



Beijing 2008:
Taking a bet on the Olympic Ideal

**Will the IOC heed the call for
Human Rights in Tibet and China?**

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CONTENTS

1. Introduction	3
• Leaving the past behind: the opportunity for the IOC	
• China: an unpromising start to the Olympics lead-up	
• Corruption: Problems for the IOC and China	
2. The IOC and Human Rights: a new challenge to its reputation.	6
• Human Rights: the IOC's head in the sand	
• The IOC's response to Free Tibet Campaign since July 2001	
3. Organising the 2008 Olympic Games	8
• Beijing Organising Committee	
• IOC Co-ordinating Commission	
• Sponsors	
4. A New Step Backwards: Human Rights July 2001 to July 2002	10
• Beijing's Promise: Media Freedom	
• Summary of current Human Rights situation in China	
• Background on the occupation of Tibet	
• Human Rights In Tibet July 2001 to July 2002	
5. The Olympics and Politics: 'No Strangers'	13
• The Power of the Olympic Games for Regimes	
• The Olympics as a Platform for Ideologies	
6. Conclusion:	15
Free Tibet Campaign Recommendations	

Appendix:

Letter from Hein Verbruggen, Chair of IOC Coordination Commission to International Tibet Support Network, June 2002

Below: © FTC.
Lhasa: May 2001. Beijing's 2008 bid paraphernalia included umbrellas and posters.



Cover photos

Top: © Kari Herbert. Free Tibet Campaign demonstration in London, March 2002.
Bottom: © AP. Jacques Rogge in Beijing, August 2001.

1. INTRODUCTION

"The Olympics and politics are not strangers, as they have been linked to one another in many important and subtle ways. In recent years the popularity of sport has made it a powerful tool. In most countries sports events are used as scenes for patriotic displays to emphasise the superiority of a particular political system or ideology. The impact of these displays is intensified by the endorsement of sport by political leaders."
(Olympic Fact Sheets, The National Sport Information Centre [Australian Sports Commission])

When China was awarded the right to host the 2008 Olympic Games by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), with an overwhelming majority on 13 July 2001, the IOC conferred huge political respectability on a regime presiding over a continued deterioration in human rights. The 'spin' promulgated by supporters of Beijing's bid suggested that the Olympic Games would facilitate an improvement in human rights - the reality on the ground is very different, as this report will document.

Having opposed Beijing's bid, Free Tibet Campaign intends to hold the IOC accountable for having taken 'a bet' that human rights would improve in Tibet and China as a result of the 2008 Olympic Games. This was the extraordinary admission by IOC Executive Director Francois Carrard at Beijing's winning press conference on 13 July 2001. If the Chinese authorities fail to justify this blind faith, Free Tibet Campaign will ensure that both they and the IOC have an uncomfortable ride over the next six years. Free Tibet Campaign, as part of the International Tibet Support Network, has made a series of recommendations for action by the IOC (see page 15): should the IOC reject these, and there is insufficient progress in China towards a society that respects fundamental freedoms, the IOC will come under pressure to remove the 2008 Games from Beijing, so that they may take place in a more appropriate environment. In the meantime the IOC will be held jointly accountable with China for any human rights abuses connected to preparation for the Games. Moreover, Free Tibet Campaign will ensure that the IOC cannot claim ignorance as protection with regard to the situation in Tibet or China.

Below: © TIN/Tibet Images
Dawa Wangdu, a Tibetan monk being dragged away following his interrogation in a police station, 5 March 1987.

Corporate sponsors (see page 9) would also do well to reflect on the threat to their reputation if they came to be linked with an event that was itself associated with human rights abuses. Free Tibet Campaign will highlight the dangers of this strategy.



Leaving the past behind: the opportunity for the IOC
The legacy of former IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch was an organisation fighting to free itself from a history of corruption and a lack of transparency. The award of the 2008 Games to Beijing was Samaranch's second legacy to his successor, Dr Jacques Rogge, who emerged as the new IOC President. Rogge has a mandate for change, but time is short and Beijing 2008 will be a crucial test for the IOC. If the IOC fails to institute human rights mechanisms into its planning process, it will be gambling with the Olympic ideal. This ideal seeks to promote a "peaceful society" and ensure the "fundamental dignity of the human person". An Olympics that take place in the context of human rights abuses does not fulfill that ideal.

The IOC's 114th Session will meet in Mexico City on 28 and 29 November 2002, to consider a number of proposals for reform of the Olympic Games. Free Tibet Campaign calls on the IOC to put human rights (and therefore its reputation) at the top of the agenda. A Human Rights Committee or Advisor must be appointed to assist the organisation in its preparations for the 2008 Olympic Games. Engaging on this level with the Chinese regime is the only possible approach to putting on an Olympic Games consistent with the founding values of the Olympic movement. There could be no greater legacy for China and Tibet, or indeed for the IOC.

Sunder Katwala of *The Observer* wrote: "*In this age of accountability,*

sport seeks to be the last bastion of unaccountable power. The IOC still thinks that, because it owns the Olympics, the rest of the world should mind its own business."
(The Olympics after Samaranch, 15 July 2001).

The IOC's current reluctance to take on the human rights issue contrasts with its stated attention to the environmental impact of the Olympic Games on a host city. Human rights must become another pillar of the Olympic organisation; they are integral to the success of all future Games. The 17 members of the IOC's Coordination Commission must have a real duty of care to ensure that all aspects of the Games perform well and, given the level of concern about human rights in China and Tibet, there should be even greater emphasis on this area. For example, how will the Coordination Commission ensure that security personnel do not transgress international human rights standards in their policing of the event?

Additionally there is a profound double standard between the IOC's reluctance to act on China and its decision to exclude South Africa from the Games between 1964 and 1992 due to the apartheid system. This rare principled action by the IOC, combined with other international efforts, ensured that South Africa was made forcefully aware that its policies did not meet with international approval.

China: an unpromising start to the Olympics lead-up

"The Chinese leadership's preoccupation with stability in the face of continued economic and social upheaval fuelled an increase in human rights violations. China's increasingly prominent international profile, symbolised in 2001 by its entry into the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and by Beijing's successful bid to host the 2008 Olympics, was accompanied by tightened controls on fundamental freedoms".

(US State Department, 2001 Country Reports)

Beijing officials used the Games as a platform to promote policies of control even before the IOC's decision in July 2001. Reuters reported that Liu Qi, Mayor of Beijing and now President of the Beijing Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (BOCOG), told an Olympics rally in September 2000 that the city would *"resolutely smash and crack down on Falun Gong and other evil cults"*, and drive away beggars, the homeless and prostitutes to prepare for the 2008 bid (Reuters, 15 January 2001)

The Olympics Charter calls for the promotion of a "peaceful society". On the basis of recent experience, the Chinese regime seems likely to interpret a "peaceful Olympics" as being a silent Olympics, with all public dissent ruthlessly suppressed. The IOC has already provided the Beijing authorities with a licence for "zero tolerance", as its host city contract stipulates that there should be no demonstrations or political meetings during the Olympic Games (http://www.olympic.org/uk/organisation/ocog/index_uk.asp). As Human Rights Watch points out, if the IOC is to be a *"positive force for change, rather than a pretext for heightened restrictions on basic rights, the IOC and the Games' corporate sponsors need to take a far more pro-active stance"*. China may have lost the right to host the 2000 Olympic Games because the memory of Tiananmen Square was still too fresh even for the unsqueamish IOC, but the current brutal crackdown on Falun Gong, Tibetan religious institutions, and the recent blocking of BBC World television all point to a regime still desperate to control its citizens. What would be the response if China's leadership felt under threat internally in the run-up to the Olympics? And would the IOC stand by and watch it happen?

Just over a week after the IOC decision in July 2001, Chinese Vice Premier Li Lanqing made a direct link between Beijing's success in being granted the 2008 Olympic Games and the regime's crackdown on Falun Gong. His remarks can be applied just as easily to claim international support for suppressing Tibetans, democracy activists, or anyone else who opposes the Communist Party of China. *"...we have won a great victory against Falun Gong....we have won the right to*

Below: © FTC
Lhasa, May 2001: Chinese soldiers parading to mark the 50th anniversary of the 'peaceful liberation of Tibet'.

Bottom: © FTC
Lhasa, May 2001. Posters promoting the Beijing 2008 bid decorate the capital. Tibetans who paste up posters calling for democracy or freedom receive prison sentences.



host the 2008 Olympic Games. This shows that the international community has acknowledged the fact that China is marked by social stability and progress, its economy is prospering, and its people are living a peaceful and comfortable life". (reported by *The Australian*, 23 July 2001)

It is not only within its borders that China attempts to control dissent. On 8 July, Associated Press reported that the Lithuanian government had responded to Chinese instructions that demonstrators with Tibetan flags were dragged away during a visit by President Jiang Zemin. The Lithuanian Interior Ministry's security chief Raimundas Kairys was quoted as saying "*I could not guarantee that Chinese security officers would not shoot them on the spot.*" This statement may be hyperbole, but Kairys was clearly expressing the degree of pressure that the Lithuanian government came under to ensure that the notoriously sensitive President Jiang was not offended.

In all likelihood, the 2008 Beijing Olympics will be presided over by a new Chinese leadership in the form of Hu Jintao as President, Li Ruihuan as Chair of the National People's Congress and Wen Jiabao as Prime Minister. The transfer of power is likely to commence in Autumn 2002 and be completed in Spring 2003.

Hu Jintao and Li Ruihuan have strong connections with repression in Tibet. Hu Jintao imposed martial law in Tibet in 1989, during his term as Party Secretary. Li Ruihuan was instrumental in the development of the 'Patriotic Education' campaign, which began in 1996 targeting monasteries and nunneries. This programme of thought reform has led to hundreds of arrests and over 35,000 monks and nuns being expelled from their religious communities. Li was also involved in the selection of an officially approved Panchen Lama whilst Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the child recognised by the Dalai Lama as the 11th Panchen Lama, was abducted (see page 12).

Corruption: Problems for the IOC and China

The IOC was almost overwhelmed by the public revelations of internal corruption which emerged in the run-up to the Salt Lake City Games of 2002. Worryingly, the IOC, the 'last bastion of unaccountable power', may well have much in common with China, which has its own problems with corruption. Moreover, the desire for new markets for IOC sponsors and the desperate need to complete a large number of infrastructure projects in Beijing (budget of \$23 billion) in a repressive society, could provide a major challenge to an IOC that no longer wants to be associated with corruption.

At a symposium organised by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace on February 13 2001, Angang Hu from the Centre for China Studies at the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Qinghua University labelled corruption as "*one of the biggest political and economic challenges that faces China in the twenty-first century.*

Conservatively estimated at 13-16% of China's GDP, corruption is a huge economic loss and a "social pollution," contributing to problems such as environmental degradation, social and political instability, and decreased credibility of government officials." He further added that "*Collusion among the Chinese Communist Party, judiciary, police, and mafia must end.....If economic development continues without [political] reform, corruption will deepen and ultimately retard China's development.*" (<http://www.ceip.org/files/events/AngangHuEvent.asp?p=1&EventID=284>)

Below © Celeste Nourse
Tibetan demonstrator in
Dharamsala, India.



2. THE IOC AND HUMAN RIGHTS: A NEW CHALLENGE TO ITS REPUTATION

Human Rights: the IOC's head in the sand

Hein Verbruggen, chair of the IOC's Beijing Coordination Commission, in correspondence with the Tibet movement, has expressed the belief that human rights in China have improved.

"...we also acknowledge, as do nearly all governments, that there is already a positive trend of change within the country."

(letter to International Tibet Support Network, 20 June 2002 - see Appendix).

This analysis is clearly at odds with the view of the US Government (see page 4) and the European Union:

"The Council remained concerned about the lack of respect for human rights in China, including the freedoms of expression, religion and association, about the ongoing violations of human rights of pro-democracy activists, proponents of free trade unions and followers of the Falun Gong.....At the same time, the Council underscored its deepest concern for the "strike hard" campaign, which has resulted in an extremely high number of death sentences and executions. The EU is dismayed at this grave setback." (EU Foreign Ministers' General Affairs Council statement, 11 March 2002).

The IOC's reluctance to take pro-active steps which will encourage China to improve human rights sends a dangerous signal to the regime. The IOC has apparently refused to act on behalf of Chinese dissidents detained for protesting at the Olympic decision, or appealing to the IOC for help. Shan Chengfeng was sentenced to two years in a labour camp in February 2001 for protesting at the Beijing bid and for organising a petition which asked the IOC to call for the release of all political prisoners. She was sentenced during the very week that the IOC's Evaluation Committee was visiting Beijing.

A Human Rights Committee

As described in the Introduction to this report, Free Tibet Campaign recommends that the IOC appoints a Human Rights Committee or Advisor to oversee this aspect of the Olympic Games. The IOC must take a systematic approach to human rights, as an integral part of the preparation process for the Games, not least to ensure that such issues are taken seriously by the Chinese authorities. Such a Committee or individual would require free access in order to be effective. Jens Anderson, Co-ordinator of the Sports Intelligence Unit in Copenhagen, pointed out:

"[A] Commission should have full liberty to travel and meet whom it likes in China, and it should have unlimited access to minutes and other confidential papers from the IOC. If no serious attempt is made to monitor the development of human rights in this way, then Beijing would be as bad choice for the Games as Germany was in 1936." (as quoted in *The Observer* 1 July 2001).

On 23 April 2002, Dr Jacques Rogge took part in an interview with BBC's *Hard Talk* programme. His comments were mistakenly reported as suggesting that the IOC would consider removing the Olympic Games if the human rights situation did not improve. He additionally rejected proposals that the IOC should appoint a Human Rights Committee. However, he did state that some discussions had been held on human rights issues with Chinese leaders and the Host City, but gave no information on what these consisted of.

Extracts from interview with BBC *Hard Talk*, 23 April 2002

Jacques Rogge: *"On the issue of human rights... the IOC will make sure that within its sphere, which is sport, that all the human rights are totally respected. I've expressed this very clearly."*

Tim Sebastian: *"How can you make sure of that? How can you do that?"*

Jacques Rogge: *"I've said this very clearly to the political leaders and we have in the host city contract a lot of provisions where we have to approve and we have to sign and we have to take decisions."*

I've said to the Chinese political leaders, the IOC urges you to improve as much as possible human rights, as soon as possible and I've said clearly after discussions I had with Amnesty International that it is not our role to monitor human rights, because to monitor human rights you need specialised task forces and specialised people which we do not have. And I have said that we would be in close contact with Amnesty International and with Human Rights Watch of the UN (sic) and they will report to us and they will tell us what they feel."

The IOC's response to Free Tibet Campaign since July 2001.

Free Tibet Campaign's experience of attempting a dialogue with Jacques Rogge and the IOC does not reflect this apparent willingness to engage with human rights concerns.

2001

25 July

Letter to new IOC President and Executive Director outlining concerns, requesting meeting.
No response from IOC.

July to October Phone calls and faxes chasing response.

August World University Games held in Beijing. IOC President attends and meets with Chinese leaders. States that politics has no place in sport.

November Meeting with IOC President refused; offer to meet with Hein Verbruggen, Chair of Beijing Coordination Commission and Gilbert Felli.

18 December Three representatives from International Tibet Support Network (ITSN) meet with Hein Verbruggen and Gilbert Felli at which ITSN outline concerns. IOC presented with a list of recommendations and promise a response. No response - written or verbal - forthcoming.

2002

March to May Three phone calls to IOC requesting response to letter/meeting. Copies of letter sent to all IOC representatives.

April Rogge and members of the Coordinating Commission make their first visit to Beijing since the 2008 Games were awarded.

Rogge interview with BBC's *Hard Talk* programme (see excerpts, pg6)

June Letter to Rogge, again requesting response to recommendations.
Faxed response from Hein Verbruggen received 20 June 2002. No detailed response on the recommendations made by Tibet groups. (see appendix)

Below: © AP
December 2001, Chinese police attempt to stop Australia Tibet Council's protest in Beijing to raise awareness of the abducted Panchen Lama.



3. ORGANISING THE 2008 OLYMPIC GAMES

The IOC entrusts the organisation of the Games to the National Organising Committee (NOC) of the host country as well as to the host city. The NOC then forms an Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (OCOG). The Beijing Organising Committee (BOCOG) receives its instructions from the IOC, principally through the IOC's Coordination Commission. There are six monthly update meetings to assess progress. The IOC clearly states that it considers itself to be the final arbiter on all questions relating to the Olympic Games: "*The final authority on any question concerning the Olympic Games lies with the IOC*". The IOC further states: "*The OCOG executive body includes: the IOC member or members in the country; the President and Secretary General of the NOC; and at least one member representing and designated by the host city. In addition, it generally includes representatives of the public authorities and other leading figures.*"

**Beijing Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (BOCOG)
President**

Liu Qi, Mayor of Beijing. Reuters reported that he told an Olympics rally in September 2000 that the city would "*resolutely smash and crack down on Falun Gong and other evil cults*", *and drive away beggars, the homeless and prostitutes to prepare for the 2008 bid* (15 January 2001)

Executive President

Yuan Weimin, Minister in charge of the State Sport General Administration of China and President of the Chinese Olympic Committee (COC).

Executive Vice-President

Liu Jingmin, Vice Mayor of Beijing.

Vice Presidents

Mr. Li Zhijian, President of All-China Sports Federation, Vice President of COC.

Mr. Yu Zaiqing, Vice Minister of Sports, Vice President of COC, IOC Member.

Mr. Duan Shijie, Vice Minister of Sports, Vice President of COC.

Mr. Jiang Xiaoyu, Vice Mayor of Beijing.

Mr. Zhang Mao, Vice Mayor of Beijing.

Secretary General

Wang Wei, Deputy Secretary General of the People's Government of Beijing Municipality.

IOC Coordination Commission (Note: Made first visit to Beijing in April 2002).

Chairman

Hein Verbruggen, Netherlands.

Independent Financial Consultant. Also chaired the IOC's Evaluation Commission (2001) on Beijing's 2008 bid. IOC member since 1996.

Vice Chairman

Kevan Gosper, Australia.

Currently Special Representative for Australian Government. Had previously been Chairman and CEO of Shell Australia Ltd (1980-91).

Members

Robert Fasulo, USA.

On 2004 Athens Coordination Commission. Secretary General of the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations.

Timothy Fok, Hong Kong.

Businessman. Also member of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. IOC member since 2001.

Alex Gilady, Israel.

Background in media broadcasting. On Coordination Commission for Athens 2004. IOC member since 1994.

Issa Hayatou, Cameroon.

Board member of the National Olympic Committee in Cameroon. Heavily involved in FIFA in a number of positions. IOC member since 2001.

Nat Indrapana, Thailand.

Long history in sports administration. Had been on the Coordination Commission for Sydney 2000. IOC member since 1990.

Kip Keino, Kenya.

Previous career includes police officer and businessman. Led Kenya team to numerous international competitions. Currently President of Kenya National Olympic Committee. IOC member since 2000.

Julio Cesar Maglione, Uruguay.

Career in public health at grassroots and governmental level. On Evaluation Committee and Coordination Commission for Athens 2004 Games. IOC member since 1998.

Ser Miang Ng, Singapore.

Currently Singapore Ambassador to Hungary. IOC member since 1998.

Carlos Arthur Nuzman, Brazil.

Lawyer and businessman. Currently President of Brazil National Olympic Committee. Had been on the Committee that had evaluated Beijing's bid (2001). IOC member since 2000.

Susie O'Neill, Australia.

Former swimmer. Currently on IOC Athletes Commission and Women and Sport Working Group. IOC member since 2000.

Craig Reedie, UK.

Independent Financial Adviser. Chair of British National Olympic Committee. On Coordination Commission for Athens 2004 and took part in the Committee that had evaluated Beijing's 2008 bid (2001). IOC member since 1994.

Austin Sealy, Barbados.

Businessman. Formerly a diplomat and director of state-owned Radio, TV and Sports and Tourism Authorities. Took part in the committee that had evaluated Beijing's 2008 bid (2001). Member of IOC since 1994.

Robert Steadward, Canada.

Academic. Former President of International Paralympic Committee (IPC). Also took part in the committee that had evaluated Beijing's 2008 bid (2001). IOC member since 2000.

Executive Director

Francois Carrard. Long-standing staff member of IOC. Controversially introduced the winning press conference on 13 July 2001 by admitting that there had only been one issue for debate: namely human rights. He went on to say that the IOC had taken a 'bet' that China would improve its human rights record because of the Games.

Sports Director

Gilbert Felli. In charge of coordination for all the Olympic Games.

Sponsors:

Beijing intends to spend \$23 billion in its preparations over the next six years.

Corporate sponsors include:

Coca-Cola
Xerox
Telstra
McDonald's
TimeWarner

John Hancock
Heineken NV
Schlumberger/Sema
Panasonic
Visa

General Motors
Fuji Photo Film
Kodak
Samsung

4. A NEW STEP BACKWARDS: HUMAN RIGHTS 2002

"Developments in the human rights situation in China over the past few months represent a major setback for human rights and the "rule of law" in China, and a new step backwards since the deterioration of human rights which started in late 1998." (Amnesty International, Human Rights in China in 2001: A new step backwards, October 2001)

The human rights situation in China and Tibet has continued to deteriorate since the IOC's decision of July 2001 to take a 'bet' that human rights would improve. Beijing 2008 is shaping up to be an Olympic Games held in a climate of fear as the authorities are likely to maintain their current policy of controlling all internal dissent; a new interpretation of the Olympic Charter which seeks to promote "a peaceful society". In the run-up to the July 2001 decision 10,000 Tibetans were "encouraged" to sign a huge petition which was delivered to the bid Committee in order to demonstrate the apparent strength of support from the Tibetan people.

Beijing's Promise: Media Freedom

The Beijing authorities have made one promise on a human rights issue, namely media freedom.

Wang Wei, Secretary General of the Beijing bid committee said on 13 July 2001:

"We will give the media complete freedom to report when they come to China... We are confident that the Games coming to China not only promotes our economy but also enhances all social conditions, including education, health and human rights."

Jacques Rogge has also stated that media freedom would be assured:

"Beijing has signed a host city contract with the IOC which provides the condition on the organising committee to give free access to the country for all accredited media." (quoted by AP, 27 August 2001)

However, progress to date towards media freedom in China is discouraging. Reporters sans Frontières (RSF) have recorded the following infractions:

- On 4 July 2002, BBC World Television had its satellite relays suspended by China following a programme mentioning Beijing's crackdown on the banned Falun Gong movement. Associated Press questioned the Chinese authorities on the suspension of broadcasts but they refused to be drawn.
- On 20 June 2002, RSF reported that the Beijing authorities had banned the 15 June issue of the British magazine, *The Economist*. The magazine had carried a special editorial called "Set China's Politics Free" and included a dossier from the magazine's Beijing correspondent which looked at sensitive topics, including the spiritual movement Falun Gong, the pro-democracy movements of 1989 and the new Chinese financial markets.
- On 13 June 2002, a South Korean journalist was beaten up in Beijing when he covered a scuffle between Chinese security and consulate personnel. Chinese Public Television, which owns the monopoly, prevented the broadcast to South Korean television of any images from the scuffle.
- On 5 June 2002, a Canadian journalist Jiang Xueqin was expelled from China after he had been detained in Daqing (Heilongjiang Province in the north-east of country). He had been reporting on a workers' demonstration for the Public Broadcasting Service when he was arrested for "making illegal video recordings".

Below: © FTC

Lhasa. May 2001: Chinese petition for the 2008 Olympics that 10,000 Tibetans were 'encouraged' to support



Raymond Ménard, Secretary General of RSF stated that: *"This incident is yet another example of the numerous difficulties encountered by foreign correspondents working for the international media, who have to brave all kinds of pressure, violence and surveillance".* What actions will the IOC take to ensure media freedom? No answer has been forthcoming on requests by Free Tibet Campaign on how this will be achieved.

Summary of Current Human Rights Situation in China

- No freedom of the press and crackdown on internet provision and access.
- Thousands of political prisoners in China and Tibet. Torture and ill-treatment commonplace in prisons. Death in detention not uncommon.
- 'Rule of law' still a whim of the Communist Party machine.
- No freedom of expression, conscience, religion or association.
- Continued attacks on distinctive Tibetan cultural and religious identity.
- Intensification of crackdown on East Turkestan's (Xinjiang) ethnic Uighurs since September 11 events in the USA.
- Continuing crackdown on Falun Gong, other spiritual movements and religious activities outside the official churches.
- Labour activists, dissidents, academics and journalists singled out for repression.
- Extensive use of the death penalty. Amnesty International reported that China executed more people in the space of 3 months than the rest of the world over a period of 3 years, including during Beijing's successful campaign for the Olympic Games. At least 2,960 people were sentenced to death and 1,781 executed in the last three months of China's 'Strike Hard' campaign against crime (Amnesty International, 2001).

Background on the occupation of Tibet

- Tibet was invaded by 40,000 Chinese troops in 1950. In the 52 years of Chinese occupation, the Tibetan government in exile has estimated that over 1.2 million Tibetans died either directly or indirectly as a result of the Chinese occupation.
- In 1959 following the Tibetan National Uprising, when approximately 87,000 Tibetans were killed, over 100,000 Tibetans followed the Dalai Lama into exile.
- Tibet's distinctive religious and cultural traditions are under threat as the Chinese regime controls freedom of religion through a 'Patriotic Education' campaign. Photographs of the Dalai Lama are no longer permitted. Displaying the Tibetan flag or shouting 'Free Tibet' is illegal and will result in arrest and imprisonment.
- There are around 200 political prisoners in Tibet with torture, ill-treatment and sentence extensions commonplace.
- Thousands of Tibetans flee to India each year to escape repression in Tibet. Heavy surveillance with CCTV in the main areas backed up by undercover police units to monitor any signs of dissent.
- China is exploiting Tibet's natural resources of gas, oil and mineral deposits, to fuel economic machine elsewhere in China.

Below: © David Hoffman
Ex-political prisoner Palden Gyatso with the torture weapons that he smuggled out of Tibet. He had been imprisoned for 33 years for peacefully protesting at China's occupation of Tibet.

"These events may be taking place in a land so far away that it hardly seems real. But pain, torture and anguish are real... You have the chance to make sure that hope is also real"

Palden Gyatso,
Tibetan monk



Human Rights in Tibet July 2001 - July 2002

China stepped up its attack on the cultural and religious heritage of Tibet in 2001 and 2002. This destruction went hand in hand with the continued abuse of human rights by the Chinese authorities.

Examples include the Serthar Monastic Settlement in Sichuan Province: this was the largest Buddhist community in Tibet with 7,000 monks and nuns until August 2001 when the Chinese authorities sought to restrict numbers to 1,400. Nuns in particular were forced to destroy their own dwellings and evicted from the settlement. It is estimated that 1,000 dwellings were destroyed.

Yachen Gar, also in Sichuan Province: In September 2001, officials entered Yachen Gar where there were around 2,500 - 3,000 monks and nuns. Officials forced monks and nuns to destroy their own homes, imposing heavy fines on those who did not. Over 800 dwellings were destroyed and around 1,000 monks and nuns were evicted. Only 1,500 monks and nuns are believed to remain.

"Many nuns [who were forced to leave] are now in retreat in the mountains nearby. Many of them didn't have a nunnery to go back to, so they have nowhere to go. Also they wanted to stay near their religious teacher, Achug Khenpo [the head of Yachen Gar]. Only monks and nuns from Payul county were allowed to stay."

(sources: Tibet Information Network and International Campaign for Tibet)

Political Prisoners

- Female political prisoners face a 1 in 24 chance of dying as a result of conditions in Drapchi Prison (TIN, February 2002 data).
- Ngawang Sangdrol, the 25 year old Tibetan nun currently serving the longest sentence of any Tibetan woman prisoner remains in the notorious Drapchi Prison.
- The one Tibetan beneficiary to date of external political pressure on China has been Ngawang Choephel who was released on medical parole in January 2002 after having served 7 years of an 18 year sentence. His 'crime' had been to record Tibetan music and dance. It is understood that the volume of mail received by the Chinese authorities on his behalf as a result of the international campaign was a major factor in his release.

The Panchen Lama

- The Chinese authorities continue to deny access to Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, who was just 6 years old in 1995 when he was abducted along with his family. He had been recognised as being the 11th Panchen Lama, the second most important religious position in Tibetan Buddhism after the Dalai Lama.
- His whereabouts are unknown, but the most plausible reports indicate that he may be held in the vicinity of Beijing. He will have passed his 18th birthday by the time the 2008 Olympic Games happen. Will he have been granted the 'freedom' of the Olympic city by that time, or will he still be detained?

Below: © ICT

Serthar, August 2001. The nun in the foreground has been forced to destroy her own dwelling as part of an official programme of evictions from the religious settlement.



5. The Olympic Games and Politics: 'No Strangers'

Summer Games since 1936

Berlin 1936	London 1948	Helsinki 1952
Melbourne 1956	Rome 1960	Tokyo 1964
Mexico City 1968	Munich 1972	Montreal 1976
Moscow 1980	Los Angeles 1984	Seoul 1988
Barcelona 1992	Atlanta 1996	Sydney 2000

China returned to the Olympic fold in 1984 after a voluntary 32 year absence.

The Power of the Olympic Games for Regimes

China itself had many years previously acknowledged how the presence of the Olympic Games could be used to justify a country's internal or external human rights record. *Xinhua Press Agency*, one of the official mouthpieces of the Chinese regime reported that the Soviet authorities in 1980 believed that: "*the decision to hold the Olympic Games in Moscow has become convincing evidence of the correctness of the foreign policy course of our country*". *Xinhua* commented that: "*The Berlin Olympic Games of 1936 were later dismissed as the 'Nazi Olympics', now the Soviet leadership has clearly put its own political stamp on the Games even before they actually begin in Moscow*".

As previously described, Chinese Vice Premier Li Lanqing himself made the link between the award of the Games to China at a time of a continued crackdown on Falun Gong as demonstrating that the world agreed with China's behaviour.

The Olympics as a Platform for Ideologies

The Olympic Summer Games provide a platform for worldwide attention, not just for the competing athletes but also for the host country. They have been used as a platform for political ideologies, and as a political football too. Examples include Germany and Japan being barred from taking part in the 1948 Games as a result of World War Two; and the then Soviet Union boycotting the 1996 Atlanta Games in a tit for tat response to the USA's boycott of the Moscow Games in 1980.

Berlin 1936

The Berlin Games of 1936 provided a platform for Nazi Germany that, despite Jesse Owens' amazing performance at the time, associated the Olympics with a political philosophy that was the absolute antithesis of the Olympic ideal. Lord Abberdare, an IOC Member stated that: "*the Committee were seriously alarmed at the ill-treatment of the Jews...but decided that they could not be drawn into political and other controversies.*" (Jennings, *The New Lords of the Rings*, Pocket Books 1996, pg 35).

Mexico 1968

Mexico City's 1968 Olympic Games were the background to an explosion of violence against demonstrators, who were protesting at the funding of the Games at a time of severe poverty in Mexico. The President, anxious to avoid disruption to the Games, ordered in troops on 2 October 1968, ten days before the Olympics opened. It is estimated that anywhere between 100 and 325 protesters were killed. Thousands were arrested and the massacre shook the country to the core.

The IOC had been anxious to avoid any protests from happening. As one IOC member recounted: "*Brundage had warned the President, Diaz Ordez, that if there were demonstrations at the Olympic sites the Games would be cancelled....the Government strategy in the Square ensured that did not happen.*" (Jennings, *ibid*, pg 41).

Moscow 1980

The 1980 Olympics was already highly controversial before the Games even opened, with 60 teams boycotting Moscow in protest at the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979.

The Soviet Union also carried out human rights violations against its own citizens in the run up to the Games. Notable dissidents included Anatoly Scharansky, who was imprisoned in 1978 after he supplied material to the *Los Angeles Times*, and Alexander Ginzberg, sentenced to hard labour on 13 July 1979 after he had managed a fund for political prisoners.

There was no freedom of the press, expression or movement. Dissent was brutally suppressed. It was another six years before the Soviet Union embarked upon democratic reforms.

Seoul 1988

South Korea has often been cited as an example of the power of the Olympic Games to transform a society. However, the reality is far more complex, with IOC commentator Andrew Jennings in particular pointing out that the Olympic organisation seemed far more keen on ensuring stability for the Games than expressing concern for the people of South Korea.

South Korea had been a military dictatorship beset with corruption that, in the run up to the Games in 1988, brutally suppressed mass uprisings in support of democratic reforms. Although there was a change of leadership from General Chun to General Roh in 1988 (who also happened to be the President of the South Korean Organising Committee) this only allowed limited political reform. Political demonstrations were banned throughout the Olympics with 90,000 troops drafted in to enforce it. Seoul was also cleared of all political dissidents, beggars, blind people and alleged criminals.

Below: © AP
Berlin Games 1936. Adolf Hitler in foreground.

Bottom: © AP
Mexican soldiers arrest student protesters on 2 October 1968. Between 100 and 325 protesters are believed to have died.



6. Recommendations to the IOC

Free Tibet Campaign supports the following recommendations, made to the IOC in December 2001 by members of the International Tibet Support Network.

- That a written guarantee be sought from the Chinese authorities stipulating that Chinese citizens and Tibetans will not be arrested for voicing dissent or any other public opinions about the Olympic Games in the run-up to, during and in the aftermath of the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing.
- That representations be made demanding the immediate release of those Chinese citizens already arrested for actions related to the Beijing bid. Most notably Shan Chengfeng, sentenced to two years in labour camp.
- That a written guarantee be sought from the Chinese authorities stipulating that the local and international media will have full and free access to China and Tibet in the run-up to and during the Olympic Games. Wang Wei, Secretary-General of the Beijing bid committee, was quoted in the China Daily in July 2001 as stating that "*the world's media will enjoy full freedom to report on all aspects of China if the 2008 Olympic Games is held in the city*".
- That sports stadiums where ritual public humiliation and executions of alleged criminals have taken place be ruled out of the site plans for the Beijing Olympic Games.
- That a code of conduct be drawn up to guide IOC members, officials and sponsors in their role in the period running up to the Games and during the Games to prevent the IOC becoming a propaganda pawn for the Chinese authorities.
- That a mechanism for raising human rights abuses carried out by the Chinese authorities explicitly in the name of providing a "better Olympics" be established. These abuses may include arrests, detentions, torture or ill-treatment of those protesting about Beijing's preparations for the Games; coercion in Tibet or China in order to promote the Olympic Games; security crackdowns in Tibet in the name of security and "fighting terrorism".
- That representations be made on behalf of dissidents arrested for protesting Beijing's Olympic bid, including Shan Chengfeng sentenced to two years in labour camp.
- That a mechanism for regular consultation and a channel of communication with human rights advisers and NGOs, including the International Tibet Support Network (ITSN), be established, that enables the IOC to keep itself up-to-date with human rights violations in Tibet and China.
- That benchmarks be set by the IOC to determine the basis for an eventual reconsideration of the location of the 2008 Olympics in the event of a lack of improvement or further deterioration of the human rights situation in China and Tibet.
- That the case of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the 11th Panchen Lama of Tibet, be taken up by the IOC with the Chinese authorities. The Panchen Lama, one of the most senior figures in Tibetan Buddhism, was last seen in public in 1995. Despite repeated calls from the UN and governments around the world for information on his whereabouts and condition, the Chinese authorities have so far failed to respond. The case of the Panchen Lama is one of the central issues of the Tibet-China conflict. In the spirit of the Olympic Charter and the Olympic Truce Resolution adopted by the 54th UN General Assembly on 24 November 1999, the IOC should use the opportunity of the Olympic Games to press for independently verifiable information about the Panchen Lama. (The 1999 UN resolution, co-sponsored by 180 member states, including the People's Republic of China, urges member states to "*abide by the Olympic Truce, individually and collectively, and to pursue, in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the peaceful settlement of all international conflicts through diplomatic solutions*".)

Appendix: Letter from Hein Verbruggen to International Tibet Support Network



Send by telefax (41 21 78333838)
Ms Alison REYNOLDS
Co-chair, ITSN
c/o Free Tibet Campaign

Lausanne, 20 June 2002
Ref. no 10481 /2002/CHD/col

Re: Games of the XXIX Olympiad, Beijing 2008

Dear Ms Reynolds,

Following our meeting last December and your subsequent letter addressed to the IOC President, and the conversation you recently had with the staff of the IOC administration, I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our position.

While the IOC is a responsible member of society, in our more than one-hundred years of history, we have respectfully refrained from entering political debates or taken political stands that were not universally accepted. While we respect the rights of individuals and organizations such as yours to promote their specific causes, for us to do so would run counter to our primary mission and responsibility: to bring athletes from around the world together – despite their differences – to celebrate peaceful athletic competition.

We share the hope that the Olympic Games will improve the economical and social contexts within China, as the Chinese Government itself has announced. However, we also acknowledge, as do nearly all governments, that there is already a positive trend of change within the country. We hope that China's experience organizing the Games – and the global engagement it requires – will in some way strengthen this trend; but the IOC does not have the power to determine what will happen or the capability to monitor any progress toward that end.

The competency of the IOC's Coordination Commission lies solely in helping the organizing committee adapt a standard Olympic Games organizing model to its own local situation by transferring knowledge and expertise gained from past Games experiences.

As the chairman of this Commission, I will do all I can to ensure the proper organization of the Games, so the world's athletes, who train for years for the chance to compete in the Olympic Games, can do so under the best conditions. In doing so, I trust you will understand that I must respect both the IOC's political neutrality and the limitations of my Commission.

Yours sincerely,

Hein VERBRUGGEN
Chairman
Coordination Commission for the
Games of the XXIX Olympiad

cc: Mr Gilbert PELLI, IOC Sports Director
Mr Christophe de KEPPEL, IOC President's chief of staff

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Free Tibet Campaign stands for the Tibetans' right to determine their own future. It campaigns for an end to the Chinese occupation of Tibet and for the Tibetans' fundamental human rights to be respected. Founded in 1987, Free Tibet Campaign informs and educates people about the situation in Tibet, to generate active support. It is an international organisation, funded by its members and supporters. It is independent of all governments. Free Tibet Campaign does not use or advocate the use of violence.

Free Tibet Campaign is a member of the International Tibet Support Network (ITSN). The International Tibet Support Network is a body of Tibet related non-government organisations with a political mandate. Its purpose is to maximise the effectiveness of the worldwide Tibet movement, which is dedicated to ending human rights violations in Tibet and to actively supporting the Tibetan people's right under international law to determine their future political, economic, social, religious and cultural status.

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