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China: Human rights -- a long way to go before the Olympics

"Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy found in effort, the educational value of good example and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles,"

Olympic Charter, Fundamental principles, paragraph 2.

In three years from now, on 8 August 2008, the Olympic Games will begin in Beijing. Today Amnesty International called on the Chinese authorities to make good on their promise to improve the human rights situation in their country for Olympic Games 2008.

"This is the perfect opportunity for China to show the world that it cares about human rights," said Catherine Baber - Asia/Pacific Deputy Programme Director of Amnesty International.

"Unfortunately despite the promises given to the International Olympic Committee, serious violations of human rights continue in China."

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) may be particularly concerned by the violations of human rights experienced by Chinese citizens that are linked to China's preparation for the Games. These include the imprisonment of individuals who have sent open letters to the IOC calling for improvements in China's human rights, the thousands of Beijing residents forcibly evicted from their homes, many illegally, in the city's preparation for the Games, and intensified suppression of groups that the authorities fear may embarrass the nation during the Games, to name a few.

Amnesty International is today releasing a list of concerns relating to China's human rights record and a set of realistic, practical, steps that now need to be taken. The measures proposed would bring government practice closer in line with international human rights standards and the ideals of the Olympic Charter. Their implementation by the Chinese authorities is realistic within the remaining three years before the Games commence.

"Amnesty International will be monitoring and reporting on China's progress in these areas over the next three years," added Catherine Baber.

Amnesty International is calling on the Chinese authorities to:

- Abolish the death penalty;
- Reform urgently the judicial system;

Allow citizens full freedom of expression and association;
Release all prisoners of conscience and those imprisoned for exercising their right to free expression, whether on the internet or other media;
Provide justice for the victims of the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown;
End forced evictions.

Amnesty International continues to have broader human rights concerns in China but will be monitoring China's progress closely in these particular areas given their direct connection with its hosting of the Olympics.

"Amnesty International will be monitoring and reporting on China's progress in these areas over the next three years," said Catherine Baber.

"We will be urging the International Olympic Committee and the wider Olympic movement to work together with our worldwide membership and in solidarity with human rights activists within China to press for concrete and positive human rights reform in China before August 2008," concluded Catherine Baber.

Background

In April, 2001, Liu Jingmin, Vice President of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games Bid Committee stated "(b)y allowing Beijing to host the Games you will help the development of human rights." Liu Qi, mayor of Beijing also pledged that by hosting the games, social progress and economic development in China would move forward, as would China's human rights situation. Officials of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) have also make clear the expectation that human rights in China should improve as a result of Beijing being chosen to host the Games.

For the full text of the Amnesty International's recommendations to Chinese government, please go to:
<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engasa170212005>

Public Document

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