CAMPAIGN INTRODUCTION

On 8 August 2008, the 29th Olympic Games will begin in Beijing. During their campaign to secure the 2008 Olympics, the Chinese authorities declared that the human rights situation in China would improve if Beijing were chosen to host the Games. Wang Wei, Secretary General of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games Bid Committee stated, “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,” a sentiment echoed by other members of the Committee. Liu Qi, Mayor of Beijing, said in 2001: “The Olympic Games] will help promote all economic and social projects and will also benefit the further development of our human rights cause.”

The International Olympic Committee has repeatedly made clear their expectation that human rights in China would improve as a result of Beijing being chosen to host the Games. The International Olympic Committee has stated that it relies on international human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, to monitor and report on the human rights situation in China and that it is committed to listening to these organizations. If grave human rights violations are not being sufficiently addressed as part of the preparations for the Games, the International Olympic Committee is compelled to take action. In April 2002, Jacques Rogge said that the “International Olympic Committee is a responsible organization, be it in the field of human rights, be it in the field of just logistics and delivering what is necessary to have good games, be it in the field of human rights or any other major issue that would make the games difficult or impossible for young athletes to participate in, then we will act.”

The Chinese authorities have a unique opportunity to honour the pledges they made to advance human rights if awarded host nation of the 2008 Summer Olympics. China’s international human rights commitments, as well as the spirit of Olympism which assert that “the practice of sport is a human right”, and avow respect for “universal fundamental ethical principles”, suggest that respect for human rights lies at the heart of the Olympic movement.

While the primary responsibility lies with the Chinese authorities, the International Olympic Committee has an obligation under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that it is the duty of every individual and organ of society to promote respect for human rights. Since 2001, in referring to the likely positive legacies the Games will leave for Beijing and China, the Chinese authorities and the International Olympic Committee have focused on improvements to the economy, environment and international image. They have placed little emphasis on the human rights legacy of the Games. The unprecedented growth of China’s economy in the last two decades has led to great social transitions, but there continues to be a disparity between economic progress and individuals being able to freely enjoy all their human rights. This deliberate stalling of progress on
human rights must end and relevant reforms must be implemented at a much faster rate.

That human rights are respected, protected and fulfilled can be one of the positive legacies of the Games – without improvements to the human rights situation in China not only will the Games fail to be remembered in a positive light, but China’s image will remain one of a country that represses its citizens.

Image: Chinese students celebrate at Beijing’s Millennium Monument after Beijing was declared the host city for the 2008 Olympic Games, in July 2001.

OUR CAMPAIGN
Amnesty International is campaigning for a lasting human rights legacy for the Beijing Olympics. Amnesty International will monitor the Chinese government’s performance particularly closely in areas with a direct link to preparations for the Olympics, to core principles in the Olympic Charter and to promises of human rights improvements made by Chinese officials in 2001 around the awarding of the Games to China. Amnesty International will mobilize thousands globally to press the Chinese authorities to deliver a positive human rights legacy to the people of China by making substantial reforms in four key areas:

- the death penalty;
- punitive administrative detention and fair trials;
- arbitrary detention and harassment of human rights defenders;
- unwarranted censorship of the internet.

Amnesty International, International Secretariat, Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X ODW, United Kingdom.
www.amnesty.org/thechinadebate

Amnesty International is a global movement of 2.2 million people in more than 150 countries and territories who campaign to end grave abuses of human rights. Our vision is for every person to enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards. We are independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion – funded mainly by our membership and public donations.

WHAT WILL THE LEGACY BE?
IT’S CHINA’S CHOICE
February 2008
AI Index: ASA 17/028/2008
“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 of Olympism, paragraph 1