

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO OPEN LETTER IN THE IHT

AI Index: ASA 17/092/2008
07 August 2008

Athletes signed up publicly to an open letter to the Chinese presidency at the Berlin International Sports Meeting in June. They are free to withdraw their expression of support at any time. It appears some athletes have chosen to do so, and we respect their decision.

Such retractions take place against a general backdrop of fear in terms of freedom of expression and censorship surrounding the Beijing Olympic Games.

They also further highlight the failure of the International Olympic Committee to show clear moral leadership ahead of the Games. Athletes should feel free to express their personal opinions on human rights without fear or favour, and we wish them every success in their individual events.

The open letter appeared in the International Herald Tribune on Wednesday 6 August. It was a Sports for Peace initiative, to which Amnesty International Germany and the International Campaign for Tibet offered their solidarity.