



# Beijing 2008

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PRESS CONFERENCE**

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**CONTACT:**

**Vincent Brossel - Beijing :**  
(86) 15 90 19 49 460

**Christine Poumarède - Paris :**  
+33 (0)1 4483 8472

**REPORTERS  
WITHOUT BORDERS**

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# **China, gold medal for human rights violations**

Tens of thousands of athletes, sports lovers and journalists will gather in Beijing for the start of the Olympic Games on 8 August 2008. Exactly one year ahead of what is meant to be the leading sports event, Reporters Without Borders is launching an international campaign to alert world opinion about the violation of basic freedoms in China.

## **Why there is an urgent need to put pressure on the Chinese authorities and International Olympic Committee:**

1. Despite the explicit undertakings it gave in 2001 to the International Olympic Committee, the Chinese government has done nothing to improve the situation of free expression or human rights in general. A representative of the Beijing Candidate Committee said at the time: "By entrusting the holding of the Olympic Games to Beijing, you will contribute to the development of human rights." Six years later, this simply has not happened.
2. All those who love sports will be shocked to see the Olympic Games and its athletes used by a government which refuses to release the hundred or so journalists, free speech activists and cyber-dissidents it has imprisoned, and which heavily censors the news media and Internet.
3. The International Olympic Committee cannot remain silent in the face of this situation without discrediting itself. The Olympic Charter says sport must be "at the service of the harmonious development of man, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity."
4. The Beijing Olympic Games slogan, "One world, one dream," lacks any meaning when government opponents, Tibetans, Uyghurs, Christians and others continue to be repressed. There are thousands of prisoners of conscience in China.

We need your help now. Support the Beijing 2008 campaign on the Reporters Without Borders website ([www.rsf.org](http://www.rsf.org)).

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## **This press pack contains :**

- «Repression continues in China, one year before Olympic Games», a text by Reporters Without Borders ..... p.2
- The Reporters Without Borders list of nine things the Chinese authorities must do before the Beijing Olympic Games ..... p. 4
- List of cyberdissidents and journalists imprisoned in China ..... p.5
- Letter sent on Tuesday 26 June 2007 to Mr. Jacques Rogge, President of the International Olympic Committee ..... p.6
- The campaign kicks off with T-shirts and postcards ..... p.9



## **Repression continues in China, one year before Olympic Games**

When the International Olympic Committee assigned the 2008 summer Olympic Games to Beijing on 13 July 2001, the Chinese police were intensifying a crackdown on subversive elements, including Internet users and journalists. Six years later, nothing has changed. But despite the absence of any significant progress in free speech and human rights in China, the IOC's members continue to turn a deaf ear to repeated appeals from international organisations that condemn the scale of the repression.

From the outset, Reporters Without Borders has been opposed to holding the Olympic Games to Beijing. Now, a year before the opening ceremony, it is clear the Chinese government still sees the media and Internet as strategic sectors that cannot be left to the "hostile forces" denounced by President Hu Jintao. The departments of propaganda and public security and the cyber-police, all conservative bastions, implement censorship with scrupulous care.

At least 30 journalists and 50 Internet users are currently detained in China. Some of them since the 1980s. The government blocks access to thousands of news websites. It jams the Chinese, Tibetan and Uyghur-language programmes of 10 international radio stations. After focusing on websites and chat forums, the authorities are now concentrating on blogs and video-sharing sites. China's blog services incorporate all the filters that block keywords considered "subversive" by the censors. The law severely punishes "divulging state secrets," "subversion" and "defamation" - charges that are regularly used to silence the most outspoken critics. Although the rules for foreign journalists have been relaxed, it is still impossible for the international media to employ Chinese journalists or to move about freely in Tibet and Xinjiang.

### **Promises never kept**

The Chinese authorities promised the IOC and international community concrete improvements in human rights in order to win the 2008 Olympics for Beijing. But they changed their tone after getting what they wanted. For example, then deputy Prime Minister Li Lanqing said, four days after the IOC vote in 2001, that "China's Olympic victory" should encourage the country to maintain its "healthy life" by combatting such problems as the Falungong spiritual movement, which had "stirred up violent crime." Several thousands of Falungong followers have been jailed since the movement was banned and at least 100 have died in detention.

A short while later, it was the turn of then Vice-President Hu Jintao (now president) to argue that after the Beijing "triumph," it was "crucial to fight without equivocation against the separatist forces orchestrated by the Dalai Lama and the world's anti-China forces." In the west of the country, where there is a sizeable Muslim minority, the authorities in Xinjiang province executed Uyghurs for "separatism."

Finally, the police and judicial authorities were given orders to pursue the "Hit Hard" campaign against crime. Every year, several thousand Chinese are executed in public, often in stadiums, by means of a bullet in the back of the neck or lethal injection.

### **The IOC cannot remain silent any longer**

The governments of democratic countries that are still hoping "the Olympic Games will help to improve the human right situation in China" are mistaken. The "constructive dialogue" advocated by some is leading nowhere.

The repression of journalists and cyber-dissidents has not let up in the past seven years.



# China : the world's biggest prison for journalists and cyberridissidents

Everything suggests that it is going to continue. The IOC has given the Chinese government a job that it is going to carry out with zeal - the job of "organising secure Olympic Games." For the government, this means more arrests of dissidents, more censorship and no social protest movements.

This is not about spoiling the party or taking the Olympic Games hostage. And anyway, it is China that has cynically used the games and the Olympic spirit, with the IOC's complicity. The world sports movement must now speak out and call for the Chinese people to be allowed to enjoy the freedoms it has been demanding for years. The Olympic Charter says sport must be "at the service of the harmonious development of man, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity." Athletes and sports lovers have the right and the duty to defend this charter. The IOC should show some courage and should do everything possible to ensure that Olympism's values are not freely flouted by the Chinese organisers.

The IOC is currently in the best position to demand concrete goodwill gestures from the Chinese government. It should demand a significant improvement in the human rights

situation before the opening ceremony on 8 August 2008.

And the IOC should not bow to the commercial interests of all those who regard China as a vital market in which nothing should be allowed to prevent them from doing business.

## No Olympic Games without democracy!

Reporters Without Borders calls on the National Olympic Committees, the IOC, athletes, sports lovers and human rights activists to publicly express their concern about the countless violations of every fundamental freedom in China.

After Beijing was awarded the games in 2001, Harry Wu, a Chinese dissident who spent 19 years in prisons in China, said he deeply regretted that China did not have "the honour and satisfaction of hosting the Olympic Games in a democratic country."

Russian dissident Vladimir Bukovsky's outraged comment about the holding of the 1980 Olympics in Moscow - "Politically, a grave error; humanly, a despicable act; legally, a crime" - remains valid for 2008.



**The Reporters Without Borders list of nine things the Chinese authorities must do before the Beijing Olympic Games:**

1

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Release all journalists and Internet users detained in China for exercising their right to information.

2

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Abolish for ever the restrictive articles in the Foreign Correspondents Guide that limit the media's freedom of movement and work.

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Disband the Publicity Department (the former Propaganda Department), which exercises daily control over content in the Chinese press.

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End the jamming of foreign radio stations.

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End the blocking of thousands of news and information websites based abroad.

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Suspend the "11 Commandments of the Internet," which lead to content censorship and self-censorship on websites.

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End the blacklisting of journalists and human rights activists, which prevents them from visiting China.

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Lift the ban on Chinese media using foreign news agency video footage and news reports without permission.

9

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Legalize independent organisations of journalists and human rights activists.



## **50 cyberdissidents imprisoned :**

**Ablikim Abdiriyim**, cyber-dissident - **Xu Wanping**, freelance writer - **Hu Mingjun**, cyber-dissident - **Zhang Jianhong** (Li Hong), writer - **Chen Shuqing**, writer - **Yang Maodong** (Guo Feixiong), lawyer - **Guo Qizhen**, cyber-dissident - **Ren Zhiyuan**, teacher - **Wang Xiaoning**, cyberdissident - **Li Changqing**, journalist for the Fuzhou Daily - **Yang Tianshui**, online journalist - **Li Yuanlong**, journalist for the Bijie Ribao - **Li Jianping**, freelance journalist, entrepreneur - **Zhang Lin**, pro-democracy activist - **Zheng Yichun**, poet, professor and freelance writer - **Liao Yuanhua**, former civil servant, member of Falun Gong movement - **Kong Youping**, dissident - **Huang Jinqiu** (Qing Shuijun), former journalist, cyberdissident - **Li Zhi**, civil servant - **Tao Haidong**, dissident - **Zheng** ("Sini"), pupil - **Lu Zengqi**, executive in a technology company - **Chen Shumin**, head of a technology firm - **Yin Yan** - **Li Jian** - **Yan Qiuyan** - **He Depu**, dissident - **Zhao Changqing**, dissident - **Han Lifa**, dissident - **Liang Changying**, teacher, member of Falun Gong movement - **Li Dawei**, dissident - **Tan Qiu**, former hospital worker - **Fang Guokun**, railroad worker, member of Falun Gong movement - **Li Hongmin**, dissident - **Wang Sen**, dissident - **Yang Zili**, creator of the website www.lib.126.com - **Jin Haise**, dissident - **Xu Wei**, journalist for the Consumer daily - **Zhang Honghai**, writer - **Zhang Yuhui**, businessman - **Li Yanfang**, student - **Jiang Yuxia**, student - **Li Chunyan**, student - **Huang Kui**, student - **Ma Yan**, student - **Lin Yang**, student - **Zhang Haitao**, creator of the only China-based Web site on Falun Gong - **Liu Xianbin** - **Wu Yilong**, dissident - **Mao Qingxiang**, journalist

## **32 journalists imprisoned :**

**Sun Lin**, Boxun - **Wu Zhengyou**, Zhonghua Xin Qingnian - **Zhu Wanxiang**, Zhonghua Xin Qingnian - **Ching Cheong**, Straits Times - **Lu Jianhua**, news analyst - **Tashi Gyaltsen**, nyi da'i gzi byin - **Lobsang Dhargay**, nyi da'i gzi byin - **Thoe Samden**, nyi da'i gzi byin - **Tsultrim Phelgay**, nyi da'i gzi byin - **Jampel Gyatso**, nyi da'i gzi byin - **Korash Huseyin**, Kashgar - **Nurmuhemmet Yasin**, journalist and poet - **Shi Tao**, Dangdai Shang Bao - **Zhao Yan**, New York Times - **Cai Zhuohua**, publisher of christian magazine - **Yu Huafeng**, Nanfang Dushy Bao - **Zhang Wei**, Redian Jiayao & Shishi Zixun - **Zuo Shangwen**, Redian Jiayao & Shishi Zixun - **Abdulghani Memetemin**, translator - **Lu Wanbin**, Textile industry daily - **Ma Linhai**, Zhengquan Shichang Zhoukan - **Xu Zerong**, Yazhou Zhoukan - **Li Jian**, Commerce in Xinjiang Newspaper - **Zha Jianguo**, China Human Rights Watch Newsletter - **Gao Hongming**, China Human Rights Watch Newsletter - **Yue Tianxiang**, Zhongguo Gongren Guancha - **Qin Yongmin**, China Human Rights Watch Newsletter - **Tohti Tunyaz**, freelance journalist - **Fan Yingshang**, Remen Huati - **Hada**, The Voice of the Southern Mongolia - **Chen Renjie**, Ziyu Bao - **Lin Youping**, Ziyu Bao



Mr. Jacques Rogge  
President  
International Olympic Committee  
Lausanne - Switzerland

Paris, 26 June 2007

Dear Mr. President,

As the International Olympic Committee prepares for its next session in Guatemala City, from 4 to 7 July, international public opinion is puzzled by the IOC's silence about the human rights situation in China. The 2008 Summer Olympics are due to start in Beijing in just over a year's time but the Chinese government, despite its explicit promises, refuses to make improvements in basic rights and freedom.

Throughout the world, concern is growing about the holding of these Olympics, which have been taken hostage by a government that balks at taking action to guarantee freedom of expression and respect for the Olympic Charter's humanistic values.

The Chinese authorities promised in Moscow in 2001 to improve the human rights situation. The representative of the Beijing Candidate Committee said: "By entrusting the holding of the Olympic Games to Beijing, you will contribute to the development of human rights." Six years later, Reporters Without Borders has registered no lasting improvement in press freedom or online free expression. Foreign journalists obtained a temporary improvement in their status on 1 January but that will end in October. Strong pressure would have been needed to get the government to abandon the authoritarian and suspicious habits that make China one of the most backward countries for the international press.

China continues to be by far the world's biggest prison for journalists, press freedom activists, cyber-dissidents and Internet users. Nearly 100 of them are serving sentences imposed without due process. Most of them are being held in terrible conditions. The journalist Shi Tao, for example, is forced to work in the prison where he is serving a 10-year sentence. How can you accept that Chinese who have campaigned for more freedom will have to impotently watch the world's most important sports event from their cells?

China's journalists continue to have to accept the dictates of the Propaganda Department, which imposes censorship on a wide range of subjects. The state maintains broad control of news and uses authoritarian laws to punish violators. Charges of subversion, divulging state secrets and espionage continue to rain down on journalists and editors working for the most liberal media. Self-censorship is the rule in editorial rooms. Chinese-language media based abroad are blocked, harassed or jammed, preventing the emergence of any media pluralism,

The laws governing the Internet have been made even tougher in the course of the past six years, turning the Chinese Internet into a space that is subject to surveillance and censorship. These restrictions also apply to foreign Internet companies.

We have never remained silent in the face of these massive free speech violations. In response to the situation's urgency, we are this week launching a new international campaign on freedom violations in China. Like us, many human rights groups throughout the world are preparing for the 8 August rendez-vous in different ways. Activists plan to demonstrate in Beijing and elsewhere. Not out of hostility towards the Olympic Games, but to condemn the Chinese government's refusal to keep its promises.

Athletes are already voicing their dismay about the situation in China, including the death penalty, the fate of Tibetans, religious persecution and censorship. Do not put sportsmen and sportswomen in a difficult situation by refusing to deal with the problem head-on. The companies that sponsor the Olympic Games are also liable to be put on the spot as result of news media putting human rights at the centre of their coverage of these Olympics.

Who will be able to say that the Olympic Games are a great sports event when thousands of prisoners of conscious are languishing in Chinese detention centres? Who is going to be able to believe in the 2008 Olympics slogan "One World, One Dream," when Tibetan and Uyghur minorities are subject to serious discrimination?

If nothing is done, the Olympic Games will be marred by the tragic situation of freedoms in China. It is not reasonable to accuse human rights groups of taking the Olympic Games hostage. On the contrary, it is the Chinese government that has kidnapped the Olympic ideal along with this sports event. Our belief that this is the case is reinforced each day by the virulence of the authorities towards those who make a link between the Olympics and human rights. The cynicism of senior Chinese officials on all matters related to human rights requires a firm response.

You know better than anyone that the Chinese government and Communist Party attach the utmost importance to the success of the Olympic Games for their own sakes, but without keeping any of the promises they have made. Mr. President, it is not too late to get the Chinese organisers, who are for the most part also senior political officials, to release prisoners of conscience, reform repressive laws and end censorship. We expect firm action from you. It is time to say clearly to the Chinese authorities that the contempt with which they treat the international community is unacceptable.

With the entire Olympic community gathered in Guatemala City, it will no longer be a time for timid, whispered comments. The hour has come for the IOC, through you, to speak clearly about the problems. Your demands will be heard and the Olympic movement will emerge strengthened from it.

You know that the Olympic games have in the past been able to help establish freedoms in countries newly emerged from authoritarianism. Today, the absence of efforts by the IOC and the international community as regards China could dash these hopes. If nothing is said during the session in Guatemala City, the Olympic ideal will again be in danger of being led astray.

Reporters Without Borders knows the strength of sports when they are put at the service of peace and democracy. We have in the past participated in sports initiatives in Sarajevo and Kabul to promote this ideal. And we know how sensitive athletes are to matters affecting freedom. We see this each time journalists are taken hostage.

Mr. President, we do not doubt your commitment to freedom of expression. We believe that your convictions and those of the entire Olympic movement will enable you to quickly do what everyone is expecting of you – to take action on behalf of freedoms in China before the start of the 2008 Olympic Games.

We feel sure you will take account of our comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Ménard".

Robert Ménard  
Secretary-General



## The campaign kicks off with T-shirts and postcards



"Show what you think. A T-shirt that challenges, cries out or warns. That moves or resists. Show solidarity, be supportive, by wearing something that says everything. A simple gesture that says what other people, at the other end of the world, dare not say. In China, where the Olympic spirit will soon be celebrated against a backdrop of prisons. Help us, and you will help them."

Order this T-shirt at [www.fruitoftheboom.com](http://www.fruitoftheboom.com)



Distribution of 20,000 postcards will begin on 7 August 2007.

**China :**  
the world's biggest prison for journalists and cyberridissidents

**Many other activities are envisaged until the Olympic Games open on 8 August 2008.**

**Read about the campaign in Chinese by going to [www.rsf-chinese.org](http://www.rsf-chinese.org)**