

CHINA RIGHTS NETWORK

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Dear COC Member:

RE: Human Rights and the Beijing Olympics

We are writing at the suggestion of Chris Rudge to initiate a dialogue with COC to explore ways in which we, as Canadians, can engage China to take advantage of hosting the 2008 Olympic Games to improve human rights in China.

In their pledges to the IOC while bidding for the Games and since, China's leaders at all levels repeatedly assured the world that they would use the Games to go beyond improving the country's physical infrastructure. "If people have a target like the Olympics to strive for, it will help us establish a more just and harmonious society, a more democratic society, and help integrate China into the world," one of China's key Olympic figures, Deputy Mayor Liu Jingmin, told the Washington Post in 2001.

We couldn't agree more. But instead of the hoped-for reforms, the Chinese government appears to be backsliding on its promises. (Please see the enclosed Amnesty International synopsis of a report called Olympics Countdown.) The record to date is no reason to give up on prospects for reform. But it is essential to take action on these pressing issues.

China Rights Network does not advocate a boycott of the Beijing Games. Nor do we expect every athlete to become a spokesperson for human rights. What we ask is that the COC, and its counterparts around the world, use participation in the Olympics to help China along.

When South Korea bid for the 1988 Games, the country was a military dictatorship. Due to international engagement and concerns about embarrassment, the Olympics helped to initiate an overdue peaceful political transformation in South Korea just six months before the launch of the Seoul Games. Since then, South Korea has endured as one of Asia's most stable and vital democracies.

The lesson the world learns from South Korea's example is that the Olympics certainly present an opening to raise human rights issues in the context of the Chinese government's own promises. COC can do its part to move this process along.

We want to meet with the COC to explore ways in which you can engage and encourage China to implement human rights improvements, both before and during the Games. You no doubt want Canadians to know that the COC has acted responsibly, addressing concerns expressed by human rights organizations. Our mutual goal is to ensure that Canada's participation in the Games will adhere to Olympian ideals and help to integrate China into the world.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Craig
Chair, China Rights Network

CHINA RIGHTS NETWORK represents: Amnesty International • Canada Tibet Committee • Falun Dafa Association of Canada • Federation for a Democratic China • Formosan Association for Public Affairs • Students for a Free Tibet • Taiwanese Human Rights Association • Tibetan Women's Association • Tibetan Youth Committee • Toronto Association for Democracy in China • Uyghur Canadian Association