

## ***CHINA RIGHTS NETWORK***

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***MEDIA RELEASE***

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### ***China Rights Network condemns the COC***

**Toleration of rights abuses amounts to endorsement of repressive policies  
COC ignores its own principles and Charter**

The China Rights Network of Toronto is frustrated and disturbed by the Canadian Olympic Committee.

The COC, like its parent organization, the International Olympic Committee, seems determined to ignore the fact that the Chinese government has largely failed to live up to its promises of human rights improvements prior to the Olympic Games in Beijing.

The COC argues that human rights is not their business; that the Chinese people on the whole are much freer than two decades ago; and that significant improvements will be automatically realized when the world beats a path to Beijing. These are foolish, self-serving arguments that fly in the face of the responsibility of the Olympic movement to uphold its values. Though Chinese people now have greater freedom to travel or own property, anyone who dares to challenge the absolute power of the Chinese Communist Party will most often find themselves behind bars without charge or trial, and frequently tortured. The relaxation of individual civil rights cannot be equated with improvements in human rights.

The IOC charter "places sport at the service of the harmonious development of man, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity"; and advocates "a concerted effort of every citizen, of every social group, to find long-lasting solutions for better human development". Turning a blind eye to a Chinese human rights catastrophe is a repudiation of Olympic values.

Here, for example, are stories of three courageous Chinese citizens reported by Amnesty International:

- ❑ On 10 October Wang Ling was assigned to 15 months 'Re-education Through Labour' for signing petitions and preparing banners in protest against the demolition of her property for Olympic construction projects. Beaten, detained and imprisoned on numerous occasions, Wang Ling is currently being held at Daxing Re-education Through Labour Facility in Beijing.
- ❑ Yang Chunlin was detained and reportedly tortured for his involvement in a petition "We Want Human Rights, not the Olympics" signed by farmers protesting against the confiscation of their land. Since his detention in July, Yang Chunlin has reportedly on numerous occasions had his arms and legs stretched and chained to the four corners of an iron bed and then left to eat, drink and defecate in that position. He is still in detention.
- ❑ Housing rights activist, Ye Guozhu, is serving a four year sentence after he applied for permission to hold a demonstration about forced evictions in Beijing. His home and business were demolished as a result of Olympics-related construction and his family received no compensation. He has reportedly been tortured in prison.

For chapter and verse on Chinese human rights abuses we urge the media to read the accurate, impartial reports of Amnesty International that we are distributing today as part of our demonstration. Amnesty concludes that, despite a few cosmetic improvements, the human rights situation in China over the past few years has been deteriorating, and "there has been increasing repression of human rights activism and domestic journalism".

#### **What China Rights Network advocates**

Since February of this year, in letters and face-to-face discussions with the CEO of the Canadian Olympic Committee, CRN has demanded action. We have suggested that behind-the-scenes diplomacy is not good enough; that the COC must challenge the Chinese government publicly to explain why it has failed to deliver on its promises of improvements in human rights.

We suggest that the COC push the IOC to ask specific, detailed questions of the Chinese government, including:

- ❑ How is the Chinese government dealing with complaints that residents of Beijing have been evicted from their homes to make way for Olympic facilities, generally with little or no compensation?
- ❑ Will domestic journalists in China be allowed to report freely on the jailing of dissidents, internet repression, protests from the Tibetan and Uyghur Autonomous Regions, and China's horrific record as the world leader in executions?
- ❑ When will googling Tiananmen Square in China yield more than a blurb for tourists?
- ❑ When will peaceful protests, a right enshrined in the Chinese constitution, be permitted without severe restrictions and repression?
- ❑ When will China denounce and cease torture in its police stations and prisons?

These questions and the resultant discussions should be made public so that the world knows that the IOC does not meekly tolerate repression.

CRN also asks that the COC enable us to communicate with Canadian athletes, coaches and their supporters concerning the human rights situation in China. We have requested on several occasions that we be allowed to write an article for their "Podium" magazine or other publications, but we have been refused.

CRN does not advocate a boycott of the Olympic Games in Beijing. Rather, we hope that the world, led by the IOC, will use the Games to press China for the real improvements in human rights. The Olympic movement is well within its rights because China promised improvements in order for Beijing to be selected for 2008. In fact, the question is: why is the IOC tolerating this breach of promise?

To tolerate human rights abuses amounts to endorsement of such abuse. And this, of course, is exactly what the Chinese government wants, indeed demands. If the COC, led by the IOC, takes this position, if it refuses and fails to speak out, we as Canadians will be deeply ashamed.

We want action from the leaders of the Olympic movement. We want it now.

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**CHINA RIGHTS NETWORK represents:** Amnesty International • Canada Tibet Committee • Falun Dafa Human Rights Association • 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 Congress • Toronto Association for Democracy in China • Uyghur Canadian Association