

TAKE ACTION | 2008 AND BEYOND

The Organizing Committee for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games issued the “Beijing Olympic Action Plan,” which laid out guiding principles and a series of promises as part of Beijing’s preparations to be host city.

In 2003, Human Rights in China (HRIC) launched the Incorporating Responsibility 2008 Campaign to encourage Beijing to keep these promises.

HRIC issued an initial assessment of Beijing’s progress in a 2005 report entitled “Promises, Promises.” This update focuses on what has happened over the past two years and what remains to be done before the Games open in August of next year.

In coming months, HRIC will be releasing additional Olympics material and interactive features, which will be available on our Web site.

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“GREEN OLYMPICS” POLLUTION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

THE BEIJING PROMISE

“By 2008, we will achieve the goal of building the capital into an ecological city that features green hills, clear water, grass-covered ground, and blue sky.”

Beijing Olympic Action Plan, 2002

IMPLEMENTATION CONCERNS

While China’s government has taken some superficial environmental steps, such as planting more trees in Beijing, it has a long way to go in tackling major environmental challenges. Such problems need long-term solutions, and the cooperation of other governments, regional organizations, transnational corporations and ordinary citizens, as well as the Chinese government itself. China’s efforts to educate Beijing residents and work toward short-term solutions are a step in the right direction, but its promise of a “green Olympics” by 2008 appears too ambitious to achieve.

→ KEY PROBLEMS

A short-term approach may hinder long-term progress

Ensuring adequate water supplies for Beijing and other host cities during the Games may worsen the water crisis in other parts of the country or in neighboring countries.

THE REALITY

China's environment is deteriorating on several fronts—air, land and water. Researchers estimate that pollution in China causes more than 300,000 premature deaths every year,¹ and China is home to 17 of the 20 most polluted cities in the world.

Jacques Rogge, president of the International Olympics Committee, has warned that events could be postponed if conditions are unhealthy, and some athletes say they plan to arrive in Beijing as late as possible to minimize their exposure to pollution. Efforts are being made to address some of the problems during the Games but some of these are being viewed skeptically. While there are plans to reduce Beijing traffic flows, for example, Dr. Michal Krzyzanowski of the World Health Organization wonders whether the effect of reducing traffic in the city will be offset by pollution from other parts of China.²

According to one of China's leading environmental lawyers, only about 10 percent of the country's environmental laws and regulations are actually enforced.³ But pollution has economic as well as human costs, resulting in losses of an estimated 10 percent of China's GDP.⁴

And while the government is trying to improve conditions, it is also silencing voices of protest and thereby eliminating a major catalyst for change—grassroots activists.⁵

“In a very real and immediate sense, you can look at a dust event you are breathing in China and look at this same dust as it tracks across the Pacific and reaches the United States.”⁹

Jeff Stith, National Center for Atmospheric Research



CHINA'S ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS ARE THE WORLD'S ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS

Korea Sea of Japan USA

Storms in the Gobi and Taklamakan deserts of western China each year hurl sand across China to Korea and over the Sea of Japan, picking up factory pollutants from China's industrialized coast, and eventually scattering the dust across the western United States.

Russia

A chemical plant blast on November 13, 2005, dumped 100 tons of benzene into Jilin Province's Songhua River, a waterway also used by Russia. The World Wide Fund for Nature said the river faces “ecological catastrophe.” Experts say the damage is likely to be long-lasting, and the river could take more than 10 years to flush out absorbed pollutants.⁶

Myanmar Indonesia Russia Gabon Equatorial Guinea

China is the world's largest importer of forest products, with imports—many of them illegal—tripling in less than a decade. Nearly 75 percent of the wood used in Chinese furniture and plywood products is imported from Russia, Burma and Indonesia.⁷ Other source countries include Gabon and Equatorial Guinea, both exporting over 60 percent of their timber to China.⁸

ACTIVISTS AT RISK



WU LIHONG

Anticipated release: 2010

Environmental activist **Wu Lihong** is an avid campaigner against the pollution of Taihu Lake, the third largest lake in China and a major source of drinking water for the border area between Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces. Although Wu was named by the government as one of the top 10 individuals who “moved China with their service to society,” he has been harassed constantly for his activities. He was detained on April 13, 2007, and accused of extorting money from business owners after he reported worsening pollution at Taihu Lake. Wu said he had been paid a commission by a factory owner as part of the sale of a wastewater treatment system to factories, but the court refused to hear evidence on this point. Just prior to his arrest, Wu had been preparing to sue the state over its designation of his home town, Yixing, as a “Model Environmental City.” Wu was sentenced in August to three years in prison for fraud and extortion. Wu’s wife said that no witnesses were called to testify during his trial, and police statements were not challenged.¹⁰ Wu also stated that he was tortured during a five-day interrogation. Zhu Xiaoyan, Wu’s lawyer, says he plans to appeal.



SUN XIAODI

For more than a decade, **Sun Xiaodi** has pressed the central authorities to clean up radioactive contamination from the No. 792 Uranium Mine in Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu Province, and to stop illegal mining, allegedly carried out by local officials. For his efforts, Sun Xiaodi was presented with the prestigious Nuclear-Free Future Award in Window Rock, Arizona. Residents of the prefecture where Sun Xiaodi lives suffer an unusually high rate of ailments linked to radioactive contamination, and in November 2006, a medical examination revealed a tumor in Sun’s abdominal cavity. In February 2007, with his condition worsening, Sun and his daughter traveled to Beijing, where a specialist recommended surgery costing 120,000 *yuan* (approximately \$15,000). Friends are currently attempting to raise the funds to pay Sun’s medical expenses.¹¹ Sun’s harassment has intensified since he won the international award. After Sun and his daughter left for Beijing, his wife was also threatened and harassed by unknown individuals. Sun’s family believes they were hired by local officials, who feared that Sun had gone to Beijing to report on abuses at the uranium mine.

“HIGH-TECH OLYMPICS”

USE OF SECURITY TECHNOLOGY

THE BEIJING PROMISE

“We will make all-out efforts to guarantee the security during the Olympic Games on the basis of a sound social order, reliable public transport and fire fighting systems, safe medical and health structures, and well planned supporting measures.”¹²

Beijing Olympic Action Plan, 2002

IMPLEMENTATION CONCERNS

China has long been known to use its security network to arbitrarily detain and imprison individuals. While the safety of the Games is crucial, China has made no assurances that sophisticated new security systems won't be used to spy on and repress activists who are exercising their rights to freedom of expression, movement and association.

Beijing's security strategies could lead to the abuse of security systems during the Olympics and afterwards.

→ KEY PROBLEMS

Since there is no independent judiciary, checks on the government's authority are inadequate. This makes it hard to balance the protection of individual rights with the need for public order.

Beijing's security strategies could lead to the abuse of security systems during the Olympics and afterwards.

THE REALITY

Armed with new security technology acquired for the Olympics, China will have an even greater capacity to monitor and restrict individual rights beyond 2008. Tian Yixiang, the director of the Military Bureau with the Olympics Beijing Olympic Games Security Work Commanding Center, stated, “The Beijing Olympic Games is still facing complicated security situations, including rampant international terrorism, the ‘East Turkistan’ terrorist organization and the Falun Gong cult.”¹³ Additionally, it was announced publicly at the China Public Emergencies and Emergency Technology Forum held in May that “Beijing's Olympics Intelligence Center will conduct a background check and risk assessment on all athletes attending the Olympics in Beijing.”¹⁴

China's Ministry of Public Security has issued the

→ CAMERAS, CAMERAS EVERYWHERE

More than 450 technology projects are currently planned or have already been implemented in preparation for the Olympics security network. The equipment acquired for this network includes barcode scanners, biometric fingerprint cards, hidden cameras and microphones.

(continued on next page)

“Notification on Carrying Out Stringent Background Investigations on Individuals Applying to Participate in the Olympics and Performing a Pre-Selection,” listing 43 categories of “unwants” who may be barred from the 2008 Beijing Olympics.¹⁵ Vulnerable groups, including ethnic minorities and religious practitioners, may be increasingly at risk of surveillance and repression.

The Olympic organizing committee says it will spend about \$300 million on security.¹⁶ And China’s security budget is expected to continue to grow after 2008 at an annual rate of at least 20 percent.¹⁷ The country is already the second largest security equipment market in the world, after the United States.

→ CAMERAS, CAMERAS EVERYWHERE, *cont.*

Certain control centers will be capable of monitoring surrounding areas with real-time images that can be quickly transmitted to the municipal public security bureau and all sub-bureaus.¹⁸

Face recognition system will be installed in 500 shopping centers by 2008,¹⁹ and “anti-terrorism” cameras will be placed in high-end hotels. In all, a network of 90,000 cameras will be in place to monitor traffic and track individuals. A nationwide database will be in place containing personal information on nearly 96 percent of the country’s population.²⁰

THE PRICE OF RELIGIOUS PRACTICE



JIN WEI

Anticipated release: 2018

LI XIANGDONG

Anticipated release: 2017

SHU JIANQIU

Anticipated release: 2011

LI WEI

Anticipated release: 2009

Falun Gong practitioners **Jin Wei**, **Li Xiangdong**, **Shu Jianqiu**, **Li Wei** and **Liu Chunshu** tapped into local television transmissions on January 1, 2002, to broadcast documentaries countering the government’s attacks on their religion. All five were sentenced on May 18, 2002, to prison terms ranging from 7 to 16 years. Jin Wei received the harshest sentence as the alleged ringleader, found guilty of “organizing and using a cult to undermine implementation of the law” and sabotaging broadcasting and television facilities.²¹ Liu Chunshu died as a result of an “illness” while in custody.



TENZIN DELEK RIMPOCHE

Life sentence

Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, a lama from Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, is a respected leader who worked to provide nomadic Tibetan communities with access to education, health and other social services.²² Officials considered his influence a threat to their control of the region, and regularly monitored and harassed him for over a decade. He was detained on April 7, 2002, and charged with “inciting separatism” and “crimes of terror” in connection with a bombing in Chengdu in April 2001. He was sentenced to death on December 2, 2002. Rinpoche reportedly went on a hunger strike to protest torture in detention and the lack of a fair trial.²³ Despite sustained international protests, and promises from Chinese authorities that he would be given a retrial, his appeal was rejected on January 26, 2003, after a secret retrial. A former monk charged in the same case, Lobsang Dhondup, was executed. On January 26, 2005, Rinpoche’s death sentence was commuted to life in prison.²⁴

“FREE AND OPEN OLYMPICS”

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION • TRANSPARENCY AND CORRUPTION

THE BEIJING PROMISE

“In the preparation for the Games, we will be open in every aspect to the rest of the country and the whole world. We will draw on the successful experience of others and follow the international standards and criteria.”

Beijing Olympic Action Plan, 2002

Wang Wei, secretary general of the Olympic Organizing Committee, promised to give the international media “complete freedom to report when they come to China.” But while China has taken a step in the right direction by loosening restrictions on foreign journalists, an open and transparent Olympics is still only a dream at this point.

THE REALITY

A recent Foreign Correspondents Club of China (FCCC) survey found that 40 percent of 163 journalists who responded had experienced some form of interference since new Olympics media regulations were put into effect. The situation for domestic journalists is even worse, given that the regulations did not apply to them in the first place.

China has responded to a string of major corruption scandals by cracking down on a few highly visible individuals. Zheng Xiaoyu, former director of the State Food and Drug Administration, was swiftly executed in July after being found guilty of accepting 6.49 million *yuan* (\$832,000) in bribes. Last summer, the vice-mayor of Beijing, responsi-

→ KEY PROBLEMS

It is unclear whether the new regulations will be applied evenly to all foreign journalists. The freedom to report is not at all guaranteed for domestic journalists. Chinese officials still forcibly shut down peaceful demonstrations.

Corruption continues despite disproportionately harsh punishments for some high-profile offenders.

→ CHINA'S RECORD ON PRESS FREEDOM

China ranked 177th out of 194 countries in Freedom House's 2006 Global Press Freedom ratings. It was classified as “not free.”²⁵

China ranked **163rd out of 168** countries in the fifth annual Worldwide Press Freedom Index prepared by Reporters Without Borders, dropping from 159 in 2005.²⁶

The Committee to Protect Journalists identified China as the **world's leading jailer of journalists** for the eighth consecutive year, with 31 journalists imprisoned in 2006.²⁷

→ SOME OLYMPIC FIGURES ²⁹

Over 224 million	Profits, in US dollars, estimated by the International Olympic Committee from the Beijing Games. Beijing officials suggest that profits will amount to only \$16 million. ³⁰
300 million	Estimated proceeds from the sale of <i>fuwa</i> , the official Beijing mascot. ³¹
65 million	What a sponsor in The Olympic Partner Programme (TOP) must pay. ³² This is \$25 million higher than what TOP sponsors paid for the Sydney Games in 2000. ³³
54	The number of official sponsors who have signed on for the Games. ³⁴
5 billion	The amount expected to be spent on advertisements and television sponsorships even before the events begin. ³⁵
40 billion	What Beijing has spent on Olympics preparations. ³⁶
4 billion	The expected audience for the Beijing Olympics—one billion more than the Athens Olympics in 2004. ³⁷

ble for Olympics projects, was removed from office after he was found to have built himself a private palace from the proceeds of kickbacks.²⁸ The Games preparations have been plagued by corruption, forced relocations and a lack of transparency and independent monitoring mechanisms.

THE PERSONAL COST OF REPORTING AND WRITING



GAO QINRONG Released in 2006

A former journalist for Xinhua News Agency, **Gao Qinrong** in 1998 reported the involvement of high-level officials in a bogus irrigation scheme in Yunchung, Shanxi Province, during a severe drought. Blamed for the ensuing media scandal, Gao was detained on December 4, 1998, and sentenced to 13 years' imprisonment on charges of bribery, embezzlement and organized prostitution.³⁸ After his wife, Duan Maoying, made high-profile appeals to the international community, the Supreme People's Court reopened the case. Gao's release in 2006 after eight years in prison was widely publicized, but the authorities quickly ordered the story removed from print and Internet pages.³⁹



NURMEMET YASIN Anticipated release: 2014

Uyghur writer **Nurmemet Yasin** is known for his many poems, essays, and short stories.⁴⁰ On November 29, 2004, Yasin, who is 33 and married, with two children, was arrested for his short story, "Wild Pigeon," which Chinese authorities said incited "Uyghur separatism." His personal computer, which contained more than 1,600 poems, short stories and an uncompleted novel, was also seized.⁴¹ Following a closed trial in February 2005, Yasin was sentenced to 10 years in prison. His appeal was denied. On May 19, 2005, he was transferred to Urumqi No. 1 Prison, and has not been permitted any visitors. Unconfirmed reports in August 2007 state that Yasin was tortured to death in prison.

“PEOPLE’S OLYMPICS”

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

THE BEIJING PROMISE

“The Olympic Games will give an impetus to economic development and urban construction and management, and bring about increasing benefits for the people. We will make the preparations for the Olympic Games a process of substantially improving the people’s living standard, both materially and culturally.”

Beijing Olympic Action Plan, 2002

IMPLEMENTATION CONCERNS

Although the Chinese government has spent large amounts on economic development in Beijing, not all have benefited equally. Some vulnerable groups are experiencing forcible evictions and crackdowns on their homes rather than the fruits of development.

THE REALITY

Inequality has widened in recent years, with a growing income disparity between rural and urban residents. The incomes of rural residents are less than a third of those of their urban counterparts. Taking account of the disparity in health care services and access to other social benefits, the gap is actually even greater.⁴²

With overpopulation already straining Beijing’s resources and environment, the city’s 5.1 million **migrants** have been feeling some heat. Although they have been instrumental in providing labor for the construction of Olympic sites, they have been subject to evictions and other tactics aimed at keeping them out of the cities included in the “Olympics clean-up” campaign. The Ministry of Public Security has demanded that all Chinese cities set up systems by the end of 2009 to more easily track migrants.

In June of this year, PlayFair 2008 reported that four Chinese factories contracted to produce Olympic souvenirs were **violating labor laws**. After investigations, the Organizing Committee terminated its contract with Lekt Sta-

→ KEY PROBLEMS

Government spending priorities have widened the **gap between urban and rural** areas.

Migrants, who have been crucial in building Olympic sites, will be left jobless when the Games are over.

The Olympic preparations have trampled on workers’ rights.

Ethnic minorities in border regions remain vulnerable to repression, even as the government points to their cultures as symbols of a “diverse but happy” state.

Demolition planned for the construction of Beijing Olympic facilities disregards cultural heritage sites and people made homeless by the building boom.

tionery Company, Ltd., for employing underage laborers and paying its employees less than 50 percent of the legal minimum wage.⁴³ The committee said it was also dropping the three other companies named in the PlayFair 2008 report because of “overtime issues.”

The “war on terror” continues to be used to justify repression of **Uyghurs, Tibetans** and **Mongols**. In Beijing, the commoditization of ethnic minorities is evident in their portrayal as pre-modern and exotic at the National Ethnic Minorities Park.

The number of **people displaced** by Olympics-related development in Beijing rose to 1.25 million in early 2007. Another 250,000 are expected to be displaced over the next year.⁴⁴

THE PERILS OF PROTEST



WANG SEN

Anticipated release: 2011

Wang Sen, a China Democracy Party (CDP) member based in Chengdu, was detained after criticizing the sale of tuberculosis medication at full price by a public health center that had received the medicine for free from the Red Cross in 2001.⁴⁵ The previous year, Wang Sen and Hu Mingjun, another CDP member, had issued a statement supporting workers at the Dazhou Iron and Steel Factory in Sichuan Province, where more than 1,000 steel workers were protesting to demand unpaid back wages.⁴⁶ On April 30, 2001, Wang Sen was arrested in Dachuan, along with Hu Mingjun. He was convicted of “incitement to subvert state power” and sentenced to 10 years’ imprisonment on May 30, 2002. The Dazhou Intermediate People’s Court ruled that the CDP was an “enemy organization.”⁴⁷ Wang Sen was diagnosed with severe diabetes in 2004 and has lost a great deal of weight; his wife reported that he was almost unrecognizable during a recent visit.



HUANG XIRANG

Anticipated release: 2012

LIN HANRU

Anticipated release: 2010

HUANG XIJUN

Anticipated release 2010

Huang Xirang, Lin Hanru and **Huang Xijun**, residents of Dongzhou Village, Guangdong Province, led protests against the construction of a power plant in their village in December 2005. The event was widely covered by the international media when the People’s Armed Police opened fire on the protesters, reportedly killing three civilians. Residents opposed construction on the grounds that compensation was inadequate and that the plant would block access to a lake they relied on for fishing and power generation. In May 2006, a court named Huang Xirang a ringleader of the protests and sentenced him to seven years. Lin Hanru and Huang Xijun received five-year sentences⁴⁸ for the illegal manufacture of explosives, illegal assembly and disturbing public order.⁴⁹

CRF TAKE ACTION

WHAT YOU CAN DO!

Are you planning to go to China in 2008?

- Blog and document your experience! Send HRIC your photos and stories, or publicize human rights concerns through interactive Web and technology tools such as cell phones, PDAs, Flickr, YouTube and others. Send us your links!
- Are you a writer or a journalist? Take advantage of the promised greater media access for foreign journalists and cover underreported human rights stories. You can also submit your essays to *China Rights Forum!*
- Experience Internet censorship in China first-hand and let us know what happened. Keep checking IR2008.org for the latest updates on HRIC's *Log on for access!* launch and how you can be part of the campaign.
- Read the Olympics Blacklist feature in this issue of CRF and find out if you are one of the 43 categories of people reportedly being targeted for investigation and screening by China's Ministry of Public Security. Be alert!

Do you write, publish or blog?

- Make the "People's Olympics" pledge mean something! Highlight the individuals featured in this Take Action, so that their stories are not lost.
- Link HRIC's banner supporting Chinese voices to your blog or Web site.

Are you a member of a business or professional association?

- Is there a corporate social responsibility or human rights committee in your association? Find out what they're doing about China!
- Contact HRIC to explore taking action on a case or issue.

Find an International Olympic Committee member near you!

- Ask the IOC member to push for the Beijing Host City contract to be made public, like other contracts. Releasing the contract, which spells out the legal, commercial and financial obligations of the IOC and host city, would make the management of the Olympics more transparent.
- Ask the IOC member to help make public the progress report on Beijing's preparations for the Games. This report has been completed, but remains secret.

Do you live in a Sister City?

- Find out if you live in a city with a relationship to Beijing or one of the other 2008 host cities.
- Write to your mayor or city government expressing your concern with the problems outlined above.
- Visit HRIC's Web site for more ideas, to learn how you can send these letters, and how you can send copies to the Beijing mayor and members of the BOCOG!

Beyond 2008!

- Human rights obligations, promises and commitments do not have an expiration date! Chinese civil society must continue to flourish even after the closing of the Olympic Games.
- In the lead-up to 2008 and after, all governments, UN bodies, foundations and other organizations that have technical assistance programs in China must assess their projects with relevant indicators and international standards.

VISIT OUR WEB SITE FOR MORE DETAILS ON HOW TO "TAKE ACTION" AND FOR OTHER IDEAS ON HOW YOU CAN HELP!

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