

2008

Human Rights Index

University of Iowa Center for Human Rights

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Recommended Citation

University of Iowa Center for Human Rights. "Human Rights Index." *The Iowa Review* 38.2 (2008): v-vi. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.6441>

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HUMAN RIGHTS INDEX

Prepared by the University of Iowa Center for Human Rights (UICHR)*

Recent protests demanding human rights for Tibet have reawakened concerns about China's hosting the 2008 Olympic Games. It is important to remember, however, that China's human rights record is too complex and varied to be summarized by blanket statements of condemnation. China has pledged loyalty to the Olympic Charter's "Fundamental Principles," which provide, *inter alia*, that "Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on...respect for universal fundamental ethical principles." In 2004, China amended its constitution to include the phrase "the state respects and safeguards human rights." And in the past quarter-century of post-Mao reform, the Chinese Communist Party has brought greater wealth, freedom, and opportunity to more people than any other government in the world, accounting alone for more than 75% of poverty reduction in the developing world in the last twenty years. On the other hand, China's human rights abuses in Tibet and elsewhere are legion and substantial, including abuses that have occurred during preparations for the Olympic Games themselves.

- 42** Categories of people blacklisted and banned from the Olympic Games, including the Dalai Lama, Falun Gong practitioners, and individuals alleged to incite protest against the Communist Party, illustrating China's suppression of dissent and denial of religious freedom for groups outside the state-controlled religious registration system (Human Rights in China, 2007; Human Rights Watch, 2008)
- 60** Minimum number of Chinese citizens still imprisoned as of early 2008 for their participation in pro-democracy demonstrations in Tiananmen Square in 1989, suppressed by a force now known to have killed hundreds and injured thousands in the "Tiananmen Square Massacre" (National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book, 1989; *International Herald Tribune*, 2008)
- 140** Reported number of people killed in Tibet in mid-March 2008 after Chinese security forces opened fire on peaceful demonstrators, largely Buddhist monks, who demanded independence for Tibet (CNN, 2008; Human Rights Watch, 2008)
- 637** Days *New York Times* reporter Zhao Yan was detained before facing trial on a charge of publishing "state secrets" in a process ruled arbitrary by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, prompting international outcries that loosened restrictions on foreign journalists, but only until after the Olympic Games (University of Minnesota Human Rights Library, 2005; *New York Times*, 2006)

- 700 Number of online forums shut down in the first half of 2006 for containing “subversive and sensitive content,” part of an ongoing crackdown enforcing a government mandate that all media publish only news that has appeared already in a state-run publication (Human Rights Watch, 2007; Human Rights in China, 2008)
- 1,000 Number of school-age children, some as young as 12, lured or kidnapped from rural Liangshan province (an area plagued by drug abuse and AIDS where many have no formal education and cannot converse in Mandarin) to work in export zone factories desperate for cheap labor, notwithstanding China’s minimum wage and child labor laws, to offset rising costs while maintaining low prices on consumer goods to appease foreign buyers (*New York Times*, 2007)
- 2007 Year in which China passed the United States as the world’s largest emitter of greenhouse gases, resulting in over 400,000 premature Chinese deaths annually and affecting air quality so severely that marathon world record holder Haile Gebrselassie, an asthmatic, declined to compete in Beijing out of concern for his health (*The Guardian*, 2005, 2007; Times Online, 2008)
- 10,000 Estimated number of people executed in China every year, several times more than the rest of the world combined, the exact number and methods of execution being impossible to ascertain because China refuses to make such information public (Olympic Watch, 2007; US Dep’t State, 2007; Human Rights Watch, 2008)
- 200,000 Number of people believed to have died so far in the Darfur genocide in part because, for a two-thirds share of Sudanese oil production, China supplies arms and funds to Sudan for its government-backed militias and resists international pressure to use its clout to bring peace to Darfur, prompting calls for a boycott of what many have labeled “the Genocide Olympics” (BBC, 2008)
- 1,500,000 Number of people estimated to have been forcibly evicted from their homes due to Olympic Games construction, with compensation so far unpaid or only partly paid and no resettlement plan put in place (Human Rights in China, 2007; Human Rights Watch, 2004, 2008)
- 4,200,000 Estimated number of migrant workers in Beijing, thousands of them working to construct Olympic facilities, often performing dangerous tasks without adequate physical safeguards, access to medical care, time off, or fair wages (China Aid, 2008; Human Rights Watch, 2008)

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