



Amnesty International

Orange County

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<http://www.aiusaoc.org>

China: Beijing Authorities' Broken Promises Jeopardize Olympic Legacy

This article is from a July 28, 2008 AIUSA press release.

The Chinese authorities have broken their promise to improve the country's human rights situation and betrayed the core values of the Olympics, said Amnesty International in a new report published today, marking the 10-day countdown to the Games.

"By continuing to persecute and punish those who speak out for human rights, the Chinese authorities have lost sight of the promises they made when they were granted the Games seven years ago," said Roseann Rife, Amnesty International's Asia-Pacific deputy director at a press conference in Hong Kong. "The Chinese authorities are tarnishing the legacy of the Games. They must release all imprisoned peaceful activists, allow foreign and national journalists to report freely and make further progress towards the elimination of the death penalty."

Amnesty International's report, *The Olympics countdown — broken promises*, evaluates the performance of the Chinese authorities in four areas related to the core values of the Olympics: persecution of human rights activists, detention without trial, censorship and the death penalty. The document concludes that in most of these areas, human rights have actually deteriorated in the run-up to the Olympics. In preparation for the Games, the Chinese authorities have locked up, put under house arrest and forcibly removed individuals they perceive may threaten the image of "stability" and "harmony" they want to present to the world.

Amnesty International believes that local activists and journalists working on human rights issues in China are at particular risk of abuse during the Games. Human rights activist and writer Hu Jia continues to serve his sentence for "inciting subversion" by writing about human rights and giving interviews to foreign media. Hu Jia suffers from liver disease due to a Hepatitis B infection, but the authorities have prevented his family from providing him with medicine in the prison.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) President, Jacques Rogge, recently claimed the IOC's quiet diplomacy had led to several human rights reforms, including new regulations for foreign media. "We welcome the IOC's recognition of its role on human rights, but given the current reality, we are surprised at their confidence that foreign media will be able to report freely and that there will be no internet censorship," said Rife. "They must speak out when the authorities violate the wider Olympic principles."

Amnesty International's report concludes that:

- Many human rights defenders continue to be held in prisons across China and under house arrest; others are tightly monitored by police to ensure they will not disrupt the

Olympics in any way.

- The Chinese authorities have extended the use of punitive administrative detention, including "re-education through labor" (RTL) and "enforced drug rehabilitation," to "clean up" Beijing before the start of the Olympics and ensure activists stay out of sight during the Games.
- Temporary media regulations that were supposed to allow greater freedom of reporting for foreign media have not been fully implemented. The Foreign Correspondents Club of China reported 260 cases of reporting interference since January 1, 2007. The regulations do not extend to Chinese journalists who continue to be prevented from publishing stories on issues deemed sensitive by the government.
- The death penalty continues to be handed down for some 68 crimes, including some non-violent crimes such as economic and drug-related offences. Despite assurances that the number of executions has dropped since the Supreme People's Court reinstated the review process, the Chinese authorities have not published actual figures.

Because of this, activists continue to suffer. Liu Jie, a rural activist, was detained in Beijing and assigned to 18 months "re-education through labor" in Heilongjiang province, northeast China, where local sources say she has been physically abused for having organized a public letter urging leaders to carry out political and legal reforms, including abolition of RTL. In June 2008, the police detained Sichuan-based human rights activist Huang Qi on suspicion of "illegally acquiring state secrets." Huang had been involved in assisting the families of five primary school pupils to bring a legal case against the local authorities. The five pupils died when the school buildings collapsed in the earthquake in Sichuan in May.

"It is time for President Bush to raise his voice clearly and definitively to promote human rights in China," said T. Kumar, Asia advocacy director at Amnesty International USA. "Not only do Chinese human rights activists need his direct support, but a failure to speak out will send the message that the United States finds it acceptable to hold the Olympic Games in a repressive atmosphere."

In 2001, when China was granted the hosting of the 2008 Olympic Games, Wang Wei, Secretary General of the Beijing Olympic Bid Committee said: "We will give the media complete freedom to report when they come to China. (...) We are confident that the Games coming to China not only promote our economy but also enhance all social conditions, including education, health and human rights."

July Meeting Minutes

Group #175 Long Beach

Present

Lizette Ashcraft, Diana Budd, Norma Edwards, Deidre Gaffney, Kevin Gaffney, Jim Roberts, Angelique Saavedra, Steve Wicke

Same Campaign, Different Name

The Denounce Torture / The America I Believe in campaign will now be called the Counter Terror With Justice campaign. This is the name of the International Secretariat's campaign to stop abuses of human rights, including torture, committed by the U.S. government in the name of fighting terrorism. We have switched campaign names in order to better align with the IS and reflect the scope of AIUSA's campaign: stopping torture and ill-treatment; closing Guantanamo and ending illegal U.S. detentions; ending the use of extraordinary rendition and secret prisons; ensuring fundamental legal rights; and holding accountable those who authorized and implemented such abuses. The Denounce Torture page is still at <http://www.amnestyusa.org/torture-and-terror/get-involved/page.do?id=1031009&n1=3&n2=38&n3=1053>.

We spent some time talking about the latest happenings in the U.S. regarding this subject. Deidre reported that Executive Director Larry Cox held his own and hopefully educated people as they laughed with John Oliver on *The Daily Show*. They did a bit on the show about Amnesty's Guantanamo cell, which is currently touring the U.S. (it is scheduled to come to L.A. September 20–22, site TBD). You can see a clip of Larry and learn more about the cell on its blog page at <http://celltour.amnesty.org/>.

China/Olympics Focus

Kevin informed us that Chinese journalist Shi Tao, who turned 40, was sent birthday cards from Amnesty members. Shi Tao is the Western Region's Special Focus Case. From Amnesty's web page on Shi Tao:

In April 2004 Shi Tao used his Yahoo! e-mail account to send a message to a U.S.-based prodemocracy website. In his e-mail, he summarized a government order directing media organizations in China to downplay the upcoming 15th anniversary of the 1989 crackdown on prodemocracy activists. Police arrested him in November 2004, charging him with "illegally providing state secrets to foreign entities." Authorities used e-mail account holder information supplied by Yahoo! to convict Shi Tao in April 2005 and sentence him to ten years in prison.

China's vaguely worded legal definition of what constitutes a "state secret" gives authorities broad discretion to detain people who peacefully exercise their right to free expression. In a similar case, authorities arrested government worker Li Zhi in August 2003 for allegedly using e-mail accounts through Yahoo! and another company to make contact with a banned political party.

We are still planning some sort of event on the weekend of September 6 and 7 to get together and maybe have some sort of post-Olympic focus on China. It will be interesting to see what

transpires and if anything results from the attention to human rights.

Burma/Myanmar

The IS is preparing new actions focusing on human rights violations in eastern Myanmar. This is where a long-standing war between ethnic Karen insurgents and the government is causing abuses on all sides (both sides are accused of forcing children to join the fighting). There may also be more of a focus on U Win Tin, the longest-held prisoner of conscience in Myanmar. The 78-year-old U Win Tin was imprisoned because of his senior position in the National League for Democracy (NLD) and was sentenced to further years in prison for his attempts to inform the United Nations of ongoing human rights violations in prisons in Myanmar. He has been in a poor state of health, exacerbated by his treatment in prison, which has included torture, inadequate access to medical treatment, being held in a cell designed for military dogs, without bedding, and being deprived of food and water for long periods of time.

The latest estimate of Cyclone Nargis' death toll is 138,000 dead or missing. Sadly, the death toll will probably continue as the salt-water inundation has ruined rice production in the area.

Group News

- We were glad to meet Angelique at our meeting. Angelique is very interested in human rights and working for a human rights nonprofit.
- Steve said he has the video *11th Hour*. We will make plans to show it (and perhaps other videos) at a future meeting.
- We sent letters on behalf of U Win Tin to the Ambassador of Myanmar, the leader of Myanmar, Senior General Than Shwe, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nyan Win. We sent letters to the Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, on behalf of Omar Khadr, an abandoned Canadian citizen in Guantanamo, and we sent cards to Faithi el-Jahmi in Libya, one of the people in our summer postcard action.
- Thanks to a few members, we were able to send much-needed supplies to the newly established women's shelter Pretty Bird Woman House (www.prettybirdwomanhouse.blogspot.com/). Thank you Lizette, Joanne, and Norma!

Update on Shi Tao

In the new Olympics Countdown report that AI issued earlier this week, there is a brief update on Shi Tao:

Shi Tao continues to serve a 10-year sentence in Deshan prison for sending an email summarizing a Chinese Central Propaganda Department communiqué on how journalists should handle the 15th anniversary of the crackdown on the 1989 pro-democracy movement. Following a prison visit in May 2008, Shi Tao's brother stated that his conditions of detention had improved. Shi Tao is not being forced to work and is allowed to read newspapers and listen to the radio. Also in May the SPC rejected an appeal to review his case which had been submitted by Shi Tao's mother, stating that there was no appropriate procedure for such a review. The prison authorities have also turned down his mother's request to grant Shi Tao medical parole due to stomach problems, but stressed that he would be given appropriate medical care in prison.

July Meeting Minutes

Group #596 Huntington Beach

There were five members present at the Huntington Beach AI group meeting in July. The group discussed the background of our newly adopted prisoner of conscience, Mah Khin Leh of Myanmar. We signed letters and a petition urging the government to release Mah Khin Leh and other prisoners in Myanmar jailed for exercising their right to free expression.

The bulk of the meeting focused on the upcoming Olympics in China. The group discussed the various human rights violations taking place in China and signed petitions pleading for the release of two prisoners of conscience and the Tiananmen Mothers, a group of around 130 human rights defenders, women and men, whose children and other close relatives were killed or injured during the 1989 military crackdown. Afterwards, we viewed *China's Stolen Children*, a documentary detailing how the One Child Policy has resulted in numerous kidnappings. The HB group of Amnesty will be paying close attention to how China handles Internet censorship during the Olympics, especially now that the Amnesty International website has been shut down in the country.

Syrian Prisoner of Conscience Freed

The Syrian authorities unexpectedly released Dr. 'Aref Dalilah on August 7 following a presidential amnesty. Dalilah is the former Dean of the Faculty of Economics of Aleppo University and was a well-known prisoner of conscience in Syria.

Amnesty International has welcomed the release, noting that it is long overdue and hopes it will be followed by the release of all other prisoners of conscience in Syria.

Thousands of Amnesty International members around the world had been campaigning for Dr Dalilah's release since his arrest on September 9, 2001, when Amnesty International declared him to be a prisoner of conscience.

Dr. Dalilah was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment on July 31, 2002 by the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC), whose procedures fall far short of international standards, for "attempting to change the constitution by illegal means". It was the longest sentence handed down to any of those arrested for their participation in the "Damascus Spring". The "Damascus Spring" describes the brief period of increased tolerance from the authorities for freedom of expression and pro-reform activities that followed Bashar al-Assad's inauguration as President in July 2000.

'Aref Dalilah was reportedly beaten at 'Adra prison before his trial. His lawyer, 'Anwar al-Bunni, who is himself now a

prisoner of conscience held in 'Adra prison, presented a blood-stained handkerchief as evidence of how 'Aref Dalilah had been beaten during an SSSC hearing on June 3, 2002. The president of the court, a military officer, ordered 'Anwar al-Bunni out of the court and banned him indefinitely from practising before the SSSC.

It is thought likely that Dalilah's release was related to his health, which deteriorated alarmingly while he was in prison. He has suffered from a blood clot in his lung, deep-vein thrombosis, swelling of the heart and diabetes. He had a stroke in May 2006, losing some of the feeling on the left side of his body.

Dalilah has not been informed of any conditions on his release or restrictions he may face if seeking to travel outside the country for treatment.

Following his release, Dalilah said, "I am thankful for all the efforts made by everyone at Amnesty International and all those who took part in actions on my behalf. We are united in the struggle for the causes of justice and democracy. This struggle is still ongoing."

However, Dalilah's release does not quite close the chapter of the Damascus Spring detentions. Kamal Labwani and Habib Saleh, two former prisoners of the Damascus Spring released before Dalilah, have been re-arrested. Labwani was sentenced to 15 years for his pro-democracy activities and Saleh is currently being tried for publishing political articles on the Internet. Hundreds of other political prisoners remain detained in Syria, including many prisoners of conscience.

Jeff Bachman Elected AIUSA Chair

Jeff Bachman, an enforcement attorney with the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, was elected Chair of Amnesty International USA's Board of Directors by the Board in Washington, D.C. on June 29. A member of Amnesty International since 1988 when he helped found a local group in Utica, New York, Bachman has worked at local, regional, national and international levels to mobilize Amnesty activists. In his role as a country specialist Bachman lead Amnesty members in fighting human rights violations in East and Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia and East Timor. "I have been a member and activist with Amnesty for the past 20 years because no other organization so enables its grassroots membership to carry out meaningful human rights work," says Bachman who lives in Portland, Oregon with his wife, Kathy, herself a former Chair of AIUSA's Board. Also at the meeting, Carole Nangengast was voted Vice Chair. Shahram Hashemi was elected Treasurer and Barbara Sproul was named General Secretary.

If you would like to continue receiving this newsletter and supporting the work of the Orange County and Long Beach Amnesty International groups, please return this coupon to the address shown with annual dues of \$10.00. Dues cover the costs of this newsletter and of stamps used for saving lives. Your address label contains your membership expiration date. Join us!

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Please make your check payable to Amnesty International. Contributions to AI are tax-deductible. Thank you for your interest and support!

Calendar August

20 Wednesday 7:00 PM

Group #175 Long Beach Monthly Meeting at the Unitarian Universalist Church, Rooms 1 and 2, 5450 Atherton Street, Long Beach. Letter-writing from 7:00–7:30. For further information about the group, contact Norma Edwards at (562) 425-4353.

25 Monday 7:00 PM

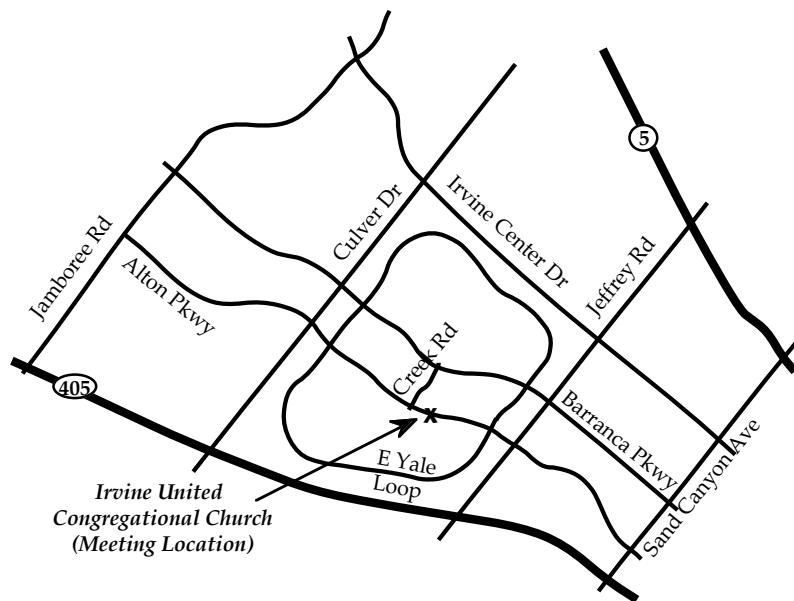
Group #596 Huntington Beach Meeting at Saints Simon and Jude Church, Adult Center, 20444 Magnolia Street in Huntington Beach. For more information, email Anne Saxe at annegalan56@hotmail.com.

26 Tuesday 7:00 PM

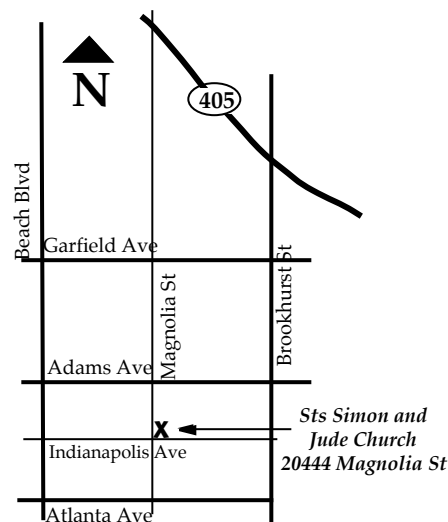
Group #141 Orange Monthly Meeting at the Sisters of St. Joseph, 480 S. Batavia Street, in Orange. Look for the classroom/auditorium building behind the main building. Drive around on the south side of main building and park in the back. Look for the signs for the classroom number. For further information about the group, contact Kevin Gaffney at xhuskr@aol.com.

28 Thursday 7:30 PM

Group #178 Irvine Monthly Meeting at the Irvine United Congregational Church, 4915 Alton Parkway, Irvine. See details on the web page <http://www.aiusaoc.org>. For more information about the group, contact Jacques Kilchoer at jacques.kilchoer@aiusaoc.org.



Group #178 Irvine Meeting Location



Group #596 Huntington Beach Location

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