

BEIJING 2008 TIBET RESOURCE PACK

我支持人权

I support human rights.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The chances are you are already aware of the human rights controversy surrounding the Beijing Olympics. You may have seen exiled Tibetans and many thousands of other people around the world protesting the Chinese government's policies in Tibet, including their violent crackdown on the demonstrations that broke out in Tibetan areas in March this year.

While many had hoped that the Olympics would bring improvements to the lives of Tibetans, just weeks from the Games it is clear that for the majority of the Tibetan people the situation has deteriorated.

But it is not too late. And like many others heading to Beijing you are probably wondering how you can help Tibet at this critical time.

Throughout its modern history the Olympics has proved a powerful force for change. Whether Jesse Owens in 1936 or Australian Peter Norman in 1968, on many occasions courageous Olympians have successfully championed social justice and human rights, inspiring a generation and setting in motion a tidal wave of positive change.

The Beijing 2008 Tibet Resource Pack contains a variety of resources for people heading to Beijing who are concerned about human rights and the situation in Tibet. It contains educational materials on the Tibetan situation in addition to a range of items for showing support for human rights that people may choose to use or not.



2. BACKGROUND BRIEFING

i) What's the problem in Tibet?

Tibet was a sovereign country the size of Western Europe when it was invaded by the Chinese People's Liberation Army in 1950. Several hundred thousand Tibetans have died as a direct result of the invasion and occupation of their country. Many more have been tortured and imprisoned.

Although the histories of Tibet and China have always been closely linked, it is not true – as the Chinese Government claims – that Tibet has always been part of the Chinese 'motherland'. Tibetans have their own language, alphabet, religion and culture.



Above: Map comparing historic Tibet to today's Tibet Autonomous Region

Every aspect of Tibetan culture is under assault by the ruling Chinese authorities. Basic human rights that we take for granted are denied to Tibetans, who have no freedom of speech and are denied the freedom to practice their religion. For example, possessing a photograph of the Dalai Lama (Tibet's spiritual leader) or calling for his return to Tibet can lead to arrest, torture and lengthy imprisonment.

Like all people, Tibetans want their culture to survive. They have very real fears for the future of their unique identity.

For further information see the 'Tibet Brief' and 'Tibet Update' included with this pack.

ii) Why all the fuss now?

March 10 2008 was the anniversary of the 1959 Tibetan Uprising against Chinese occupation. Knowing that the eyes of the world were on China in the run up to the Olympics, Tibetans in all regions of Tibet were emboldened to take to the streets to protest against decades of China's harsh and unrealistic policies.

The response of the Chinese government was to launch a brutal crackdown, throw all journalists and other foreigners out of Tibet and bring in tens of thousands of additional troops to quash the protests.

Despite the media blackout, Tibetans are managing to get information to the outside world.

They describe:

- more than 200 people killed, many by police and military shooting point blank at unarmed protesters,
- thousands of arbitrary arrests and the torture of men, women and children,
- increased intensity of 'patriotic education' during which monks, nuns and ordinary Tibetan adults and children must denounce the Dalai Lama, their spiritual leader, or risk arrest for refusing to do so,
- rewards of up to 80,000 Yuan (over \$12,000) for information about anyone attempting to leak these details to the western media.

iii) What has the Tibetan issue got to do with the Olympics?

(See also section on Human Rights and the Olympics.)

Described as China's 'Great Coming Out Party', the 2008 Beijing Olympics brings unprecedented media attention onto China. In August China will make a grand entry onto the international stage.

While the Chinese Government can rightly boast of extraordinary advancements in economic and social development and improvements to the lives and prospects of hundreds of millions of its citizens, there is another side to this story.

Although there have been many winners among China's majority Han population, minority groups have suffered deplorably under the current regime. This is especially true for the Tibetans who have faced fifty years of repression and colonization of their land and who still risk imprisonment and torture for speaking out.

The Olympics provides a unique opportunity to show the world the real situation in Tibet and to gently but firmly encourage China to reach a peaceful resolution with the Tibetan people, thus bringing about greater harmony within China and the respect of the international community.

iv) What are the Tibetan people asking for?

Contrary to the Chinese government's allegations, the Dalai Lama and the majority of the Tibetan people are not seeking independence from China. Since the 1980s the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration (known also as the Tibetan Government-in-Exile) have promoted a pragmatic and conciliatory policy known as the 'Middle Way'.

The Middle Way policy, which outlines a middle path between Tibetan independence and accepting the current situation, seeks a meaningful autonomy for the Tibet within the People's Republic of China, in which the cultural and religious freedoms of the Tibetan people are protected. There is more information about the Middle Way policy in the 'Tibet Brief' included in this information pack.

Representatives of the Dalai Lama have attempted to progress the Middle Way policy through the Tibet-China dialogue, a series of meetings between Chinese officials and of the Dalai Lama's envoys that began in 2002.

In May this year the Chinese Government silenced many of its international critics with the announcement of a seventh formal round of Tibet-China dialogue before the Beijing Olympics. Sadly, this latest round of dialogue, held in Beijing on 1 and 2 July did not lead to a softening in the Chinese Government's position. In short, the Tibet-China dialogue has so far brought no substantive progress towards a mutually agreeable resolution to the Tibet issue or even any genuine hope of a peaceful resolution.

3. STANDING UP FOR TIBET IN BEIJING

i) Human Rights and the Olympics

In its 'Olympic Charter', the International Olympic Committee (IOC) defines 'Olympism' as seeking to 'create a way of life based on the joy found in effort, the educational value of good example and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles'.

Despite these bold aspirations, the Olympic Games has been politicised to varying degrees throughout its modern history, even to the extent of being hosted by totalitarian governments eager to legitimise their oppressive regimes.

The Chinese Government's appalling human rights record was acknowledged as a key issue even before the 2008 Games were awarded to Beijing. In 2001 the IOC said it was "taking a bet" that human rights in Tibet and China would improve as a result of Beijing hosting the Olympics. It lost this gamble – Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and other respected international human rights watchdogs have shown conclusively that the human rights situation in Tibet and China is worse now than it was in 2001.

When bidding for the Games In 2001, the Chinese government undertook to allow new freedoms for the foreign press to travel without restriction anywhere in China. It broke this promise – as soon as unrest began in Tibet this year, all foreign journalists were rounded up and thrown out of all Tibetan areas.

While the Chinese Government has invoked the noble Olympic Charter in its attempts to insist the Games are non-political and discourage people from standing up for human rights in Beijing, it has flagrantly used the Olympics for its own political gains. Most recently, Chinese authorities locked down Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, to parade the Olympic Torch past a select group of journalists and approved onlookers, silencing dissent and attempting to demonstrate to the world its control over the region.

While the Australia Tibet Council recognises that the Olympic Games can be a powerful force for good, we see also that it has often taken the courage of a few determined individuals to show the world the true meaning of Olympic Spirit and inspire positive change.

The best known example was during the 1968 Mexico Olympics when African-American sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos, joined by Australian sprinter Peter Norman, refused to remain silent about the racial turmoil engulfing America and used their moment of glory on the podium to make a powerful symbolic protest. The image of the two athletes with their fists raised became a defining image of the twentieth century, an image that changed the world forever.

Coming at such a critical time in the Tibetan struggle, the Beijing Olympics provides those heading to Beijing with a unique opportunity to help resolve one of the most enduring human rights struggles in the world – the struggle to save Tibet.

Could we be on the cusp of another defining moment in history? Who in Beijing will inspire the whole world with their courage and character? Who will stand up for Tibet?

ii) Introduction to the Beijing 2008 Tibet Resource Pack

Briefing Materials

The Australia Tibet Council has received a number of calls and emails from people heading to Beijing who are concerned about the current situation in Tibet and interested in how the Olympics can be used to help the Tibetans.

We are also aware that under tough Chinese laws and additional regulations imposed by the IOC, the options for people wanting to show their support for human rights issues and Tibet while in Beijing are limited.

This briefing pack is designed to provide you with the best information on the current situation in Tibet, guidelines on what you are and are not able to say/do in Beijing and to offer advice and assistance to anyone wishing to speak up about Tibet or other human rights issues.

ATC is also providing a number of tools to help people wishing to take a positive stand for Tibet while in Beijing:

T-Shirt: 'I support human rights'



The message, 'I support human rights' has been chosen because it is sufficiently non-contentious, positive and generic to circumvent restrictions on what people are permitted to take with them to Beijing. The shirt is printed in Australian team colours.

Badge: 'Olympic Project for Human Rights'



The badge is an exact replica of the badge worn by Tommie Smith, John Carlos and Australian Peter Norman at the 1968 Mexico Olympics.

iii) The Olympic Charter and the AOC's guidelines on the interpretation of rule 51.3

Athletes heading to Beijing are further restricted in their freedom to express opinions by the Olympic Charter and the Australian Olympic Committee's Team Agreement.

The educational resources and T-shirt in this pack have been carefully designed in accordance with these restrictions. However, individuals need to be aware that they may not be permitted to carry certain other items in the pack to Beijing.

In its amended 'Team Agreement', issued on 12 May, the Australian Olympic Committee included 'Guidelines on the Interpretation of Rule 51.3 of the Olympic Charter'.

Rule 51.3 states:

'No kind of demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda is permitted in any Olympic sites, venues or other areas.'

The Australia Tibet Council believes the message 'I support human rights', pertaining merely to the universal respect for human rights, freedoms and dignity - regardless of race, religious or politics - falls comfortably outside the scope of 'political, religious or racial propaganda'.

The AOC has clarified 'Olympic sites, venues or other areas' as 'every area for which an official Olympic accreditation is required'.

In point 1 of their guidelines, the AOC states that 'Accredited persons at the Games may of course express their opinions including on Tibet' providing they do not breach AOC media and blogging guidelines or the Olympic Charter.

The guidelines further state that 'Accredited persons at the Games will have many opportunities to express themselves upon the occasion of the Games, whilst respecting the Olympic Charter, for instance by giving interviews including in Olympic Press or Broadcasting Centres or in mixed zones, statements and discussing with their fellow athletes, officials and others – to name but a few'.

iv) Suggested actions for individuals wishing to stand up for Tibet in Beijing

There are many ways that people can help raise the Tibet issue while in Beijing, from making bold public gestures to talking to teammates. If you are heading to Beijing, we strongly encourage you to become informed about the situation in Tibet. From there we have many suggestions for taking positive action:

- Discuss Tibet with Chinese people you meet. Most Chinese residents know little of the real situation in Tibet because they are denied access to information by their government,.
- Wear the 'I Support Human Rights' T-shirt and 'Olympic Project for Human Rights' badge.
- Use the enclosed stickers, balloons and temporary tattoos as a means of silent protest.

If you're an athlete then you may wish to:

- Encourage your teammates to pick up a Beijing 2008 Tibet Resource Pack.
- Mention Tibet in media interviews while in Beijing.
- Talk to other athletes about the situation in Tibet.

And there's no need to stop there... Remember, in speaking up for human rights we are limited only by our courage and imagination.

4. FURTHER INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

i) Australian Embassy in Beijing

21 Dongzhimenwai Dajie
Sanlitun
Beijing 100600
Phone: +86 10 5140 4111
<http://www.china.embassy.gov.au/>

ii) Useful websites

Central Tibetan Administration

(Known also as the Tibetan Government-in-Exile)
www.tibet.net

Australia Tibet Council

www.atc.org.au

Amnesty International Australia

Main website: www.amnesty.org.au

'Uncensor: China's Choice – A New Human Rights Record': <http://uncensor.com.au>

Athlete Wanted

Offers resources for athletes wishing to stand up for Tibet in Beijing.
www.athletewanted.org

'Salute' the Movie

Documents the Black Power protest at the 1968 Mexico Olympics, in which Australian sprinter Peter Norman participated.
www.salutethemovie.com

iii) Where to go for more support

The Australia Tibet Council has committed to assisting anyone willing to make a positive stand for Tibet at the Beijing Olympics.

If you would like further information and assistance then please contact us on:

Phone: **03 9283 3466**

Email: **tibetcouncil@atc.org.au**