

## Unrest, Riots, and Crackdowns

### UNREST IN XINJIANG UYGHUR AUTONOMOUS REGION (XUAR)

Xinjiang, an oil-rich region in western China with a largely Muslim Uyghur population under strict Chinese control, has been rocked by violent protests since the beginning of this year.

- **Plane hijack attempt.** On March 9, three Uyghurs attempted to hijack a plane en route to Beijing from Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR).<sup>1</sup>
- **Protests.** As many as 1,000 Uyghurs demonstrated in Hetian City, on March 23–24, to protest the torture of Uyghur detainees, imprisonment of political prisoners, and lack of religious freedom. A large number of participants were quickly arrested by security forces.<sup>2</sup>
- **Tightened security.** In mid-June, in anticipation of the Xinjiang leg of the Olympic torch relay (June 17–19), Chinese authorities increased security measures, including detaining thousands in the Xinjiang region and forcing Muslim religious officials to undergo “political education” on “protecting” the Olympics.<sup>3</sup>
- **Olympic torch relay passed through Urumqi.** On June 17, residents along the torch relay route were told to stay inside, keep away from windows, and watch the relay on television instead. The majority of spectators on the street were Han Chinese.<sup>4</sup> Authorities also banned reporters from speaking with people along the relay route and reporters were only allowed to attend the opening and closing ceremonies for that leg of the torch relay.<sup>5</sup>
- **Sixteen policemen killed in bombing on eve of Beijing Olympics.** On August 4, two Uyghur men rammed their truck into a group of 70 policemen and threw homemade bombs at them, killing 16 policemen and injuring 16 more in Kashgar City.<sup>6</sup>
- **Series of attacks.** On August 10, fifteen men led a series of attacks, including bombings, in Kuqa County, killing one security guard and injuring five other people. Police killed eight of the attackers and arrested two. An additional two committed suicide at the scene and three others ran away.<sup>7</sup>
- **Three policemen fatally stabbed.** On August 12, three police officers were killed and another injured when a group of men stabbed the officers at a security checkpoint in Yamanya Town, Shule County.<sup>8</sup>
- **Two policemen killed in knife fight.** On August 27, two Uyghur policemen were killed and another two severely injured in Peyzawat County in a knife fight during a police search for a woman suspected of aiding the assailants in the August 12 attack.<sup>9</sup>

### UNREST IN TIBET

- **Demonstration.** On March 10, hundreds of Tibetan monks near Lhasa marched peacefully to commemorate the 49th anniversary of a failed 1959 uprising against Chinese rule and in support of previously detained monks. Some were arrested and others were reportedly beaten, which triggered several other protest marches that week.

- **Clashes.** On March 14, clashes broke out between Tibetans and Chinese authorities in Lhasa. The protests and riots spread to Tibetan areas in the neighboring provinces of Gansu, Sichuan, and Qinghai over the following two weeks.<sup>11</sup>
- **Arrests and killings.** The number of arrests resulting from the subsequent crackdown on Tibetan unrest could not be confirmed. The International Campaign for Tibet estimated at least 600 people were arrested in Lhasa on March 15, and at least 300 on March 16.<sup>12</sup> Xinhua stated that by March 19, 170 Tibetans had handed themselves in.<sup>13</sup> Chinese authorities reported on March 31 that 19 individuals had been killed on March 14 in Lhasa. Tibet's government-in-exile placed the estimate at 140 Tibetans killed.<sup>14</sup>
- **Olympic torch passed through Tibet.** On the eve of the shortened two-hour Tibetan leg of the Olympic torch relay,<sup>15</sup> Chinese authorities announced the release of 1,157 people previously detained for minor offenses in connection with the March unrest in Tibet. Reports suggested that more than 1,000 monks were still held in detention centers ahead of the Olympics, and that nuns were being expelled from their nunneries for refusing to participate in "patriotic education" campaigns.<sup>16</sup>

## LARGE SCALE RIOTS

- **Guizhou.** On June 28, an estimated 30,000 people took to the streets of Weng'an County, Guizhou, due to dissatisfaction with police investigation into a teenage girl's death. Rioters set fire to the local Communist Party headquarters and police headquarters after the girl's uncle was allegedly beaten by police for protesting the handling of the case. Authorities arrested nearly 200 people, and over 1,500 paramilitary and riot police were dispatched to the county.<sup>17</sup>
- **Zhejiang.** On July 10–12, migrant workers in Kanmen, Zhejiang, rioted after one worker was allegedly beaten by police over a quarrel about his application for a temporary residence permit. Hundreds burned police cars and motorcycles, demanding the release of the detained worker. According to a Hong Kong-based NGO, 300 anti-riot police were deployed to restore control. Government officials report 23 people were "dealt with according to the law" after authorities regained control.<sup>18</sup>
- **Sichuan.** On July 15, one thousand people in Wushan County, Sichuan, surrounded a government office in support of petitioners whose wrists were cut after petitioning over land lost to the Three Gorges dam project. Earlier that day, local officials had rejected the requests of six petitioners and allegedly hired gangsters to attack them with razor blades.<sup>19</sup>
- **Yunnan.** On July 19, in Kunming, Yunnan, 500 rubber farmers with knives, steel tubes, and bars clashed with Yunnan police when officials attempted to arrest five people involved in violent disputes between farmers and representatives of a rubber factory. Forty-one policemen and 13 farmers were injured, with two farmers shot dead by police.<sup>20</sup>

## Sichuan Earthquake

- **Earthquake.** An 8.0 magnitude earthquake struck Sichuan province in southwestern China on May 12, the worst quake to hit the country in 30 years. The earthquake's epicenter was in Wenchuan County, 50 miles northwest of Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan. Other hardest hit areas include: Mianyang City, Beichuan County, and Dujiangyan City.
- **Death and destruction.** As of September 2, the Chinese authorities report that over 80,000 were killed, with other estimates topping 87,000.<sup>21</sup> Nearly 1.5 million people were forced to relocate, five

million were left homeless, and over 30 million people lost most of their assets.<sup>22</sup> 7,000 classrooms collapsed in the quake, killing about 10,000 children.<sup>23</sup> According to official statistics, over 11 million houses were either seriously damaged or collapsed.<sup>24</sup> Aftershocks, landslides, and damage to dams added further risks to safety, property, and food supplies.<sup>25</sup> A government official estimated that the total direct financial loss from the earthquake reached \$123 billion.<sup>26</sup>

- **Government response.** In an unprecedented move—and in sharp contrast to its delayed response to the 1976 Tangshan earthquake—the Chinese government immediately reported the earthquake and accepted international relief efforts.<sup>27</sup> According to official figures, the Chinese government deployed around 130,000 army and paramilitary troops to the quake-hit areas to carry out rescue and aid operations.
- **Official mourning.** The State Council ordered a three-day national period of mourning in remembrance of those who died, starting with a moment of silence at 2:28 p.m. on May 19, exactly one week after the quake hit. Flags were lowered to half-mast, and entertainment-related news and entertainment activities were suspended.
- **Civil society response.** Despite warnings from the authorities to stay out of the earthquake zone, over 150,000 volunteers offered to help rescue, relief, and rebuilding efforts.<sup>28</sup> In the weeks following the tragedy, people from throughout the country donated money and relief supplies worth over \$6.3 billion (44 billion *yuan*).<sup>29</sup>
- **School collapse.** Soon after the quake destruction became clear, many people began raising questions about extensive school collapses, placing intense pressure on authorities to investigate inadequate enforcement of building codes and local corruption.
- **Protests by grieving parents.** Relatives of school children killed in collapsed schools began demonstrating in May. On June 3, police in Dujiangyan forcibly removed over 100 grieving parents protesting in front of the town courthouse.<sup>30</sup> Authorities stifled similar protests and tightened security throughout the worst-hit areas, in some cases intimidating, detaining, and interrogating demonstrators.<sup>31</sup> In an effort to silence protestors, local government officials pressured many parents into signing contracts that offered compensation in exchange for praising the government’s response and foregoing legal proceedings.<sup>32</sup>
- **Media restricted.** Immediately after the quake, the Central Propaganda Department ordered media to stay away from the disaster zone. Two days later, so many reporters had ignored the directive, in a rare display of defiance, that the department rescinded it.<sup>33</sup> After a brief period of relative media freedom, however, the central government tightened press controls—including forbidding coverage of sensitive topics such as collapsed schools—and on June 24 issued new “propaganda resources” as guidance for local media.<sup>34</sup>
- **Citizen reporters arrested.** The Chinese authorities detained people who continued to investigate official corruption relating to collapsed schools. **Huang Qi** (黄琦), founder of the website, 64tianwang.com, was detained on June 10 and later arrested on state secrets-related charges for visiting the disaster zone and publishing news about the plight of parents who lost children in the disaster.<sup>3</sup> On June 25, **Liu Shaokun** (刘绍坤), a Sichuan school employee, was detained and later sentenced to one year of Reeducation-Through-Labor (RTL) for taking photographs of collapsed schools and posting them on the Internet.<sup>3</sup>
- **Lawyers warned.** In early July, the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Justice ordered lawyers in Beijing not to represent Sichuan earthquake victims seeking compensation for concerns such as not receiving proper medical treatment in the aftermath of the disaster.<sup>37</sup>

- **Investigations and punishment.** Growing domestic pressure and aggrieved parents have led to the public censure of local government officials. In June, official media reported that 28 Communist Party officials were disciplined while 50 were promoted as a result of their performance during the rescue phase of the earthquake. The highest-ranking official to be fired was a deputy director of Dujiangyan's Civil Affairs Bureau for vastly overestimating casualty estimates and wasting emergency response resources. Despite these punishments, many parents of dead children and earthquake survivors are still awaiting a comprehensive investigation.<sup>38</sup>
- **Official acknowledgement of poor construction.** On September 4, for the first time, a representative of the Chinese government acknowledged that poor school construction may have led to the devastating collapses that resulted in the deaths of thousands of students.<sup>39</sup>

# ROUND-UP: 2008 BEIJING OLYMPICS

## Official Promises

### Improvement of social and human rights conditions.

- **July 2001.** Liu Jingmin, vice-president of the Beijing Olympic Bid Committee, told the International Olympic Committee (IOC) before its vote that “by allowing Beijing to host the games you will help the development of human rights.”<sup>1</sup>
- **July 2001.** Wang Wei, secretary general of the Beijing Olympic Bid Committee, said during the bidding process that “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. We will give the media complete freedom to report when they come to China.”<sup>2</sup>
- **October 2007.** Liu Jingmin, executive vice president of the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (BOCOG), said that “the Olympic preparatory work is progressing concurrently with China’s development, and in the process, the democracy and human rights of the people will be vigorously enhanced and safeguarded.”<sup>3</sup>

**Press freedom.** Wang Wei, July 12, 2001: “Certainly we will give the media complete freedom to report on anything when they come to China.”<sup>4</sup>

**Air quality.** From China’s official bid document, known as the Candidature File, Volume 1, Theme 4: “. . . air quality during the period of the Games in 2008 will be of a high quality . . .”<sup>5</sup>

## IOC Statements

- **November 2004.** IOC President Jacques Rogge expressed confidence that Beijing will host a successful Games and that BOCOG “will fulfill these requirements and obligations of the Host City Contract.”<sup>6</sup> The Host City Contract between the IOC and BOCOG has still not been made public.
- **August 2007.** Rogge stated that the “Games can only be a catalyst for change, not a panacea.”<sup>7</sup>
- **July 2008.** Hein Verbruggen, head of the IOC Coordination Commission, hailed Beijing’s preparations as “a gold standard for the future.”<sup>8</sup>

## Environmental Challenges

- **Costs and plans.** China spent \$10.44 billion (71.3 billion *yuan*) on environmental clean-up efforts,<sup>9</sup> including pulling half of Beijing’s 3.3 million vehicles from the road for a two-month period, and shutting down polluting factories.<sup>10</sup>
- **Air pollution hurdles.** Despite drastic pollution-cutting measures, Beijing’s air remained smoggy days before the Olympics, even exceeding the national standards for the pollution index, according to the *China Daily*. Greenpeace reported that the average level of PM10—a key measure of pollution—in Beijing’s air, was twice what the World Health Organization considers safe.<sup>11</sup>
- **Air quality improvements.** Emergency measures taken to reduce air pollution appeared to have

worked throughout the Olympics, aided in large part by favorable weather conditions, including heavy rain on a couple of days. Beijing enjoyed mostly clear skies and a reduction in the levels in particulate matter for much of the Games and any lingering pollution did not appear to impede athletes.<sup>12</sup>

- **Measures ended.** As the Olympics came to a close, a lively debate sprang up in Internet forums, on the radio, and in newspapers over whether or not to extend the measures. Three days after the Paralympics concluded, however, most measures were ended—except for an effort to keep many government vehicles off the roads—and once again private cars flooded the roads and polluting factories resumed work.<sup>13</sup>
- **Increasing water demands.** In May 2007, a top water official announced plans to divert up to 400 million cubic meters of water from nearby Hebei Province to meet demand in Beijing for the Games,<sup>14</sup> despite a severe drought in the region that threatens the livelihoods of millions of people.<sup>15</sup>
- **Water transfer project and its effects.** Officials planned 309 kilometers of channels and pipes in Hebei province to pump 300 million cubic meters of water to Beijing for the Olympics. In the rural area around Baoding city alone, the water transfer project caused 31,000 residents to lose land and their homes.<sup>16</sup>
- **Consequence.** Despite the pre-planning, much of the infrastructure intended for the water diversion scheme was left half-constructed or unused when Beijing officials realized they had overestimated water demand. Nevertheless, water in the Hebei area had already been diverted to fill a number of large reservoirs, leading to local resentment and agricultural losses.<sup>17</sup> After the Olympics, the story changed yet again, and Beijing said it was facing “grim” shortfalls and started pumping additional water from Hebei.<sup>18</sup>

## Displacement from Olympics Construction

- **Residents displaced.** In June 2007, the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) reported that some 1.5 million Beijing residents would have been displaced by Olympics construction by the time the Games began, many of them evicted against their will.<sup>19</sup>
- **Migrant workers “encouraged” to leave Beijing.** Many of Beijing’s estimated four million migrant workers helped build the 31 Olympic competition venues that went up since Beijing won the 2001 bid.<sup>20</sup> On July 20, all construction was banned in the city, and as journalists and tourists started arriving over the next couple of weeks, migrants responded to an unwritten government policy encouraging them to leave the city.<sup>21</sup>
- **Deepening poverty.** COHRE estimates that as many as 33,000 people each year have been pushed into poverty, or deeper poverty, because their homes were demolished due to Olympic Games preparations.<sup>22</sup>

## New Regulations for Foreign Journalists

- **New regulations.** In January 2007, a set of new regulations covering reporting activities by foreign journalists during the Olympics went into effect. They do not cover domestic journalists and are set to expire on October 17, 2008.<sup>23</sup> The regulations allow foreign journalists to interview organizations or individuals in China without official permission but “need only to obtain their prior consent.” An accompanying service guide indicated that foreign journalists are permitted to travel freely within China, provided they have a valid visa or certificate and only travel to places open to foreigners, as

designated by the Chinese government, and that this provision applies not only to those journalists covering the Games but also those covering “political, economic, social and cultural matters of China.”<sup>24</sup>

- **Improvement and continuing problems.** During the Games, foreign reporters highlighted both improvements in the reporting environment and continuing problems despite the new regulations. The Foreign Correspondents Club of China said that the Chinese government did not live up to its Olympic promise regarding press freedom and confirmed more than 30 cases of reporting interference since the formal opening of the Olympic media center.<sup>25</sup>

## Internet Censorship

- **Rogge: “No censorship on the Internet.”** In mid-July, IOC president Jacques Rogge told Agence France-Presse: “For the first time, foreign media will be able to report freely and publish their work freely in China. There will be no censorship on the Internet.”<sup>26</sup>
- **IOC allowed China to block websites.** On July 30, Kevin Gosper, Chairperson of the IOC Press Commission, admitted, “Some IOC officials negotiated with the Chinese that some sensitive sites would be blocked on the basis they were not considered Games related.” Gosper apologized: “I regret that it now appears BOCOG has announced that there will be limitations on website access during Games time.”<sup>27</sup>
- **China announced Internet restrictions.** In response to this revelation, BOCOG spokesman Sun Weide said on July 31 that the government would not allow the spread of any information on the Internet that is forbidden by law or harms national interests.<sup>28</sup>
- **IOC denial.** In an August 1 statement on its website, the IOC denied that there had ever been such a deal regarding censorship.<sup>29</sup>
- **Rogge denial.** On August 2, Rogge said, “I am not going to make an apology for something that the IOC is not responsible for. We are not running the Internet in China.”<sup>30</sup>
- **Websites blocked, unblocked.** In response to the resulting controversy over censorship, some websites that were blocked when the Games began suddenly became accessible, including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the Chinese BBC. Human Rights in China’s website, and many websites related to Falun Gong and Tibet, remained blocked, as did some professional blogging platforms and news portals like the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Huffington Post*.<sup>3</sup>

## Crackdown on Civil Society Groups

- **Beijing AIZHIXING Institute of Health Education** (北京爱知行信息咨询中心). Due to harassment of its clients, the organization was forced to stop the majority of its services in April.<sup>32</sup>
- **Tiananmen Mothers.** The organization of family members of the victims of the violent 1989 crackdown launched a new website on May 28. It was blocked within a few hours.<sup>33</sup>
- **“In the Hepatitis B Camp”** (肝胆相照论坛). The world’s largest online forum offering counseling and support to Hepatitis B sufferers was shut down in May. The webmaster **Lu Jun** (陆军) was harassed and questioned by police as he returned home to China on July 3 from a trip to Hong Kong and the U.S.<sup>34</sup>
- **Crackdown on June Fourth commemoration.** On June 3-4, activists, lawyers, and other mourners, who sought to commemorate the 19th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square Crackdown, were detained, escorted home, and closely monitored.<sup>35</sup>

## Intensified Crackdown on Activists

In the final lead up to the Games, many activists, petitioners, bloggers, concerned citizens, and lawyers were harassed, monitored, detained, or forced to leave Beijing by security forces, in the name of ensuring a “peaceful” Olympics. For a list of those targeted, see sidebar, *“Timeline: Human Rights Defenders.”*

## Security Buildup

- **Security threats.** The authorities stepped up security measures in Beijing and other Olympic cities before the Games. The Chinese Communist Party says China’s main security concerns regarding the Olympics are Tibetan “separatists,” Falun Gong religious practitioners, and criminals.<sup>36</sup>
- **Costs.** In a 2007 official estimate, Beijing organizers stated that \$300 million USD would be budgeted for security work.<sup>37</sup> As of September 2008, an updated figure had not been released. However, the Washington, D.C.-based Security Industry Association estimated that China would spend \$6.5 billion on security improvements throughout Beijing, more than four times the amount spent on security for the 2004 Games in Athens.<sup>38</sup>
- **Police force.** Officials announced that 100,000 commandos, police, and army troops would be placed on high alert during the Games in Beijing.<sup>39</sup>
- **Military personnel and machinery.** The Chinese authorities deployed more than 34,000 military personnel with 74 planes, 47 helicopters, and 33 naval ships.<sup>40</sup> Reports also indicated that surface-to-air missiles, radar, and anti-chemical equipment were also deployed.
- **Volunteers.** The 440,000 Chinese volunteers at the Olympics included local residents and security agents, watching for any trouble from protesters or dissidents.<sup>41</sup>
- **Dissidents warned.** The Shanghai Public Security Bureau barred political dissidents from leaving the city or speaking with foreign reporters during the Olympics. Under the rules, dissidents must voluntarily report to police every week about their activities.<sup>42</sup>
- **Beijing security intensified.** Before the Olympics, authorities introduced new visa rules for foreigners, including restrictions limiting visitors to 30-day stays, replacing more flexible, multiple-entry visas.<sup>43</sup> Some subway stations installed X-ray machines to screen the bags of subway passengers. Many restaurants and bars near the Olympic venues were ordered to close for two months. Police raided the Sanlitun bar district several times before the Olympics, detaining dozens of people, some for drug offences and others for not carrying passports.<sup>44</sup> The Olympic Green, encircling the stadiums, was surrounded by fences and checkpoints and limited to event ticketholders.<sup>45</sup>

## Protests

- **Official protest zones.** On July 23, officials designated three parks in Beijing where protests and petitions would be allowed, including World Park, Ritan Park, and Purple Bamboo Park, none of which are near the Olympic Green.<sup>46</sup>
- **Total number of applications for permit:** 77.
- **Total number of permits granted:** 0.
- **Harassment and abuse of applicants.** Many applicants reported harassment by authorities.

Following are a few examples:

- **Late July. Sang Jun** (桑军), who lost his 11-year-old child in the Sichuan earthquake, was looking for compensation and applied to protest in late July. His plane ticket was torn up by Sichuan authorities.<sup>4</sup>
- **August 1. Ge Yi Fei** (葛亦菲), a doctor of Chinese traditional medicine from Suzhou Province, was involved with 140 others in a forced relocation case. She applied for a permit in Beijing and was physically carried away by four Suzhou officials to bring her back to Suzhou.<sup>4</sup>
- **August 5.** Hunan petitioner **Tang Xue Cheng** (唐学成) went to Beijing and applied according to regulations. Authorities in Beijing contacted security police in Hunan to take him away.<sup>4</sup>
- **August 6. Zhang Wei** (张薇), a housing activist protesting the demolition of traditional homes in downtown Beijing, was detained shortly after applying for a permit.<sup>5</sup>
- **August 7. Shan Chun** (单春), a representative of retired military and police, officially applied to protest and was threatened by officials that she would be locked up. She and hundreds of others were planning to engage in activities on August 12.<sup>5</sup>
- **August 18.** Two elderly petitioners, **Wu Dianyuan** (吴殿元), 79, and **Wang Xiuying** (王秀英), 77, were sentenced to one year of Reeducation-Through-Labor after applying several times to demonstrate in the official protest zones. The women were protesting insufficient compensation after being forcibly evicted and relocated from their Beijing homes in 2001 to make way for Olympics construction. Their sentence, first reported by Human Rights in China in an August 19 press release,<sup>52</sup> gained widespread press attention in the West.<sup>53</sup> On August 29, the Chinese authorities rescinded the sentence.<sup>54</sup>

## Opening Ceremony

- **Spectacle.** The opening ceremony, which cost at least \$100 million,<sup>55</sup> was directed by one of China's most prominent film directors, Zhang Yimou.<sup>56</sup> 91,000 spectators and 4.7 billion television viewers around the world watched the four-hour long ceremony showcasing stunning images of China's history and culture. Eighty heads of state joined President Hu Jintao in the stands for a show that featured 14,000 performers, including 9,000 from the People's Liberation Army.<sup>57</sup>
- **Criticism.** Some criticized the integrity of the ceremony when it was revealed that the children in the parade dressed to represent China's 56 ethnic minority groups were, in fact, all Han Chinese; the nine-year-old girl singing "Ode to the Motherland" was made to lip synch to the voice of a little girl deemed "not cute enough"; and the televised scenes of fireworks were digitally enhanced.<sup>58</sup>

## Top Four Medal-Winning Countries<sup>59</sup>

Rank/Country	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
1. China	51	21	28	100
2. USA	36	38	36	110
3. Russian Federation	23	21	28	72
4. Great Britain	19	13	15	47

## Total Cost

The Chinese government spent an estimated \$42 billion (297 billion *yuan*) on the Olympic Games. This includes mammoth construction projects such as the \$500 million Bird's Nest stadium and the \$3 billion airport terminal.

## Praise for Beijing Olympics

IOC President Jacques Rogge said, "The world learned more about China, and China learned more about the rest of the world. And together, we shared the excitement and drama of the Games."

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