

THE OLYMPICS AS A FORCE FOR CHANGE

HRIC recently invited several individuals with diverse backgrounds to carry out an e-mail discussion on the possible impact of the 2008 Olympics on the human rights situation in China, and possible strategies for promoting human rights advocacy, education, and democratic reforms.

The Participants

Anne Callaghan has been the Campaigns Manager for Free Tibet Campaign (www.freetibet.org) since August 2000, and has been working on the Olympics campaign since the beginning of her tenure. FTC's Olympic campaign work is coordinated through an international coalition called the International Tibet Support Network, which consists of more than 100 groups from around the world.

Gao Zhan is a researcher at American University (www.american.edu), specializing in China, Chinese politics, gender and family. She was detained and falsely charged by the Chinese government in 2001 for doing research in China.

Andrew McLaughlin is Senior Adviser to the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) (www.icann.org) and Senior Fellow at the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard Law School (<http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/>). He devotes most of his time to advising governments and fostering Internet deployment in developing countries.

Bobson Wong is executive director of the Digital Freedom Network (DFN) (www.dfn.org), a New York-based organization that promotes human rights education and activism around the world, primarily through the use of Internet technology. Specializing in the Internet in China, Bobson has written on freedom of expression and Internet access for Columbia University's Center for the Study of Human Rights, the Human Rights Encyclopedia, the U.S. Congressional-Executive Committee on China, and others.

Moderator: Sharon Hom is executive director of HRIC, and is professor of law, emerita, CUNY School of Law. Sharon

has over 14 years of experience in U.S.–China law training and legal exchange initiatives, and has conducted numerous NGO consultations and human rights workshops.

HRIC To what extent do you think the 2008 Olympics will have a positive, negative, or mixed effect on the human rights situation in China? What specific issues and relevant factors are likely to influence this effect?

Gao Zhan I believe the 2008 Olympics will have a mixed effect on the human rights situation in China.

Because China has highly politicized its hosting of the Olympics, it is using every possible means to ensure success. As a result we see the authorities arresting more political dissidents, driving more non-Beijingers out of the city, demolishing more houses against the will of their owners who have lived there for generations, and keeping a tighter control over the flow of information.

But the flip side is the event will force China to loosen its grip on some media outlets. Merely for the sake of showing the world that Chinese do enjoy some basic freedoms, China will gradually lift some website blocks, allow in more foreign press, and tolerate to a certain extent the flow of information from outside of China as it prepares for the event. And ordinary Chinese folks will take advantage of this and enlighten themselves with information from the West. A well-informed and enlightened nation will not be suppressed for too long.

Bobson Wong I don't think the Olympics by itself will have any major effect on human rights in China. Other factors will be far more important, such as labor unrest and the state of the economy. However, the world will be watching China during the Olympics. Whether this will help or hurt human rights in China depends on what happens beforehand.

On the one hand, the government wouldn't dare crack down on dissidents right before or during the Olympics if the world is watching. The 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstrations didn't get international attention until foreign journalists arrived in Beijing to cover Mikhail Gorbachev's visit. We've all seen in the past how China tends to ease restrictions while major international events are

taking place in China. If anything happens during the Olympics—any labor strikes or Falungong protests—the entire world will know instantly with potentially disastrous results for the government.

On the other hand, precisely because of the increased scrutiny, you can bet that the government will try to remove any traces of dissent before the Olympics. (Unfortunately, this is not limited to China; many U.S. cities like to remove homeless people from the streets before national conventions or other major events.) Look for a crackdown in the years before the event and perhaps a modest easing of restrictions during the Olympics (such as a lifting of Internet restrictions to show how “open” China is). A few dissidents might even be allowed to speak out, although most Chinese citizens probably won’t hear them.

The key, then, is to continue to monitor human rights now, well before the Beijing Olympics—because by 2008 it will be too late. The wild card in all of this is whether groups like Falungong, peasants, or factory workers can organize protests during the Olympics without being detected. If they can, then the government is in for a big surprise in 2008.

Andrew McLaughlin The impact of the 2008 Olympics on China’s human rights environment will depend to a large extent upon the behavior of (1) the sponsors, such as Coca-Cola, (2) the IOC, (3) the national Olympic committees and their athletes, and (4) the attending broadcast and print journalists.

I am not optimistic about the IOC, whose president regularly mentions the beneficial effect of the Olympics on China’s “social environment... including human rights,” but has taken no institutional steps to hold China to the promises made by the official Beijing bid committee. This is a case where bureaucracy could be the friend of human rights—the IOC could establish an office responsible for monitoring and reporting to the IOC on the state of China’s human rights environment and press freedom. Those two issues should be of ongoing concern for the IOC, in part to assess whether the Beijing bid committee’s commitments are being fulfilled. A quarterly report from a monitoring officer would help to maintain steady pressure on the Chinese authorities to keep their promises. However, as I mentioned, I see no sign that the IOC will take any such step.

The Olympics’ sponsors, such as Coca-Cola, are in a similar position to communicate expectations that China will live up to its commitments, and to complain when they are violated. Beijing is no doubt counting on major sponsorship dollars; potential sponsors should make clear that their sponsorship decisions will rest in part on evidence that the human rights environment in China is improving. The Coca-Cola web page on its Olympic sponsorship, however, makes no mention of institutional concern or expectations for human rights in China.

During actual course of the Beijing Olympics, the national Olympic committees (and their athletes) will be in a position to speak out on behalf of prisoners of conscience and other unfairly jailed dissidents. Protected from arrest

The Politics of the Olympics

Chapter 5 of the Olympic charter says “No kind of demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda is permitted in the Olympic areas.” But the Games have seldom enjoyed immunity from the climate of their times. Following are examples of the politicized atmosphere in which the Olympics have taken place over the past decades.

Berlin 1936

The 1936 Olympic Games were intentionally awarded to Germany so the republic could show that it had regained its status among European countries.

With the Nazis in power, however, the Berlin Olympics became a platform to demonstrate Adolf Hitler’s theory of racial superiority, as immortalized in film by Nazi propagandist Leni Riefenstahl. International Olympic Committee (IOC) member Lord Aberdare stated that the IOC was “seriously alarmed at the ill-treatment of the Jews but decided that they could not be drawn into political and other controversies.”

Tokyo 1940

The 1940 Olympic Games were originally scheduled to be held in Tokyo, but several countries planned to boycott the Games in protest against Japan’s aggressive war in Asia. Japan itself eventually decided the Games would be a distraction to its military goals.

Helsinki was awarded the Games in 1938, and the 1940 and 1944 games were canceled because of WWII.

Fascist Italy

Mussolini rose to power in Italy in 1922, a year before Hitler’s failed first attempt to seize power landed him in a German prison. Italy under Mussolini’s fascist leadership bid four times to host the Summer Games. Rome first lost the 1924 Summer Games to Paris. Mussolini lost a second bid to Berlin under Hitler (1936), and a third to Tokyo (1940). Rome also lost its fourth bid to host the 8th Summer Games (scheduled to be held in 1944), which went to London. But Italy was granted the consolation prize of the Winter Games of that same year, with Cortina d’Ampezzo beating Montreal and Oslo, only to have the 1944 Games cancelled due to WWII. As early as June 1947, four years after the death of Mussolini (1943) and only two years after the end of WWII, IOC members allowed Cortina d’Ampezzo to bid for the 1952 Games (Oslo ultimately won the right to host the Games).

London 1948

Germany and Japan were not invited to London because of their wartime roles, while the Soviet Union was invited but did not show up.

On April 28, 1949, the International Olympic Committee met in Rome, and the Italian town of Cortina d’Ampezzo won easily over the U.S. and Canada in its bid for the 1956 Winter Games. During that



Photo: Reuters.

1949 session in Rome, Melbourne won its bid to host the 1956 Summer Olympiad, but because Australian quarantine laws barred entry to foreign livestock, the equestrian events were held separately in a different hosting country. Berlin was allowed to submit itself as a candidate-city for the Equestrian Games less than a decade after the end of the Third Reich. Stockholm eventually won the Equestrian bid.

1952, Helsinki

The Helsinki Games were held under the chill of Cold War tensions. West Germany participated for the first time, and the USSR returned to the Olympics after a 40-year absence. The USSR initially planned to fly its athletes in from Leningrad daily, but eventually separate housing facilities were set aside for Eastern bloc athletes.

1956, Melbourne

Politics permeated the Melbourne Games. China withdrew after the IOC recognized Taiwan, and continued to sit out the games until it emerged from the Cultural Revolution in 1980. Egypt, Iraq and Lebanon withdrew in protest at Israel's invasion of the Sinai Peninsula, while Spain, Switzerland and the Netherlands staged boycotts over the Soviet invasion of Hungary. A water polo semi-final between the USSR and Hungarian dissolved into fistfights, and had to be terminated by the referee, who awarded victory to Hungary.

Rome 1960

On June 1955, a year before the 1956 Winter Olympic Games were to be held in the Italian city of Cortina d'Ampezzo, IOC members elected Italy once again, awarding it the 17th

by the glare of Olympic hoopla, the leading athletes will have the eyes of the world on them.

Finally, the attending print and broadcast journalists should test China's promises of full journalistic freedom to push the limits of what has previously been allowed -- like good journalists anywhere, they should roam Beijing, investigating and documenting the reality of China's human rights abuses.

In broadest terms, the application of steady, public pressure on the Chinese authorities by outsiders (especially those with economic, diplomatic, or media leverage) can foster strong incentives for improved behavior. The Chinese authorities are human beings; they care about their reputations. The various outside parties associated with the 2008 Olympics will be in an unusually strong position to influence those reputations by drawing attention to human rights abuses and pressuring the Chinese authorities not to disgrace the promises and commitments they have made. Early signs of attention to human rights by the IOC and the sponsors are not, however, encouraging.

Anne Callaghan Our focus has been to try and pressurize the IOC to take up human rights concerns as part of its planning process with Beijing, thus creating incentive for reform and positive change. That is proving to be rather too demanding for the IOC at present.

My thoughts on possible positive effects of the Olympics are as follows:

Media freedom - The Chinese authorities have made some promises on in guaranteeing media freedom for the Games, although they have not been specific about the time frame or scope. I would hope that the media and media freedom

organizations would begin to test China's promise on this score, bringing real heat to the issue. But we also need to ask, will the world's media be able to transmit independently of any Chinese communication system to prevent blockages?

Freedom of expression – Sadly, I think that this area may not improve, given China's overwhelming obsession with putting on problem-free Games and trying to ensure that the Games do not provide an outlet for criticism of the Party. Examples of this include the arrest of Shan Chengfeng and his sentencing to 2 years in a labor camp in the very week that the IOC Evaluation Committee was in Beijing to evaluate the bid in February 2001. Who is going to press China on these issues when companies from the USA and Europe will be desperate to win bids for infrastructure and services for the Games or open up the Chinese marketplace?

Internet freedom – I think it is likely that China will continue to clamp down on Web sites, and the authorities are becoming more sophisticated in blocking sites.

Freedom of movement – Given that the world's press may well be camped in Beijing for the Games, it will be interesting to see how China ensures that persons it regards as "undesirables" (citizens or foreigners) do not get to move freely within China.

Labor rights – What guarantees will there be that no prison labor will be used in the manufacture or delivery of good related to the Olympics?

Security – It is hard to know what state the world will be in by 2008, but certainly China has been quick to use the current situation to justify its clampdown on "splittists" and "extremists." The IOC also seems to be stressing security considerations with Beijing and Athens 2004 at the moment, and it was one of the issues [IOC president Jacques] Rogge raised with us when we queried the continued reliance by the IOC on its clause stipulating that no political meetings or demonstrations are allowed to take place in the week running up to, during and after the Olympic Games. Will companies be drafted to help them create or run the technology required to do that? Interestingly, it's possible that increased access to technology could help dissident groups or external groups bypass official blocking systems as they try to raise human rights issues during the Games.

Tibet – I have a mixed response to this, as it's impossible to say what Hu Jintao will be like as a leader or whether he will be as sensitive to the world's perception of him as Jiang was (witness the release of Ngawang Sangdrol [a Tibetan nun imprisoned in 1992] in advance of Jiang's visit to the USA in October 2002). We have to remember that Hu was the man who oversaw the imposition of martial law in Tibet in 1988. Will he be paramount leader by 2008, or will Jiang still be guiding things through his people, or indeed will there be someone new to contend with? I think the Chinese leadership's approach to reform and desire for openness will determine Tibet's future and whether the initial discussions that occurred in September 2002 might actually blossom into a fully-fledged dialogue for a peaceful settlement on the issue of Tibet.

Xinjiang – My fear is that the situation here will continue to

Summer Olympiad.

By that time, both Germany and Japan were welcomed to submit their bids, although neither succeeded. The 1960 Rome Olympics attracted a record 5348 athletes from 83 countries. The Rome Games marked the end of Olympics participation by South Africa, which was excluded because of its racist apartheid policies until the 1992 Barcelona Games.

Tokyo 1964

On May 26, 1959, IOC members held their session in Munich, Germany, electing Tokyo to host the 18th Olympic Games. In October 1964, Hirohito, the only surviving leader of the WWII Axis powers, declared the opening of the Olympic Games. The first Asian country to host the Olympics, Japan spent \$3 billion rebuilding Tokyo to show off its post-war success.

Mexico City 1968

1968 was a year of universal unrest. Student protests rocked Europe, the U.S. was embroiled in racial tensions and controversy over the Vietnam War, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy were assassinated and the USSR invaded Czechoslovakia. In Mexico City itself, only ten days before the 1968 Olympic Games were to open, the Mexican army opened fire on a group of student protestors. Estimates of those killed range from 100 to 325, with more than 1,000 injured and thousands arrested.

East Germany competed separately for the first time at the Mexico City Olympics. American athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos, who finished first and third in the 200 meters, gave the Black Power salute during the national anthem as a protest against racism in the U.S. Both men were suspended by the American Olympic Committee and were ordered to leave Mexico City.

Munich 1972

In a symbolic 'revival' of the WWII German-Italian-Japanese axis, on April 25, 1966, in a session held in Rome, the Japanese city of Sapporo was elected to host the 1972 Winter Games and Munich was elected to host the 20th Summer Games. The Spanish capital of Madrid, under the nationalist regime of Francisco Franco Bahamonde, came in second place behind Munich. On the early morning of the 10th day of the Munich Olympics (September 5, 1972), eight Palestinian terrorists broke into the Olympic Village, killing two members of the Israeli team and taking nine more hostages. In an ensuing battle, all nine Israeli hostages were killed, as were five of the terrorists and one policeman. After holding a memorial service in the main stadium, the IOC resolved to resume the Games.

1976, Montreal

Around 30 African nations staged a last-minute boycott after the IOC allowed New Zealand to compete. New Zealand's rugby team had recently played in the

racially segregated South Africa, which was still under an Olympic ban. Taiwan withdrew from the Games when Beijing pressured Canada to deny the Taiwanese the right to compete.

Moscow 1980, Los Angeles 1984

In December 1979, just 8 months before Moscow was to host the 22nd Olympiad, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. Following a call by U.S. President Jimmy Carter for a boycott protesting this act, 65 countries withdrew from the 1980 Moscow Olympics, including the U.S., Canada, West Germany, Japan, China, Kenya and Norway. The USSR leadership retaliated with its own boycott of the Los Angeles games in 1984. The Cold War between the US-NATO allies and the USSR bloc depleted the field in many Olympic sports, damaging the spirit of the Games for almost a decade.

1988, Seoul

For the first time since the Munich Games, there was no organized boycott of the Summer Olympics, although North Korea, Ethiopia, Nicaragua and Cuba failed to participate. The success of the Seoul Games was regarded as a major milestone on South Korea's journey from dictatorship to democracy. But the Seoul government called in 90,000 troops to prevent political demonstrations, and the city was cleared in advance of all political dissidents, beggars and other undesirables.

1992, Barcelona

Barcelona was elected to host the first Olympic Summer Games since the dissolution of the USSR and the end of the Cold War. Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia fielded separate teams, while the rest of the former Soviet Union competed as a unified team. Germany competed as a single nation for the first time since 1964, and the ban was lifted on post-apartheid South Africa.

Atlanta 1996

The Atlanta Games, marking the 100th anniversary of the modern Olympic movement, were the first to be held without any governmental support, leading to criticism over commercialization of the Games. A pipe bomb exploded in Atlanta's Centennial Olympic Park, killing two people and injuring a further 110. No motive or group has been identified as the perpetrators of this alleged terrorist act. Hong Kong won its first Olympic gold medal, in windsurfing, one year before its reversion to Chinese sovereignty.

2002 Salt Lake Winter Games

The Salt Lake City Games were marred by the worst bribery scandal in the history of the modern Olympic movement when the city was found to have won its bid after plying IOC members and their families with more than \$1 million in gifts and scholarships. The ensuing scandal resulted in the forcing out of ten IOC leaders, as well as a congressional inquiry and a U.S. Justice Department investigation.

deteriorate as the Chinese leadership does seem to be targeting the country rather viciously.

Political prisoners/fair trials – Again, I have mixed feelings on this. Will there be a moratorium on arrests or will the Olympics be used as a blanket to cover up what is going on? It might be worth taking a look at what happened during the UN Women's conference in 1995.

Certainly, some Tibetan delegates were harassed and denied a visa, but what we should find out is whether there was a stepping up of arrests or release of prisoners to divert attention from the bigger picture.

Death penalty – Will there be mass sentencing rallies around the time of the Games? If this happened, it would be harder to argue why the Chinese government would do such a thing if they weren't ashamed or worried about affect of the death penalty on China's image.

Religious freedom – As with the death penalty and political prisoners, I'm not sure whether China will try to tone down its harassment of religious minorities. The situation in Tibet and the other "autonomous" provinces could be a source of embarrassment to the Chinese authorities. However, they may try to paint themselves as an all-inclusive country through "supporters" from these communities, possibly coercing entire populations into mass displays.

Release of political prisoners – I would think that there would be at least some high profile releases well in advance of the Games to try and take the sting out of the human rights question. What strikes me after having heard a presentation from a Chinese delegate from the Beijing committee at a sporting conference in October 2002 is that they are tired of hearing the human rights arguments when they present what the Games will look like, but they haven't yet formulated any convincing arguments to repel them. What would particularly interest us is if the Panchen Lama might be freed in advance of ratification of some international instrument. China may well have ratified the ICCPR by this point and may use ratification of other UN instruments to counter human rights arguments.

Corruption/transparency – China is quite sensitive on this subject but given the amount of money that will be involved in the Games, there is huge potential for wide-scale corruption. Perhaps if foreign companies could be persuaded to be openly transparent about their financial dealings in this respect and pressured to come clean, this could have a positive effect and set a precedent.

Sharon Hom Thanks to everyone for your responses. From each of your respective perspectives-- NGO advocacy, Internet policy, academic, and personal experience with China's security apparatus -- you have raised a rich range of issues. As the moderator, I am joining in at this point to raise some additional questions.

Gao Zhan points out the highly politicized nature of the bid and the hosting of the Olympics and suggests that the Olympics will have a mixed effect on the human rights situation. It is clear that the PRC government has effectively raised the nationalism banner to mobilize public support for

the hosting of the Olympics, as well as to silence critical political debate or attention to ongoing human rights violations in the name of national security or social stability. This appeal to nationalism for political purposes (e.g. maintaining control) is also effective in undermining international human rights activists' efforts to promote uncensored public debates and free flow of information.

So one follow-up question is: how can/should concerned actors address or respond to the very effective deployment of nationalism here by the PRC government? What strategies (rhetorical, advocacy, media, other?) can be explored to expose the political uses of appeal to nationalism?

Gao Zhan In addition to carrying out counter-propaganda activities on the media front, we should also play politics with the Chinese on their hosting of the Olympic Games. Two things we could think of doing: we can exert pressure on the U.S. Congress and the IOC by revealing to them how China is exploiting the opportunity of hosting the Games, and we can ask them to pass resolutions condemning the Chinese government and demanding improvement. We could do this by visiting the offices of members of Congress and by writing to IOC officials, or by hosting press conferences or other public forums.

Anne Callaghan I see a number of possible rhetorical responses that would defuse the pro-nationalism argument. Some examples:

- "Doesn't China Deserve Human Rights for Life - Not Just for the Olympics?"
- "Give Human Rights a Sporting Chance"

- "Chinese People Deserve Olympics, Corrupt Regime Does Not"

I think it's important to reach out to Chinese communities, not only in China, but also abroad.

Embarrassment strategies might also be effective. For example, we could elaborate on how various regimes have sought to use the Olympics to justify their human rights practices. Another possibility would be to stage public stunts and/or press briefings at the Athens 2004 Olympics that might test China's approach to the Olympics. In addition, we could consider ways to embarrass the IOC Evaluation Committee.

Ideally we need to find athletes and other sporting personalities willing to speak out for human rights. We can also apply pressure on Olympic sponsors by examining their public statements on human rights and pointing out contradictions with their Olympic promotion.

Regarding media strategies, we should target International Press Freedom Day in May or the International Olympic Day in June to raise questions about the extent of media freedom in China.

Sharon Hom Bobson Wong makes a distinction between the direct impact of the Olympics and the opportunities for making an impact due to a "world will be watching" context. He predicts a crackdown in the years leading up to the Olympics and perhaps a modest easing of some Internet restrictions to show China's openness. In suggesting that the key is monitoring human rights now, Bobson, can you talk more about DFN's plans in the lead-up to the Olympics? Can you also address more generally specific Internet strategies



Athletes such as China's Su Yiping should have an interest in an "untainted" Olympics. Photo: Reuters.

Also during the Salt Lake Games, Russian sports authorities were obliged to deny allegations that a Russian mobster had tried to fix skating contests. Beijing won its Olympics bid on July 13, 2001, raising protests from human rights groups. One month later, while visiting Beijing for the first time, IOC president Jacques Rogge was quick to state that the IOC would not monitor China's human rights record or relations with Taiwan in the run-up to the 2008 Olympic Games. "The International Olympic Committee is not a political body, it is a sports organization, so we will not be involved in politics," said Rogge, restating the message several times at a press conference in Beijing. "The IOC is, of course, in favor of the best possible situation for human rights in all countries in the world," he said. "But it is not the task of the International Olympic Committee to get involved in monitoring and/or lobbying and/or influencing."

Several possible scenarios could lead to unrest during the Beijing Olympics:

- Tibet: The Dalai Lama dies. His death sparks international demonstrations against China.
- Water crisis: A severe drought in northern China continues from 2003 to 2008, leaving millions of thirsty, poverty-stricken farmers. Tens of thousands of farmers demonstrate in Beijing demanding a solution.
- Growing economic gap: Thousands of poor migrants, their pay with

held for more than a year, march into Beijing.

- The Falun Gong: During the opening ceremony, at the Olympic stadium, foreign athletes raise banners supporting the movement. Support for the banned cult continues throughout the Games.
- Summer sandstorms.
- Taiwan: Political negotiations between Beijing and Taipei reach a stalemate, raising the tensions on both sides of the Straits. The Taiwanese President declares independence. (Note, however, that Taiwan supported Beijing's Olympics bid in the belief that Beijing would exercise restraint toward the island in order to avoid an international boycott of the Games.)
- Food poisoning: An unemployed local resident puts rat poison in food sold on the street, killing several foreign tourists and hospitalizing dozens of others.
- Crowd problems: Beijing expects about 5 million "foreign guests," along with 120 million domestic visitors, to flow into the city for the Olympics. China has experienced several recent incidents in which unmanageable crowds have led to injury, death, and event cancellation.

Adapted from "Beijing 2008 Olympic Games" in ChinaWNN business newsletter, February 20, 2003, and "Politics and the Olympics" in *The Guardian*, February 12, 2003.

for monitoring human rights situation, (e.g. DFN's excellent monitoring work), and how to amplify voices from inside China as well as get uncensored information flow in?

Bobson Wong At this point, DFN has no specific plans to do anything related to the Olympics – not because we don't think it's important but because we don't feel that tying our existing human rights monitoring to the Olympics will add much to the debate.

Empowering voices from within China involves a number of things.

First, Internet access in China needs to be improved; since the government is already spending a lot of money on this, I don't think there's much that people outside China need to do.

The second thing that needs to happen is for government filtering of the Internet to be reduced or eliminated. This is a much trickier thing – there are technological ways to get around filtering, of course. The problem is that many of these methods require some persistence - subscribing to e-mail lists that send you URLs of proxy servers that are only good for a few days before censors shut them down. This is not for the casual surfer. What's surprising is the substantial number of Net users in China who use them – about 10 percent of urban Internet users in China according to a recent study by researchers at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. There is a lot of work to be done in this regard – advancements in tools like SafeWeb, Triangle Boy, and other technological methods for circumventing censorship will definitely help.

But technological tools only get you so far because the government has a lot of money to counteract anti-censorship tools in what journalists like to call a "cat-and-mouse" game. These policies won't change unless Internet users in China feel threatened. Change is not going to come from outside pressure. It's too late for that. Pressuring western Internet companies not to do business in China is pointless now because they have too much money involved to change their minds. In the last few years, dissidents have been detained for using the Internet for political purposes and unfortunately most users in China don't seem to care. Internet users in China have spoken out when the government overreached and began affecting the average user. Look at the outrage from ordinary users last September after access to Google was temporarily blocked, when cybercafes in Beijing were shut down in June after a terrible fire, and after Liu Di (a university student who made the mistake of protesting government restrictions on the Internet) was detained. Users are beginning to realize that the government isn't just targeting dissidents. Ordinary users' fears that they could be next is more likely to spur change than any technological advancement.

Sharon Hom Anne Callaghan outlines a very thorough inventory of human rights concerns and issues. On Xinjiang, the situation is deteriorating and quite serious, and China has been opportunistically invoking the war against terrorism to wage its campaign against "separatists." Human

Rights Watch and HRIC will be issuing a joint report in the spring 2003 on Xinjiang that we hope will generate more attention to the ongoing human rights abuses there. Some questions for Anne and everyone:

- In pressing for guarantees for media freedom during the games (and leading up to the Games?), what kinds of specific guarantees can you suggest in terms of time frame or scope?
- Are there any thoughts on Anne's question regarding the technological ability of international media to broadcast independently of a Chinese (and censored) communication system?

Anne Callaghan On pressing for specific guarantees, one possibility would be to highlight one specific theme over and above the others each year. However, given the scope of human rights abuses involved and the need for year-on-year improvement, I would prefer more of a "report card" format, giving "end of term marks" to China on its human rights record.

On media freedom I suggest pressing for these guarantees:

- Unrestricted media access to all areas of China
- No media handlers during visits or interviews
- No interference with the publication or transmission of reports on human rights or political issues
- Removing site bans on the Web (with external monitoring on whether the number of affected sites has decreased, and whether key sites can be accessed)

Apart from making demands on the Chinese government, I think we should also encourage the cooperation of outside actors.

For instance, there could be a Hot Spot Identification program, through which front-line reporters could report back on how media freedom is frustrated. These reports should be tracked for follow-up in subsequent years to see if there's been any improvement.

We should also press Internet providers to challenge China's site bans and to withdraw from "voluntary codes."

Bobson Wong I am not completely familiar with the abilities of satellite technology in circumventing local filters. However, if past history is any guide, I doubt that the government would censor information going out of China to the rest of the world. I think it's more likely that the government would censor information that people in China could see.

Sharon Hom In terms of developing concrete measurable "benchmarks" for assessing and monitoring the human rights situation in China in the lead-up to the Olympics, what areas would you suggest these focus on? For example, HRIC is exploring the first year's benchmark (2003) as focusing on the release of all political prisoners, especially those still imprisoned for the now non-existent crime of counter-revolutionary activity.

Anne Callaghan I would like to see the following benchmarks:

- Political prisoners - press for the release of all still being held for the now-non-existent crime of counter-revolutionary activity by the end of 2003 (but is it legally feasible to accomplish this so quickly?)
 - Prison labor - develop codes of conduct relating to merchandise manufactured in prison labor camps. We could call on Olympics sponsors to monitor implementation of the codes.
 - International obligations - call on China to adhere to its current international obligations, and to ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
 - Olympics preparation - Beijing authorities should pledge not to use the Olympics to justify a human rights crackdown or forced removal of people from their homes.
 - Tibet issues - call for China to grant impartial international observers access to the Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima. Access should in particular be granted to Special Rapporteurs on torture and religious freedom.
 - Also on Tibet - press for full and unconditional negotiations with Tibet's Government in Exile by 2004.
- One other thought is to look at possibilities for including the Olympics as part of areas studied by the various relevant Special Rapporteurs - and within UN committees. For example, the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights could provide an opportunity for examining China's record linked to rights abuses associated with the Games.

In addition, special hearings could be held within Congress or various parliaments analyzing the information and debating whether companies should be allowed to bid for contracts that may facilitate human rights abuse -- I'm thinking particularly of security and monitoring equipment.

Sharon Hom Thanks to everyone for making the time to share your ideas and perspectives in this round-table discussion. Anne's thorough coverage of the breadth of issues and specific strategy ideas clearly reflect the effective advocacy and research grounding the Free Tibet Campaign. Bobson offered good insights regarding the role of technology in developing strategies for empowering more voices within China. Gao Zhan and Andrew offered mixed assessments on the likely impact (or not) of the Olympics on China's human rights environment. As HRIC moves forward with our Incorporating Responsibility 2008 campaign, we invite ongoing discussion and input from all of you as well as from all our readers. We hope that by sharing ideas and collaborating on specific strategies, we can work together in the coming years to maximize the window of opportunity for making a greater impact on the improving the human rights situation in China.