

**RAN #11 March 20, 2008**

**CHINA:** freedom of the press to report from Tibet

**Please note:** On December 10, 2007 PEN Canada launched a Countdown to the Olympics. On that day (242 from Olympics opening) there were 40 writers in prison. Today there are 38. Many upcoming RANS will be part of this campaign; for details see our website. Please participate!

**BACKGROUND:** China has imposed complete restrictions on the press and flow of information from Tibet, where protests and repression have reportedly resulted in at least 100 deaths in Lhasa and other cities. News blackouts and censorship imposed by China have removed a critical deterrent to human rights abuses and increased suspicions of official wrongdoing.

The Chinese government has long prevented international journalists from reporting freely from Tibet. No international journalists have been allowed to enter or report from Tibet since Buddhist monks began peaceful demonstrations last week to protest continuing restrictions on religious and cultural activities in Tibet. Satellite broadcasts focusing on events in Tibet have been jammed in Beijing and other Chinese cities; video footage of journalists forced to leave Tibet has been confiscated and news sites such as the LA Times and The Guardian have been shut down, leaving China's citizens in the dark about the unfolding tragedy.

The Chinese government pledged to the world that there would be no restrictions on media reporting and movement of journalists anywhere in China, up to and including the Olympic Games. That pledge has been completely undermined by its conduct in Tibet, and by the ongoing crackdown on journalists, writers and cyber-dissidents. The Chinese government's restrictions on news reporting only fuel suspicions that its actions go beyond what is necessary to protect public safety and amount to another violent crackdown on free expression and dissent.

Please send the appeal letter below. Note: there are no fax numbers for Chinese authorities. We recommend that you mail your letter to the President of China in P.R. China, and send your appeal to the Chinese embassy in Ottawa asking them to forward it to other authorities in China and welcoming any comments.

---

—  
March 20, 2008

His Excellency Hu Jintao  
President of the People's Republic of China  
State Council  
Beijing 100032  
People's Republic of China

Excellency:

As a member of PEN Canada, the Canadian centre of the international writers' organization with member centres in 145 countries, I write to ask that you and your officials take urgent action on the issue of press access and freedom of expression in Tibet.

First, we urge that you immediately lift restrictions on the press and flow of information from Tibet, where protests and repression have reportedly resulted in many deaths in Lhasa and other cities.

We ask that your government provide unfettered access to the Tibet Autonomous Region and all traditionally Tibetan areas in Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu and Yunnan provinces to international journalists and restore phone and Internet access.

Secondly, we ask that China ratify immediately the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, signed in 2001, but never ratified. Signing this treaty would signal that China is serious about honoring its commitments to improved human rights for the people of China.

We again respectfully request that the Chinese government:

- Abide by its pledge that "there will be no restrictions on media reporting and movement of journalists in China up to and including the Olympic Games";
- End all internet censorship and reform the laws now being used to suppress the free exchange of information and ideas on the internet;
- Not impose conditions of censorship on writers who are released.

China's citizens are ready to exercise the rights they are guaranteed under their constitution and under international law, including the freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

With all eyes on China this year, we look forward to the good news that international press access to Tibet has been restored, and that our 38 writer colleagues have been released and that no restrictions have been imposed upon their freedom to write..

Sincerely,

[your signature and name and address]

**Copies (care of the Chinese Embassy in Ottawa) to:**

Procurator General Mr. Jia Chunwang  
Supreme People's Procuratorate  
Beiheyuan Street 147  
100726 Beijing  
P.R.China

H.E. Lu Shumin  
Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Canada  
Embassy of the Peoples Republic of China  
515 St. Patrick Street, Ottawa, Ont. K1N 5H3  
Fax: (613) 789-1911

Huang Huikang  
Political Counsellor and Deputy Chief of Mission  
Embassy of the Peoples Republic of China  
515 St. Patrick Street, Ottawa, Ont. K1N 5H3  
Fax: (613) 789-1911  
E-mail Address: [chinaemb\\_ca@mfa.gov.cn](mailto:chinaemb_ca@mfa.gov.cn)

**Please also send copies of your appeal to the following Canadian authorities:**

Robert Sinclair  
Deputy Director, Human Rights Division  
Foreign Affairs Canada  
Email: [robert.sinclair@international.gc.ca](mailto:robert.sinclair@international.gc.ca)

Robert Wright  
Ambassador  
Embassy of Canada  
19 Dongzhimenwai Dajie  
Chao Yang District  
Beijing 100600 PRC  
Email: [beijing-pa@international.gc.ca](mailto:beijing-pa@international.gc.ca)

Fax: (011 86 10) 6532-5033

Toby Schwartz  
Desk Officer, China  
Foreign Affairs Canada  
Email: [toby.schwartz@international.gc.ca](mailto:toby.schwartz@international.gc.ca)