



August, 2008

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INTERNATIONAL

President Hu Jintao welcomed the honorary Chairman of the KMT Lien Chan, KMT Chairman Wu Poh-hsiung and People First Chairman, John Song, who all came from Taiwan on the advent of the Olympics. President Hu welcomed the support of the Taiwanese people for the Games.

[Originally reported by CCTV, 8 August]

Two Spanish groups have filed lawsuits in Madrid against seven Chinese officials saying that they are responsible for the deaths of 203 Tibetans during the spring protests. Under Spanish law, magistrates have universal jurisdiction for charges such as genocide and crimes against humanity. The two Spanish groups making the charges are the Tibet Support Committee and the House of Tibet Private Foundation. The Chinese foreign ministry declined to comment on the news.

[Originally reported by AP, 5 August]

The Dalai Lama told French television channel TF1 that some Chinese officials inside Tibet “do not respect the Olympic Spirit”, that there was “very strong censorship” in the region, and that “often civilians are arrested and tortured very violently to the point where they die.” The Dalai is in France for most of the Olympics, attending various spiritual meetings.

[Originally reported by AP 17 August]

The Dalai Lama has cancelled all international appointments for three weeks as he recovers from “exhaustion”. The 73 year old Nobel Prize Laureate was planning to visit Mexico and the Dominican Republic. [Originally reported by BBC, 28 Aug]

During his first major international visit, President Ma Ying-jeou of Taiwan requested a ‘truce’ in the international competition between Taipei and Beijing for diplomatic allies. The Taipei government is now only recognized by 23 foreign countries, mostly small, who have received large Taiwanese subsidies in return. Ma addressed the leaders of Panama, Honduras, Guatemala, Haiti and Belize saying that they should seek trade ties with Beijing, and that Taiwan would switch its financial aid to technical aid in future. China has not yet officially responded to the calls for a ‘truce’, but the move was welcomed by China’s Taiwan experts. [Originally reported by DPA, 18 August]

Prime Minister Gordon Brown has said that it is in Britain’s national self-interest to support “China’s re-engagement with the world” and that he wanted to “emphasize China’s responsibility as a stakeholder in the world”. Mr Brown is travelling with his family to the Olympics and expects to watch several events, as well as be present for the closing ceremony when the Olympic flag is handed on to London.

[Originally reported by Bloomberg, 23 August]

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There are around 10,000 American students now enrolled in programs at Chinese universities and colleges. The number has increased 500% in ten years and makes China the seventh most popular overseas destination for US students. China is cheaper than studying in Europe, there are increasing numbers of American-trained academics in Chinese universities, and China is seen as the future. Concerns about teaching quality, health care and finding host families still may still influence the future growth of the programme. There are around 50,000 Chinese students studying in the US.
[Originally reported by AP, 21 August]

NATIONAL NEWS

Chinese leadership relaxed several restrictions for foreign journalists in the leadup to the Olympics. Government spokesman Guo Wemin gave reassurances that media freedoms would be safeguarded. Minister's phone numbers were published on government websites for the first time. The governor of Xinjiang, Kuerxi Maihesuti calmly answered questions on the previous weeks' attacks on police and military outposts, normally a taboo subject for reporters.
[Originally reported by SCMP, 11 August]

Hu Jia, a leading human rights and AIDS activist, sentenced to three years imprisonment earlier this year, has been denied medical treatment and forced to work seven hours in the sun raking leaves. Mr Hu suffers from cirrhosis of the liver, and has not been allowed to see a liver specialist or get the rest he needs. All his letters to his family have been confiscated. His wife Zeng Jinyan and infant daughter have been allowed to return to Beijing after being put up in a hotel in Dalian since early August. They are still under surveillance.
[Originally reported by AsiaNews, 26 August]

Hu Shigen, a democracy activist, has been released after serving 16 years in prison. Mr Hu, 53, was charged with carrying out counter-revolutionary propaganda and incitement and organizing a counter-revolutionary group. He had been a lecturer at Beijing Languages Institute when he set up a political party and an independent labour union. He also planned commemorations for those killed after the Tiananmen Square pro-democracy protest in 1989. Hu's political rights to freedom of speech, assembly and association are suspended for a further five years.
[Originally reported by AP, 27 August]

A man accused of killing six police officers in Shanghai has gained some sympathy in the country's press. Yang Jia, a jobless man, walked into a police station on 1 July and stabbed several police officers – killing five immediately and injuring four more. One of the injured died the following day. Yang told police he was seeking revenge after he received psychological trauma during an interrogation by police last year for riding an unlicensed bicycle. Papers including *Southern Weekend* and the Xinhua News, noted that Yang tried to sue the police for psychological damage, but his case was turned down. His appointed lawyer also works as a legal advisor to the Zhabei district government where Yang was arrested. The trial concluded on 26 August, but no verdict was made public. The death penalty is expected. [Originally reported by AP, 29 August]



Another earthquake in Sichuan killed 33 people, injured hundreds and caused thousands to flee ruined homes. The earthquake was measured at 5.7 on the Richter Scale, and occurred along the same fault line as the May 12 earthquake which claimed the lives of nearly 70,000. The new school term was delayed for a week as officials continued inspecting schoolrooms for damage. The new quake's epicenter was in southern Sichuan, near Panzhihua. About 152,000 people have since been evacuated amid more fears of reservoirs flooding, and relief efforts were being stepped up to bring in tents, food and quilts. The region has been hit by perhaps 300 aftershocks since the May earthquake.

[Originally reported by AP, 1 October]

OLYMPICS

Zhang Yimou, the artistic director for the Olympic Opening Ceremony as well as being a famous film director, said that the Ceremony should express "who we are" as well as "the idea of you and we are actually a family." It was also a sensual and humane expression of the slogan "one world, one dream". The *People's Daily* also indicated that the Ceremony displays China's governmental capabilities, the spirit of the Chinese people, and exhibits Chinese culture to the world.

[Originally reported by People's Daily, 10 August]

Chen Qigang, the musical director for the opening ceremony revealed that the young girl Lin Miaoke only lip-synched one of the songs. The voice belonged to another girl, Yang Peiyi, whose face was deemed too plain for the ceremony. [Originally reported by AsiaNews, 13 August]

The coach of the Chinese women's gymnastic team at the Olympics has said the one child policy is diminishing the pool of talented young gymnasts in the country. Liu Qunlin, who coached the team to gold, was explaining why the winning streak was broken when the American Nastia Liukin won the women's individual all-round gold. However, another coach, Lu Shanzhen, added that the attractive, highly technical and charming performances given by the gymnasts at Beijing would attract new girls into the sport. [Originally reported by Reuters, 15 August]

The majority of the forty-or-so foreign protestors detained during the Olympics were kept in custody for only a few hours and subsequently deported. Ten foreigners protesting for a free Tibet were held in custody for ten days after video blogging their protests in Beijing. Foreigners may be held without charge in China for up to fourteen days. None of the seventy applications to hold protests in the approved 'demonstration zones' in Beijing were approved. Wu Dianyuan, 79, who applied for a protest permit has been sentenced to one year of re-education, after she complained about the low compensation paid for her Beijing home to make way for redevelopment.

[Originally reported by Washington Post, 22 August; AP 25 August; Reuters, 26 August]

It is possible that traffic restrictions introduced into Beijing for the Olympic period may be continued. The municipal government will hold hearings before the scheduled end of the scheme on the 18 September. [Originally reported by People's Daily, 26 August]



CHURCH AND RELIGIOUS NEWS

Numerous foreign visitors have been in Beijing for the Olympics, some noting the open Chinese churches for the first time. Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Luxembourg's Grand Duke Henri, and Samoa's head of state, Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese Efi all attended mass at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception (Nantang) on 10 August. The Bishop of Beijing, Joseph Li Shan hosted a reception for them after the service. [Originally reported by UCAN, August 14]

Bishop Joseph Li Shan has told Italian television that relations with the Vatican are "constantly improving ... We can say that there are big developments." Liu Bainian, vice-president of the CCPA, responded that he hoped the Pope "can visit China as soon as possible" but that the first step had to be the Vatican establishing diplomatic relations with Beijing. [Originally reported by AP, 20 August; AFP, 21 August]

American President George W. Bush visited Kuanjie Church in Beijing on 10 August. He said outside the church that it was 'a great joy and privilege' to worship in Beijing, and 'it just goes to show that God is universal, and God is love, and no state, man or woman should fear the influence of loving religion.' He added at a press conference that the Olympics provided the opportunity for him to tell the Chinese people, 'Religion won't hurt you. You ought to welcome religious people.' He thought that Chinese leaders should 'register the underground churches and give them a chance to flourish.' [Originally reported by AFP, 10 August; UCAN, August 14]

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom called for President Bush to insist that the Chinese government to guarantee freedoms of religion and public thought. Felice D. Gaer claimed that rather than leading to an improvement in human rights in China, the Beijing Olympics had given rise to an "increasingly dire" situation, "particularly for many of China's religious adherents." The Commission pointed to the detention of Buddhist monks and lay people since April, the detention of more than 30 Catholic priests and bishops, and of over 700 Protestant leaders who had been refused government registration. In addition there was repression against Falungong and some Islamic groups. [Originally reported by ENI, 31 July]

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao urged President Bush to view the situation of religions in China with a just and balanced viewpoint. "China is a country under the rule of law, and the Chinese government is protects its citizen's freedom of religious belief according to law, and Chinese citizens enjoy full freedom of religious belief protected by law." Liu continued that all Chinese are "equal before the law" and that "anyone's speech or behaviour should not violate the country's law nor imperil the state security and social stability." Spokesman Qin Gang also added that "The Chinese government puts people first, and is dedicated to maintaining and promoting its citizens' basic rights and freedom. Chinese citizens have freedom of religion. These are indisputable facts. ... As for divergence on human rights and religions, we always advocate that both sides talk from a basis of mutual respect and equality, to enhance understanding and diminish divergence, and enlarge mutual consensus." [Originally reported by AP, 8 August; Chinaview, 16 July]



China Desk Bulletin



Hua Huiqi, arrested with his brother on his way to attend Kuanjie church on 10 August escaped from his captors later the same time. Mr. Hua is a pastor of an unregistered church, and has been arrested several times. His mother Shuang Shuying, 78, has been serving a two-year prison sentence for 'damaging state property'. Since his escape, Mr. Hua has been in hiding.

[Originally reported by NYT, 13 August]

President Bush's visit to China will not include a speech reminiscent of President Reagan's "Tear Down this Wall" given in West Berlin. Despite pressure from certain elements within the US Congress to mark his visit by meetings with house-church leaders or demand human rights reform, the White House has chosen not to confront Chinese sensibilities. President Bush will be the first sitting president to attend the Olympics, and has said he is going as a sports fan. [Originally reported by NYT, 5 August]

The Pope expressed his wishes that the Beijing Olympics would be a "pledge of fraternity and peace among peoples" and would be held "in respect of common dignity." He hoped that China "would open itself to the Gospel." He also sent his "cordial greetings to the host country, to the organisers and participants, in the first place to the athletes." He also expressed deep interest in the unfolding competition. The Pope was speaking during his summer holiday in Bressanone, north Italy, where he visited the small mountain church of Oies, dedicated to the China missionary St. Josef Freinadmetz..

[Originally reported by AsiaNews, 3 August]

The Catholic coadjutor bishop of Hong Kong, John Tong Hon, attended the Olympic opening ceremony. Although he had hoped to meet the bishop of Beijing, Joseph Li Shan, but it was deemed that the timing would be inconvenient. The two did speak by telephone. Bishop Tong also expressed the Vatican's good will toward China, adding that as far as Sino-Vatican relations are concerned, "the ball is now in China's court". He said that he hoped "China may have genuine progress not only in a materialist dimension but also progress in a spiritual dimension."

The opening ceremony was also attended by the bishop of Macao, Jose Lai Hung-seng, who noted that many resources had been used to help foreigners understand China better though some of the historic sequences had been a bit "abstract". [Originally reported by UCAN, AsiaNews, 6 August, 12 August]

The Justice and Peace Commission of Hong Kong Catholic diocese presented a petition to the Chinese government's Liaison Office, detailing those recently detained in China after trying to protect residents' farmlands and houses, and the cause of a number of underground bishops and priests who remain detained during the Olympics. They particularly highlighted the case of bishop Su Zhimin of Baoding diocese who has been missing since being detained in October, 1997.

A number of underground priests have returned to their home provinces from Beijing during the Olympics. Strict controls have been issued in the capital concerning people from other provinces, and so a number of priests have made alternative arrangements to allow their parishioners to attend registered churches presided over by the Vatican recognised bishop Joseph Li Shan. Underground bishops in Tianjin and Hebei have been placed under house arrest and forbidden from contacting their priests during the Olympic period. [7 August, 2008]

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Despite warnings to attend celebrations in their own parishes, perhaps 1000 Catholics travelled to celebrate the Feast of the Assumption of Mary at the cathedral in Wuqiu village, near Shijiazhuang, Hebei province. The Mass was presided over by the unrecognised bishop Julius Jia Zhiguo alone, and other priests in the diocese were detained or warned from attending. Bishop Jia has been under 24 hour surveillance since April. 5 priests from the diocese were taken to a government guesthouse where they were told to stay for three days. While the priests were free to read the Bible, celebrate Mass together, and use the guesthouse facilities during the day, Public Security officials were stationed in their bedrooms throughout the night. [Originally reported by UCAN, 20 August]

The unregistered bishop of Zhengding, Julius Jia Zhiguo was detained on the concluding day of the Olympics, 24 August. After celebrating morning mass, the 73 year old bishop was taken by police from the Wuqiu cathedral and bishop's residence where he has been under house arrest for several months. Msgr. Jia has already spent 15 years in prison (between 1963-1978) and since 1989 has been under close surveillance and subject to periodic rearrests. His diocese in Hebei is one of the centres of the unregistered Catholic church, with around 110,000 "underground" believers. [Originally reported by AsiaNews, 25 August; UCAN 26 August]

The number of Massgoers in Sichuan has increased markedly following the earthquake in May. Although several churches were destroyed by the quake, a number of temporary and new structures have been erected in Mianzhu and surrounding counties. Three temporary buildings have been built under the supervision of Chengdu diocese's Church Restoration Office. Catholic care, concern and outreach following the quake has increased the fervour of previously non-practising Catholics, said Father Li in Mianzhu. [Originally reported by UCAN, 1 August]

Liu Bainian, chairman of the CCPA, said that Catholic churches in Beijing had printed and distributed 30,000 bilingual Chinese/English New Testaments prior to the Olympic Games. Churches in Tianjin which is hosting some of the football matches has been given 2,000 to distribute, while Shanghai diocese printed 20,000 of its own bilingual New Testament for foreign visitors during the Olympics. [Originally reported by UCAN, 4 August]

Pat Klein of Vision Beyond Borders said he and his group had 300 Bibles confiscated from them after flying into Kunming airport from Thailand on 17 August. Mr. Klein said he has brought in over 20,000 Bibles into China since the 1980s, and this is the first time some of them have been confiscated. He and his group, which includes members of his family, were refusing to leave the airport until the books were returned. Customs officials told the group could take one Bible each into China and collect the rest when they returned to the airport to fly home. [Originally reported by AFP, 17 August; CNN 18 August]



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ABBREVIATIONS AND ORIGINAL SOURCES

AF	Agenzia Fides	www.fides.org
AFP	Agence France Presse	www.afp.com
AP	Associated Press	www.ap.org
BBC	British Broadcasting Association	www.bbc.co.uk
BOCOG	Beijing Organising Committee for the Olympic Games	
CAA	China Aid Association	www.chinaaid.org
CASS	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences	
CCC	China Christian Council [Protestant]	
CCP	Chinese Communist Party	
(C)CPA	(Chinese) Catholic Patriotic Association	
CD	China Daily	www.chinadaily.net/news/
CHCA	Chinese House Church Association [Protestant]	
CRI	China Radio International	
CWN	Catholic World News	
	Chinaview	www.chinaview.cn
	China.org.cn	www.China.org.cn
DPA	Deutsche Presse-Agentur	
EDA	Églises D'Asie	http://eglisie.mepasie.org
FT	Financial Times	www.ft.com
	Guardian	www.guardian.co.uk
HK	Hong Kong	
	Independent	www.independent.co.uk
IHT	International Herald Tribune	www.iht.com
IPS	Inter Press Service	www.ipsnews.net
PBOC	People's Bank of China [China's Central Bank]	
PBS	Public Broadcast Radio	www.pbs.org
RAB	Religious Affairs Bureau	
	Religious Intelligence	www.religiousintelligence.co.uk
	Reuters	www.reuters.co.uk
SARA	State Administration for Religious Affairs	
SCMP	South China Morning Post	www.scmp.com
SOE	State Owned Enterprise	
	Telegraph	www.telegraph.co.uk
	The Times	www.timesonline.co.uk/
UCAN	Union of Catholic Asia News	www.ucanews.com
UNPO	Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization	
	Xinhua	http://www.xinhua.org/

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