



July, 2008

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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]

OLYMPICS

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]

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]

American President George W. Bush visited Kuanjie Church in Beijing on 10 August. He said later 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.' 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 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."



China Desk Bulletin



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." [Originally reported by Chinaview, 16 July]

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]

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 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. [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". 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, 12 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]

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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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