

July 13, 2001: Commission "Deeply Disappointed" by Awarding of Olympic Games to Beijing

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom today issued the following statement:

"The Commission is deeply disappointed by today's decision of the International Olympic Committee to award the 2008 Olympic Games to Beijing. This decision sends a message to the leaders of China that their appalling and worsening record on religious freedom - a record over the past year that includes arrest and harassment of unregistered Protestant and Roman Catholic Christians; hundreds of Falun Gong practitioners tortured and murdered in police custody and some incarcerated in psychiatric hospitals; closures of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and interference in private Buddhist worship; executions of Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang; and the desecration and destruction of thousands of worship sites - does not matter to the rest of the world."

"The Commission also deeply regretted the Bush Administration's neutral stance on the issue, despite the Commission's May 1 recommendation that the Administration make diplomatic efforts to oppose the awarding of the Games to Beijing."

"Nevertheless, we hope that President Bush will now join with the leaders of all other Olympic countries to press China to live up to the obligations it has undertaken to ensure, beginning now, that the Games take place in an atmosphere in which the religious freedom and human rights of participants, spectators, and Chinese citizens are honored and protected. Only by upholding religious freedom and related international human rights obligations will China merit the awarding of the Olympic Games. We call upon Secretary of State Powell to deliver that message during his upcoming trip to Beijing."

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