

**Statements of Support from Athletes and Sports Figures (Current as of 28 March)**

**Australia, Austria, Canada, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Switzerland, Thailand and USA.**

**Please send additions to [olympics@tibetnetwork.org](mailto:olympics@tibetnetwork.org).**

**AUSTRALIA**

Michelle Engelsman of Australia, a swimming competitor at the Athens Olympics in 2004, told Australian Broadcasting Corp. television that the protests and crackdown had added to her concerns about possibly competing in Beijing. "To be going into a country that has massive rioting and death going on, that's definitely something to be paying attention to and be concerned," she said.

**AUSTRIA**

3/17 - A local Austrian newspaper carried a report where ex-Olympic champions and legendary athletes have publicly called for adherence to human rights:

The ex-athletes are:

Marcus Wasmeier - ex-Olympic skiing champion

Anja Richter - legendary diving champion

Rosi Mittermaier - 2 time ex-Olympic skiing Champion 1976.

Marcus Wasmeier - Demands that human rights be adhered to for the Olympic Games

Anja Richter - Human rights are being trodden upon in China. Therefore, the IOC shouldn't have awarded the Games to China

Rosi Mittermaier - appalled at how China tramples on human rights.

**BELGIUM**

# Belgian athlete-Kim Gevaert (Olympic sprinter who expressed her discontent with the hosting country of the Olympic Games. "Organising the Games in a country that violates Human Rights, at first sight this cannot be and should not allowed to be.")

# Belgian athlete-Sébastien Godefroid (Olympic sailor who stated "People who have been there already, have found the human rights not always being respected in an optimal way. I am convinced that the China reserved for the Olympic Games is a totally different country then the China we are not shown. Until now, Rogge has always pointed at China's promises to improve, but the practice doesn't equal the theory...It would be a good thing if Rogge had the courage to make an effort."

# Belgian athlete-Veerle Dejaehere (Olympic runner who stated "I would be very pleased if he (Jacques Rogge) will take a stance... One of the Olympic ideals is respect, so we should also have respect for Human Rights."

**CANADA**

Anna Rice, badminton player, doing MA in Human Rights: "I can't basically say in what capacity I'd commit to something, but I definitely want to see what is going on and potentially get involved in varying degrees." (CBC, The National, March 26<sup>th</sup>).

Mark Tewksbury (1988 Silver Medalist, Canada)  
MC at HHDL's public talk in Ottawa, 2007  
<http://www.tibet.ca/en/newsroom/library/tewksbury>

"When those men [founders of the modern Olympic Games] of peace met in Paris in 1894, were the Beijing Games what they really had in mind as they wrote their fundamental principles to the Olympic Charter.

Principles which included that the practice of sport is a human right to be celebrated without discrimination in regards to a country or a person on the grounds of race, religion, politics, or gender.

And the principle that to do otherwise is incompatible with belonging to the Olympic Movement.

This coming August, thousands of athletes from around the world will compete at the Olympic Games.

Let's celebrate their passion and their personal triumphs.  
But as we do, let's also honour those who remain oppressed through military occupation or imprisoned solely for their beliefs and faith.

## FRANCE

French swimming champion Alain Bernard, fresh from his two world records - and two gold medals - from the European Swimming Championships, said a political boycott of the opening ceremony would send an important message.

French pole vaulter Romain Mesnil wants athletes at the Beijing Olympics to wear green ribbons in support of human rights in China after the clampdown on protests in Tibet. Mesnil, the silver medalist at last year's world championships in Japan, is the president of the French athletes' union.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2008/03/22/sports/OLY-Beijing-Green-Ribbons.php>

Yohann Diniz intends to boycott the opening or closing of the Games in Beijing in order to "get a message to China and public opinion" concerning respect for human rights.

Appeal from French Athletes to Hu Jintao (using google translator):

<http://www.google.com/translate?u=http%3A%2F%2Ftempsreel.nouvelobs.com%2F&langpair=fr%7Cen&hl=en&ie=UTF8>

“...an appeal to Chinese president Hu Jintao to hold his word "respect human rights" and that it does "not spoil the Games."

"To get the Olympics in Beijing, the Chinese government pledged to respect human rights. Today, the violent suppression of riots in Tibet seriously calls into question the word given to the Olympic Movement" believe the signatories of the appeal published in "Le Nouvel Observateur" on Thursday."

Signed by (running list):

1. Christine Arron, Championne du Monde 4 x100 m (2003) Christine Arron, World Champion 4 x100 m (2003)
2. Murielle Urtis, Championne du Monde 200 m salle (2003), Championne du monde du 4 x100 m (2003) Murielle Urtis, World Champion Room 200 m (2003), World Champion of the 4 x100 m (2003)
3. Yohan Diniz, Vice Champion du Monde 50 Km marche (2007) Yohan Diniz, Vice World Champion 50 (2007)
4. Romain Mesnil, perchiste, vice champion du monde la perche à Osaka (2007). Romain Mesnil, pole vaulter, vice world champion perch in Osaka (2007).
5. Vanessa Boslak, perchiste, recordwoman de France (2006) Vanessa Boslak, pole vaulter, recordwoman of France (2006)
6. Adriana Lamalle, finaliste championnat du monde du 100m haies et 4x100m (2007) Adriana Lamalle, a finalist in the World Championships 100m hurdles and 4x100m (2007)
7. Sophie Duharte, championne de France 3000 m steeple (2007) Sophie Duharte champion of France 3000 (2007)
8. Romain Barras, champion de France décathlon (2005) Romain Barras, France decathlon champion (2005)
9. Marie Collonvillé, recordwoman du Monde Décathlon féminin (2005) Marie Collonvillé, recordwoman the World Women's Decathlon (2005)
10. Brice Panel, sélectionné aux Jeux de Pékin sur 400 m et relais 4x400 m. Brice Panel, selected to the Beijing Games in 400 metres and 4x400 metres relay
11. Vincent le Dauphin, 3000 m Steeple Vincent Le Dauphin, 3000 m Steeple
12. Adrien Hardy, champion du monde aviron deux de couple (2003, 2006), médaille d'or à Athènes (2004) Adrien Hardy, world champion rowing pair of two (2003, 2006), gold medal in Athens (2004)
13. Isabelle Severino, gymnaste, championne d'Europe au sol (2005), championne de France barres asymétriques (2006) Isabelle Severino, gymnast, champion of Europe Ground (2005), French champion uneven bars (2006)
14. Frédérique Jossinet, judo médaille d'argent JO Athènes (2004), médaille d'or par équipe (2006) Frédérique Jossinet, judo silver medal OJ Athens (2004), gold medal team (2006)
15. Julien Bahain, vice-champion du monde d'aviron en quatre de couple (2007) Julien Bahain, vice-world champion rowing in four of torque (2007)
16. David Maître, natation, 50m nage libre Master David, swimming, swimming 50m free
17. Jonathan Coeffic, aviron, vice-champion du monde en quatre de couple Jonathan Coeffic, rowing, vice-world champion in four torque
18. Sophie de Ronchi, recordwoman de France 100m quatre nages Sophie de Ronchi, France recordwoman of 100m medley

19. Jacques Chollet, préparateur physique, Bobsleigh, médaille de bronze aux JO de Nagano en 1998 Jacques Chollet, physical preparer, Bob, bronze medal at the Olympic Games in Nagano in 1998

20. Yves Le Roy, décathlon, médaille d'argent aux championnats d'Europe de Rome en 1974 Yves Le Roy, decathlon, silver medal at the European Championships in Rome in 1974

21. Sylvie Moisson épouse Neuville Natation Synchronisée (Championne d'Europe par équipe en 1985) Harvest wife Sylvie Neuville Synchronized Swimming (1985)

## GERMANY

A German pole vaulter says she wants to protest China's intervention in Tibet at the upcoming Summer Olympic Games in Beijing.

"What is happening in Tibet at the moment is simply tragic," said Anna Battke, a 23-year-old psychology student and athlete from the University of Mainz Sport Club, in an interview with SPIEGEL.

The Beijing Games will provide competing athletes with an excellent opportunity to make a public statement, Battke said: "It is the obligation of athletes to call attention to injustice."

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,542665,00.html>

Team Tibet supporter: Dieter Baumann (Olympic Gold Medalist 1992, Germany)

German athlete- Christian Obergfoell (Javelin thrower who stated, "I had been asking myself the whole time why they gave the Olympic Games to China," "After Tibet, my feeling will not be any better."

News reports on Sunday, March 30, quoted water polo player Soeren Mackeben as saying that his team is considering wearing "bath robes in orange, the colour of the (Tibetan) monks."

A German network of athletes has the same in mind with a silicon armband in green and blue with the writing "Sport for Human Rights."

"We will express our protest during the Games not in reference to Tibet but in a general way concerning abiding to human rights and freedom of press," said a statement on the network's website. "That is because the Olympic Charter outlaws any kind of political propaganda at the Olympics."

Canoeing Olympic bronze-medallist Stefan Pfannmoeller, one of the initiators of the network, said that athletes can not turn a blind eye to the systematic abuse of human rights and freedom of press.

"As athletes we carry a big responsibility and must show it. If not us, who else?," he said.

Sebastian Schulte, a spokesman of the German Olympic team and part of the rowing eighth, said that athletes will not overstep the rules.

"I will not undermine the chances of my crew by voicing my opinion in a careless way, but I will express myself within the rules.

"Sport can not be misused as the last resort to continue a war with other methods, but as mature athletes we will look closely into what the Olympic Charter allows and use our options within this framework for our protests," said Schulte.

### **Statements of concern, but not necessarily support:**

"What is happening in China is sad but a boycott would not change anything," pole vaulter Danny Ecker said in a survey by Deutsche Presse-Agentur.

Fencer Imke Duplitzer agreed: "I will travel (to China) with mixed feelings and don't like what is happening there. But I do like the idea behind the Olympics in general."

Swimmer Antje Buschschulte said that China will be measured by its promise to guarantee free speech. "If you endorse free speech you must accept any opinion," she said.

Buschschulte added that China should have never been awarded the Games in the first place if human rights had been the criteria, a view also shared by hammer thrower Markus Esser.

"The problems with China are not new, they were known seven years ago when the Games were awarded to Beijing," said Esser. "I am relieved and in a positive mood after the DOSB decision, even though I can not endorse what is happening there.

Cyclist Linus Gerdemann said that he can understand the Tibetans wanting to use the Olympic platform in their call for human rights improvement, but like triathlon athlete Jan Froedo said that sport should not be involved alone.

"I don't believe that sport should generate pressure through a boycott. There are so many economic ties between Germany and China that sanctions should come from this side as well."

Froedo said: "It would be more effective if Olympic sponsors and businesses involved there would act accordingly."

### **HUNGARY**

Pál Schmitt, a Hungarian member of the European Parliament and of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), argued that the IOC should issue a strong statement about the human rights situation in China.

"We are a sports organisation," said Schmitt, who holds an Olympic medal for fencing. "But we can't just close our ears to what is happening on the outside."

Schmitt, 65, a fencing gold medalist for Hungary at the 1968 and 1972 Games, said the IOC had taken political stances before, such as when it suspended South Africa in 1964 over its racial separation policies. "It is time for a political statement," he said after hearing dissidents and activists speak of a worsening human rights climate in the run up to the Games. "We can't just close our ears to what's happening. We did it for the apartheid regime, so let's do it again." [...] "We want to give China an opportunity, it is a golden opportunity ... but we expect them in turn to respect human rights." [...]

Schmitt told Reuters he had an obligation to pass European Parliament concerns to the IOC president. "There is a tremendous pressure from all directions in the world... We have a shared responsibility," he said. Schmitt said he did not think a statement on rights would hurt IOC ties with China. "I don't think it will poison our relationship, which it can be said is excellent. Based on this we can raise some other issues that might be inconvenient."

## INDIA

Bhaichung Bhutia, captain of the Indian football team, has refused to carry the Olympic torch in protest against China's actions to quell unrest in Tibet.

Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan will run with the torch in India, but says:

"When I do run with the torch on the 17th of April it is not in support of China. In fact it will be with a prayer in my heart for the people of Tibet, and indeed for all people across the world who are victims of human rights violations," Khan said in a blog post on his web site ([www.aamirkhan.com](http://www.aamirkhan.com)).

## LATVIA

Team Tibet supporter: Martins Rubenis, a Latvian luger who won the bronze medal at the 2006 Winter Olympics in Turin.

## NETHERLANDS

(MARCH 5<sup>TH</sup> 2008) Three-time Olympic gold medalist Pieter van den Hoogenband called on International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Jacques Rogge to speak out on human rights in China ahead of the Beijing Games.

"I'm calling on him (Rogge) to take responsibility as the highest leader in international sport and to speak out publically before the whole world, in the name of athletes all over the world, in favour of the improvement of the human rights situation in China," the Dutch swimmer told a press conference. "As the head of the Olympic family Mr Rogge is the right person to give a voice to athletes worldwide."

Van den Hoogenband's coach Jacco Verhaeren last month expressed his concern at the IOC's reluctance to criticise China's record on human rights.

"What bothers me is the IOC's indifferent attitude. Really I don't understand the problem. What is so difficult about condemning executions," Verhaeren told the Dutch daily NRC Handelsblad.

## NORWAY

Thor Hushovd professional bicycle racer will boycott the opening ceremony. He is renowned for his sprinting and time trailing and Norwegian National Time Trial Champion and was the first Norwegian to wear the coveted yellow jersey. In 2006, Thor Hushovd won 7 UCI ProTour victories, including two stages of the 93rd Tour de France . "I will join the boycott of opening ceremony as protest for Chinas policy" said to the media.

Norwegian Cultural Minister Trond Giske will consider boycott of opening ceremony. During a Norwegian televised debate on Norwegian National television regarding the Beijing Olympics on March 25th, when asked about his opinion regarding an Olympic boycott of the opening ceremony, IOC executive board member Gerhard Heiberg said he was "not against an Olympic boycott of the opening ceremony". Mr. Gerhard Heiberg was re-elected for his second four-year term in the executive committee in 2007, and is the current chairman of the IOC Marketing Committee. Other panellist were Norwegian Minister for cultural Mr Trond Giske, President of Norwegian National Sports Association Mrs Tove Paule, Vice leader of opposition party( Christian peoples Party) Mrs Dagrun Eriksen and chairwomen of Norwegian Tibet Committee Mrs Chungdak Koren.

## POLAND

Polish Games's participant Monika Pyrek: "The best solution is boycott of the opening ceremony. It is not a sport event, but if the stadium is empty, everyone will know what is the matter."

## SOUTH AFRICA

South African Athlete-Roland Schoeman (world 50-meter butterfly champion who said the IOC "should stand up and say, 'The way these people (Tibetans) are being treated is not acceptable.'")

## SWITZERLAND

The head of the Swiss Olympic Committee told state-owned DRS radio that he is against a boycott but wants the IOC to intervene with China over the troubles in Tibet.

"The Rubicon has been crossed," Joerg Schild said. "I can't bring myself to say that we're going to go there and do sport."

"Thailand's Narisa Chakrabongse will not be receiving the Olympic flame in Bangkok in April.

## THAILAND

M.R. Narisa Chakrabongse has withdrawn from a group of torchbearers who were to carry the Olympic Flame to protest against the violent crackdown in Tibet. M.R. Narisa, the founder and chairperson of the Green World Foundation, was among six Thai green activists selected to carry the Olympic Flame when it arrives in Bangkok next month under the "Green Olympics" theme.

M.R. Narisa said in a statement: "I want to send a strong message to China that the world community could not accept its actions and urge Beijing to urgently rethink its policy towards Tibet.

"The slaying of the Tibetans since the middle of March is an outright violation of human rights. It happened two weeks before the Olympic torch bearer leaves Athens and five months before the Olympic Games. This reflects the Chinese government's negligence of world sentiment."

## USA

AP David Wallechinsky, an author and vice president of the International Society of Olympic Historians said At least four major boycotts have occurred in Olympic history, but they mostly resulted in undue punishment for athletes.

It is unlikely the International Olympic Committee would support a boycott despite the recent violence in Tibet, he said. The committee held the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City even though the authorities had killed hundreds of nonviolent protesters days before the event, Wallechinsky said. But he condemned the decision to hold the Games in China. "The IOC asked for trouble when they put the Olympics in a country run by a dictatorship," he said. "Now it's come back to haunt them."