

GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION TALKING POINTS

Remember our key demand is the Olympic torch out of Tibet, but when talking about why, do emphasize as much as possible what is happening in Tibet today, and why it is happening.

What are you doing / why are you doing this today?

* Our protest today is part of a global day of action, designed to turn the spotlight on the people of Tibet, who are suffering China's brutal crackdown of peaceful protests across Tibet. As the Olympic torch arrives in Beijing to great fanfare, Tibetans and Tibet Supporters want to remind the world of the terrible situation in Tibet and press our demand that the Olympic torch must not be allowed to pass through Tibet.

* Add a sentence about what YOUR GROUP is specifically doing; (see bottom of page for talking points about the Avaaz petition)

What are you trying to achieve?

* We want to build public and political support for our demand that the Olympic Torch not be permitted to go through Tibet.

Why would the torch going through Tibet be such a bad thing?

* We believe the torch passing through Tibet would at worst contribute to the current crisis; we believe it would provoke further protests, and therefore more arrests, torture and possible loss of life for Tibetans.

* At very best, the torch passing through Tibet would be a public relations disaster for the International Olympic Committee and the Torch Relay sponsors: imagine China's torch being paraded through Tibet in front of a subjugated population that China has cowed through military force.

* China is using the Olympic Games to gloss over its occupation of Tibet and gain legitimacy for its terrible policies in Tibet, which have resulted in the Tibetan people resorting to such dangerous and courageous protests as we've seen in the last three weeks.

What is happening in Tibet?

* Tibetans are still protesting; just last week a group of monks took the extraordinarily courageous step of speaking out to a small group of journalists on a Chinese-controlled visit to Lhasa. There are also protests still going on elsewhere; in parts of Tibet that are hundreds of miles from Lhasa.

* Tibetans have paid a terrible price for their actions;

- The Tibetan Government in exile says it has reports of 140 deaths;
- we understand that as many as 1,000 people have been arrested (the International Campaign for Tibet reported last week that several hundred prisoners, including many monks, have been taken out of Lhasa by train; no-one knows where they have been taken)
- all prisoners face the prospect of torture - which remains in widespread use according to the UN Special Rapporteur Manfred Nowak.
- All those detained face the possibility of long sentences; 5 - 10 years would be typical.
- the main Monasteries of Sera, Drepung and Ganden in/near Lhasa have been sealed off, leading to terrible suffering by the monks trapped inside
- the Media and diplomats are not allowed free access to any parts of Tibet (apart from small Chinese-governments organised tours to Lhasa) so Tibetans have no protection from China's retribution.

Why is it happening?

* Tibet has been occupied for nearly 60 years; the Dalai Lama was forced to flee into exile almost 50 years ago, but China's repressive policies have not won the hearts and minds of the Tibetan people. These last two weeks they have been calling for

freedom and for the return of the Dalai Lama.

* Tibetans feel completely marginalized in their own country: The ghettoisation of the Tibetan people is the result of China's attempts at assimilation, and the increased migration of Chinese people into Tibet. China tries to assimilate the Tibetans through language, employment and education policies. Economic subsidies promote Chinese entrepreneurship and make it impossible for Tibetan entrepreneurs to compete effectively.

But aren't some Tibetans violent thugs who deserve to be arrested and imprisoned?

* The vast majority of the protests have been non-violent. One day of violence in Lhasa on 14 March was preceded by 4 days of peaceful protest.

* Of course we regret the loss of any innocent lives, but we don't know the exact circumstances of how peaceful protests escalated into the destruction of property or attacks on Chinese people.

* Many, many Tibetans were shocked by the violence, so this incident is not representative of the Tibetan people. One source in Lhasa told the International Campaign for Tibet "This is so very sad for Tibetan people but shows just how desperate we are. Some stupid people could not see any other alternative. There is no doubt that Tibetan murderers and attackers should be punished under the law, but the hundreds and likely thousands of innocent Tibetans who are now being arrested should not be treated in the same way."

* There is no truth in China's ridiculous allegation that the Dalai Lama instigated any violence. As a Buddhist Lama, such an idea is absurd. Last week a Tibetan prisoner named Luoya told journalists on a Chinese-organised visit to Lhasa "This [the violence] wasn't organized...It just happened all of a sudden."

Why are you focused on the torch relay and not calling for an outright boycott of the Olympics?

* The situation in Tibet is urgent, and we must win this campaign to get the torch out of Tibet to prevent more suffering by the Tibetan people.

* We are also calling on the world's political leaders and other prominent people to stay away from the Olympics opening ceremony; they should not endorse China's repressive regime.

* We're not calling for an athlete's boycott at this stage, as we don't have a grudge against athletes or the spirit of the Olympics, but we will keep the situation under review as China's actions are clearly damaging the Olympic ideals.

What should our government be doing to support the Tibetan people?

* We expect our government leaders to personally contact Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao and demand:

- China must cease crackdown, and release all those detained (and provide names of all those that had been detained)

- China must re-admit foreign press immediately, and allow them free access to all Tibetan areas.

- China must make a commitment to enter into negotiations without pre-conditions with the Dalai Lama. 1.5 million people have signed a petition to that effect.

* Our Government leaders should stay away from the Beijing Olympics Opening Ceremony

I see from your press release that you have already asked the IOC and Olympic sponsors to take action, and now are appealing to National Olympic Committees.

What do you want National Olympic Committees to do?

We are calling on our National Olympic Committee to put pressure on the IOC Executive Board to take torch out of Tibet. We believe that they will be sympathetic to our demand, both on humanitarian grounds (because it will cause further suffering) and because of the damage to the reputation of the Olympic Games.

National Olympic Committees are meeting in Beijing from 7 – 9 April, which is the

perfect opportunity for them to raise our concerns. We'll make the same appeal to IOC Members as well.

What do you want the public to do?

Write to our National Olympic Committee - we have a flyer with all the details and we appeal to the public to act before 6th April, as the National Olympic Committees are meeting in Beijing.

We ask the public to join our Tibet Group!

(IF YOU ARE TAKING PART IN THE PETITION DELIVERY)

Tell us about this petition that is being delivered today / that you have with you today?

This petition has 1.5 million signatures (CHECK ACTUAL NUMBER ON DAY) of citizens from across the globe, calling upon the Chinese government to show restraint and respect for human rights in its response to the protests in Tibet, and to open meaningful dialogue with the Dalai Lama.

Avaaz believes this is the largest and fastest growing *global* online petition in history. The petition was organized by [avaaz.org](http://www.avaaz.org). Avaaz means "voice" in several European, Middle Eastern and Asian languages, and was launched in January 2007 to bring people-powered politics to global decisionmaking. Avaaz uses the internet to organize millions of people around a simple democratic mission - to close the gap between the world we have and the world most people everywhere want - on human rights, climate change, poverty, war and many other issues. Avaaz has grown to almost 3 million members from every country on earth.

The text of the petition, to Chinese President Hu Jintao, is:

As citizens around the world, we call on you to show restraint and respect for human rights in your response to the protests in Tibet, and to address the concerns of all Tibetans by opening meaningful dialogue with the Dalai Lama. Only dialogue and reform will bring lasting stability. China's brightest future, and its most positive relationship with the world, lies in harmonious development, dialogue and respect.

http://www.avaaz.org/en/tibet_end_the_violence/

NB If you are asked a question about the petition you cannot answer, or about Avaaz's position on issues like the Olympics/Tibet's future, you should direct the media to Avaaz: +1 866 394 2338 Or send an email to media@avaaz.org

If anyone asks about ITSN:

The International Tibet Support Network is a global coalition of Tibet related non-governmental organizations, which works to maximise the effectiveness of the worldwide Tibet movement. ITSN Member organizations hold varied positions on Tibet's future political status, but all regard Tibet as an occupied country and are dedicated to ending human rights violations in Tibet, and to working actively to restore the Tibetan people's right under international law to determine their own political, economic, social, religious, and cultural status. For more information, go to www.tibetnetwork.org, or email itsn@tibetnetwork.org.