



Play the Game for Open Journalism

**A report on the media freedom project in
relation to the Beijing Olympics 2008**

*Brussels, Belgium
Aarhus, Denmark
November 2008*

www.playthegameforopenjournalism.org

An International Federation of Journalists and Play the Game Project
www.ifj.org
www.playthegame.org

Table of contents

1. Introduction

- The Play the Game for Open Journalism project
- Comments from around the world

2. Background information

- The new media law
- The FCCC: improvements and suggestions
- BOCOG and IOC: controversial questions
- Assessing the impact of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games: Yao Xiaoling's study

3. Voices of journalists. Interviews with journalists connected to the Olympics

- Olukayode Thomas of The Guardian, Nigerian
- Kaj Kunnas of YLE, Finnish Broadcasting Company, Finnish
- Jens Randrup Sørensen of Jyllands-Posten, Dane
- Patrick Whitely of China Daily, Australian
- Ashis Chakrabarti of The Telegraph and The Commonwealth Journalist Association, Indian
- Summary

4. Comments and Perspectives from China and Media Specialists

- Comment: Experiences of Serenade Woo, IFJ Press Freedom Monitor
- Comment: Analysis by Sam Grunhard, IFJ Asia Pacific
- Comment: Experiences of Jens Sejer Andersen, Director of Play the Game

5. Suggestions and conclusions

6. Appendices

- a. The new media law
- b. Analysis by Yao Xiaoling
- c. IOC press statement

I. INTRODUCTION:

“The China story is our greatest test - it’s a golden chance to showcase quality journalism for democracy.”

Aidan White, Secretary General, International Federation of Journalists

“The Olympics is a unique opportunity for opening the dialogue between the citizens of China and the world with a view to raising the standards of our future communication.”

Jens Sejer Andersen, Director, Play the Game

The 2008 Beijing Olympics was a significant event in the relationship between China and the media. For the first time in recent history, foreign journalists had been granted the right to work freely without interference from Chinese authorities.

As part of the conditions under which Beijing was granted the right to host the 2008 Summer Olympics, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) stipulated that journalists must be permitted to report in a free and open environment from the Games, without censorship or political interference. In recognition of this, the Chinese hosts implemented new media regulations that allowed foreign journalists to report freely from China as of January 1 2007 until October 17 2008. These were made permanent by the Chinese authorities in October 2008.

Prior to the Games, the IFJ anticipated that somewhere in the region of 40,000 journalists would be travelling to China to cover the Olympics, with 30,000 of these receiving accreditation from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the local Beijing Olympic Games Organising Committee (BOCOG).

The Play the Game for Open Journalism project was established to assist international media in China during the 2008 Beijing Olympics, in particular those media professionals who were not accredited to the Games.

The goals of the project were

- To raise the quality of media coverage and public debate on the 2008 Olympic Summer Games in Beijing and its legacy
- To lay a basis for a strengthened direct dialogue between Chinese and non-Chinese organisations, individuals and stakeholders in relation to media issues
- To inspire to further progress in the development of freedom of expression in the People’s Republic of China through open, fact-based and respectful debate and dialogue
- To improve the quality of media coverage surrounding sports mega events and their legacies.

The project was a joint initiative of the International Federation of Journalists, the world's largest association of journalists, and Play the Game, a non-profit organisation working to strengthen the basic ethical values of sport and encourage democracy, transparency and freedom of expression in world sports.

It was developed with the support of and in co-operation with the Foreign Correspondents Club of China (FCCC) with whom the project shared information.

The project was primarily targeted at journalists, academics, sports leaders and politicians, though other relevant target groups were expected to emerge during the course of the event.

The project was built on the basis of two main tools:

- A website to provide advice and nuanced information on China to help international media. www.playthegameforopenjournalism.org
- A telephone helpline staffed by two people on the ground in Beijing during the Games, an international emergency hotline and assistance from IFJ Asia Pacific

The project website

The project website consists of:

- Hands-on guides on how to work as a journalist in China, information on cultural etiquette, language tips, how to maintain journalistic integrity, and how to decipher fact from spin
- Background articles and fact sheets on Chinese history, society, politics, economics, culture, religious attitudes and of course sport
- Section with independent and official Chinese voices, bloggers and media professionals
- Interactive section for contact exchange, networking, comments and dialogue
- Highlight of an emergency hotline (established by the IFJ) and its current functioning and results
- Links to organisations with an interest in the Olympics in China
- Links to experts and organisations able to provide information on the Olympics, Chinese politics, Chinese media and other relevant information
- Relevant news stories (and links to news stories) that may surface during the duration of the project

The website was launched on July 1st, 2008. In the first four months, it received 11,000 unique visitors who provided a total of 141,516 page views. The project organizers conclude that the amount of visitors has not been as large as the goal was, however they are certain that it was partially due to the short time span from launch until the Games. Taking the numbers of page views per visitor into consideration it is fair to judge that the website served as a useful resource for those who used it.

As expected, the highest monthly number of visits occurred in August with 3716 unique visitors. After a decrease in the monthly number of visitors it is interesting that the figure increased in October to 2580 unique visitors.

The project helpline

During the 2008 Olympics, the Play the Game for Open Journalism project sent two special consultants to Beijing. The goal was to monitor activities and to assist international media, in case this was needed.

It is important to note that the helpline was not a travel guide style advice line for journalists, with tips on where to stay or what event to see at the Olympics, but rather focused on the facilitation of safe reporting when circumstances become tough.

Although the two representatives met with numerous journalists, the experience was that those who found time to do an interview and exchange their personal working experience, often had either not experienced any interference in their work or had been too busy to cover anything besides the sports perspective. However, we received credible information through FCCC about a large amount of such interferences.

The Play the Game for Open Journalism project organisers assess that the provision of practical assistance by the Games organisers and the established presence of the FCCC meant that international media tended to report directly to the FCCC if there were problems and had sufficient official support to deal with practical matters. The Project could have had more impact if there was greater awareness in advance among the media community of its role. Nevertheless, useful information was shared with the FCCC.

However, given the narrow time frame, the organisers find the efforts worthwhile and the overall project result satisfying. The project has provided a useful knowledge base via its homepage with a character and content that is not to be found elsewhere.

Additionally, the project established a great number of personal and organisational contacts with a great potential for future co-operation.

The project report

The goal of this report is to assess the working conditions of international media – as part of an assessment of the impact of the Beijing Olympics – through interviews with

media professionals about their experiences of reporting from China.

This report has been written by staff from IFJ and Play the Game, partly from personal experiences while working in Beijing during the 2008 Beijing Olympics, partly from interviews with journalists, scholars and sports organizations in connection to the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

The project organisers would like to thank IMS for their support for the project

Global voices:

“China will welcome foreign journalists and facilitate their reporting in China whether before or after the Beijing Olympic Games.”

President Hu Jintao, August 1, 2008

“The FCCC has logged more than 335 cases of reporting interference since January 1, 2007”.

The Foreign Correspondents Club of China

“We will give the media complete freedom to report when they come to China.”

Wang Wei, General Secretary, 2001, Beijing Olympic Bidding Committee

“China’s open door to the international press will not be closed after the Olympics.”

Liu Binjie, Minister of the General Administration of Press and Publication

“The biggest problem is that foreign journalists are free to interview whoever they want, but many Chinese interviewees are not willing to talk to the journalists or in front of the camera.”

Yao Xiaoling, Chinese scholar at Oslo University

“...it (China, ed.) is still an authoritarian government, but there has been an incredible explosion in ordinary people’s personal freedom. There is a thriving, ambiguous, independent media now. They are not reporting on controversial news, but on pretty much everything else.”

Jeremy Goldkorn, South African, founder of Danwei.org in an interview with American Christine Lu of The China Business Show.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The new media law

“Article 6: To interview organizations or individuals in China, foreign journalists need only to obtain their prior consent.”

Source: The Special Regulations on Reporting Activities in China by Foreign Journalists During the Beijing Olympic Games and the Preparatory Period. (See appendix a)

The special Regulations on Reporting Activities in China by Foreign Journalists During the Beijing Olympic Games and the Preparatory Period were introduced well ahead of the Beijing Olympics, coming into force on January 1, 2007. The regulations covered all foreign journalists visiting China and were mirrored in similar provisions for journalists from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau.

Most notably, foreign journalists were formally allowed to travel freely in China and to interview anyone who gave consent to be interviewed.

The temporary freedoms of the special Regulations on Reporting Activities in China by Foreign Journalists During the Beijing Olympic Games and the Preparatory Period were extended on October 17 2008.

Excerpts of some comments on the new law from foreign correspondents in China, as quoted on the BBC's website, were:

“It was mainly a psychological difference, we had been widely flouting the rules before, leaving Beijing to report in the provinces without seeking advance approval as was officially required.”

James Miles, Correspondent for the Economist

“These rules were a small step forward in that they allowed foreign reporters to legitimately travel across China without first getting permission. But, like many rules and laws issued by the Chinese central government, they weren't always implemented properly.”

Michael Bristow, BBC correspondent

“In fact, the Chinese authorities, whether in some far-flung village or in central Beijing, would simply ignore the rules if it suited them.”

Calum MacLeod, USA Today

“These rules looked good on paper, but they weren't implemented properly”

Barbara Luethi, Asia correspondent for Swiss Television

(Source: “How free are reporters in China”, BBC News Online, 17 October 2008. URL: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7676013.stm>)

The FCCC

The Foreign Correspondents Club of China is the association of Beijing-based professional journalists reporting on China for audiences around the world.

Although their main focus is correspondents permanently based in Beijing, they offered assistance and guidance to visiting foreign reporters during the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

FCCC issues an annual survey on working conditions of international media in China, the FCCC Working Conditions Survey. The reports, which started in 2006, track reporting interferences.

The FCCC define 'reporting interferences' as "violence, destruction of journalistic materials, detention, harassment of sources and staff, interception of communications, denial of access to public areas, being questioned in an intimidating manner by authorities, being reprimanded officially, being followed, and being subjected to other obstacles not in keeping with international practices."

According to their website, the FCCC has logged 335 cases of reporting interference since January 1, 2007 (by November 20, 2008). This includes over 60 cases during the Olympic period, more than 40 cases after the unrest in Tibet on March 14 and more than 12 after the Sichuan earthquake on May 12.

All known incidents during the Olympic period have occurred outside the IOC area and typically involve journalists covering the Olympics from a non-sports perspective.

Working conditions inside the IOC area are reported to have functioned well, though the content of press conferences was not ideal.

"Working conditions outside of the sports perspective have become tighter than usual," said FCCC president, Jonathan Watts of the Guardian. "However China has also taken steps to improve working conditions of foreign journalists."

According to Watts, three steps have improved the working condition of journalists. These include the new media regulation stating that reporters are allowed to move freely in China. Watts also underlined that the Internet has become less blocked, and there has been an increase in the number of press conferences held.

"All of these measures must be acknowledged," said Watts.

"However," said Watts, "China promised complete freedom. Nobody can say that they lived up to that."

On October 17, 2008, The FCCC issued a press release stating that they welcome the new regulations and urge full implementation:

“The Foreign Correspondents’ Club of China welcomes the announcement of new reporting regulations that recognize the right of foreign reporters to travel where they wish without prior permission and to interview anyone who is willing.

If properly implemented, we believe this will mark a step forward in the opening of China’s media environment,” said club president Jonathan Watts. “We urge the government to ensure that police and local officials respect the spirit as well as the letter of the new rules. The easing of controls for foreign journalists should not be achieved at the expense of putting more pressure on local sources.”

The FCCC urges China to take further steps including the enactment of legislation protecting news sources, the abolition of rules obliging hotels to report to police when a foreign journalist checks in, and the opening of restricted areas, such as Tibet. We will continue to monitor cases of reporting interference and we remain willing to work with the authorities to improve working conditions for journalists in China.”

BOCOG and the IOC

In the run up to the Games, it became obvious on several occasions that the IOC and BOCOG (Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games) interpreted freedom of expression in quite different ways.

When applying to become the host of the 2008 Olympics, Beijing’s bidding committee promised freedom of speech and information. This promise led to some controversy as the international press corps arrived in Beijing to find websites such as Amnesty International blocked.

In the case of restricted access to information on the Internet, the IOC took the unparalleled measure of overtly criticising the local Olympic organisers, BOCOG, in the run up to the opening of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. (See appendix c for the press statement.)

In a press release, IOC stated that they had had meetings with BOCOG concerning Internet censorship:

“The issues were put on the table and the IOC requested that the Olympic Games hosts address them. We understand that BOCOG will give details to the media very soon of how the matter has been addressed. We trust them to keep their promise”

During the Beijing Games, Giselle Davies, IOC director of communications and Wang Wei, executive vice president and secretary general of BOCOG were the official spokes-people.

IOC and BOCOG held ten press conferences. According to foreign correspondents working in China, this is by local standards a large amount of press conferences. However,

the IOC and BOCOG were criticized for postponing and cancelling press conferences.

The official transcripts reveal some extent of unease on behalf of IOC and Giselle Davies, as well as numerous attempts at either evading questions or regretting lack of understanding of the Chinese way when it comes to the international media.

Below are some examples, taken from the official transcript of the eighth IOC/BOCOG press conference, August 18, 2008:

“New York Sun: (...). Is that the right procedure to censor the question? Is that the IOC’s view is the correct procedure? (...)

Giselle Davies: Well, first of all, of course we are here for the sports. And that takes the privileged place naturally. I think we are here talking about human beings trying to do their job running press venues and so on and so forth. (...) No one is trying here to have any form of censorship. Of course, we will focus on sports because that is what this event is all about. But if there are questions that urged to that grey area, as long as it is done respectfully and the athletes doesn’t have any feeling of discomfort. Wishes to respond and then that shouldn’t be a problem.

(.....)

South China Morning Post: (...) I’m just wondering can you describe to us who have contacted, how many times, who is the person in charge regarding this protest parks. (...)

Wang Wei: This matter is the matter of the city and the government security matter. It is not a BOCOG matter. BOCOG did try to help, that is our position. We are trying to provide the information. I think with matter like this, you have to be patient and you have to wait, then later we will have some information for you. Thank you.

Giselle Davies: (...) But it is true, fair and correct to say that for all the Games, these areas are not the responsibilities of the organizing committee.

Past practice of the Games has been city authorities find designated areas of the city to allow peaceful protest to take place, because it is a matter of fact, that people do use this Games as a platform to push the courses of their advocate. The IOC was very pleased when we were told by the authorities here, it is transferred to us through organizing committee. The relevant cities authorities have put in place these areas where we confirm that the best practice of past Games would be applied in this incidence. (...)

CBC: Mr. Wang Wei, many athletes are having problems accessing their websites and blogs still. Are some of the sites that are still blocked? And what are you planning to do about it?

Wang Wei: Well, I think I answered the question before. Actually, whether the media and athletes are enjoying freedom to access to the website except those fields that the authorities feel might sabotage the country and might bad for the growth of the youth. I think that is the position of BOCOG and we also facilitate these questions, thank you.

(...) **Toronto Star:** (...) My direct question was, has the president of IOC made inquiries regarding the case of Dr. Ge Yifei?

Giselle Davies: You are inquiring about the full area of the protest zones of which this is one example, I think this is the case that you brought forward was a particular specific example that was brought to us as well in this bundle of questions that have been asked on how the protests and the procedures are working. We endeavored to find out more information from the authorities. We welcome transparency in handling the cases (...)

Wang Wei: I think the Olympic Games are all about sport. It is about the Olympic spirit. It is not a political platform. Political issues have their own channels so I think as far as this issue is concern, it is very clear. We welcome people from all over the world and media to come to China to celebrate the Olympic spirit during the Games, to develop and strengthen the friendship and understanding. It is not possible to expect that all the issues will be resolved. The United Nations have a lot of issues which remained unresolved. You can't ask the IOC and BOCOG to resolve this issue. To ask for this is not realistic. As far as this issue is concern, it's all done to the lack of understanding of the situation in China. China has its own style of democracy.

If you are happy, you can stay longer in China. For instance, to learn more from the concerned and ordinary people in China. Chinese people are very happy and contented with their life. I'm talking about the majority of the Chinese people. You can go out and ask people on the streets, why people are happy and hopeful for tomorrow? People are also discovering issues and trying to resolve these issues themselves. But as far as the Olympic Games is concerned, this is not the place and venues to resolve some issues. BOCOG and IOC can't answer the question that you've asked (...)

(...) I think the friends of the media have to be patient, wherever country you go, you have to respect the country's system. You have to respect how the issues are tackled in the country (...)

The quotes from the transcript illustrate several aspects of the relationship between the media and the IOC and BOCOG, as well as the relationship between BOCOG and the IOC.

For one, the IOC and BOCOG are not in sync and the IOC openly urges transparency, while BOCOG evades the questions. However, Sinologists will suggest that this type of criticism and direct confrontation of Chinese authorities to answer sensitive questions is

an example of lack of in depth understanding of Chinese culture.

From a journalistic perspective, the reporters have the right to ask critical questions and should attempt to either get satisfactory answers or at least pinpoint where failures to answer questions lies within the hierarchy of the Chinese hosts.

The issues discussed in the transcript above refer to the temporary protest zones allocated by the Chinese authorities during the Olympic period to facilitate legal protests. According to a temporary law, people were formally allowed to apply for a permission to protest in designated areas, however media and human rights organizations have criticised the fact that no protest were ever allowed.

From the transcripts it can be concluded that the IOC and BOCOG revealed some extent of disagreement and that the concept of press freedom was interpreted differently by the attending international press and the local organizers.

Chinese scholar Yao Xiaoling's research on the impact of the Olympics:

Yao Xiaoling, a Chinese researcher at University of Oslo, the Centre for Development and the Environment, is currently conducting a qualitative survey on the impact of the Beijing Olympics, entitled Report on Foreign Correspondents Working Conditions In China during Olympic Games.

The academic report is to be published by the beginning of 2009.

At the Global Investigative Journalism Conference in September 2008, Yao Xiaoling gave a presentation on her initial findings.

In her presentation, Yao Xiaoling concluded that full press freedom during the 2008 Beijing Olympics was not achieved.

In her report, Yao Xiaoling reported 59 incidents of interferences in foreign journalists work in China, as documented by the FCCC. She also concludes that sensitive areas such as Tibet and Xinjiang remain off limits for journalists.

Yao Xiaoling's initial conclusions, based on her interviews and research, presented at the Global Investigative Journalism Conference, were:

“1. All the foreign journalists in China are positive to the new media regulations effective from the 1st of January 2007 that guarantees foreign journalists the freedom to travel and to interview any person in China without applying to the government for prior permission. Most of the journalists understand this as a starting point of the press freedom in China. They feel free and safe to travel around in China. They think it is challenging and interesting. China gave an important promise to the world, but China has not been very successful to implement the Olympic regulations, especially at the local level. Between the 25th of July and the 27th of August there were according to the Foreign Correspondent Club of China 59

cases of harassment or interference.

2. Many journalists complain that Tibet, the Tibetan areas and Xinjiang are not included as the free travel and free reporting zone.

3. The biggest problem is that foreign journalists are free to interview whoever they want, but many Chinese interviewees are not willing to talk to the journalists or in front of the camera. And it is even more difficult for the foreign journalists to do interviews with Chinese officials. This also has an effect on the balance in their reporting on for example, the Tibetan riot on 14 March.

4. The international media, especially the big media from Europe and the US, matters to the Chinese government. More and more Chinese have been paying attention to what the foreign media have been reporting and how they do the reporting. However, many Chinese including the Chinese officials have problems understanding why the western media has been so critical and negative to China. The Chinese reacted emotionally in the Chinese media as well as on Chinese websites, especially after the Tibetan riot and the torch relay in Paris and London. Anti-CNN websites were created. The hostility towards western media on the Chinese side spread on the Internet. Some foreign media offices received a huge pile of fax, phone calls, SMS with emotional and hostile contents. Some foreign journalists even received death threats which made them move out of their home or office and in some cases also hire some extra security people. Some had to move their family members out of the country temporarily.

5. Generally speaking, foreign correspondents who speak Chinese and have been living and working in China for longer periods of time are more careful, responsible and objective in their reporting.

6. If the western coverage is seen by the Chinese and Chinese government to be too provocative, it would most likely create negative emotions towards the western media, so that there would be more surveillance and restrictions from the Chinese security. For example the western media coverage of the Tibet riots and the torch relay was perceived as unbalanced, politicized and in some instances not based on facts.

Importantly in China as much as in any other country the level of press freedom will not develop independently. It is part of the larger political and social developments. Hence, press freedom should be seen as a part and process of China's development and democratization."

3. IN THE EYES OF PEOPLE ON THE GROUND: INTERVIEWS WITH JOURNALISTS WORKING IN BEIJING DURING THE 2008 BEIJING OLYMPICS

The representatives from Play the Game for Open Journalism, who monitored the working conditions of international media during the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, conducted a series of interviews with international journalists.

Some journalists were foreign correspondents with more than five years' working experience in China, some were visiting journalists in Beijing to cover the Games, and some were foreigners living in China working for Chinese media.

The aim was to listen to some global voices to get their answers to questions like how it was to work in China during the 2008 Beijing Olympics; whether the respective journalists felt impaired in their work, and what their take on the present situation of the international press in China was at that moment.

These are excerpts from some of these interviews.

Limited resources and lack of Internet access:

Olukayode Thomas of The Guardian, Nigeria

Olukayode Thomas (b. 1968), a native of Nigeria, covered the 2008 Beijing Olympics for Nigerian newspaper The Guardian. The critically acclaimed sports reporter has a background in Sociology from the University of Ibadan, and began his journalism career in 1996.

Prior to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Thomas had not visited China.

During the mass sports event, Thomas worked inside the International Press Centre. Here, he found the working conditions to be satisfactory, however Internet access at the International Press Centre was too pricy for his media to cover. Therefore he relied on using free sponsored Internet cafés in the vicinity.

As the only reporter for The Guardian, Thomas explained how limited resources made it impossible for him to get through to the real inside stories in China.

Thomas also found other obstacles in being able to conduct critical journalism, even though many of these obstacles were of a self-evident and practical nature:

"The biggest problem is the language barrier. Normally I get insights into society from talking to common people, but in Beijing they didn't speak English," said Thomas, who stressed that he generally preferred not to interview the elite of a society, as he often found them to paint too positive a picture.

Aside from the language barrier, Thomas also found the distrust towards media on behalf of the authorities to be a challenge:

“China is very careful about the press which makes it difficult to get the true picture.”

According to Thomas, he expected the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games to have had a positive impact on China, especially in that China received global acceptance and that China opened up to the world.

“The only way for China now is to open up further,” said Thomas commenting on the new media regulations and positive changes during the Games. “They can’t go back.”

“The locals are justifiably confident that they have done a great job”:

Kaj Kunnas of YLE, Finnish Broadcasting Company, Finland

TV-journalist Kaj Kunnas of Finnish Broadcasting Company worked in Beijing during the 2008 Olympic Games. His impression was positive.

Kunnas is a true media veteran of the Olympic Games: this was his tenth time.

When he met a representative of Play the Game for Open Journalism in one of Beijing’s small tea stores for a talk about his experiences in working inside the press centre, Kunnas stressed that he was overwhelmed by the amount of helpful Chinese people he had met during this, his first, visit to China.

“I feel like people trust me here, both the Chinese people and the organisers,” explained Kunnas: “It is as if they are confident that they have done so well that my reports will be positive.”

Examples of positive experiences were the smiling and proud attitude of the Olympic helpers, fast responses to requests, as well as relatively few security checks compared to most of the past nine Olympic Games that Kunnas had worked at.

However, as much as Kunnas expressed his positive view on working in China during the Olympic Games, he was aware that he and his colleagues were being observed.

At one point, when working on a TV transmission of one of the games, Kunnas wore a tee shirt with the logo “stop volden”, Swedish for “stop the violence”. Within a short period of time, he was approached by officials, who asked him, whether the tee shirt read what it did.

“This showed me that in spite of all the kindness, the Chinese were on guard.”

Several incidents of interference in reporting:

Jes Randrup Nielsen of Jyllands-Posten, Denmark

Since 2005 Jes Randrup Nielsen (b. 1975) has been the foreign correspondent in China for the Danish national daily Jyllands-Posten. Randrup has a background in studies of

Politics and Sinology at the University of Cambridge.

When Randrup met with one of the representatives from the Play the Game for Open Journalism project in a coffee shop in Beijing during the Olympics, his viewpoint was clear:

“The real story behind the working conditions of foreign journalists here in China should not be the journalists themselves,” he stressed. “Focus ought to be on what it is that the Chinese Government doesn’t want us to know.”

Randrup’s personal experiences of working as a foreign correspondent in China count several incidents of interferences in his job.

Randrup listed some of these incidents, which include several of the well-known problematic areas such as Tibet and Sichuan.

As an example, during the aftermath of the Sichuan earthquake in May 2008, plain-clothes police physically blocked Randrup from completing an interview with grieving parents of children who had been killed in the disaster.

Another obstacle in working freely as a foreign correspondent in China is less obvious. Because, according to Randrup, his articles, published in Denmark, are regularly translated and read by Chinese officials. Consequently, both journalists and interviewees need to be aware that what is printed abroad does still come to the attention of the Chinese authorities. Therefore, journalists cannot write freely because of fear of repercussions for themselves and interviewees in China.

However, journalists from less influential nations or publications are under less surveillance than journalists working for large international media such as the New York Times or British newspaper The Guardian, said Randrup.

When asked how he works under these conditions, Randrup replied that journalists need to be cautious of what they tell others, as they may get in trouble for their knowledge.

Common people and experts are not too difficult to get to answer questions, said Randrup, who reported that he has given up on gaining information from officials. When contacting common people, Randrup usually uses a local go-between.

In an interview with the Danish Journalist Association during the 2008 Beijing Olympics, published online, Randrup said:

“The most important aspect is not the safety of foreign correspondents. Only few journalists have been physically hurt and often we are regarded almost like diplomats, that is, as representatives of the country in which our newspapers reside. Far worse are the consequences of the people, we interview. Because these new media laws only apply to foreigners. Today, the surveillance possibilities of the authorities are so advanced that you can only rarely assume to be left alone, and the legal system offers absolutely no protec-

tion for the sources, you interview.”

The immense difference between Chinese media and Western media:

Patrick Whitely of China Daily, Australian

Australian Patrick Whitely is the editor of expatriate content at the Beijing headquarters of the English language Chinese newspaper China Daily. During the 2008 Beijing Olympics he was one of the editors of the temporary Olympic daily newspaper, The Olympian, published by China Daily.

Whitely met with one of the representatives of Play the Game for Open Journalism during a busy lunch break just after the start of the Olympic period.

He called for a nuanced debate in lieu of the so-called “China bashing” which had been seen in recent months in some foreign media.

Whitely expressed that the claim that China has censorship is in itself indisputable. However, he thinks that censorship also takes place many places outside of China especially if one thinks of censorship on several levels, such as political censorship, corporate censorship or family censorship for instance.

Whitely reports of a Scandinavian reporter who, allegedly, had been sent out on the mission to get arrested by local police. This is, said Whitely, an example of Western media focusing on criticising China.

“All media censors” said Whitely, “as long as one defines the word as making sure that one’s articles fit with the interests of the reader.” Whether taking commercial interests into consideration or aiming for a certain readership, all newspapers are likely to censor their content, Whitely explained.

“The important difference between Western media and Chinese media is that the latter is political.”

From his years of experience working in Chinese and Australian media, Whitely concluded that Western media tend to be oriented towards finding and creating conflict whereas Chinese media are oriented towards upholding harmony.

“It makes a significant difference whether a newspaper is regarded as a critical voice pointing out the mistakes of the politicians, or, on the contrary, the newspaper is believed to maintain stability within a society.”

“What are we comparing the 2008 Beijing Olympics with?”:

Ashis Chakrabarti of The Telegraph and The Commonwealth Journalist Association, Indian

Senior writer Ashis Chakrabarti, who is on leave from The Telegraph in India to work as a columnist at China Daily, agreed with Whitely.

With a background in Indian journalism and as a member of The Commonwealth Journalist Association, Chakrabarti has had his share of experience with the relationship between journalism and freedom of expression.

As Chakrabarti explained, the working conditions of journalists and challenges with lack of freedom of expression are important both in the work he does for The Commonwealth Journalist Association, and in regards to his knowledge of how media in India has changed in his more than 30 years of experience in the field.

After the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Chakrabarti asked local Chinese about their opinion. To his surprise, their answers were unlike those of his foreign friends. Whereas foreigners might have seen the opening ceremony to be a display of an exotic “Chinese-ness”, locals pointed to the lack of reference to present-day China as well as some particular historical times.

To the idea that any media research project would be capable of assessing the impact of the 2008 Beijing Olympics on Chinese society, Chakrabarti rhetorically asked: “With what are you comparing the 2008 Beijing Olympics? Former Games or perhaps the expectations of foreigners and Chinese?”

Summary

In short, the journalists, with whom we were in contact, who covered the 2008 Beijing Olympics from a sports perspective were predominantly positive in terms of their working experience.

The foreign correspondents we interviewed, some of whom had lived in Beijing for more than five years, other who had moved to China months in advance of the Games, were generally critical towards the working conditions of international media in China.

Some reported of hidden microphones in their joint foreign correspondents office, others reported of severe consequences for sources whom they had interviewed.

In conclusion, we find that the working conditions of journalists covering the 2008 Beijing Olympics from a sporting perspective to be satisfactory. We also find that the working conditions of foreign correspondents are improving as a result of the implementation of the new media law for foreign reporters, and welcome the decision of the Chinese authorities to extend the rules indefinitely. However, despite this positive progress, further development is indeed necessary as described in the chapter “Conclusions and suggestions”.

4. ANALYSIS, PERSPECTIVES, COMMENTS

Aside from journalists from international media, many experts, both on China and on media, have an opinion about the significance of the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Play the Game for Open Journalism has gathered information from some of the important players on the field.

Comment and analysis by Serenade Woo on her observations and interviews in Beijing during the Olympics

“Shout, Cover and Push” are the basic steps that police will take if you are a journalist trying to cover China during the Olympic Games.

The media is an important tool by which China’s authorities try their best to make sure that everything is under control. The way that we look at press freedom is different from the view of the authorities of China. From the point of view of China’s government, State Security is the most important priority for every citizen including mainland journalists. Therefore whatever, wherever and whenever there is something negative for the country, it must be blocked. Hence when the authorities of China spelt out that they were allowing foreign journalists and Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan journalists “press freedom” from January 2007, I was stunned but I was glad .

Did China honour its promise? When we look at the number of violations of press freedom collected by the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of China since January 2007, I am disappointed but not surprised.

The day I arrived at Beijing airport, the immigration department officer was able to spell my name without looking at my permit. Just after that a Mainland woman who I met in Hong Kong called me angrily after she discovered I was in Beijing. These forewarnings might help to explain why it was so difficult for me to meet local journalists, academics and so on.

“We are ordered not to speak to outsiders,” a journalist exclaimed to me when we met in a restaurant of his choice. “The Games actually brought us no breakthrough on press freedom – on the contrary, it’s much worse than last year.”

His complaint had some grounds. Prior to the Games, journalists already received piles of orders restricting their freedom to report. They sometimes received more than a dozen orders a day, not including orders by telephone. During the Games, the number of orders was tremendously higher than last year. Journalists continually received instructions not to report various topics such as food safety issues, the lip-synching scandal during the opening ceremony, and so on. The sole aim of these orders was to emphasize a positive image of China. Because of various restrictions, many journalists were stood down or were forced to shift their reporting targets to positive sports news.

“No local academic dares to research about press freedom during the Games, at least not right now,” an academic told me. This remark was echoed by a student from a journalism school, who told me that the students only focus on how foreign countries exercise press freedom rather than look into the situation in China. He told me that this was because they already knew there was no press freedom in China, so they didn’t need to waste time on it. They also don’t want to get involved in any “trouble”. The most unfortunate thing is that many students no longer wish to join the media industry by the time they graduate.

When we talk about the possibility of press freedom in China, I believe many people shake their heads and say “no chance”. My answer is almost the same, but China’s authorities have brought about some improvements while still lagging far behind international standards.

They have increased the number of government press conferences to disseminate information to the public, including after major incidents such as when journalists were beaten up by security officers in Xinjiang. There has also been greater freedom for journalists to interview citizens with consent, and greater freedom of movement for journalists around China. However, I believe these improvements are because they knew that they were under the spotlight.

When we talk about genuine press freedom, it should not be limited to certain situations, it should be apparent even during crisis. At the same time, press freedom must be accompanied by other important practices such as protection of sources, the free flow of information, and so on. I did not see this in Beijing. Lots of journalists, particularly photographers and cameramen, were roughed up when trying to report on the aftermath of accidents, protests or scuffles. Many plain-clothes officers took photos of interviewees, journalists and their notebooks. It was much worse than when I was working in Beijing a decade ago. In previous years, they only took pictures of journalists for security reasons – but obviously the aim has changed. For example, two discontented Beijing land-owners were charged with “disturbing the social order” after they accepted an interview with foreign journalists in early August.

Also, when journalists asked for controversial data from the authorities, they either directed journalists to other irrelevant departments or just delayed answering without a concrete explanation. Sometimes officials seemed not really to understand the nature of their job. I remember an officer of the security bureau in Tiananmen Square asking me to disseminate information on their behalf after suddenly requiring journalists to register before entering the Square. In another case, after entering the office of an appeal department to report on protests by citizens, I was under constant watch escape from the officers inside. They shouted at and intimidated disgruntled citizens inside the office as well as keeping a close eye on me.

Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which China has signed but not ratified, enshrines the right to freedom of expression. This right is echoed in Article 35 of China’s Constitution. But it seems to me that in China these “rights” are just words.

Comment and analysis by Sam Grunhard, IFJ Asia Pacific:

“On paper, the regulations allowed greater freedoms for journalists to interview subjects and to carry out their work. However, while the regulations allowed limited improvements in media freedom in China, they were widely breached by government and security officials.

From the time the regulations were introduced, the IFJ noted small improvements in media freedom in China. These included:

- As per the regulations, greater freedom for journalists to interview citizens with consent, and greater freedom of movement for journalists around China;
- An increased number of government press conferences to disseminate information to the public, including after major incidents;
- Minor roll-back of some controls on internet access and postings on websites.

For example, many organizations noted that for the first ten days after the earthquake in Sichuan province in May 2008, local and foreign journalists were allowed relatively free rein to travel and report on the disaster. Only after the scale of the devastation and public distrust of authorities' preparations and handling of the crisis began to emerge did the state propaganda apparatus crack down on the media.

However, breaches of media freedom and of the regulations have been widespread and serious. The Foreign Correspondents' Club of China documented more than 335 cases of interference in media reporting from the date the regulations came into force to November 2008.

During the Olympics, journalists were regularly inhibited by local officials who were either unaware of the regulations or unwilling to allow such a free media environment on their territory. For example, an international outcry ensued when it emerged that China was blocking or limiting Internet access from press centers set up for international journalists covering the Games. A Chinese foreign ministry spokesman admitted the Internet restrictions and said they concerned the Falun Gong spiritual movement. However reporters in China said they were also unable to seek information from sites such as those related to Tibet or Amnesty International.

Security officials physically assaulted several reporters in Beijing around the Games period, including British and Hong Kong journalists reporting on protests and scuffles around Olympic venues. In a series of incidents in late July and early August, reporters from Hong Kong media such as Radio Television Hong Kong, Apple Daily, TVB, Now TV and the South China Morning Post were stopped from reporting on stories in Beijing or physically assaulted by police. John Ray, a British journalist working for Independent Television News, was roughed up by security officers on August 13 after he and two colleagues filmed protestors who brought a banner that said “Free Tibet” inside the Chinese Ethnic Culture Park, close to the Bird's Nest Stadium in Beijing.

In one of the most serious cases, three Japanese journalists reporting in Xinjiang, western China, were detained and beaten on August 4 while covering the aftermath of a bomb attack which killed a contingent of police officers. The journalists, from Chunichi Shimbun and Nippon Television Network, were beaten by police and had materials confiscated. Other reporters from Agence France Presse and Hong Kong's ATV were also barred from reporting. On the morning of August 5 police reportedly visited the hospital where the journalists were recovering to apologize for the injuries and to offer compensation for medical bills and damage to equipment. However, China Daily, a government controlled newspaper, reported that Liu Yaohua, head of Xinjiang's public security department, said of the journalists' attempts to report that "the act was not well-justified and they should accept the consequences".

The IFJ also reported on August 10 that plain-clothes security officials were taking photographs of journalists at work in Beijing. In a form of intimidation designed to restrict press freedom, officials took photographs of journalists interviewing local subjects in several locations in Beijing. While the reporting regulations allowed journalists to interview subjects with only their consent, it was clear that the heavy security presence would discourage potential Chinese interviewees from speaking to the international media.

Quite apart from the restrictions on international media, China has continued to punish and jail local journalists, writers and bloggers for doing their jobs. On April 3, online journalist and blogger Hu Jia was sentenced to three and a half years' jail and one year's denial of political rights on charges of "inciting subversion of state power" for articles and interviews critical of China's Government's record on human rights. Other journalists and writers detained in 2008 include Chen Daojun, for investigative articles raising concerns about chemical plants in Pengzhou, Sichuan; Sun Lin, for articles on civil rights violations in Nanjing; Zhou Yuanzhi, a freelance writer and social commentator, detained in Zhongxiang City, Hubei, in May; Qi Chonghuai and He Yanjie, journalists working for China Legal News, detained in Shandong in May; and Du Daobin, dissident writer and former editor of Human Rights Poetry, detained in Yingcheng, Hubei, in July.

During the Olympic Games, China's Central Propaganda Department continued to issue regular directives to shape the direction of news coverage, to restrict reporting on "sensitive" topics, and to alert the state security apparatus to breaches. A leaked directive issued to local media during the Games revealed that journalists were ordered not to mention Tibet, not to cover any protests including those in the officially designated "protest parks", not to report on food safety issues including carcinogens in water, and only to report the "official line" on any controversies arising during the Games. Some blogs and websites were ordered permanently closed.

After the Games it became clear that the restrictions on local media were continuing unabated. As a public health crisis over tainted milk products swept China and the world in October, the IFJ learned that the Central Propaganda Department ordered media not to report on a lawsuit filed by parents of a baby who reportedly developed kidney stones, as well as issuing commands that only information obtained from official government sources such as Xinhua News Agency and China Daily could be published, and orders insisting on positive reporting of the Government's handling of the crisis. This response

came despite the obvious grave public health concerns raised both in China and elsewhere over the contaminated food products.

In July, the IFJ reported that Liu Binjie, Director of China's General Administration of Press and Publications (GAPP) which regulates print publishing, said that the freedom of the press promised in the special regulations for foreign journalists was not a "short term policy" and would continue after the Olympics. And indeed, on October 17 Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao announced that the government would extend the regulations indefinitely. However, "sensitive" areas such as Tibet will remain off-limits, and the regulations of course do nothing to open up reporting for local journalists. Clearly the press freedom promised in Article 35 of China's constitution remains some distance away."

Comment: The Personal Experience of Director of Play the Game, Jens Sejer Andersen:

The director of Play the Game, Jens Sejer Andersen, experienced a number of incidents that may be related to Play the Game's involvement in the project, when he took part in the pre-Olympic sports science congress ICSEMIS 2008 in Guangzhou from August 1-5, 2008.

His access to the Internet was suddenly blocked for several hours in the morning of 30 July, although the Internet connection worked well enough to secure problem-free email-communication.

Later the same day, an interview with the BBC World Service was clearly intercepted by the Chinese authorities. 22 minutes earlier, Andersen received a call by an unidentified Chinese man at 18:27 local time. The conversation went as follows:

- JSA: "Yes, hello"
- Unknown: "Who is it?"
- JSA: "I am Jens Andersen. How..."
- Unknown: "Where from?"
- JSA: "Denmark"
- (...Click)

The BBC confirmed that exactly at that time they made their first attempt to call Andersen's cell phone – an attempt that the BBC says was rejected by an automated voice.

During the welcome dinner at the ICSEMIS congress on the evening of the 1 August, Andersen was asked by an unidentified female official to leave a table where he had started talking with some Chinese congress delegates. Allegedly that part of the dining hall was not for foreigners. This was evidently not true when looking around, and when Andersen obeyed and joined a table of foreigners-only, another Chinese couple chose to sit down next to him, starting a conversation about his activities after the conference.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS: THE FUTURE.

One of the big questions is: Should China get credit for starting to improve or should they be confronted with the fact that they have not yet accomplished what they aimed at; that is, press freedom?

Both, we believe.

The IFJ and Play the Game find the decision of the Chinese authorities to cut down on the restrictions of the working conditions of the international press to be important progress. Therefore, it is also positive that the Chinese authorities have decided to prolong the new media law, enabling foreign correspondents to travel freely and interview who ever gives consent.

The IFJ, which organized a ten-country official delegation to China in March 2008 to meet with the official media and the state journalists' organization, is of the view that the policy of engagement as distinct from confrontation over human rights abuse in the context of the Games was a useful strategy.

The decision to continue the policy of more openness and the links established during the activities carried out in 2008 provide a basis, says the Federation, for more dialogue and further practical actions to strengthen moves towards greater freedom for journalists in the country. There is no false optimism, says the IFJ, because the situation can change quickly, but groundwork has been done which can prove useful in the months and years to come.

The progress that has been made might indicate that the Chinese authorities acknowledge that there are more positive sides to a free press than down sides. Furthermore, we hope this is an indication that the Chinese authorities acknowledge that the ability of citizens to produce and consume journalism will, in the long run, be crucial preconditions to maintain and develop the social progress which China is aiming at.

At the present moment, as before, the foreign correspondents and the Chinese authorities have a great responsibility to treat this freedom with respect and caution, and IFJ and Play the Game recommend all journalists to live up to the best standards of the profession when reporting from China in the future.

Despite the obvious progress, the seriousness of this situation calls for the attention of the world not to be withdrawn from the situation of media in China, as a vast amount of issues still need to be taken care of, before we can conclude that China has, indeed, achieved actual press freedom:

Firstly, this newfound freedom must be extended to also include Chinese journalists, who are still suffering from serious suppression. Even during the special temporary law ensuring freer working conditions during the Olympic Games, authorities have continued to imprison and in other unacceptable ways punish Chinese people, who expressed critical opinions on the Internet or in other media outlets.

Secondly, restrictions still prevail in regards of the free coverage of certain subjects, such as Falun Gong, Tibet, Xinjiang and Taiwan – topics which are of vital importance to the Chinese society and population.

Thirdly, we call for sources of journalists to enjoy the same freedom as the journalists themselves. Monitoring and targeting the sources of journalists is in itself unacceptable and in effect undermining actual press freedom.

Fourthly, the authorities will have to start a process of changing the level of knowledge and consciousness through campaigns, educational projects and such, ensuring that local police and other authorities are well aware of the laws regarding the media and are capable of implementing them.

Fifthly, a large task of cultural character lies ahead: China is in need of an ongoing debate about, on the one hand, the ideal of striving for a harmonious society and, on the other hand, the ideal of a critical and sometimes also confrontational journalism. It is the clear impression of IFJ and Play the Game that these two ideals do not have to be contradictory but that they can coexist.

IFJ and Play the Game will continue to pay attention to this part of the Olympic legacy, and hope that a delegation from the two organizations will get a chance in the coming year to further the debate with Chinese authorities and media representatives.

APPENDIX A

Regulation on free reporting

The “Regulations on Reporting Activities in China by Foreign Journalists During the Beijing Olympic Games and the Preparatory Period” (State Council Decree No. 477

Chinese version: <http://ipc.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/wgjzzhzn/xgfg/t286081.htm>

English version: <http://ipc.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wgjzzhzn/xgfg/t286115.htm>

English version:

A. Regulations on Reporting Activities in China by Foreign Journalists during the Beijing Olympic Games and the Preparatory Period

(Decree No. 477 of the State Council)

- **Article 1:** These Regulations are formulated to facilitate reporting activities carried out in accordance with the laws of the People’s Republic of China by foreign journalists in China to advance and promote the Olympic Spirit during the Beijing Olympic Games and the preparatory period.
- **Article 2:** These Regulations apply to reporting activities carried out by foreign journalists covering the Beijing Olympic Games and related matters in China during the Beijing Olympic Games and the preparatory period.

The Beijing Olympic Games mentioned in the Regulations refer to the 29th Olympic Games and the 13th Paralympic Games.

- **Article 3:** Foreign journalists who intend to come to China for reporting should apply for visas at Chinese embassies, consulates or other visa-issuing institutions authorized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China.

Foreign journalists who hold valid Olympic Identity and Accreditation Cards and Paralympic Identity and Accreditation Cards are entitled to multiple entries into the territory of the People’s Republic of China with visa exemption by presenting Olympic Identity and Accreditation Cards, together with valid passports or other travel documents.

- **Article 4:** Foreign journalists may bring a reasonable quantity of reporting equipments into China duty free for their own use. The aforementioned equipments should be shipped out of China’s territory at the end of their reporting activities.

To bring into China reporting equipment duty free for their own use, foreign journalists should apply for the Equipment Confirmation Letter at Chinese embassies or consulates and present the Equipment Confirmation Letter together

with a J-2 visa when going through customs inspection. Foreign journalists who hold Olympic Identity and Accreditation Cards and Paralympic Identity and Accreditation Cards may present the Equipment Confirmation Letter issued by the Organizing Committee of the 29th Olympic Games when going through customs inspection.

- **Article 5:** For reporting needs, foreign journalists may, on a temporary basis, bring in, install and use radio communication equipment after completing the required application and approval procedures.
- **Article 6:** To interview organization s or individuals in China, foreign journalists need only to obtain their prior consent.
- **Article 7:** Foreign journalists may, through organizations providing services to foreign nationals, hire Chinese citizens to assist them in their reporting activities.
- **Article 8:** The media guide for foreign journalists of the Beijing Olympic Games shall be formulated by the Organizing Committee of the 29th Olympic Games in accordance with these Regulations.
- **Article 9:** These Regulations shall come into force as of 1 January 2007 and expire on 17 October 2008.

(The Regulations Concerning Foreign Journalists and Permanent Offices of Foreign Media organizations issued in 1990 remain valid after the implementation of the Regulations on Reporting Activities in China by Foreign Journalists during the Beijing Olympic Games and the Preparatory Period. In case of any discrepancies between the two, the Regulations on Reporting Activities in China by Foreign Journalists during the Beijing Olympic Games and the Preparatory Period shall prevail. With respect to matters not covered in the Regulations on Reporting Activities in China by Foreign Journalists during the Beijing Olympic Games and the Preparatory Period, the Regulations Concerning Foreign Journalists and Permanent Offices of Foreign Media organizations shall apply.)

APPENDIX B

Analysis by Yao Xiaoling:

“In democratic countries the hard critics and provocations towards the government from the mass media and the opposition parties functions as an instrument for a better society. When people or journalists provoke and criticize their government, they often get more and more space for action. In China, the result may be rather the opposite. When people provoke a totally different system from outside, you will actually get less and less space to act. So the provocation has been very counter-productive, because it can be used as an argument for not opening up. This is one argument about the student demonstrations in 1989. People now argue that the demonstrations had gone too far, and they stopped the changes for five or six years, because the liberals had to back down and the conservative security forces would dominate the scene. Almost the same thing seems to have happened after the events in Tibet, Paris and London in March and April this year.

Security versus democracy

The security state versus the democratic state or the public state.

When you have security related issues, the security state intervenes, and then, immediately, the space for the public state becomes more limited and the public sphere also becomes more limited. One may slowly extend the freedom, but if you provoke a little bit too much, it goes down immediately. Then you have to build it up slowly to avoid the attack of the security state. As one Chinese official said, if there would be a terrorist attack or anything more provocative, the security would come in, and then the press office has nothing to say, because then security is more important than anything else. When provocations take place, the space for journalists is much more restricted, and it would take long time to extend the public sphere and build it up again. If foreign journalists are too anti-China and too provocative, they will actually stimulate the patriotic emotions, strengthen the position of the security state and slow down the progress made towards a more free press in China. At a certain point what the press officers of Olympic Committee say will cease to matter because security branches of the government will say that this matters for us. Many foreign journalists are very positive to the Chinese Foreign Ministry and Information office of the State Council, which are more liberal and helpful. As a consequence you have two different kinds of perspective within the Chinese government itself. When you look at the structure of the state, the security state on the one hand and the public/democratic state on the other, the public state is responsible for development and freedom of competition, of competing views, of the development of new technologies and political and social organizations, but the security state always could define when the situation is chaotic, when something is a security issue. Then the security state will enter the scene. The public state in China is still weak.”

APPENDIX C

INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE PRESS STATEMENT

www.olympic.org

THURSDAY 31 JULY 2008
IOC STATEMENT

Our position is that the IOC has always encouraged the Beijing 2008 organisers to provide media with the fullest access possible to report on the Olympic Games, including access to the internet.

In light of internet access problems which were experienced this week by media in the Olympic Games Main Press Centre in Beijing, the IOC – namely Chairman of the Beijing 2008 IOC Coordination Commission Hein Verbruggen and Olympic Games Executive Director Gilbert Felli – held meetings and discussions today with Games organizers (BOCOG) and Chinese authorities.

The issues were put on the table and the IOC requested that the Olympic Games hosts address them. We understand that BOCOG will give details to the media very soon of how the matter has been addressed. We trust them to keep their promise.

The IOC would like to stress that no deal with the Chinese authorities to censor the internet has ever in any way been entered into.

####

Project contributors:

Special Consultant: *Ida Relsted Kærup, Journalist, Denmark*

Journalist: *Kirsten Sparre, Journalist, Denmark*

IFJ Asia Pacific: *Serenade Woo, Hong Kong; Sam Grunhardt, Australia; Anna Noonan, Australia;*

IFJ: *Aidan White, Belgium; Rachel Cohen, Belgium; Søren Wormslev, Denmark*

Play the Game: *Jens Sejer Andersen, Denmark; Michael Herborn, Denmark; Maria Suurballe, Denmark; Stine Alvad, Denmark*

The project organisers would like to thank IMS for their support for the project