

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2008 was an especially challenging year for China. This issue of the *China Rights Forum*, with special contributions from guest editor Peter Kwong, examines the political and media landscape and environmental issues in China before and after the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Beginning with the unusual February ice storms in the south, the Chinese authorities have had to deal with a series of high profile events: the Tibetan demonstrations in March, the Sichuan earthquake in May and its devastating aftermath, global protests following the Olympics torch relay in March to August, the hosting of the Games in August, and the tainted milk powder scandal that came to light in September. China's double-digit economic growth also began to slow, and the deepening global economic crisis will put even greater pressure on the leadership to deal with widening social dislocations and unrest.

In the first section, "One World, One Dream?," Gao Wenqian explores the impact of a worsening economy, the policy debates within the Party, and the role of civil society in China's post-Olympics future, and concludes with three possible scenarios. Leon Stone and Zhai Minglei raise critical questions not only about tainted milk, but also about a Chinese culture tainted by greed, materialism, and the worst form of bankruptcy—the loss of trust. Jocelyn Ford talks with HRIC about the mixed reporting climate for foreign journalists in China, while Zan Aizong examines the risky environment for independent newsgathering by citizen reporters.

In the second section, "Greening the Future," Elizabeth Economy surveys the daunting environmental challenges facing China and observes that without real reform of China's political economy, it will be difficult to improve environmental protection. Sam Geall points out the unfair distribution of environmental risks and costs within China, as well as globally, and offers suggestions for shared constructive global engagement. Peter Kwong looks ahead to the World Expo 2010 to be hosted in Shanghai. Despite his doubts about whether any lessons were learned from Beijing 2008, Kwong points out as positive signs increasing grassroots environmental activism and public awareness of environmental degradation.

In the third section, "While the World Watched," Vincent Metten provides an overview of the situation in Tibet pre- and post-Olympics. Yodon Thonden, a private delegate to the Special Meeting in Dharamsala, India, in November, shares her experience and describes the significance and outcome of the meeting. Alim Seytoff reports that as the Chinese authorities violently cracked down on demonstrations in the Tibetan Plateau in March, they also continued the crackdowns on Uyghurs, largely outside of the international media spotlight. The official denial of these human rights violations, together with ongoing attacks on lawyers and rights defenders, all signal a domestic hard-line trend that will most likely continue beyond 2008.

This *China Rights Forum* issue also looks ahead to 2009, a year of sensitive anniversaries: the 60th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China (1949), the 20th anniversaries of crackdowns in Tibet and on June Fourth (1989), and of the founding of HRIC, and the 10th anniversary of the 1999 crackdown on Falun Gong. The *China Rights Forum* 2009 calendar marks these significant opportunities to resist historical amnesia and to work for the realization of the human rights enshrined in both international and Chinese law.

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