

# Chinese intellectuals condemn Tibet crackdown

Saturday 19 July 2008, by [FRENCH Howard W.](#) (Date first published: 24 March 2008).

SHANGHAI: A group of prominent Chinese intellectuals has circulated a petition urging the government to stop what it calls a “one-sided” propaganda campaign on Tibet and initiate dialogue with the Dalai Lama.

The petition, signed by more than two dozen writers, journalists and scholars, contains 12 recommendations. Taken together, they represent a sharp break from the government’s response to the wave of demonstrations that swept Tibetan areas of the country in recent weeks.

Most of the signers are Han Chinese, China’s dominant ethnic group.

Their petition accused the government of “fanning racial hatred” in China by blaming ethnic Tibetans for the violence and seeking to inflame passions among the Han to support the crackdown.

One of the signers, Wang Lixiong, is a prolific writer and leading analyst of Tibetan issues. Others are better known for their liberal political views and their willingness to speak out against government policies.

The Chinese government has sought to convey a sense of strong domestic and international support for putting down what is depicted here as a civil disturbance by lawless people being instigated by the Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, whom Beijing denounces as a secessionist, or “splittist.”

In recent days, the state-controlled media have also stepped up their criticisms of the international news media for what they say has been biased and overblown coverage of the Tibetan crisis. China has barred international journalists from Tibet and expelled most tourists and other foreigners from the region since the crisis began. As trouble has spread to neighboring provinces where many Tibetans live, the government has blocked access to these areas as well.

“In our view, the current news blockade cannot gain credit with the Chinese people or the international community, and is harmful to the credibility of the Chinese government,” the petitioners wrote. “Only by adopting an open attitude can we turn around the international community’s distrust of our government.”

Given the government’s stringent censorship of the media, including the Internet, it is not clear how widely knowledge of the petition will spread in China. But many of its points directly challenge or dispute the government line.

“We support the Dalai Lama’s appeal for peace, and hope that the ethnic conflict can be dealt with according to the principles of good will, peace and nonviolence,” it reads.

The petition cites accusations by the government that the unrest was “organized, premeditated and meticulously orchestrated by the Dalai clique,” and calls on Beijing to invite the UN Human Rights Council to do an independent investigation of these charges.

It states, "In order to prevent similar incidents from happening in the future, the government must abide by the freedom of religious belief and the freedom of speech explicitly enshrined in the Chinese Constitution, thereby allowing the Tibetan people to fully express their grievances and hopes and permitting citizens of all nationalities to freely criticize and make suggestions regarding the government's nationality policies."

#### Surveillance alert dismissed

China dismissed a recent U.S. warning about surveillance on visitors to the Beijing Olympics, saying it was "irresponsible" because the country's security measures do not violate international standards, The Associated Press reported from Beijing.

Last week, the U.S. State Department advised Americans to be mindful that all hotel rooms and offices are subject to "onsite or remote technical monitoring at all times" without the occupant's consent or knowledge.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry said privacy in China is guaranteed by law. "Foreign visitors do not need to be concerned," Qin Gang, a spokesman, said in a statement on the ministry's Web site.

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\* From the International Herald Tribune, 24 March 2008:

<http://www.ihf.com/articles/2008/03/24/asia/chinasub.php>