

China's Stand on Burma and Darfur Spurs Boycott Call

Friday 29 February 2008, by [Wai Moe](#) (Date first published: 27 February 2008).

As China prepares to host the Olympic Games in August, its foreign policy is coming under increasing scrutiny because of its stand on political events in Burma and human rights violations in the Darfur region of Sudan.

A movement in favor of boycotting the Games is gathering pace, while Hollywood director Steven Spielberg has quit as an artistic adviser for the Olympics, claiming China was not doing enough to help end atrocities in Darfur.

China responded to the boycott calls on Tuesday by saying advocates of such action should have a "correct understanding" of Beijing's Burma policy. China's "good neighborly and friendly policy" towards Burma "serves the interest of the people" in Burma and also in China, said Foreign Ministry Spokesman Liu Jianchao.

"The policy is conducive to the democratic process of reconciliation and peace in Myanmar [Burma]. I hope relevant organizations could have a correct understanding of this policy," he said.

One of the principal advocates of a boycott of the games is Burma's 88 Students Generation movement, which issued a call this week appealing to people around the world not to watch the sports events on TV.

In a recent interview with *The Irrawaddy*, Tun Myint Aung, a leader of the 88 Students Generation, said the boycott call wasn't aimed at the Chinese people but against the foreign policy of their country, which supported "the worst tyrannies in the world." Tun Mying Aung added: "We are on the same ground as the people of China."

In a similar appeal, the US Campaign for Burma (USCB), based in Washington DC, called on athletes to also boycott the games.

Aung Din of the USCB told *The Irrawaddy* on Wednesday that although China claimed publicly to be a good friend of Burma its friendship was extended only to the ruling junta.

"China should strongly pressure Burma," Aung Din said. "If the Burmese generals don't listen to Beijing, China should work with the western democracies and the UN Security Council to save the Burmese people." It was clear that the Burmese people "hated" China's policy on Burma because it supported a despised military junta, he said.

A USCB statement charged that supplies of arms from China had enabled government forces to destroy 3,200 ethnic minority villages, forcing 1.5 million people to flee their homes.

Latest policy decisions in Burma would bar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi from standing in the

general election announced for 2010, on the grounds that she had been married to a foreigner, and a threat of stern punishment for anybody judged to be interfering with the referendum planned for May.

The ruling barring Suu Kyi, even though her husband, Briton Michael Aris died in 1999, flies in the face of international calls for an “inclusive” political process in Burma.

Legislation announced on Tuesday evening by junta leader Snr-Gen Than Shwe forms a referendum commission and threatens long prison terms for anybody who “attempts to deter” the referendum.

China’s indifference to human rights abuses in Darfur has also led to increasing pressure for an international boycott of the Olympic Games.

Sudan government policies have cost more than 200,000 lives and driven more than 2.5 million people from their homes.

Beijing and Khartoum have long had strong political, economic and military ties. Analysts say China imports two-thirds of Sudan’s oil, an estimated 500,000 barrels a day. China imported a total of \$4.1bn worth of goods from Sudan, mostly oil, in 2007. China is also believed to be Sudan’s biggest arms supplier.

A visit to Sudan this week by a special envoy from China, Liu Guojin, coincided with a fresh assault by Sudanese government forces on areas of Darfur.

P.S.

*From The Irrawaddy:

http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=10583