

**REACHING OUT  
TO INTERNATIONAL POLICYMAKERS**

HRIC Executive Director Sharon Hom testified on November 26 at a hearing before the **European Parliament Sub-Committee on Human Rights** that focused on China’s development ahead of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. She argued that the international community—including governments, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), corporate sponsors, domestic and international media, activists, and civil society—has an important opportunity to leverage the Games to advance human rights. She urged the IOC to take action and not only make public the Beijing Host City Contract, but also fulfill its responsibilities under the Olympic Charter and stop avoiding sensitive issues.

Chinese activist **Hu Jia** also testified before the sub-committee via telephone, citing Olympics-related rights violations and criticizing the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (BOCOG). He was detained one month later on charges of “inciting subversion of state power,” and his family was notified of his formal arrest on January 30, 2007. He has been denied release on bail pending investigation for reportedly being a danger to society.

In December, the European Parliament (EP) passed a resolution regarding EU-China relations that recognized this hearing and concluded “that human rights concerns should receive much more focus in the buildup to the Beijing Olympic Games.”<sup>1</sup> The EP joined other international appeals and adopted an urgent resolution in January that called for Hu Jia’s immediate release. The EP president and the chair of the EP Inter-Parliamentary Delegation to China also made open statements supporting Hu Jia.

On February 27, Sharon testified before the **Congressional-Executive Commission on China** at its hearing, “The Impact of the 2008 Olympic Games on Human Rights and the Rule of Law in China.” Sharon spoke about the obligations undertaken by China in

regards to the Olympics, as well as the current challenges to rule of law. She made recommendations regarding actions the U.S. government could take to promote human rights and the rule of law in China. Sharon highlighted as well the February 27 open letter from the **Tiananmen Mothers** to Chinese authorities, which calls for dialogue on accountability for the June 4, 1989 crackdown in the lead-up to the Olympic Games. Other witnesses at the hearing included Roger Martella, Jr., of the Environmental Protection Agency, Bob Dietz of the Committee to Protect Journalists, Sophie Richardson of Human Rights Watch, and Robin Munro of China Labor Bulletin.

**ADVOCACY ON BEHALF OF INDIVIDUALS**

HRIC supports human rights defenders in China through its work with international institutions and media worldwide. HRIC’s efforts increase international awareness of these cases, and provide solidarity and support for the defenders and their families.

In January, HRIC’s Incorporating Responsibility 2008 Olympics Campaign marked its final Olympics lead-up year by launching the **Take Action Campaign**. This campaign highlights the cases of individual rights defenders in detention and systemic human rights challenges in China in order to mobilize the attention of governments, activists, corporations, and the media, and spur effective action.

Each month in 2008, the Take Action Campaign will focus on the human rights defender featured in HRIC’s 2008 calendar, **Human Rights in 2008: China’s Olympic Year**, and provide resources on the broader human rights issue that individual represents. These individuals have been imprisoned for trying to exercise their human rights and are scheduled to remain in detention during the Olympics and beyond. To get involved in the Take Action Campaign, visit <http://www.ir2008.org>.

HRIC regularly makes submissions to the **UN Working**

**Group on Arbitrary Detention**, an independent international body of human rights experts. The latest cases on which HRIC is working are those of human rights defenders **Lü Gengsong**, who has written on local corruption, and **Wu Lihong**, who has exposed pollution scandals.

HRIC has submitted 50 total cases to the Working Group and 16 have received final decisions; all were determined to be arbitrary. HRIC builds on decisions by the Working Group to advocate for the release of these individuals and raises their cases with governments that participate in human rights dialogues with China, including the European Union (EU), EU member states, and the U.S. government. HRIC's 2008 calendar and Take Action Campaign feature five of these individuals: **Shi Tao**, **Chen Guangcheng**, **Hu Shigen**, **Yao Fuxin**, and **Li Chang**.

Additionally, HRIC's press releases and case updates assist international press, government representatives, and advocates in staying abreast of developments concerning human rights defenders and systemic reform efforts. HRIC issued 17 press releases from December

through February that advocated on behalf of human rights defenders and provided context on how their individual efforts reflect larger trends. In a press statement issued in February, HRIC welcomed the release of imprisoned journalist **Ching Cheong**, but noted the mixed message China sent when writer **Lü Gengsong** was sentenced the very next day to four years in prison. HRIC also engaged in media work on behalf of human rights defenders **Zheng Enchong**, **Li Jinping**, **Guo Feixiong**, and Buddhist monk **Master Shengguan**. Additionally, in response to **Hu Jia**'s detention, HRIC prepared an **Action Bulletin** with information on the case and suggestions for action, which can be found on HRIC's website.

## PUBLICATIONS

HRIC hosted two events to celebrate the launch of its latest publication, **Challenging China: Struggle and Hope in an Era of Change**. An in-depth feature on these events can be found in this issue. This collection of essays by activists, journalists, authors, and former government officials explores the growth of individual

A boy plays at Human Rights in China's information booth at the International Human Rights Day Carnival in Hong Kong on December 9, 2007.



## HRIC SPEAKS

*The Wall Street Journal* named Executive Director Sharon Hom as one of 50 women who have the potential to make significant impact on business in 2008.

**“The 50 Women to Watch 2007,” *The Wall Street Journal*, November 19, 2007.**

“You can’t conflate the Chinese authorities with the Chinese people who are not monolithic. There are different voices—journalists, independent intellectuals, grassroots activists—all working for the same thing: they want a peaceful flourishing China that respects human rights.”

**HRIC quoted on KCRW/PRI’s “To The Point” radio program, February 22, 2008.**

“As the Olympic year begins, it is disturbing to see that during China’s intense preparations for the Games, there is an equally intense crackdown on human rights defenders. [. . .] Only 11 days into 2008, Lü Gengsong has been indicted, [AIDS activist] Hu Jia criminally detained, and [blind rights campaigner] Chen Guangcheng’s wife, Yuan Weijing, continues to be harassed. These are only three examples of China’s failure to honor its commitment to a ‘Free and Open Olympics.’”

**HRIC quoted in “Trial of dissident Chinese writer Lü Gengsong opens as curbs tighten on dissent,” *Christian Science Monitor*, January 23, 2008.**

and group activism in the face of the complex human rights challenges facing China.

On December 4, Board Co-Chair Andy Nathan introduced the publication at **Book Culture** in New York City, and on December 11, Sharon and writer Yan Li presented the book at a luncheon at the **Hong Kong Foreign Correspondents’ Club**.

## OUTREACH

HRIC works collaboratively with labor, ethnic minority, and international human rights NGOs, as well as academics, think tanks, and technology groups. During a visit to the Hong Kong office in December, Sharon met with professors from the University of Hong Kong’s Departments of Sociology and Journalism and Faculty of Law, the Director of the Chinese University of Hong Kong’s Graduate Law Centre, and the French Ambassador for Human Rights. She also met with representatives of NGOs, including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute, and the French Centre for Research on Contemporary China.

HRIC’s Hong Kong office, along with other local human rights organizations, migrant rights groups, and social service organizations, hosted interactive information booths at the **International Human Rights Day Carnival** in Hong Kong on December 9, which attracted around 1,000 local and mainland visitors.

On January 15 and 16, Sharon participated in an event hosted by **The Albert Shanker Institute** in Washington, D.C., entitled “Labor Law Reform in China: What Are the Implications for Worker Rights? For Political Liberalization?” Over 40 participants discussed whether China’s new labor contract law will benefit China’s workers. On a panel with Robin Munro of China Labour Bulletin and David Strom of the American Federation of Teachers, Sharon shared her perspective on the opportunities and challenges facing workers involved in building an independent civil society in China.

On January 26, Sharon moderated a panel discussion at the **American Museum of Natural History** in New York regarding China's Three Gorges Dam Project, including its implications for the environment, displacement of people, and global impact. Panelists included Elizabeth Economy of the Council on Foreign Relations, Casey Brown of Columbia University's Earth Institute, and Deirdre Chetham of Harvard University's Asia Center.

### BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVES

On November 27, HRIC co-organized a seminar in Brussels entitled "Corporate Social Responsibility in China in the Light of the 2008 Olympic Games," along with the **Brussels China Forum** and the **Institute for European Studies**. Sharon served as keynote speaker, and emphasized that the Beijing Olympics provide a crucial opportunity to promote awareness of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in China and spark improvements that will last beyond the Games.

Other panelists examined the benefits and drawbacks of CSR in EU-China relations and the challenges facing China. Tom Dodd of the European Commission's Directorate General for Enterprise and Industry emphasized that CSR cannot be the only answer to a problem that is mostly rooted in some countries' lack of good governance. Jan Wouters from the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven noted that the CSR process had stalled in 2004, due to the departure of many NGOs that felt the outcome served the interests of business but failed to result in real concessions on human rights. On the other hand, Bernard Dewit from the Belgian-Chinese Chamber of Commerce noted the reasonableness of the EU's soft approach on CSR, arguing that imposing a strict framework on businesses would decrease their willingness to comply.

On February 12, HRIC briefed the **European Economic and Social Committee** (EESC) in Brussels regarding CSR as part of its preparations for the EU-China roundtable between the EESC and the China Economic and Social Council. The roundtable was established by EU and Chinese leaders at a 2006 EU-China Summit in Helsinki. The first round was held in

## RECENT AND UPCOMING HRIC EVENTS

Program Officer Carol Wang and Law Program Director Elisabeth Wickeri will attend the seventh session of the **Human Rights Council** from March 10–14. They will meet with special rapporteurs of the UN representing diverse issues, present them with individual cases, and encourage them to highlight these cases in their work.

On March 12, Carol will present in Strasbourg, France, before the **European Parliament's Tibet Intergroup** on "Countdown to the Olympics: Treatment of Tibetans in the Context of Increasing Repression."

Executive Director Sharon Hom will take part in the Fifth Assembly of the **World Movement for Democracy**, April 6–9, in Kyiv, Ukraine. The theme of this year's Assembly is "Making Democracy Work: From Principles to Performance." It will focus on ways to address increasing rollback of democratic progress and restrictions on domestic space for civil society work.

On April 11, Sharon will take part as a panelist in the **Tällberg Conversation**, "In Search of the Common Sense—Leadership Beyond the Conflicts of Interest," in New York. The panel discussion is organized by the Tällberg Foundation (Sweden).

Along with several organizations including the **World Association of Newspapers** and the **World Press Freedom Committee**, HRIC is co-sponsoring a conference in Paris from April 17–19 dedicated to press freedom and freedom of expression in China in the lead-up to the Beijing Olympics. The event will also examine the legal and social conditions under which foreign journalists will be operating in China when covering the Olympics.

On April 25, Sharon will speak at the Fourth Annual China Symposium hosted by the **Weatherhead East Asian Institute at Columbia University**. The symposium, entitled "Defining Chinese Modernity: Information, Economy, and Environment," will address the connection between China's rapidly growing economy and changes in society, media, and environmental policies. Other presenters include Aryeh Neier, President of the Open Society Institute, and Orville Schell, Director of the Center on U.S.-China Relations at the Asia Society.

June 2007, followed by two rounds focusing on the environment, sustainability, and CSR. HRIC’s EU Liaison Officer Isabella Nitschke provided the EESC delegation with information on CSR developments in China and offered a few suggestions for the upcoming round table in June 2008.

On December 4, Sharon spoke at the **Hudson Institute**, a non-partisan policy research organization, on the “Business of Human Rights.” Her presentation focused on the challenges and opportunities raised by the intersection of business and human rights in China. The audience included corporate executives, journalists, and others interested in learning more about how China’s booming economy and expanding investment opportunities have an influence on China’s human rights situation.

Internet and communications technologies amplify everyday voices and enable a wide range of rights defense activities. However, these technologies also present a number of freedom of expression and privacy challenges for technology providers doing business in

authoritarian countries. HRIC has been actively participating in a multi-stakeholder process convened by **Business for Social Responsibility** and **Center for Democracy and Technology** aimed at confronting some of these challenges. This initiative includes a diverse group of companies, academics, investors, technology leaders, and human rights organizations, who together are working to draft principles and an implementation framework to advance freedom of expression and privacy rights. Sharon and Robert L. Bernstein Fellow in International Human Rights Cynthia Wong participated in the initiative’s January and February meetings in Washington, D.C.

**HRIC ORGANIZATIONAL NOTES**

HRIC held its winter Board of Directors meeting in New York on January 14. Immediately following the meeting, HRIC Board Co-Chairs Andy Nathan and Christine Loh hosted an event featuring author and HRIC staffer **Gao Wenqian** and writer **James Mann**. In addition to discussing their recent books, *Zhou*

**HRIC Board Co-Chair Christine Loh fields a question from the audience at the January 14 book event featuring authors Gao Wenqian (center) and James Mann (right).**



*Enlai: The Last Perfect Revolutionary*, and *The China Fantasy: How Our Leaders Explain Away Chinese Repression*, respectively, they provided analysis of China's growing role as a world power and the implications for addressing human rights issues.

In staff news, **Abbey Southerland** joined the HRIC staff in January. She obtained her BA in Chinese Language and Linguistics in 2005 from the College of William and Mary. As part of her undergraduate program, she studied abroad in Beijing and performed volunteer work in an orphanage in northeast China. In June 2007, Abbey graduated from the Chinese Flagship Program, a master's degree program sponsored by the U.S. government at Ohio State University, and

is one of only a few people in the United States who has completed master's degree coursework conducted entirely in Chinese.

HRIC also welcomed **W.W.**, who will be interning at HRIC throughout the spring. He is a junior at Columbia University, where he is studying Political Science and Economics. In 2006, he interned at both the New York and Hong Kong offices of HRIC.

#### Note

1. "Joint Motion for a Resolution," European Parliament, December 13, 2007, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+MOTION+P6-RC-2007-0543+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN&language=EN>.