

# BULLETIN

August–October 2005

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## **SUPPORTING HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS**

HRIC supports human rights defenders through individual case advocacy, English and Chinese language media work, and domestic and international advocacy for systemic reforms.

HRIC has been updating the **Human Rights Database** which now holds more

than 2,800 cases and will be used to support greater accountability on the part of the PRC government. The database is being extensively developed in its next phase, with an ongoing concentrated effort to translate all case information into English. Key information on individual cases will eventually be made publicly accessible in a searchable online database.

HRIC's E-Activism Project uses adaptive technology to provide a platform for amplifying independent voices inside China, promoting an uncensored civil space for discussing issues, providing access to diverse sources of information for China's Internet users and advocating greater

accountability for human rights abuses in China.

In August, Executive Director Sharon Hom, Senior IT Officer Shirley Hao, and HRIC Consultant Feng Congde attended the Wikimedia Foundation's **First Annual Wiki-mania Conference** in Frankfurt in order to gain a better understanding of how HRIC can develop more online tools and information to support civil society in China.

The conference also gave attendees the chance to learn more about the greater issues surrounding Wikipedia, the interactive online encyclopedia, and other projects operated by the Wikimedia Foundation. HRIC participated in discussions with the international Wikipedian community regard-

## HRIC's Web sites: A Network for Activism and Accountability

HRIC's new Web initiatives:

### **ADVOCATING INTERNATIONAL SCRUTINY OF CHINA'S HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES Incorporating Responsibility 2008 ([www.IR2008.org](http://www.IR2008.org))—Olympics Campaign**

- Launched in November, this Web site consolidates and advances much of the work of the IR2008 campaign, which had kicked off in 2003.
- The campaign monitors China's international obligations and the policies and practices of Olympic sponsors and contract-holders, urging international actors to support human and labor rights in the run up to the Olympics. It focuses on three main initiatives:
  - *Free All Political Prisoners and Human Rights Defenders*: Calling for China to release its political prisoners and human rights defenders;
  - *Unshackle the Internet*: Working towards ending the censorship and information control of the Internet and other media; and
  - *Invest in Social Equity*: Encouraging and advocating actors to invest in reducing the gap between China's rural and urban populations.

### **MAPPING CORPORATE SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY**

#### **Case Highlight: Shi Tao and Yahoo ([www.hrichina.org/public/highlight](http://www.hrichina.org/public/highlight))—Online Resource**

This bilingual Web site tracks Yahoo's involvement in the conviction and imprisonment of Chinese journalist Shi Tao. The Web site includes:

- Background information on Shi Tao, his arrest and sentencing to 10 years in prison on charges of "illegally providing state secrets overseas;"
- Legal and supporting documents related to the case;
- Links to relevant media coverage; and
- Yahoo's relevant corporate policies and user agreements.

HRIC's ongoing Web initiatives:

### **MOBILIZING SUPPORT FOR THE TIANANMEN MOTHERS Fill the Square ([www.fillthesquare.org](http://www.fillthesquare.org))—Online Petition**

The Web site mobilizes individuals and organizations worldwide to amplify the Tiananmen Mothers' demands for accountability for the June 4th crackdown.

### **BUILDING AN ARCHIVE FOR THE FUTURE June 4th ([www.64memo.org](http://www.64memo.org)) - Multimedia Archive**

*64memo* is the most comprehensive Chinese-language multimedia archive documenting the history of the 1989 democracy movement. With an active community of over 15,000 members, the Web site is continuously updated with new articles, photos, forum postings and more.

### **PROVIDING A VIRTUAL CIVIL SPACE FOR DISCUSSION AND DEBATE**

#### **Ren Yu Ren Quan ([www.renyurenquan.org](http://www.renyurenquan.org))—Monthly Journal & Archive**

The majority of the articles published in *Ren Yu Ren Quan* from August to October were submitted by mainland Chinese authors on issues such as the government crackdowns of Chinese web-sites, violations against human rights lawyers in China, and economic development and its affect on human rights issues in China.

### **DELIVERING UNCENSORED INFORMATION**

#### **Huaxia Dianzi Bao ([www.huaxiabao.org](http://www.huaxiabao.org))—Weekly E-mail Newsletter & Archive**

Sent into China every week to more than 300,000 subscribers, *HuaxiaBao* includes under-reported and banned news reports from within mainland China. In September, the newsletter marked its second anniversary with a special issue containing a Letter from the Editors describing *HuaxiaBao*'s work over the past two years and its direction for the future.

ing issues such as legal copyright, technical problems in localization and the use of Wikipedia in developing countries such as China.

In September, HRIC was named a Laureate of **The Tech Museum Awards 2005** after being selected from a field of 560 outstanding candidates representing 80 countries. The Tech Awards were established to honor innovators who creatively apply technology to global challenges that improve the human condition.

## GENERATING INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

HRIC raises human rights issues within multilateral fora to promote ongoing international scrutiny of the Chinese government's human rights practices. Developing such constructive external pressure supports progressive domestic forces working for social, legal and democratic change within China.

### UNITED NATIONS

During the **Committee on the Rights of the Child** (CRC)'s preparation and review of China's implementation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, HRIC participated in the Committee pre-session meeting, briefed Committee experts on specific issues at individual side meetings and submitted a parallel NGO report this past summer. In September, HRIC monitored the CRC's second periodic review of China in Geneva. The Committee's final recommendations and observations reflected many of the concerns and suggestions set forth in HRIC's parallel NGO report, including rural/urban disparity, special concerns regarding migrant children, sex ratio imbalance at birth, juvenile justice, Internet issues relating to children's right to information and the independence and contributions of NGOs in China

Despite the Chinese government's efforts to exclude the organization, HRIC attended the **World Summit on the Information Society** (WSIS) PrepCom-3 in Geneva as an affiliate of its partner NGO, the Federation Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme (FIDH). Due to pressure and objections behind closed doors by the Chinese government, HRIC was not included on the list of NGOs recommended

for accreditation. However, following HRIC lobbying and meetings with civil society groups, government delegates and concerned WSIS caucuses, a group of countries, led by the US government, raised the issue of HRIC's accreditation at the opening plenary session. After the US made a motion to accredit HRIC, China made a procedural motion that precluded voting on any NGO not on the proposed list. China's use of its enormous economic and political influence to exclude independent civil voices undermines the WSIS principles of democracy, transparency and multi-stakeholder participation.

### MEDIA AND PRESS WORK

Our media and press work in China and around the world counters the dominant spin on human rights as influenced by the Chinese government. President Liu Qing, Executive Director Sharon Hom and Research Director Nicolas Becquelin fielded numerous print and radio interviews on a range of issues, including human

rights at the UN World Summit on the Information Society, religious repression of Muslims and Christians, forced sterilization and harassment of journalists, lawyers and intellectuals in China. HRIC was also quoted in approximately 80 articles in a variety of different media outlets from around the world.

### OUTREACH AND COLLABORATION

HRIC's academic, NGO and corporate outreach contributes to policy formation and raising awareness on key issues linking technology, trade, corporate social responsibility and human rights in China.

In September, Executive Director Sharon Hom participated in a **death penalty mission** supported by the EU and organized by the FIDH. The delegation of three lawyers, Penny Martin, Siobhan Ni Chulachain and Sharon Hom, were received by Taiwanese President Chen Shui-Bian, the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Justice. Sharon visited various detention centers, interviewed death row inmates, their families and the victims' families. She also met a Japanese photographer whose works capture the inhumane reality of the death penalty on juveniles. This mission will serve to aid FIDH in producing a death penalty report.

As part of HRIC's solidarity support work, in September, Sharon Hom spoke at the Rally for Tibet's Stolen Child, hosted by the **International Campaign for Tibet** during the Committee on the Rights of the Child's session in Geneva. In her speech, Sharon called for the release of the Panchen Lama, who was taken from his home in Tibet by PRC authorities as a child. Sharon also helped to deliver a petition to the vice chair of the CRC calling for the Panchen Lama's release. Program Associate Carol Wang participated in a press briefing at the Geneva Press Club with the International Campaign for Tibet, where she spoke about violations of human rights in China, particularly in Tibet and Xinjiang, and the use of intimidation by the Chinese government to silence independent civil society voices.

HRIC's corporate outreach has also expanded. In September, HRIC board member Christine Loh delivered the keynote address to the **Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility** (ICCR), a large group of faith-based institutional investors commit-

## A Letter from China

*HRIC recently received an e-mail from an anonymous student, a portion of which is printed here:*

I previously interned at a local daily news agency to learn how to become a reporter and an editor . . . Once, at a regular editors' meeting, the chief editor said: "We will only publish that which should be published, and we will not publish that which should not be published." I don't know if specific categories of this so-called "to be published and not to be published" news have been handed down, but as far as I know, news not permitted to be published includes: train accidents, unemployment protests and opinions on politics and policy (especially those conflicting with mainstream opinions) . . . But such actions taken by the government are having the opposite affect than they would hope, and instead, make me pay more attention to Web sites like HRIC's, which have the courage to speak and disclose.

## Key HRIC Media Quotes

### On religious repression in Xinjiang:

“Uighurs are seen as an ethno-nationalist threat to the Chinese state. As Islam is perceived as underpinning Uighur ethnic identity, China has taken draconian steps to smother Islam as a means of subordinating Uighur nationalist sentiment.”

—*Agence France Presse*, August 15, 2005

### On the establishment of squads to combat terrorism:

“It is legitimate for China to have an anti-terror force but the problem is the context in which it is used and how you define terror.”—*Financial Times*, August 18, 2005

### On democracy in China:

“The future of democracy in China is interrelated to the promotion of human rights and the rule of the law that is transparent and fair, and to a judiciary and process independent of the party.”—*The Japan Times*, September 15, 2005

### On human rights activism and journalists in China:

“It is becoming more and more dangerous to be a rights activist because of the increase in intimidation using unlawful means. There are some areas that are totally lawless. This is one reason why insurance companies rate journalism as the second most dangerous profession in China.”—*The Guardian*, October 11, 2005

### On state secrets in China:

“The State Secrets Law and its Implementing Regulations provide a list of categories of what may be state secrets, but the lists are so broad and vague as to encompass essentially all conceivable information.”

—*New Straits Times Online*, October 1, 2005

ted to promoting ethical investment policies and practices. In addition, Sharon Hom was also invited to address human rights challenges in China with a focus on labor issues. Sharon’s presentation also underscored the impact of social inequalities and systemic human rights abuses and sustainable investment. She also highlighted recent developments in China that create a unique window of opportunity for business and investors to exercise corporate leadership in addressing these human rights challenges.

In October, Sharon Hom attended the “China Expert Meeting for Companies: Human Rights Best Practices and Beyond,” hosted by the **Dutch Section of Amnesty International** in Amsterdam. The consultation challenged its participants, the companies that make up the Dutch Round Table and the Business Leaders Initiative on Human Rights (BLIHR), to address the issue of conducting business in China without committing human rights violations.

Sharon participated on a panel with representatives from Amnesty International, Gap Inc. and the Dutch Centre for Trade Promotion. Her presentation focused on China’s human rights challenges, workers rights and child labor and windows of opportunity for businesses to address these human rights challenges. She also examined the lessons that can be learned from the Yahoo and Shi Tao case.

Law Program Officer Elisabeth Wickeri attended the two-day **Canadian Business for Social Responsibility 2005 Annual Summit** in October. The summit, organized to explore domestic and international human rights and business issues and provide practical guidance to Canadian companies, was attended by CBSR members, as well as other policymakers and NGOs. Elisabeth presented on one of the first day’s introductory panels, “Globalization of Human Rights,” which was attended by more than 100 participants. Her presentation included an overview of China’s human

rights issues, and outlined the challenges as well as opportunities that businesses faced by investing and manufacturing in China.

In October, HRIC organized and hosted a **“Building Social Justice Roundtable Discussion”** in our New York office. The day-long discussion was attended by 11 guests as well as HRIC staff. The lively and open discussion shared different approaches and strategies that have been adopted internationally and within Chinese communities for building social justice, healing and reconciliation in China. Our guests were impressed by the sophisticated and thought-provoking discussions, and suggested that additional discussions be organized on a regular basis. The round-table report drawn from the discussion appears in this issue of *China Rights Forum*.

Sharon Hom also participated in a brainstorming workshop entitled “Ethics in Action: The Ethical Challenges of International Human Rights and Humanitarian Non-Governmental Organisations,” hosted by the **United Nations University** in August. The workshop, attended by representatives from other human rights NGOs, was convened to help form recommendations for the concluding chapter of a collaborative book with the same name by the UNU and the City University of Hong Kong.

### STAFF AND BOARD NOTES

HRIC would like to extend a warm welcome to our three new staff members.

**Stephanie Wang**, Law Program Officer, received her JD from Harvard Law School in 2002 and recently returned from Beijing, where she worked on advocacy and research promoting the rights of people with HIV/AIDS in China as a Henigson fellow with the Harvard Law School Human Rights Program.

Prior to joining HRIC, **Peng Hongbi**, Program Assistant, worked in Japan at Sonet Provision School as an educational administrator, and has professional publishing experience with the Kokei Foreign School.

**Brenda Chan**, Finance and Operations Associate, graduated from Pace University with a BBA in accounting and has experience in the non-profit sector, specifically immigrant health policy research and socio-psychological research.