

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2040/08
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to the Commission

Subject: 2008 Beijing Olympics

The Olympic flame has started its 'journey of harmony', which was the theme chosen by the people of China on 24 March 2008 to accompany the Olympic flame on its travels until 8 August 2008, the date on which the Olympic Games will open.

In these tragic times for Tibet, with the unrest in Lhasa having led to more than 1 200 arrests and over 90 deaths, we have in disbelief listened to the condemnations of the Chinese Government accompanied by the total impotence of international diplomacy and democracy.

The recent protests against China, which in fact began in the Tibetan capital on 10 March 2008 on the occasion of the 49th anniversary of the unsuccessful uprising against the Chinese in Lhasa, are a strong signal of the Tibetan people's intent to put an end to over six decades of repression and continual violation of human rights by the Chinese Government.

A few days after the lighting of a flame which is viewed the world over as a symbol of fraternity and peace, it would be more apt to call its journey of harmony a journey of fear.

The events which have taken place at a political level are the logical upshot of a situation that is far from being resolved. The President of the European Parliament, Hans-Gert Pöttering, and the President of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, have openly stated that they will consider boycotting the opening ceremony. Those statements are symptomatic of a situation from which the European Union cannot distance itself, and with which as an institution it must be closely concerned, since the rights which it upholds, and primarily human rights, have been blatantly violated.

The European Commission has taken a stance that contrasts starkly with those statements, in claiming that a prospective boycott would not be the most appropriate way of calling for and demanding respect for human rights.

The Chinese Government has responded vehemently to the European institutions' invitation to open a constructive dialogue, claiming, in the words of the Chinese Foreign Minister Jiang Yu, that "Tibet is a completely internal Chinese affair in which no foreign country or international organisation has the right to interfere."

In the light of the above, could the Commission state what action it will take in respect of this worrying situation in Tibet, and what the most appropriate instruments would be for ensuring the effective protection of human rights which, for over forty years, have been brutally violated?