

Launch of new Tibetan documentary film shut down in Beijing

Beijing, 6th August 2008

Today in Beijing, on the eve of the XXIX Olympiad, a screening and media launch of a new Tibetan documentary film "Leaving Fear Behind: Tibetans Speak on Tibet, China and the Olympics" was blocked and forcibly shut down by Chinese authorities.

The film was due to be shown to journalists and officially launched in a room in Beijing's Hotel G. More than 40 journalists were invited to see the film. However, according to the hotel manager, plain-clothed Chinese Public Security Bureau agents put pressure on him to stop the film screening. Journalists already present were denied access to the screening room and were made to leave the premises. A handful of journalists managed to enter the room and see a part of the introduction to the film before the screening was shut down.

The introduction, in the form of a pre-recorded message, was made by Dechen Pemba who explained the background of the film. The secretly produced 25 minute long film captures the sentiments within Tibet about China's rule, the relevance and symbolism of the Olympic Games and the return of the Dalai Lama.

"The actions today by Chinese security show how even the relatively simple act of organizing a film screening is impossible given the security paranoia surrounding the Olympics and particularly the issue of Tibet" said Dechen Pemba from London, spokesperson for the group responsible for the film. "It is unfortunate that just days away from China's showcase to the world begins, Tibetans remain voiceless".

A preview event, to a very small crowd of foreign journalists, had taken place without incident just a few hours before the main media launch. For the moment, more information about the film can be found on www.leavingfearbehind.com If it proves to be impossible to organize another screening for the film in Beijing in the next few days, it will be made available to the public for general viewing.

As the filmmaker Dhondhup Wangchen says in the film, "The idea of our film is not to get famous or to give entertainment. But at a time of great difficulty and a feeling of helplessness, it is for us to show such a film to get some meaningful response and results."

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