

# CHINA, OLYMPICS AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTIES

On November 7, several news outlets reported that the Communist Chinese government would violate the Olympic Charter by banning athletes from bringing Bibles to the 2008 Olympic Games. Bill Donohue sent letters to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in Switzerland, asking for an investigation. Donohue told the press:

“Principle #5 of the Fundamental Principles of Olympism in the Olympic Charter reads, ‘Any form of discrimination with regard to a country or a person on grounds of race, religion, politics, gender or otherwise is incompatible with belonging to the Olympic Movement.’ Under Chapter Two, Rule 23, Paragraph 1.6 of the Charter, the Executive Board of the IOC has the power to withdraw the right of the host city to organize the Olympic Games if the Charter is violated. However, Paragraph 3 says, ‘Before applying any measure or sanction, the competent IOC body may issue a warning.’ Accordingly, I am asking the IOC to do just that. If the warning fails, the Catholic League will petition the IOC to deny China the 2008 Olympic Games.

“In addition to violating religious liberties, the Chinese government is guilty of gross hypocrisy. On the website of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, there are several comments lauding religious rights. For example, it says, ‘China is a country with religious freedom and respects every religion.’ It also posts a statement of October 17, 2007 titled, ‘Beijing Olympics Will Provide High-Level Service on Religion.’ Moreover, just four days later—for the first time in its history—the Communist Party of China amended its Constitution to guarantee religious liberty.”

The next day, China denied ever intending to ban Bibles

(though all visitors to the Olympics will be limited to bringing only one Bible into the country). Donohue was interviewed by New Town Dynasty, a Chinese television station headquartered in New York that broadcasts worldwide, and said he would not stop his protest until he had assurances that China intends to respect religious freedom.