

Human Rights Activists Protest Sweatshop Labor Behind Olympic Goods

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On April 9, 2008, when the Olympic torch comes to San Francisco, human rights activists will call attention to sweatshop labor abuse in China – including the abuse of workers making official Olympics gear.

Global Exchange, the Bay Area Sweat-free communities and United Students Against Sweatshops will hold a public protest from noon to 2pm at Beech and Hyde street during the torch procession.

The protest is part of a major international campaign called Play Fair 2008, which is pushing for respect for workers' rights in the global sportswear industry. The campaign's website is www.playfair2008.org.

The Beijing Olympics are expected to be the most profitable Olympics in the Games' history, according to the International Olympics Committee (IOC). The sale of the official mascot alone is expected to net \$300 million in profits. Adidas has reportedly provided the IOC between \$80 and \$100 million in cash and extras to win sponsorship rights for this year's Games. Nike is the official sponsor of the USA team.

An investigation by Play Fair found that Chinese workers who labor for Olympic licensees are subjected to egregious labor rights abuses. The investigative report, entitled ["No Medal for the Olympics on labor rights"](#), found that factories of Olympic licensees were employing child workers, forcing workers to regularly work 12 hour shifts with few days off, and paying them well below the legal minimum wage. The report focused on smaller licensees; [a follow-up report](#), scheduled for release on April 21, will focus on larger name brand sponsors.

"As a city with the strongest Sweat-free legislation in the country, we need to let the Olympic committee know that we care about how workers are treated – the Olympic Committee needs to play fair," says Kirsten Moller, Executive Director of Global Exchange.

In the run up to the Olympic Games, the Chinese government has stepped up its harassment and persecution of human rights and labor activists. Activists circulating a "We want Human

Rights, not the Olympicsâ€™ petition have been sent to reeducation camps. In February and March, export workers in Guanzhou City in southern China, who were participating in peaceful protests over unpaid wages were attacked by riot police; authorities subjected protest leaders to administrative detention without trial.

The Olympics are supposed to be about the spirit of internationalism, not international exploitationâ€™ commented Ben Feinberg of United Students Against Sweatshops who will join students from Santa Clara, Berkeley and Stanford along the torch route to show his support for workers making Olympic athletic gear.

As part of the [Play Fair 2008 campaign](#), international activists have launched an Alternative Olympics Torch relay. The virtual torch relay is housed at www.catchtheflame.org.