

For Immediate Release: August 9th, 2008

**TIBET PROTEST IN TIANANMEN SQUARE AS OLYMPICS BEGIN
FIVE DETAINED FOLLOWING DRAMATIC “DIE-IN”**

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****Photos and video footage of the action and the activists' bios available at:
<http://freetibet2008.org/mediacenter/updates/tsquare/>*

Beijing – Five Tibet supporters held a dramatic protest in Tiananmen Square early this afternoon, calling for an end to the Chinese government's occupation of Tibet. Four of the activists, lying down and draped in Tibetan national flags, staged a mock die-in with the famous portrait of Mao in the background. A fifth activist spoke about their reason for protesting there today.

The five activists, David Demes, 21, from Germany, Evan Silverman, 31, Diane Gatterdam, 55, and Joan Roney, 39, from the United States, and Chris Schwartz, 24, from Canada, were detained by security approximately ten minutes after the protest began.

“The Chinese government is seeking to cover up its ugly occupation of Tibet with the bright lights of the Olympics,” said Matt Whitticase, Press Officer of Free Tibet Campaign. “Our action at Tiananmen Square today highlights the determination of Tibetans and people of conscience that no amount of repression from the Chinese government will extinguish the desire of Tibetans for freedom and to speak out against China's worsening abuses in Tibet.”

“The world is watching China today as the Olympics begin, and with this action, the voices of the Tibetan people will be heard despite the best attempts of the Chinese authorities to silence them,” said Lhadon Tethong, Executive Director of Students for a Free Tibet. “The Chinese government will not be allowed to use the Olympics to hide the reality of its harsh rule inside Tibet.”

“Tiananmen Square is an international symbol of the Chinese struggle for fundamental human rights and democracy,” said Douglas Herman, Board Member of the International Tibet Independence Movement, who is in Beijing reporting on the Olympics. “While the world gathers in Beijing and puts aside its differences for seventeen days, the Chinese government continues its systematic and brutal repression of the Tibetan people and refuses to allow the media access to Tibet.”

This action follows two other high-profile protests by Tibet supporters in Beijing. On August 8th, one hour before the opening ceremony began, three activists held Tibetan flags aloft near the Bird's Nest stadium and the Olympic Park. They were tackled by security and swiftly detained; they were deported from Beijing at 1pm today and are on flights to New York. Earlier in the week, four members of Students for a Free Tibet hung two banners outside the Bird's Nest Olympic Stadium. The two Americans and two Britons were detained and swiftly deported.

Students for a Free Tibet (SFT) is a network of young people and activists campaigning for Tibet's independence, with 700 chapters in more than thirty countries worldwide. SFT's international headquarters are in New York, with offices in Toronto, London, and Dharamsala, India.

The International Tibet Independence Movement (ITIM) was co-founded in 1995 by Taktser Rinpoche (Oldest brother of His Holiness The XIVth Dalai Lama), and Professor Larry Gerstein to obtain Tibet's independence through non-violent methods. While ITIM is headquartered in Indiana, there are over 10,000 supporters of this organization worldwide.

Douglas F. Herman: Board Member, International Tibet Independence Movement

A native New Yorker, and recent M.A.T. graduate of the Center for Creative Teaching: Bennington College, VT, Douglas Herman is a practicing freelance photographer, filmmaker and writer. After spending six months traveling through Tibet and Tibetan Exile communities in Nepal, India and North America in 2002-03, he has continued to utilize his skills as a media artist and educator to increase global awareness of the absence of fundamental Human Rights and freedoms inside Tibet. He joined ITIM's Board in 2006.