



**"China's conscience" favorite to win Nobel Peace Prize
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Imprisoned writer Liu Xiaobo, often described as "China's conscience" has been named as a London bookmaker's favorite to win the Nobel Peace Prize tomorrow. Liu Xiaobo, who has written prominently on Tibet, has demonstrated a lifetime's commitment to the social ideals he came to enshrine in Charter 08. Bestowing the Nobel Peace Prize on Liu Xiaobo would challenge the government of the People's Republic of China to positively address the growing litany of injustices and abuses throughout China and Tibet that Liu Xiaobo has now come to represent.

As early as 2000 -- two years before dialog between representatives of the Dalai Lama and Beijing officials was to resume -- Liu Xiaobo wrote an article endorsing the Dalai Lama's position on autonomy for Tibet within the People's Republic of China, saying that the position was "not only well-founded morally, but practically, it is a sincere expression for peaceful negotiations." In March 2008, Liu Xiaobo's name was prominent among the original 29 signatories of a 12-point petition to the Chinese authorities calling for dialog between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama, noting the "serious mistakes" in China's policies in Tibet, and criticizing the Chinese government's response to the protests in Tibet as lacking "a style of governing that conforms to the standards of modern civilization."

"Liu Xiaobo is an heroic figure, and like His Holiness the Dalai Lama, people around the world would see his selection to be a Nobel Peace Prize Laureate as a catalyst for peace, reconciliation and dialog. That's the message Beijing needs to hear," said Mary Beth Markey, President of the International Campaign for Tibet. "Perhaps equally importantly, the Nobel Committee's decision to award the Peace Prize to Liu Xiaobo could and should embolden governments around the world to have the courage of their convictions and neither preemptively nor under pressure cave into the Chinese government's demands that human rights be marginalized."

Liu Xiaobo, who has a doctorate in Chinese literature from Beijing Normal University, has been at the forefront of political reform movements in China since the student protests that started in April 1989, and which led to the Chinese military's massacre of hundreds and possibly thousands of unarmed demonstrators on June 4. Sentenced to 18 months in prison on suspicion of playing a part in organizing the protests, Liu had in fact been instrumental in persuading many people to leave the square just before troops opened fire. Blacklisted and unable to find work upon his release, he continued to develop his ideas for political and social reform in a series of essays, which were widely read both in China and abroad, but which led to him serving three years "re-education through labor" from the mid- to late 1990s.

Soon after signing the 12-point petition in 2008, Liu co-drafted Charter 08, a sweeping manifesto for political reform in China which was deliberately modeled on Charter 77, a manifesto written by the Czech Nobel Laureate Václav Havel among other prominent intellectuals of the time, challenging the lack of civil and political rights in Soviet controlled Eastern Europe. However, several days prior to the planned release of Charter 08 on December 10, 2008 -- Human Rights Day -- Liu Xiaobo was detained and eventually sentenced to 11 years imprisonment on Christmas Day, 2009 on charges of "incitement to subvert the socialist system."