

China defends human rights record

by UPI

BEIJING - Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi Thursday dismissed criticism of his country's human rights record, a published report said. Yang, rejecting criticism by some human rights groups, said the Chinese government is not cracking down on political dissent ahead of the 2008 Summer Olympics, The Financial Times reported. "The Chinese people enjoy extensive freedom of speech," Yang said at a joint press conference with British Foreign Secretary David Miliband. "You could ask 10 people on the street to stand in front of public security officers and freely say 'human rights are far more important than the Olympics' 10 times or even 100 times and I'll see which officer arrests them," Yang said. "If they get tired, the public security officer would probably offer them a cup of tea." Yang last week announced at a meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice that China was willing to resume a human rights dialogue with the United States from which it had withdrawn in 2004, the newspaper reported.

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