

China had a face lift for the Olympic games and is currently getting rid of the “floating population” who helped it realize the Olympic framework in no time. Restyling even in terms of the ill-famed art. 301, whereby Turkey approved the long awaited amendment to the law which limited freedom of speech. And a EU convention recognizes the rights of the handicapped, at least on paper

## MIGRANTS OF THE BEIJING OLYMPIC GAMES

The Chinese capital holds 4,2 million migrants based on a population of 16 million inhabitants. Their work was essential for the speedy realization of the Olympic framework and up until now, neither Beijing or the other cities felt the need to record the names of about 150 million migrants to the Country. However, **before the Olympic Games start, 3,000 Beijing policemen shall record the names of all migrant workers to ensure “a safe and harmonious environment”**, according to the Town Council office for Public Safety. But many fear that mass “recording” shall lead to other activities.

Named “the floating population”, as it does not reside in the town where it works, with no right to health care or free schooling for children, migrants will be required to ask for a temporary residence permit. It is currently not clear at what conditions this permit shall be granted and if those without it shall be permitted to stay in town. Also for these reasons, it is feared that Beijing might wish to drive them out for the Olympic Games to ensure greater availability of water and improved traffic circulation, even though authorities deny this intention. Over the past few months, Beijing has closed hundreds of schools for migrant children.

**Chinese migrants, after working to realize the Olympic dream, are now full of debt (often the construction companies disappear without paying by the end of works) and with the spectre of possible expulsion.**

## AN OBSTACLE FOR THE HANDICAPPED FALLS

Starting on April 13, the Convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities has become effective. The document, undersigned by about fifty countries, amongst which Italy, acknowledges the rights of persons with disabilities and pledges to favor their actual integration in society with concrete initiatives, starting from school and the workplace. Ban Ki-moon, ONU’s Secretary General, commented: “It’s a new dawn in the fight to promote the wellbeing of persons with disabilities” and during his speech in

front of ONU’s General Assembly he asked for “concrete steps to transform the vision of the Convention into true victories on the field, for the fight against discrimination and prejudice”.

With the ratification of the agreement, the States are committed to adopt laws and other measures to improve the rights of the disabled and to abolish any discriminating legislation or activity. The assistant Secretary General for Economic Development, Jomo Kwame Sundaram, sustained that “the implementation of the agreement was an unforgettable day for the United Nations, the international community and persons with disabilities around the world”.

## THE WORSE PLACE TO BE A MOTHER? NIGERIA

Scandinavian mothers are those who see their rights safeguarded the most. Sweden, and right after Norway and Iceland are, in fact, nations who can be proud of excellent benchmarks in terms of health, education and the economic condition of mothers and their children. The ninth Relation on the state of mothers around the world sustains this in the annual Save the Children publication which reports on mother-child health in many countries around the world, examining many indicators which range from the child mortality rate to education, to life expectancy at birth, rather than on the use of contraceptives, the participation of women in the political world and their capacity for income. To be honest, mothers who are worse off are the ones in Sub-Saharan Africa, with Nigerians in the last position.

The gap between countries on top and those on the bottom of the list is unfathomable. While in Sweden, each child birth occurs with the assistance of medical staff, in Nigeria only 33% of births has any aid. About 72% of Swedish women use contraceptives, dedicates at least 17 years to their education, has a life expectancy of 83 and only one in 185 risks losing their children before age 5.

On the contrary, **in Nigeria only 4% of the female population uses any contraceptives, a woman goes to school 3 years on average, has a life expectancy of 45 and almost every woman risks seeing her child die, while 9 mothers out of 10 even lose at least two children during their lives.** The last ten



rankings are filled by Nigeria, Ciad, Yemen, Sierra Leone, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Eritrea, Djibuti and Ethiopia.

As Valerio Neri, general manager of the Italian Save the Children office explains, “the quality of life of a child depends on their health, safety and wellbeing of their own mother. **Only by ensuring education, economic wellbeing and the possibility to access services and health care will women and their children have a greater possibility of surviving and growing healthy**”. What about Italy? It’s 19th behind Slovakia, Greece, Estonia and just right before Portugal, Lithuania and Latvia.

### **TURKEY: RESTYLING OF ART. 301 TO PLEASE EU**

Last April 30, the Turkish parliament, after discussion lasting ten hours, approved the long waited law amendment which limited freedom of speech with 250 votes for and 65 against. **Amendments to ill-famed article 301 of the criminal code used to accuse hundreds of writers, journalists, intellectuals, representatives of political parties (mainly Kurds) had been solicited by the European Union.**

The article applied three years of imprisonment for “insults to the Turkish identity”. The amendment replaced the vague concept of “Turkish identity”

with “Turkish nation” and “Republic” with “State of the Turkish Republic” and reduced the maximum penalty from two to three years, which shall allow those convicted to avoid imprisonment if they have no previous criminal records. The aggravating circumstance of having uttered an insult in a foreign country has also been eliminated and the go-ahead by the Ministry for Justice will be required to try a person accused of having violated article 301.

The reform will prevent the more nationalistic legal representatives from accusing intellectuals critical of the Turkish State. **Over the past two years 1,800 persons were tried based on article 301.**

**Amongst these, many renown victims including Nobel award winner Orhan Pamuk and writer Elif Shafak and just one conviction: to Hrant Dink, Armenian journalist later assassinated in January 2007.**

Many believe that the reform is still not enough and that the total suppression of the law would have been better. But the leading government party, Justice and Development, who earlier had suggested the reform did not wish to cancel it, sustaining that similar laws do exist in the jurisdiction of other European countries. Extremely opposed instead, the People’s Republican Party (nationalist) which believes the reform is against the Magna Carta, announcing their appeal with the argument that the law is unconstitutional.