



**Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission
and
Congressional-Executive Commission on China**

**Joint Hearing on
China, Genocide and the Olympics**

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Chairman Smith, Chairman McGovern, Chairman Merkley, thanks to the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission and the Congressional-Executive Commission on China for this timely hearing on the 2022 Beijing Olympics. Human Rights Watch appreciates this opportunity to testify.

First, a bit of history: throughout the 1990s and 2000s, Human Rights Watch objected to the Chinese government being awarded an Olympics on the basis of its poor human rights record. In the runup to the 2008 Beijing Games, Human Rights Watch documented Chinese government attacks on media freedom, labor rights, and independent civil society; close allies of ours in the Chinese human rights movement who had struggled for the freedom of expression and rule of law were being detained and tortured. We detailed the ways in which the authorities utterly thwarted the various human rights commitments they had made to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to host the Games. Then and since, the authorities have used the 2008 Games to expand the domestic security apparatus and increase their use of surveillance technologies that are exponentially more problematic now. It was on this basis that Human Rights Watch objected, in 2015, to China's candidacy for a second round of Games.

The differences between the Chinese government's human rights record in 2008 and today are vast. In 2008, we had hoped that there might still be room for independent civil society activists to at least continue, if not also expand, their work; most of those courageous activists are now in prison, in exile, or forcibly disappeared. In 2008, we all assumed that transitions to subsequent authoritarian leaders would at least follow routinized practice; we now cannot predict when President Xi Jinping might end his tenure. And in 2008, none of us could have imagined the

establishment—let alone the shocking expansion—of mass arbitrary detention of Uyghurs and other Turkic communities, or of the pervasive surveillance technology deployed in an already rights-suppressed country. Human Rights Watch would certainly not have described the Chinese authorities in 2008 as respectful of human rights, but the current realities far exceed most analysts' worst expectations.

In the past year alone, Human Rights Watch has documented the Chinese authorities' crimes against humanity against Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and other Turkic communities. We have detailed the deaths of Tibetan mothers, monks, and peaceful activists in, or shortly after release from, detention. We have chronicled how the Chinese authorities are systematically and rapidly dismantling a free society in Hong Kong. We have watched Xi's government crush independent civil society, eradicate the modest progress of legal reform made during previous governments, and ensure that people across the country know their behavior can be, and is, tracked through advanced surveillance technology. Increasingly, we also need to grapple with Beijing's threats to human rights beyond its borders, ranging from harassment of diaspora communities to restricting academic freedom to weakening key international human rights institutions.

In this environment how should individuals, the IOC, sponsors, governments, and athletes engage the 2022 Beijing Games? Human Rights Watch offers the following recommendations:

- For governments: Human Rights Watch supports a diplomatic boycott of the 2022 Games: no senior officials should attend. Athletes can and should be celebrated, but officials can do that in their home countries prior to athletes' departures and upon their return. Governments will also need to be prepared to deal with and defend their athletes' right to express their views in ways that irk the Chinese authorities; they may encounter similar problems with respect to Chinese state surveillance of private communications of athletes, coaches, and staff members. Governments should also brief athletes and those going to these Games on the Chinese government's human rights record and practices, such that they are fully informed.
- For the International Olympic Committee: While the IOC has made many new human rights-related commitments, the clearest ones were adopted after Beijing was awarded the 2022 Games, such that both the IOC and Beijing believe that those standards cannot be applied to the 2022 Games. While the IOC has already made clear that it has no intention of carrying out human rights due diligence—a corporate responsibility enshrined in the 2011 United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights to assess business operations and supply chains—we believe global pressure should be brought to bear to push the IOC to do so ahead of the 2022 Olympics.
- For sponsors and broadcasters: The TOP sponsors of the Olympics and the networks that broadcast the 2022 Games (BBC and NBC) should be pressed immediately to carry out human rights due diligence as it pertains to their sponsorship. Few of these companies have shown any public concern for becoming complicit in human rights violations, recently responding to journalists' queries on this topic with “no comment.” We cannot urge you strongly enough to call these companies before your commissions to ask similar questions. These companies should not want to profit from repression, yet, they seem

unwilling to confront the reality they might be doing so. Companies continue to call us, asking whether they can do business ethically even if their supply chains run through Xinjiang or if they are operating in the technology industry; we offer a blunt reply.

- For athletes: Human Rights Watch supports athletes' opportunity to participate in these Games; they are not responsible either for the IOC's awarding these Games to the Chinese government or for that government's human rights record. Nevertheless, particularly in this time of highly effective activism by athletes in support of human rights and social justice, we believe that athletes will benefit from briefings by organizations like ours or the Center for Sport and Human Rights to be fully informed about the human rights environment in which they will be competing.

The Chinese government's intensifying crackdown undermines the basic rights that are essential for the human spirit of the Olympics. The IOC's failure to publicly confront Beijing's serious human rights violations makes a mockery of its own commitments and claims that the Olympics are a "force for good." But there are still opportunities to press the Chinese authorities for human rights gains, improve corporate responsibility with respect to human rights due diligence, and raise global awareness. Human Rights Watch hopes there will be healthy competition among all participants for gold medals in those arenas.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.