

Statement

Beijing Olympics Begin Amid Atrocity Crimes

Global Groups Call for Action on Rights Concerns

(Geneva) – The 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics will open amid atrocity crimes and other grave human rights violations by the Chinese government, nongovernmental organizations from around the world said today. The groups urged governments to join a diplomatic boycott of the Games, slated to begin February 4, 2022, and for athletes and sponsors not to legitimize government abuses.

“It’s not possible for the Olympic Games to be a ‘force for good,’ as the International Olympic Committee claims, while the host government is committing grave crimes in violation of international law,” said Sophie Richardson, China director at Human Rights Watch.

Under President Xi Jinping, Chinese authorities have been committing mass abuses against Uyghurs, Tibetans, ethnic groups, and religious believers from all independent faith groups. They have eliminated independent civil society by persecuting human rights activists, feminists, lawyers, journalists, and others. The government has eviscerated a once-vibrant civil society in Hong Kong, expanded tech-enabled surveillance to significantly curtail the rights to expression, association, and peaceful assembly, and allowed the use of forced labor, in violation of international law.

Chinese authorities also continue to threaten members of diaspora communities, public figures, and companies beyond China’s borders through a sophisticated campaign of transnational repression.

“That the Winter Olympics is held in Beijing sends a signal to the world that Xi Jinping’s government is normal,” said Renee Xia, Director of Chinese Human Rights Defenders. “When the world rationalizes away such an abusive situation, it makes it harder for victims to stand up against injustice.”

Since the Chinese government was awarded the 2022 Winter Games in 2015, nongovernmental organizations and media outlets have documented numerous serious human rights violations by Chinese authorities. Those include:

- Arbitrary detention, torture, and forced labor of millions of Uyghurs and other Turkic groups in Xinjiang (the Uyghur region);
- Decimation of independent media, democratic institutions, and rule of law in Hong Kong;
- High-tech surveillance systems enabling authorities to track and unjustly prosecute peaceful conduct, including criticism shared through apps, such as WeChat;
- Prosecution of people exercising rights to free expression, peaceful assembly, and association on behalf of vulnerable populations, including the lawyers Xu Zhiyong and Ding Jiayi, the citizen journalist Zhang Zhan, the Tibetan monk and writer Go Sherab Gyatso, and public health activists known as the Changsha Funeng group; and
- Arbitrary detention, torture, and forcible disappearance of human rights defenders, including Gao Zhisheng and Guo Feixiong.

“The spectacle of the Olympics cannot cover up genocide,” said Omer Kanat, executive director of the Uyghur Human Rights Project. “It’s hard to understand why anyone feels it’s even possible to celebrate international friendship and ‘Olympic values’ in Beijing this year.”

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has said that its human rights obligations,

announced in 2017, do not apply to the 2022 Winter Games. The IOC has not met its responsibilities under the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights by carrying out human rights due diligence despite the well-documented abuses in China, the groups said.

In other respects, the IOC has shown that its stated commitment to human rights means little. IOC President Thomas Bach participated in a Chinese government propaganda campaign to whitewash the sexual assault allegations brought by three-time Olympian Peng Shuai. The IOC has been unwilling to meet with the End Uyghur Forced Labor (EUFL) coalition, and has sported uniforms made by a company credibly alleged to use forced labor.

“The IOC claims that sport and politics do not mix, but the Chinese government was the one that used the 2008 Beijing Olympics to serve its political interests,” said Bhuchung K. Tsering, interim president of the International Campaign for Tibet. “Tibetans in Tibet then took the risk to tell the world about this, but the IOC didn’t pay heed. The upcoming Beijing Olympics is a unique opportunity for the IOC and governments to empower their athletes and press Chinese authorities to abide by international norms.”

The top corporate sponsors of the Games – Airbnb, Alibaba, Allianz, Atos, Bridgestone, Coca-Cola, Intel, Omega, Panasonic, P&G, Samsung, Toyota, and Visa – have also not fulfilled their human rights due diligence responsibilities. The companies have not provided meaningful public responses to concerns that their sponsorship creates or contributes to human rights violations, or whether they have acted to mitigate those violations. Sponsors should immediately disclose their human rights due diligence strategies, or explain their failure to carry out such assessments, the groups said.

Several governments, including Australia, Canada, Japan, Lithuania, the United Kingdom, and the United States, have announced a diplomatic boycott of the Games in response to the Chinese government’s human rights abuses. They will send no senior officials – a longstanding Olympic tradition – to the opening or closing ceremonies. All governments, whether joining the diplomatic boycott or not, should use the opportunity to not only support the athletes participating in the Games, but also demonstrate concrete support for human rights defenders across China.

“We urge governments to send messages of support to human rights defenders in prison or detention who are paying a great price for advocating reform, defending the rights of others, or simply discussing ways to strengthen civil society in China,” said Sharon Hom, executive director of Human Rights in China.

Those participating in the Beijing Olympics face a host of human rights risks, the groups said. IOC rules prohibit athletes from publicly expressing their views on human rights in China on the Olympic podium, and Chinese authorities’ retaliation against critics creates a chill for athletes worldwide. The Chinese government’s willingness to arbitrarily detain foreigners for peaceful criticism, such as the Swedish publisher Gui Minhai, further limits free speech. Olympic athletes, coaches, and other support staff are also likely to be subjected to pervasive state surveillance, particularly through monitoring of digital communications.

“Athletes upholding Olympic ideals should not have to face omnipresent surveillance, repression of free speech or belief, and an insecure human rights environment to participate in the Games,” said Bob Fu, president of ChinaAid.

Spectators around the world watching the Winter Games can play a positive role by educating themselves about the human rights environment inside China, and can take actions ranging from purchasing products not made with forced labor to encouraging their own governments to pursue accountability for Chinese government officials responsible for

the worst international crimes. People can urge companies to sign the EUFL coalition's Call to Action.

"The stark reality of the Chinese government's atrocity crimes and ongoing impunity should compel the IOC, sponsors, and others associated with the Olympics to question whether these Games are legitimizing and prolonging grave abuses," said Dolkun Isa, president of the World Uyghur Congress. "No one should want another Olympics like this."

Nongovernmental Organization Signatories:

6.12 Manchester Working Group
ACAT Belgium
Adas Israel Social Action Committee
Alberta Uyghur Association
All Citizenship Compact
Alliance for Vietnam's Democracy
ALTSEAN-Burma
American Alliance for Automotive Corporate Social Responsibility
Amigos del Tibet Chile
Anti-China Expansion Movement
Anti-Slavery International
Army of Survivors
ARTICLE 19
Asociación Cultural Tibetano-Costerricense
ASSEMBLY FOR DEMOCRACY IN VIETNAM
Athenai Institute
Athlete Activist
Athlete Ally
Australia Tibet Council
Australian Centre for International Justice
Australian East Turkestan Association
Australian Uyghur Association
Australian Uyghur Tangritagh Women's Association
Austria Uyghur Association
Bauhinias For Freedom
Bay Area Friends of Tibet
Be Slavery Free
Belgium Uyghur Association
[Redacted For Anonymity]
Bloc 8406 International
Blue Crescent Humanitarian Aid Association
Campaign For Uyghurs
Captive Nations Coalition of the Committee on Present Danger: China
China Against the Death Penalty
China Human Rights Defenders
ChinaAid
Chinese Democracy And Human Rights Alliance
Christian Coalition for Uyghur Freedom
Church of Scientology National Affairs Office
Citizen Power Initiatives for China
CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
Comitato Lady Lawyer Village
Comité de Apoyo al Tíbet CAT
Congregation Beth Ora

Consortium for Intersectional Justice
Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience
Corporate Accountability Lab
CSW
Czech Support Tibet
Dawn of HongKong
Den norske uyghur komiteen
Dialogue China
Dominican Sisters Grand Rapids
Dutch Uyghur Human Rights Foundation
East Turkestan Press and Media Association
East Turkestan Union of Muslim Scholars
East Turkistan Association in Finland
East Turkistan Association of Canada
[Redacted For Anonymity]
East Turkistan Education and Solidarity Association
East Turkistan Entrepreneur Tradesmen and Industrialists Businessmen Association
East Turkistan Human Rights Watch Association
East Turkistan New Generation Movement
East Turkistan Nuzugum Culture and Family Association
East Turkistan Sports and Development Association
East Turkistan Union in Europe
Eastern Turkistan Foundation
Emgage Action
Equality League
European East Turkistan Education Association
Family Research Council
FIDH - International Federation for Human Rights
FIDU - Italian Federation for Human Rights
[Redacted For Anonymity]
Finnish Uyghur Culture Center
Football Supporters Europe
Frankfurt Stand With Hong Kong
Free Tibet
Free Uyghur Now
Freedom House
Freedom Ummah
Friends of Hong Kong Calgary
Friends of Tibet Bulgaria
Front Line Defenders
[Redacted For Anonymity]
Germany Stands with Hong Kong
Global Alliance for Tibet & Persecuted Minorities
Global Athlete
Global Peace Mission (GPM) Malaysia
Grupo de Apoio ao Tibete-Portugal
Havurat Shalom
[Redacted For Anonymity]
Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights
Hong Kong Committee in Norway
Hong Kong Democracy Council
Hong Kong Watch
Hong Kongers in San Francisco Bay Area
Hongkonger in Deutschland e.V.
HOPE not hate

Human Rights Foundation
Human Rights in China
Human Rights Research and Education Centre, University of Ottawa
Human Rights Watch
Human Rights Without Frontiers
Human Trafficking Search
Humanitarian China
Ilham Tohti Initiative
Indonesia Save Uyghur
International Campaign for Tibet
International Coalition to End Transplant Abuse In China (ETAC)
International Pen Uyghur Center
International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
International Society for Human Rights
International Support for Uyghurs
International Tibet Network
International Union of East Turkistan Organizations
International Uyghur Human Right and Democracy Foundation
Isa Yusup Alptekin Foundation
Islamic Community Milli Gorus
Islamic Information Services Foundation
Japan Uyghur Association
Jewish Community Relations Council/American Jewish Committee Detroit
Jewish Movement for Uyghur Freedom
Jewish World Watch
Judicial Reform Foundation
Justice For All
Justice for Uyghurs
Lady Lawyer Foundation
Lantos Foundation for Human Rights & Justice
[Redacted For Anonymity]
LICADHO
Louise Xin Group
LUNGTA - Actief voor Tibet
Malaysia Consultative Council of Islamic Organization (MAPIM)
Malaysia4Uyghur
Malaysian Consultative Council of Islamic Organizations
Minaret Foundation
Minh Van Foundation
Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies
Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)
National Clergy Council
Netherlands for Hong Kong
Norwegian Uyghur Committee
Omer Uygur Foundation
Overseas Liaison Office Representative for The Interfaith Council in Vietnam
Peace Catalyst International
Perth Anti-CCP Association
Power of Sport Lab / Athletes for Human Rights
People for Successful Corean Reunification (PSCORE)
Religious Freedom Institute
René Cassin, the Jewish voice for human rights
Reporters Without Borders (RSF)
Santa Barbara Friends of Tibet
Satuq Bugrakhan Foundation of Science and Civilization

Silk Road Peace Project
SoCal Students for Uyghur Justice
Society for Threatened Peoples
Society Union of Uyghur National Association
Stand with HK@JPN
Stand with Hong Kong Vienna
STANDNOW
Stefanus Alliance International
[Redacted for Anonymity]
Stop Uyghur Genocide UK
Stop Uyghur Genocide Australia
Stop Uyghur Genocide Canada
Students for a Free Tibet - Denmark
Students for Free Tibet – Japan
Students For Liberty - Myanmar
Sweden Uyghur Education Union
Swedish Tibet Committee
Swiss Tibetan Friendship Association
Switzerland East Turkestan Association
Sydney Uyghur Association
Taiwan Association for China Human Rights
Taiwan Association for Human Rights
Taiwanese Human Rights Association of Canada
Temple Shalom
Thailand and Hong Kong Together
The Army of Survivors
The Community Human Rights Promotion and Protection Association (ACPDH)
The Norwegian Tibet Committee
THE TAIWAN UNITED NATIONS ALLIANCE (TAIUNA)
The Tibet Support Committee, Denmark
The Viet Democratic Side's International Forum
Tibet Action Institute
Tibet Initiative Deutschland e.V.
Tibet Justice Center
Tibet Mx
Tibet Solidarity
Tibet Support Group Ireland
Tibetan Community in Britain
Tibetan Parliament in Exile
Tibetan Youth Association in Europe
Transparency International Deutschland e.V.
Tso Pema Non-Profit
Uigur Society of the Kyrgyz Republic
Uigurische Gemeinde Österreich
Umer Uyghur Trust
Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam
United Council of Vietnamese Homeland and Overseas
universitet Sulayman Demirel
Uyghur Academy Australia
Uyghur Academy Canada
Uyghur Academy Europe
Uyghur Academy Foundation
Uyghur Academy Japan
Uyghur Academy USA
Uyghur American Association

Uyghur Association of Victoria
Uyghur Center for Human Rights and Democracy
Uyghur Cultural and Education Union in Germany
Uyghur Education Union
Uyghur Human Rights Project
Uyghur Projects Foundation
Uyghur Refugee Relief Fund
Uyghur Research Institute
Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project
Uyghur Science and Civilization Research Foundation
Uyghur Support Group Netherlands
Uyghur Transitional Justice Database
Uyghur U.K. Association
Uyghur Youth Union in Kazakhstan
Uzbekistan Uyghur Culture Center
Verein der Tibeter in Deutschland
Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation
Victoria Uyghur Association
Vietnamese Community of Pomona Valley
Visual Artists Guild
We The Hongkongers
[Redacted For Anonymity]
Women's Rights Without Frontiers
World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)
World Uyghur Congress Foundation
(美国)民主中国阵线
加拿大价值守护者联盟
台灣聯合國協進會
民主中華傳媒
民主黨洛杉磯委員會
洛杉矶中国民主平台
自由中國
自由雕塑公園
華人基督徒公義團契