



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Beijing Olympics concerns raised at UN Human Rights Council

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July 7, 2021

At the ongoing 47th session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on July 7, 2021, Vincent Metten delivered a statement on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights raising concerns with regard to the 2022 Winter Olympic Games in Beijing in light of the widespread and systematic human rights violations committed by the Chinese government.

The UN Human Rights Council met for its quadrennial panel discussion on promoting human rights through sport and the Olympic ideal, attended by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet and International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach, among others.

Metten recalled the crackdown in Tibet before the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing and raised the negative developments in Xinjiang (which Uyghurs know as East Turkestan) and Hong Kong.

“In 2008, the Chinese Communist Party engaged in a violent clampdown of overwhelmingly peaceful protests, and since then, the Party has established a surveillance state with omnipresent indoctrination, and with the stated goal to ‘Sinicize’ Tibetans,” Metten said. “In Xinjiang, more than two million Uyghurs and others have been detained in internment camps. Hong Kong has lost freedoms guaranteed by international law.”

Recalling how the 2008 Summer Olympics emboldened China to pursue policies detrimental to human rights, Metten asked the panel: “Can awarding the Games to an authoritarian state like the [People’s Republic of China] have a negative effect on young athletes ... and run counter to the UN General Assembly’s stated expectations and the fundamental principles of Olympism?”

Calls for a diplomatic boycott of the 2022 Winter Olympics have been mounting in recent weeks. In February 2021, a coalition of more than 180 civil society organizations urged governments to commit to a diplomatic boycott of the games. A number of parliamentarians worldwide—including in the US, Germany, the Czech Republic and the UK—have also called on their governments to decline invitations to the games.

The representative of Denmark, who delivered a statement on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic European countries, called for the respect of human rights, including the rights of minorities, in the planning, the preparation and the execution of all major sport events.

Read Vincent Metten’s statement on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights:

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Human Rights Council
Forty-seventh Regular Session
July 7, 2021

Quadrennial panel discussion on promoting human rights through sport and the Olympic ideal

Statement delivered by Vincent Metten on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights

Dear Madame President Khan; dear speakers and panellists,

We welcome today's panel discussion on the promotion of human rights through sport and the Olympic ideal.

The Olympic Games, and other international sporting events can all contribute to an atmosphere of tolerance and understanding among peoples and nations. At the same time, they can present threats to human rights. This is particularly true if the Games are awarded to governments that are responsible for widespread and systematic human rights violations. We believe that discussions at the Human Rights Council on the matter of sports and human rights must address this issue.

In this context, we are deeply concerned about the awarding of the Olympic Winter Games 2022 to Beijing. The IOC's decision did not take into consideration the experience gained following the 2008 Summer Olympics in China. Presumptions, communicated strenuously by the IOC at the time, that the Olympics would encourage China to embrace transparency and human rights, did not materialize. Instead, the 2008 Olympics emboldened policies of the Chinese Communist Party that are fundamentally adverse to human rights principles and norms.

In Tibet, in 2008, the Chinese Communist Party engaged in a violent clampdown of overwhelmingly peaceful protests, and since then, the Party has established a surveillance state with omnipresent indoctrination, and with the stated goal to 'sinicize' Tibetans. In Xinjiang, more than two million Uyghurs and others have been detained in internment camps. Hongkong has lost freedoms guaranteed by international law.

In September 2020, a coalition of human rights groups called on the IOC to revoke its decision awarding Beijing the contract to host the 2022 Winter Olympic Games. In February 2021, a coalition of more than 180 civil society organisations urged governments to commit to a diplomatic boycott of the Games.

In conclusion, we would like to ask today's panellists: Can awarding the Games to an authoritarian state like the PRC have a negative effect on young athletes, and may this even be detrimental to an "atmosphere of tolerance and understanding among peoples and nations", and run counter to the UN General Assembly's stated expectations and the fundamental principles of Olympism?

Thank you



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