



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

NBC urged to include Tibet in Olympics coverage

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January 20, 2022

NBC must report on China's human rights abuses in Tibet as part of its coverage of the Beijing Winter Olympics, a new open letter from the International Campaign for Tibet says.

“By airing these Olympics, you are choosing to give China’s authoritarian regime a platform to spread its propaganda,” says the letter from ICT, an advocacy group that promotes human rights and democratic freedoms for the Tibetan people. *“Therefore, it’s only just that you provide equal time to the victims of China’s oppression, who deserve more than to be brushed aside in the name of access and profits.”*

The letter suggests several stories NBC could cover during the Games to spotlight Tibet, which is now tied with Syria as the least-free country on Earth, according to the watchdog group Freedom House. China’s repression in Tibet has skyrocketed since the last Beijing Olympics in 2008.

ICT is combining the letter with a petition that allows ordinary viewers to tell NBCUniversal CEO Jeff Shell that they want to see Tibet included in the network’s coverage of the Games.

ICT will also host NBA player and global activist Enes Kanter Freedom for a discussion about Tibet and the Olympics on ICT’s Tibet Talks webcast, Friday, Jan. 21 at 12 noon EST/9 am PST. Freedom will appear alongside Dhondup Wangchen—an escaped Tibetan political prisoner who made a documentary about repression in Tibet before the 2008 Beijing Games—and Wangpo Tethong, the executive director of ICT-Europe.

The Winter Olympics begin Feb. 4 in Beijing.

Read the International Campaign for Tibet’s open letter to NBC:

Open letter to NBC: Cover Tibet at Beijing Winter Olympics

Dear Jeff Shell, NBCUniversal CEO:

With just weeks to go before the 2022 Winter Olympics, we trust you plan to roll out the usual coverage. But these will be no ordinary Games. The severe oppression, including of freedom of expression, that the Chinese government inflicts on Tibetans and others under its rule demands equal attention.

As you are well aware, the Chinese government is one of the most brutal human rights abusers the world has seen in decades. Since falsely promising to improve its human rights record ahead of the last Beijing Olympics in 2008, China has cracked down viciously on Tibet, which Freedom House now ranks as the world’s least-free country alongside Syria. In 2020, the US government also designated China’s persecution of the Uyghurs as genocide. The US and other governments have imposed a diplomatic boycott of the Olympics in response to Beijing not abiding by international norms.

Knowing this, the International Olympic Committee should have had the moral fiber to demand the Chinese government adhere to internationally upheld standards of freedom and human rights to deserve the Games.

That has not taken place. Now, as the designated broadcaster of the Games, NBC too has an ethical responsibility as a defender of freedom, particularly that of expression, and must go beyond business as usual.

By airing these Olympics, you are choosing to give China's authoritarian regime a platform to spread its propaganda. Therefore, it's only just that you provide equal time to the victims of China's oppression, who deserve more than to be brushed aside in the name of access and profits.

As an organization that advocates for Tibet, we can assure you there's no lack of potential stories. Here are just a few:

- **Demolished Buddhist statues:** Just last month, Chinese authorities reportedly demolished a 99-foot-tall Buddha statue in a Tibetan area of today's Sichuan province. Later, they demolished another three-story-high statue, as well as 45 Buddhist prayer wheels. Six Tibetan monks were also arbitrarily detained on trumped-up accusations of informing the outside world about the demolitions. NBC News should travel to the area to investigate.
- **Access to Tibet:** If your crews can't enter Tibet, that itself is a story. In recent years, the Chinese government has almost completely shut Tibet off to outside visitors; the situation is so extreme that the United States has passed legislation to address it. But with the Olympics returning to China, media need to insist on the right to report from Tibet. If they don't receive it, their audience should know why.
- **Political prisoners:** For creating "Leaving Fear Behind," a documentary about China's repression in Tibet before the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Dhondup Wangchen and Golog Jigme were imprisoned and severely tortured. Thankfully, both men are now free and living in exile, but over 270 Tibetan political prisoners are still in detention. As the Winter Games begin, Wangchen and Jigme can explain what the Olympics really mean for people living under China's oppression.
- **Tibetan Americans:** In 2020, NBC News reported on the arrest of Baimadajie Angwang, a New York City police officer accused of spying on local Tibetan Americans for the Chinese government. His case highlighted China's use of transnational repression on Tibetan communities here in the US. With the Chinese government planning to celebrate itself during your Olympics coverage, your viewers should hear from Tibetan Americans who can fact check China's propaganda.

Mr. Shell, all eyes will be turned to China during these Olympics, and history will not be kind to any broadcast partner that fails to meet the moment and confront China's ongoing atrocities. Genocide, cultural demolition and the systemic repression of basic free speech are not "political" issues outside the scope of the Games; they are crimes against humanity that must be exposed and challenged wherever they occur.

On behalf of our members across the United States, as well as all Americans who have shown longtime, bipartisan support for Tibet, we call on NBC to cover these or similar stories during the 2022 Olympics. Failing to do so would be a disservice to your audience and an act of complicity that history won't forget.

Sincerely,

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