



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

European parliamentarians urge EU-wide diplomatic boycott of Beijing Winter Olympics

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BRUSSELS—On the eve of the Winter Olympics in Beijing, a group of members of the European and national parliaments have urged the European Union to impose a diplomatic boycott of the Games to denounce China's human rights record.

In an opinion piece published today by Euractiv, the 66 parliamentarians—from 16 EU countries and from all sides of the political spectrum—underline the importance for the EU to agree on a unified position on the issue and call on EU Member States to refrain from attending the prestigious sporting event in any capacity.

Human rights concerns

The signatories recall that while the International Olympic Committee and China had promised progress in human rights and social conditions when the country was awarded the Summer Olympics for the first time back in 2008, such improvements did not materialize—quite the opposite.

In Tibet in particular, the situation has since continued on a downward spiral, with Tibetans' religious and cultural rights, freedom of expression, and freedom of assembly and association, as well as their social and economic rights, extensively curtailed.

Just a month ago, in a move reminiscent of the worst moments of China's Cultural Revolution, Chinese authorities in Drango (Chinese: Luhuo) county in eastern Tibet for example demolished a deeply revered 99-foot-tall Buddha statue along with 45 Buddhist prayer wheels and detained a number of people over suspicion that they informed the outside world about the demolitions.

Dhondup Wangchen's appeal

The initiative for a joint appeal for a EU diplomatic boycott by European parliamentarians was launched by the European Parliament's Tibet Interest Group in December 2021, after members of the group met with former Tibetan political prisoner Dhondup Wangchen.

Wangchen, who spent six years in jail for making a movie in which he interviews ordinary Tibetans about their views on the 2008 Olympics, is currently in Europe to raise awareness about China's continued human rights abuses in Tibet, and his testimony and call against the Games in Beijing seems to have resonated among policy-makers.

This Friday, January 21, he will be a special guest on an episode of Tibet Talks about the Olympics and Tibet. Wangchen will appear alongside basketball player and global activist Enes Kanter Freedom.

EU diplomatic boycott?

In July 2021 already, the European Parliament called on the EU and its Member States to decline invitations to the Winter Olympics in Beijing “unless the Chinese Government demonstrates a verifiable improvement in the human rights situation,” including in Tibet.

But while a number of countries around the world—including the US, Australia, the UK and Canada—confirmed in recent months that they will impose a diplomatic boycott of the Games, European Union countries have so far been unable to agree on a common stance on the issue.

So far, among EU countries, Lithuania, Belgium, the Netherlands and Denmark announced they would not send any official delegations to Beijing.

With their opinion piece—published days ahead of a meeting of EU foreign affairs ministers on Monday—the parliamentarians hope to convince all EU governments to send a concrete signal of support to victims of the Chinese government’s oppressive policies by committing to a diplomatic boycott of the Games.

Quotes

Mikuláš Peksa, Chair of the European Parliament’s Tibet Interest Group said: ““The list of signatories of the letter shows that the diplomatic boycott of the 2022 Beijing Olympics has support from lawmakers across Europe. Now, we hope that ministers of EU member states join the boycott, ideally through coordinated EU action. Countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia or the United States already declared they will boycott the Games months ago. EU member states must join them, for their efforts in human rights advocacy to be taken seriously.”

The International Campaign for Tibet’s EU Policy Director Vincent Metten said: “ICT welcomes the appeal of the parliamentarians, which demonstrates once more the solidarity of the European people with Tibetans, Uyghurs and all those suffering under the Chinese government’s repressive policies. The upcoming Winter Olympics in Beijing represent a unique opportunity for the EU to respond concretely and firmly to China’s disregard for human rights and international norms, and we therefore hope that EU countries will seize this opportunity and diplomatically boycott them.”

Signatories of the opinion piece «The EU and its member states must impose a diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Olympics»

Members of the European parliament:

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Antoni COMÍN I OLIVERES
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Guy BENARROCHE (France)
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Samuel COGOLATI (Belgium)
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