



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Enes Kanter Freedom: Morals worth more than Olympic gold

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During a recent discussion about Tibet and the Beijing Winter Olympics, Enes Kanter Freedom called on his fellow athletes to provide a voice for the voiceless, saying that Olympic gold medals are worth less than moral values.

Freedom, the NBA player and activist, appeared Jan. 21, 2022 on the International Campaign for Tibet's "Tibet Talks" live webcast. Other guests included Wangpo Tethong, the executive director of ICT-Europe, and Dhondup Wangchen, a Tibetan filmmaker who endured torture and imprisonment for creating a documentary about China's repression in Tibet leading up to the Beijing Olympics in 2008.

The Olympics will return to China for the 2022 Beijing Winter Games beginning Feb. 4.

"I am telling all my athlete friends: All the gold medals in the world that you can win is not more important than your morals and your values and your principles," Freedom said. He added: "My last message is to all my athlete friends and all the people out there who have a platform. I feel like we need to stand for innocent people out there and be their voice [for those] who don't have a voice."

Freedom—who has been outspoken in his support for Tibetans and his criticism of the Chinese government—mentioned that he takes inspiration from Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama.

"I grew up as a big fan of His Holiness [the Dalai Lama]," Freedom said. "So that's why I was like, 'I'm going to do whatever I can to amplify the peace and the love and unity that he always calls for.'"

"So that's why I was very sad to see what Tibetans are going through. Because to me, it is a cultural genocide, and shame on the [Chinese] Communist Party."

Enes Kanter Freedom on the Olympics and Tibet

Freedom made several strong statements about the upcoming Olympics and China's brutal occupation of Tibet, which is now in a tie with Syria as the least-free country on Earth, according to a watchdog group.

During the Tibet Talk, Freedom commented on:

- *Celebrities' fear of offending China:* "Unfortunately, many of my friends in the sports world, and many of my friends in the acting world, my friends who sing or rap, unfortunately they are scared to say a word against China, because they care too much about money, business and endorsement deals. But to me, morals, values and principles are way bigger than any kind of business or any kind of endorsement deals that you can get."
- *The diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Winter Olympics:* "I believe a diplomatic boycott is good, but it's not enough. I hope all these governments and athletes out there go out and say enough is enough. We need to use our voice to amplify what's going on over there. I hope that all the governments out there and all the athletes out there can do more than just diplomatic boycotts."

- *The International Olympic Committee*: “I believe the International Olympic Committee is sleeping in the same bed with China, because it’s a shame that they’re organizing an important games like the Olympics in a country like China, where there are millions of human rights abuses.”
- *China and the Olympics*: “People and athletes and the governments need to understand: the Chinese Communist Party does not represent the Olympic core values of excellence, of respect, of friendship. They are a brutal dictatorship, and they engage in censorship. They threaten freedoms, and they do not respect human rights. And while we are talking right now, there is a genocide happening.”
- *His love for Tibetans*: “They’re one of the most nicest people around the world. Actually I love the food that they cook for me called ‘momo.’ It is one of the most tastiest foods that I ever tasted. We actually have a Tibetan cultural center in Boston, and I visited there, and they made me a momo, and I actually had four to-go boxes and brought it home with me. But after hearing all this, I told myself I cannot stay silent. I have to stand for these beautiful people.”
- *The Dalai Lama*: “I remember when I was a teenager, I was following His Holiness on social media. All his tweets, all his Instagram posts, all his social media really inspire me to become a better person.”

Freedom made his support for Tibet known in a video he posted to social media in October 2021 in which he declared that, “Tibet belongs to Tibetans. I’m here to add my voice and speak out about what is happening in Tibet.”

Dhondup Wangchen

Freedom appeared on Tibet Talks alongside Dhondup Wangchen, a Tibetan who received a six-year prison sentence for creating “Leaving Fear Behind,” a documentary showing ordinary Tibetans describing the inhumanity of Chinese rule, as well as their feelings about the then-upcoming 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing.

“After 2008, Tibet turned into a big prison, and people are suffering,” Wangchen said. Chinese President “Xi Jinping became sort of a second Mao Zedong, and the Tibetans are suffering, as are also other people.”

Over the past few months, Wangchen has been traveling to several European countries to meet with government officials and national Olympic committees to raise awareness about Tibet before the Olympics begin. Wangpo Tethong, the International Campaign for Tibet-Europe executive director, has aided Wangchen during his meetings.

The International Campaign for Tibet—an advocacy group based in Washington, DC and Europe that promotes human rights and democratic freedoms for the Tibetan people—has published an open letter calling on NBC to include Tibet in its Olympics coverage.



International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) | 1825 Jefferson Place NW | Washington, DC 20036 | United States of America
Phone: (202) 785-1515 | Fax: (202) 785-4343 | info@savetibet.org

ICT Europe
Funenpark 1D | 1018 AK
Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Phone: +31 (0)20 3308265
Fax: +31 (0)20 3308266
icteurope@savetibet.nl

ICT Deutschland e.V.
Schönhauser Allee 163 | 10435
Berlin, Germany
Phone: +49 (0)30 27879086
Fax: +49 (0)30 27879087
info@savetibet.de

ICT Brussels
11, rue de la linière | 1060
Brussels, Belgium
Phone: +32 (0)2 609 44 10
Fax: +32 (0)2 609 44 32
info@save-tibet.eu