



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Statement: As Beijing Olympics begin, don't let history repeat

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STATEMENT FROM THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET:

The last Beijing Olympics led to a major escalation of China's brutality in Tibet, as the Chinese government acted with impunity. As this year's Olympics begin, the international community must not let that happen again. During and after these historic Games, countries around the globe must take action to confront the Chinese government's oppression of Tibetans, Uyghurs, Mongolians, Hong Kongers and other targeted groups.

As a result of China's human rights abuses, Tibet is now tied with Syria as the least-free country on Earth, according to the watchdog group Freedom House. Hosting the Olympics will only further embolden China's regime. The international community must act now before conditions get even worse.

Diplomatic boycott

A growing list of countries have decided not to send their officials to Beijing as part of a diplomatic boycott of the Games. That is the right choice both morally and strategically, and we encourage other countries to follow suit and not remain silent or even complicit. However, the diplomatic boycott should be a first step, not an end in itself.

Media access to Tibet

Governments must also push for unfettered access to Tibet, which the Chinese government mostly keeps closed off to the outside world. Foreign diplomats, UN officials, parliamentarians and human rights experts must be able to visit Tibet so they can assess the situation there in the wake of the Olympics. In 2018, the United States enacted the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act to push for greater access to Tibet; other countries should pass similar legislation.

Journalists also need access to Tibet. In its recent report on media freedom in 2021, the Foreign Correspondents' Club of China says that "foreign journalists remain unable to freely visit" the Tibet Autonomous Region, which spans about half of Tibet. The report says foreign media also faced harassment in Tibetan areas outside the TAR. Independent journalists must be able to report freely in Tibet so they can tell their audiences the true impact these Olympics have on the Tibetan people.

NBC, international media

As the official US broadcast partner of the Olympics, NBC has a special responsibility to inform its viewers about the repression that China is using the Games to "sportswash." By airing the Olympics, NBC is giving the Chinese government a platform to spread its propaganda. Therefore, it's only fair the network give equal time to Tibetans and other victims of China's oppression. As we say in our open letter to NBC, there's no shortage of stories to cover, from China's demolition of Buddhist statues, to its torture of Tibetans over the 2008 Beijing Olympics, to its efforts to spy on and intimidate Tibetan American communities in the United States.

Likewise, we are calling on international media to be mindful not to fall into the trap of Chinese government propaganda and its narratives, in particular on Tibet. Broadcasters should, like NBC, cover the stories of human rights defenders and courageous Tibetans, Uyghurs, Chinese, Hong Kongers and others who peacefully resist repression and persecution.

Empowering athletes

China will try to use Olympic athletes for propaganda; their governments must take steps to protect them. Over the past few months, we at the International Campaign for Tibet have met with government officials and national Olympic committees to share some best practices to help athletes avoid China's exploitation. The best practices include giving athletes the option of a human rights disclaimer so they can publicly disassociate from the Chinese government's human rights abuses. We also urge governments to help athletes avoid unintentionally compromising themselves by appearing in photos with token representatives of "minorities" like Tibetans and Uyghurs. In addition, our best practices recommend encouraging athletes to speak freely about all aspects of the Games.

Resources for journalists

The International Campaign for Tibet is an advocacy group based in Washington, DC and Europe that promotes human rights and democratic freedoms for the Tibetan people.

ICT has several resources available for journalists and others covering the Games, including:

- Briefing paper on China's rising repression in Tibet since the 2008 Beijing Olympics
- Open letter to NBC calling for equal coverage of Tibetans and other victims of China's oppression
- Video of Enes Kanter Freedom telling fellow athletes that Olympic gold medals are "not more important than your morals"
- Petition to NBC from ICT members
- Petition to the US Olympic Committee urging full support of athletes who call out China's crimes in Tibet or elsewhere
- Open letter to EU leaders by more than 250 organizations urging a diplomatic boycott of the Games
- Open letter to UN Secretary General António Guterres by more than 250 organizations urging him not to attend the Games

Also, visit our Olympics pages for more statistics and stories about the Olympics and Tibet:
<https://savetibet.org/olympics/>

Contact

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