

The EU and its Member States must impose a diplomatic boycott of the 2022 Winter Olympic Games in Beijing

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On 4 February 2022, the Winter Olympic Games will kick off in the Chinese capital Beijing. The decision to award these Games to China was taken at the end of July 2015 by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). This was a misstep by the IOC, as the Chinese government does not deserve to host this important event with its human rights record.

Fourteen years ago, in 2008, Beijing hosted the Summer Olympic Games. The decision to award that year's Games to China was taken on the basis of Chinese government promises to improve human rights and social conditions in the country, including in Chinese-occupied Tibet, East Turkestan (Chinese: Xinjiang) and Southern Mongolia. But these promises have not been fulfilled nor respected—on the contrary, the human rights situation in these areas has worsened.

The overwhelmingly peaceful protests of 2008 on the Tibetan Plateau were met by a violent crackdown by Chinese security forces. After the Games, there was no substantial call by the IOC nor by the international community for an independent investigation of these events.

Since then, the human rights situation has continued to deteriorate in the country, in particular under President Xi Jinping's leadership. Tibet has been transformed into a surveillance state with hundreds of political prisoners facing torture and more than 150 Tibetans having self-immolated to protest against oppressive Chinese policies and lack of fundamental rights, as highlighted in a [report](#) of the International Campaign for Tibet. In East Turkestan, between 1.8 and 3 million Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples are arbitrarily detained in "re-education camps," enduring inhumane treatment and political indoctrination. In Hong Kong, the city's vibrant community of human rights activists and outspoken youths have been rounded up by the thousands for simply advocating for democracy. In Southern Mongolia, children are being deprived of their right to speak their mother tongue, as the Chinese government has intensified its crackdown on cultural identity. And let's not forget Macao, where press freedom and, more generally, freedom of expression is under high pressure.

These developments are in opposition to the Olympic Code of Ethics, which sets the safeguarding of the individual's dignity as a "fundamental requirement of Olympism," as well as to the Olympic Charter, which aims to put sport "at the service of the harmonious development of man, with a view to encouraging the establishment of a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity."

In 2017, the IOC added human rights requirements aligned with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (the "Guiding Principles") in its host city agreements. Although Beijing was awarded the contract to host the Winter Olympics before the new human rights language was adopted, "Operational Requirements" included since then allow the IOC to negotiate for human rights protections and standards with the host city.

As the IOC has failed to uphold its commitments, it is crucial that our governments voice their disapproval of Beijing's repressive policies. A way to do so would be for the EU and our national governments to adopt statements in advance of the Games expressing their concern about the dire human rights situation in China. They should also task their National Olympics Committees to educate their athletes about these issues.

Furthermore, as expressed by a European Parliament [resolution](#) adopted in July this year, we call on the EU and its Member States to impose a diplomatic boycott of the Games and refrain from attending in any capacity unless the Chinese government demonstrates a verifiable improvement in the human rights situation in Hong Kong, East Turkestan, Tibet, Southern Mongolia, Macao and elsewhere—a move that has already been taken by a number of countries, including Australia, Canada, the UK and the United States. It is important for the EU to agree on a unified position on this issue and send a strong signal of support to communities suffering under the Chinese government's oppressive policies.

Doing anything less will be seen as tolerating Beijing's abuses, which the Chinese government would take as carte blanche to continue its crackdown on fundamental rights and freedoms. Such a slap in the face to thousands of people who suffer from the Chinese government's repression violates the spirit of Olympism and the values we have committed to defend worldwide.

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