



ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
SENATOR JEFF MERKLEY, CHAIRMAN
REPRESENTATIVE JAMES P. MCGOVERN, COCHAIRMAN

July 23, 2021

Thomas Bach
President
International Olympic Committee
Château de Vidy
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1001 Lausanne, Switzerland
VIA Fax: +41 21 621 62 16 (Lausanne)

Dear President Bach:

We are writing to ask the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to postpone the XXIV Olympic Winter Games scheduled to be held in China in February 2022 and to relocate them if the host government does not change its behavior. No Olympics should be held in a country whose government is committing genocide and crimes against humanity.

On October 10, 2018, the then-Chairs of the Commission, Senator Marco Rubio and Congressman Christopher H. Smith, sent a letter to you asking you to use the good offices of the IOC to press for human rights improvements in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). We received no reply.

Since the 2018 letter, the situation facing Uyghurs and other Muslim ethnic communities in the XUAR has deteriorated further, as documented by the Commission and numerous other governmental and non-governmental entities around the world. Earlier this year, the State Department determined that the Chinese government's actions constitute genocide and crimes against humanity. We have seen no evidence that the IOC has taken any steps to press the Chinese government to change its behavior.

We believe that it would reflect extremely poorly on the Olympic movement, and the international community in general, if the IOC were to proceed with holding the Olympic Games in a country whose government is committing genocide and crimes against humanity as if nothing were wrong. To proceed with business as usual is implied consent and suggests the IOC has learned nothing from the Chinese government's use of the 2008 Beijing Olympics to score propaganda wins and distract from its appalling human rights record. The IOC is on course to set a dark precedent where the behavior of future Olympic host governments is unconstrained by the international spotlight provided by the Olympic Games.

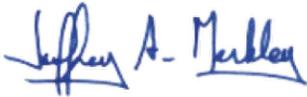
On March 24, 2020, four months before the planned start of the 2020 Summer Olympics, you announced jointly with the Japanese government a postponement of the Tokyo Games because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This demonstrates that the IOC is capable of orchestrating a postponement of the Olympic Games on short notice. If the Olympic Games can be postponed for a year for a pandemic, they can be postponed a year for a genocide.

Therefore, we ask that you announce a postponement of the XXIV Olympic Winter Games to allow a period of time for the host government to take concrete steps to end its gross violations of human rights, including genocide and crimes against humanity in the XUAR, with a commitment to move the Olympic Games to another country unless fundamental improvements in the human rights situation in the XUAR are verified by the IOC and an impartial and independent United Nations mechanism, as proposed by over 50 UN independent experts in June 2020. Given that the Beijing host committee is supported by the government committing these crimes, their concurrence should not be a factor in your decision.

This action would also be in the best interests of the athletes. We find it unfair for the IOC to force athletes to sacrifice their consciences in order to pursue their competitive goals, or vice versa. We would not want any athlete to have to wear clothing or consume food made as a product of forced labor, which is coincident to the crimes against humanity in the XUAR. We would not want to see an athlete penalized, or even detained by the host government, for exercising their right to speak out against genocide.

This is not a matter of whether the Olympics should be immune from politics. Taking action against genocide is not politics. It is about basic morality and human dignity. Again, we urge you to postpone the Beijing Winter Games and relocate them to a different country if the host government does not stop committing genocide and crimes against humanity.

Sincerely,



Senator Jeffrey A. Merkley
Chairman



Representative James P. McGovern
Co-Chairman



Representative Christopher H. Smith
Ranking Member



Senator Marco Rubio
Ranking Member