

**Statement of Rep. James P. McGovern
Co-Chair of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission and
Co-Chair of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China**

Joint Hearing on “China, Genocide and the Olympics”

Tuesday, May 18, 2021, 1:00 p.m.

As prepared for delivery.

Thank you, Congressman Smith, for convening this timely hearing on “China, Genocide and the Olympics.”

I have the honor of serving as co-chair of both the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission and the Congressional-Executive Commission on China. We held a joint hearing two years ago on the 30th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre, and I am pleased we have teamed up again on an issue of global importance.

In less than nine months, the 24th Winter Olympics are scheduled to be held in Beijing, the capital of the People’s Republic of China, a country whose government is –

- committing crimes against humanity and genocide according to the State Department;
- stripping away promised self-government from the people of Hong Kong; and
- brutally repressing Tibetans and other ethnic minorities and crushing Chinese lawyers, civil society and free thinkers.

This is not opinion, these are facts. This is not politics, it is reality.

The Congressional-Executive Commission on China’s Annual Report for 2020 documented how the Chinese government took “unprecedented steps in the last year to extend their repressive policies through censorship, intimidation, and the detention of individuals and groups for exercising their fundamental human rights, especially in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) and Hong Kong.”

Today we have an esteemed panel of experts to inform us on the context in which the Beijing Olympic host committee expects the world to “celebrate” the Games.

I look forward to hearing their assessment of whether the Chinese government is using the Olympic spotlight to improve human rights, or has doubled down on repression.

I welcome their views on whether the International Olympic Committee has been responsive to calls to encourage the PRC to change its human rights practices, or dug in its heels.

And I would like to hear whether outreach to corporate Olympic sponsors to encourage them to use their leverage in favor of human rights has yielded any response, or been met by silence.

Unless things change dramatically, the Winter Olympics will be held in a country as its government commits acts amounting to genocide.

Is anyone in this hearing comfortable with that? Is anyone in a position of influence comfortable with that?

“Why are we holding an Olympics during a genocide?” is precisely the question that we, Senator Jeff Merkley, chair of the CECC, and I intend to ask of the International Olympic Committee and the Beijing 2022 corporate sponsors in the coming months.

To proceed with business as usual would send a horrible signal to all people struggling to exercise their universal human rights and to live in peace with dignity.

Business as usual would require us to relinquish our moral authority to confront other atrocities around the world.

Business as usual would put an indelible stain on an Olympic movement willing to celebrate amidst crimes against humanity.

An announcement to postpone the 2020 Tokyo games was made only four months before it was scheduled to start.

If we can postpone an Olympics by a year for a pandemic, we can surely postpone an Olympics for a year for a genocide.

This would give the IOC time to relocate to a country whose government is not committing atrocities.

To those who argue that the Olympics should be immune from politics, I say that taking a stance against genocide is not politics. It is about human decency. What does it say about us – and the international community – if we pretend that nothing is happening; if we gloss over all of this. What does it say if we put money and corporate interests above basic human rights.

Lastly, to the athletes, both American and those around the world, I want to say that the burden should not be on you. We want you to compete and to pursue your dream. You deserve support.

The burden is on the IOC to find a host government that is not complicit in crimes against humanity.

The burden is on the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee to ensure what you wear and what you eat are not made with forced labor in Xinjiang or elsewhere, and to protect your right to free expression.

The burden is on the corporate sponsors to find a way to fully support your training and equipment without having to subsidize one of the world's worst human rights abusers.

Thank you, and I look forward to the testimony.