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December 15, 2020

Dr. Thomas Bach  
President, International Olympic Committee  
Château de Vidy  
1007 Lausanne  
Switzerland

**Re: IOC Human Rights Due Diligence in China**

Dear President Bach,

We write following the International Olympic Committee's publication of "[Recommendations for an IOC Human Rights Strategy](#)" to urge the IOC to immediately conduct robust human rights due diligence around the preparations for the 2022 Beijing Olympics, and to **explain its efforts to manage human rights risks connected to the Games by February 2021**, one year ahead of the games.

Such action is consistent with the steps set out in [the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#) (the "Guiding Principles"), and with the IOC's ongoing work to [build a strategic framework on human rights](#).

The 2022 Games will take place in a human rights environment significantly worse than that of the 2008 Beijing Games. During the 2008 Games, Chinese authorities repeatedly violated the fundamental human rights they had pledged to uphold to win the right to host that event, including by censoring the media and the internet, arbitrarily arresting journalists, and [abusing the rights of workers](#). The IOC imposed no consequences on the Chinese government in response to these violations.

Since the 2008 Olympics, Human Rights Watch has documented the government's crackdown on peaceful activists, lawyers and human rights

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defenders, [mass arbitrary detention](#) of one million Turkic Muslims in the northwestern Xinjiang region, and the deployment of [Orwellian surveillance technology](#) with a view towards engineering a dissent-free society. The authorities have drastically curtailed freedoms in Hong Kong and attempted to undermine international human rights standards and institutions, most notably at the United Nations.

Authorities have silenced, forcibly disappeared, imprisoned, or driven into exile most of China's fledgling civil society activists. In July 2019, [Li Sizun](#), who was detained in 2008 for applying to use the government's designated Olympics protest zone, died after enduring ill-treatment in detention. As far as we are aware, the IOC has not acknowledged these developments or considered how they might affect the conduct of the 2022 Games.

When the IOC announced in July 2015 it would award the 2022 Games to Beijing, [Human Rights Watch wrote](#) that the IOC's selection raised major concerns and challenges: "The IOC Evaluation Commission's January 2015 report on China notes that the IOC 'received assurances' from Chinese authorities on human rights but failed to provide any detail. The IOC has no human rights monitoring mechanisms in place to measure a host country's respect for these rules." That the [host city human rights requirements adopted by the IOC in 2017](#) do not apply to the 2022 Beijing Games is deeply problematic.

On May 15, 2020, the Beijing Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (BOCOG) [published](#) its "Sustainability Plan" for the Winter Olympics in 2022. As those Games near, the IOC appears to have no plan in place to assess whether the Games themselves will cause or enable human rights violations. We are unaware of any IOC strategy to deal with existing or emerging issues including forced labor in supply chains, transparency in public health, restrictions on the media and critical voices, and mass surveillance. These human rights concerns will directly affect the planning and execution of the 2022 Games and the freedoms of athletes and attendees, and yet the IOC has had [nothing but praise](#) for the current situation in China.

To date, the IOC has not challenged Chinese authorities over their relentless human rights violations, including those tied to the Olympics, and it has not formally adopted human rights policies and obligations to be mainstreamed across Olympics practices and institutions.

More than 160 human rights advocacy groups have [delivered a joint letter to the IOC](#) calling for a reconsideration of the choice to award China the 2022 Winter Games in light of Beijing's deplorable human rights record, and asking for human rights improvements in China; others are calling for a boycott of the 2022 Games or for those Games to be moved to a rights-respecting jurisdiction.

We urge the IOC to swiftly adopt and undertake the commitments outlined by the UN Guiding Principles. A failure to do so will further tarnish the IOC's reputation, cheapen the value of the human rights commitments in host city contracts, and enable an already alarmingly abusive government.

We look forward to discussing this with you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sophie Richardson  
China Director  
Human Rights Watch

Minky Worden  
Director of Global Initiatives  
Human Rights Watch