

Sept. 2013

The Sochi Games and human rights abuses: What corporate sponsors can do

The months leading up to the 2014 Winter Games in Russia represent a critical moment for leading members of the Olympic Movement to take a strong stand in favor of the Olympic principles of human dignity and non-discrimination. While it may seem challenging to effect change in Russia, recent public statements by Sochi2014 Organizing Committee President Dmitry Chernyshenko imploring the IOC to help stave off mounting international criticism of Russia's anti-LGBT law reveal that the authorities indeed are paying attention to, are affected by, and are prepared to take steps to address negative public attention. Such comments belie the Russian government's posturing as tough and intransigent. The time is now to stand up to President Putin, who does not respect those who fear to challenge policies when they are wrong. **Refusing to stand up for key human rights principles enshrined in the Olympic Charter threatens the integrity of the Olympic Movement** and a worsening of an already dire human rights situation for LGBT people and others in Russia, including through the passage of additional laws demonizing LGBT people and tearing apart families.

Human rights abuses tied to the Sochi 2014 Winter Games:

- **Exploitation of [migrant workers](#)** building Olympic venues and infrastructure in Sochi.
- **[Evictions](#) of families** in Sochi without fair compensation; in some cases without any compensation.
- **[Harassment](#) of activists and journalists** speaking out about concerns related to Olympic preparations and other concerns.
- **Existing and pending discriminatory [anti-LGBT legislation](#)** in the context of a broader clampdown on free expression, free assembly, media, and human rights defenders. Legislation currently pending in parliament would give state authorities the right to remove children from families if one or both parents are gay.

For more information, please visit <http://www.hrw.org/russias-olympian-abuses>

Five steps corporate sponsors can immediately take:

- 1) **Urge the IOC leadership to press Russia to repeal anti-LGBT legislation** and refrain from introducing other discriminatory legislation, including publicly. The IOC's request for Russian "assurances" for the Games is not sufficient or effective: the law is discriminatory and is at odds with the Olympic Charter requirement of non-discrimination.
- 2) **Issue a public statement, individually as a company and/or together with other sponsors**, opposing Russia's anti-LGBT legislation and calling on the government to remedy human rights abuses in Sochi linked to the preparations for the Games.
- 3) **Urge the IOC leadership to press Russia to remedy human rights abuses in Sochi**, including migrant labor abuses, forced evictions and the crackdown on journalists and activists.
- 4) **Urge the IOC leadership to implement institutional reforms**, in consultation with human rights groups, in particular:
 - **establish a permanent [human rights mechanism](#)** within the IOC to monitor human rights, in the same way the IOC monitors environmental impact or progress on sports venues;
 - **incorporate human rights benchmarks** and inspections into IOC monitoring of preparations for Games;
 - **require all host city bids** to include plans for human rights protections;
 - **make host city contracts public.**
- 5) **Ask IOC President Thomas Bach**, given the urgency of the current human rights crisis, to meet with Human Rights Watch and other human rights organizations to discuss the Sochi Olympics before the end of 2013.