



Human Rights Watch Submission Olympic Agenda 2020

Theme 5: IOC Structure and Organization *Integrating Human Rights in the Olympic Movement*

Human Rights Watch is submitting this document in response to International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach's call for outside contributions to the debate on the future of the Olympic Movement.

Since the founding of the Olympic Movement more than a century ago, the international community and the international sporting community have had growing expectations for the modernization and transparency of the Olympic Movement and respect for core Olympic values. Over the last decade, serious human rights abuses by some host countries linked to their preparations for hosting the Olympic Games have tarnished the Olympic Movement. We believe the time has come to act on long-standing calls for reform, with particular regard to the need for future host countries to respect basic human rights in accordance with the Olympic Charter.

The IOC's core mission is to promote Olympic values throughout the world and to lead the Olympic Movement. According to the [Olympic Charter](#), the IOC's role includes: to act against any form of discrimination affecting the Olympic Movement, to protect press freedom, and to promote a positive legacy to host cities and host countries. The Olympic Charter's core principles also include "human dignity." In all of these areas, the Russian government's record at the Sochi Olympics was abysmal.

The lesson from Sochi and the [2008 Beijing Olympics](#), where similar abuses occurred, is that awarding the Olympic Games to a country with a poor record on human rights and rule of law carries a strong risk that Olympic preparations will become a source of serious human rights abuses.

To prevent further abuses, Human Rights Watch proposes concrete human rights [reforms](#) to the Olympic Charter, as well as requirements for the IOC to write human rights guarantees into the Host City Contracts and monitor implementation of those guarantees.

I. Post-Sochi: The Way Forward for the Olympic Movement

Drawing on the experiences of the 2008 Beijing Summer Games and the 2014 Sochi Winter Games, and our submission to the 2009 Copenhagen Congress, Human Rights Watch makes **three specific recommendations** (in addition to following up on human rights issues related to the Sochi Games

that to date remain unresolved) for consideration at the IOC Extraordinary Session in Monaco in December 2014. Recognizing the IOC's acknowledgment of its role in responding to allegations of human rights abuses, as elaborated in Recommendation No. 30 (2011) following the 2009 Copenhagen Congress (provided below), Human Rights Watch believes that in order to ensure prevention and remedy of human rights abuses by host countries linked to the preparations for the Games additional reforms are necessary, including:

1. Include human rights benchmarks in Host City Contracts.

Evaluations of candidates for hosting future Summer and Winter Olympics should include human rights benchmarks. Examples of such benchmarks, building on Human Rights Watch's 2009 submission, are as follows:

a. Media freedom benchmarks

- Guarantee media freedom (to domestic and foreign journalists, including those who publish via the Internet), in accordance with the Olympic Charter;
- Ensure freedom of movement for journalists covering the country during the Olympics;
- Establish a mechanism for journalists to file complaints regarding impediments to their ability to perform their work, for example on the IOC's website.

b. Labor rights benchmarks

- Establish an independent commission to regularly and vigorously investigate, report on, and remedy, in collaboration with the host government, labor-related abuses relating to Olympic venues and Olympics-related infrastructure;
- Ensure contractual requirements for all contractors, including subcontractors, engaged on Olympic sites, and respect internationally-recognized fundamental labor protections concerning wages, hours, days off, occupational health and safety, freedom of association, the right to strike, and other protections;
- Establish an accessible, credible complaints mechanism whereby workers may file complaints about possible abuse without fear of retaliation by the government or employers;
- Fully disclose all labor disputes, workplace injuries, and deaths on construction sites for Olympic venues.

c. Freedom of expression and association benchmarks

- Guarantee full freedom of expression and association to rights activists, environmental activists, and other citizens or organizations expressing peaceful criticism of the host country;
- Ensure a safe climate for peaceful demonstrations during the Olympic Games, in accordance with international norms of freedom of assembly.

d. Liberty and security benchmarks

- Guarantee there will be no unlawful forced evictions of host city residents and that any displacement to make way for the construction of Olympic venues and Olympics-related infrastructure takes place strictly within the law and in accordance with international standards, including prompt, full compensation and the right to an appeal;
- Guarantee there will be no arbitrary detentions and/or forcible removal from the host city of any population groups or individuals deemed undesirable on various grounds by the authorities. Based on prior examples such targets could include civil society activists; street children; homeless persons; sex workers; people with disabilities, particularly mental or intellectual disabilities; people who use drugs; members of ethnic minorities; etc.

e. Nondiscrimination benchmarks

- Consistent with Principle 6 of the Olympic Charter, the host country should demonstrate how its laws and practices protect against discrimination on grounds of race, religion, politics, gender, or sexual orientation and gender identity.
- This benchmark would include any form of discrimination against women and girls, for example in Saudi Arabia, where there is continued denial of girls' physical education in state schools as a matter of government policy; the denial of women's representation on national sports bodies; and the denial of government financial support for Saudi sportswomen in national, regional, or international competitions.

2. Make Host City Contracts public.

Future Host City Contracts should be made public in the interest of transparency and to better monitor the host city's ability and/or willingness to respect the human rights benchmarks described above.

3. Amend Principle 6 of the Olympic Charter.

Principle 6 of the Olympic Charter currently states, "Any form of discrimination with regard to a country or a person on grounds of race, religion, politics, gender or otherwise is incompatible with belonging to the Olympic Movement." The experience of the Sochi Games clearly points to the need to expand this principle to include "**sexual orientation and gender identity**" in order to affirm the incompatibility of any kind of discrimination with the Olympic Movement.

In a February 2014 [joint letter](#) to the IOC, 33 international human rights organizations and LGBT groups made this same recommendation.

II. The 2014 Sochi Winter Games and Related Rights Abuses

Beginning in 2008, Human Rights Watch extensively documented rights violations linked to Russia's preparations for the 2014 Sochi Winter Games.

The main types of violations were:

- Exploitation of migrant workers, including unpaid wages or severely delayed wages; excessive working hours without overtime pay and few days off; passport confiscation; and retaliation against workers who filed complaints;
- Forced evictions of homeowners and residents to make way for the construction of Olympic venues, with unfair compensation or, in some cases, no compensation;
- Damage to and degradation of homes and other property as a result of Olympic construction without compensation or resettlement, including the destruction of drinking water wells in one village and the failure to remedy the situation for more than five years;
- Harassment, intimidation, surveillance, and threats against and arrests of civil society activists and journalists who criticized the government's Olympic preparations and related policies, including the imprisonment of one leading environmental activist. Arrests, harassment, and intimidation continued through the period of the Olympic Games;
- Discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people, in the context of an anti-LGBT "propaganda" law adopted in June 2013, in violation of Principle 6 of the Olympic Charter.

While some of these abuses were mitigated by actions taken by the IOC after being alerted by Human Rights Watch, many were not, and remained a source of grave concern. An overview of these rights violations can be found here:

<http://www.hrw.org/russias-olympian-abuses>

III. Human Rights Watch Submission to the IOC Copenhagen Congress (2009)

Human Rights Watch submitted a proposal to the International Olympic Committee's **2009 Olympic Congress** in Copenhagen, on Theme 3.2 ("Good governance and ethics"). The submission recommended the "creation of an IOC standing committee on human rights, or similar mechanism to monitor human rights in host countries." Such a committee would "help set and apply human rights benchmarks for potential Olympic hosts." Human Rights Watch had documented a range of human rights violations linked to China's preparations for the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing, including exploitation of migrant workers and harassment, intimidation, threats, and arrests of journalists and civil society activists. In its submission, Human Rights Watch noted, "Many of the human rights concerns Human Rights Watch documented in China are relevant for Russia and could impede Russia's ability to host the 2014 Winter Olympics with full respect for human dignity and good governance." As described above, Human Rights Watch documented serious human rights abuses linked to Russia's preparations for the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi.

Human Rights Watch's 2009 submission is attached and available here:

<http://www.hrw.org/news/2009/02/23/human-rights-watch-submission-2009-olympic-congress>

IV. The IOC's Recommendation No. 30 (2011)

In September 2011 the IOC published a "follow-up" document to the Copenhagen Congress, which included **Recommendation 30** (p. 33). Its first two points were:

- a) The IOC will intervene at the Organizing Committee level in the event of serious abuses, such as
 - Mistreatment of people displaced due to Olympic venue construction;
 - Abuse of migrant workers at Olympic venue construction sites;
 - Child labor;
 - Improper restrictions on the media's freedom to cover the Games, including cultural aspects.

- b) The IOC will establish a system for correctly identifying and dealing with "legitimate complaints" from official sources.

In conclusion, with our regular monitoring and reporting on human rights concerns linked to the 2008 Beijing Games, the 2014 Sochi Games, and women's right to sport around the 2012 London Games, and our attendance at the 2009 Olympic Congress, Human Rights Watch has worked to be a meaningful stakeholder in the Olympic process.

Human Rights Watch would be pleased to attend the IOC Extraordinary Session in Monaco on December 6-7, 2014 to formally present this submission and answer any questions related to it.