



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

November 24, 2021

Emma Terho
Chair of the Athletes' Commission
International Olympic Committee
Château de Vidy
Case postale 356
1001 Lausanne, Switzerland

Dear Ms. Terho:

We are writing about the case of Peng Shuai and her allegation of sexual assault.

On November 21 you participated in a video call with Peng Shuai, the Chinese tennis player and three-time Olympian who had disappeared from public view following an accusation of sexual assault she made on social media against a former high-ranking Chinese official. Peng's social media post was immediately taken down and coverage of her case, including by international media outlets, was censored by the Chinese government.

The International Olympic Committee's announcement of the call quoted you as saying that "I was relieved to see that Peng Shuai was doing fine." While we share the relief that the video call showed that she was alive, we question whether it is appropriate to conclude, based on a single remote video call, that a person who claimed to have been the victim of sexual assault is "doing fine."

Sexual assault can cause not only physical but mental harm. Victims of such trauma can suffer debilitating symptoms that can range from shock, fear or disbelief in the near term, and/or anxiety, fear or post-traumatic stress disorder in the long term.

Ms. Peng's current situation may make it difficult if not impossible for her to speak to her mental health, even if she chooses to do so, given the heavy censorship of her and her case, and the fact that access to her apparently is controlled by Chinese authorities.

Further, the silence on the IOC's announcement on Ms. Peng's accusation of sexual assault raises concern about the IOC's sincerity in supporting its community of athletes. Given who the accusation was levied against, Ms. Peng's decision to do so publicly exhibited not only bravery but a manifestation of her agency as a human being with rights. There is no indication that Chinese authorities are pursuing an investigation of Ms. Peng's claim, and the censorship

suggests they are trying to bury it. The IOC has an opportunity to validate the agency Ms. Peng has expressed and which Chinese authorities are refusing to recognize.

Therefore, we ask you and the IOC leadership to take a more active role in defending Ms. Peng and her assertion of her rights, both in demanding that the Chinese government conduct a diligent and fair investigation of her allegations and ensuring that she has access to any psychosocial support services that she may require.

Thank you in advance for addressing our concerns.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Jeffrey A. Merkley in blue ink.

Senator Jeffrey A. Merkley
Chairman

Handwritten signature of James P. McGovern in blue ink.

Representative James P. McGovern
Co-Chairman