

Congressional-Executive Commission on China

Hearing

on

The Beijing Olympics and the Faces of Repression

Thursday, February 3, 2022 – 10:00am

SD-G-50 & Virtual via Cisco Webex

Statement of Senator Jeff Merkley

Chair

Congressional-Executive Commission on China

- Good morning. Today’s hearing of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China on “The Beijing Olympics and the Faces of Repression” will come to order.
- In less than 24 hours, the Beijing Winter Olympic Games will commence and usher in weeks of pageantry designed to showcase a shiny façade, the face that the Chinese government and the Communist Party want the world to see. Beneath this glitz and glamor lies the real story. As the Commission and so many others have documented, the story of Chinese leadership is one of genocide, slave labor, forced sterilization, the desecration of democracy in Hong Kong, Orwellian repression in Xinjiang and Tibet, bullying of critics at home and abroad, and the suppression of freedom of religion, freedom of speech, civil society, and rule of law across the country.
- This Commission, which exists to shine a light on the real human rights situation in China, has sought to prevent these Olympic Games from perverting the Olympic spirit and distracting from the real story. We have held multiple hearings, including one with the top U.S.-based Olympic sponsors. We’ve engaged those sponsors, the International Olympic Committee, the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee, broadcasters, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.
- I hope it has made a difference in the degree to which U.S. companies are willing to lend their prestige to the false display of peace and harmony the Beijing Olympics represent. I hope it will influence the way these Games are covered and the way these Games are perceived by the world. I hope it will provide support to Olympians who fear for their freedom of expression, their data privacy, and their basic rights. But these Olympics are commencing and will show a face the Chinese government and Communist Party don’t deserve to show to the world.
- In this hearing we will put a spotlight on the faces of repression, the exact faces and stories the organizers of the Beijing Olympics don’t want the world thinking about as the torch is lit. For the last 60 days, the Congressional-Executive Commission on China has conducted a daily #OlympicPrisoner social media campaign to tell just a few of these stories. There are so many more in the CECC Political Prisoner Database, which is only a sliver of the untold

number of Chinese citizens detained or disappeared merely for exercising their human rights or being a member of a disfavored minority group.

- To better document these cases, in recent months we've revamped the database in several ways. In June 2021, we launched a new platform aimed at modernizing the database to address security and sustainability concerns, streamline information, and maintain our ability to record and display a wide variety of data. This upgrade enhanced the database's search functionality, added publication of prior detentions, expanded detention details, and created a permanent archived source link.
- The CECC Political Prisoner Database recently began to document cases of political detention and imprisonment in Hong Kong, in recognition of the rapid deterioration in the rule of law conditions, including arrests made under the National Security Law, as well as ongoing loss of independence of the judiciary and prosecutor's office. I never thought I would see the day when that would be necessary but the sad reality is here and it's our mandate to document these cases.
- In this hearing, we will hear about some of these cases in Hong Kong as well as others we've highlighted in the #OlympicPrisoner project. We are deeply honored that one of the greatest champions of human rights in China, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, is here to help frame our discussion of these cases. I am similarly humbled by the panel of witnesses we will hear from, who will tell deeply personal accounts of the repression they and their family members have suffered. These witnesses have started organizations dedicated to the causes of human rights, rule of law, and democracy. They have lost fathers, husbands, uncles, and friends to the Chinese system of arbitrary detention. And they have been locked up themselves.
- I can think of nobody better to hear from on the eve of the Beijing Olympics. These and the images behind them are the faces of repression we hope the world remembers as the Olympics get underway.