

**Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing, and
Congressional-Executive Commission on China Hearing
on
China, Genocide and the Olympics**

**May 18, 2021- 1:00 p.m.
Virtual, via WebEx**

**Statement of Samuel M Chu
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Good afternoon. Thank you, Chair and Co-Chairs - Mr. Merkley, Mr. Smith, and Mr. McGovern - for hosting today's hearing and Commissioners of both the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission and the Congressional-Executive Commission on China for the opportunity to contribute to your work in support of human rights in Hong Kong and China.

Like many kids who grew up in Hong Kong, I played table tennis or ping pong. Like American kids who first picked up a basketball, learned tumbling at gymnastics, or laced up their first pair of skates, I fantasized about one day competing at the Olympics.

My ping pong career never took off, but it didn't diminish the pride of watching athletes from Hong Kong compete in the Olympics or daydreaming about what it would be like to be standing on the podium. My dream was possible because Hong Kong fielded its own teams for the Olympics - separate from the United Kingdom and then later from the People's Republic of China.

I asked my parents if we would still have our own team after the 1997 handover. They assured me that Hong Kong would still be separate and distinct on the sports fields as it was enshrined in Hong Kong's Basic Law that it "may, on its own, ... maintain and develop relations and conclude and implement agreements with foreign states and regions and relevant international organizations in the appropriate fields, including the economic, trade, financial and monetary, shipping, communications, tourism, cultural and sports fields."

I remember being relieved - that our flag would still be there.

At the time, it was a childish question and a minute detail. But for Hong Kong to march under its own flag was an important symbol of the guarantees of freedoms and autonomy under "one country, two systems." Today, that footnote is the only remnant among the broken promises China made to Hong Kong.

I want to acknowledge firstly that freedom-loving Hong Kongers stand with our Uyghur brothers and sisters. If genocide does not stop us in our tracks and spurs us to meaningful actions in response, nothing else will and shame on all of us.

Meanwhile, the fall of Hong Kong has been swift and total.

The National Security Law, unilaterally imposed a year ago, has been used aggressively to limit freedom of speech, purge political opposition, and sever the movement's ties to international allies.

The CCP, not content with the mass disqualification of pro-democracy candidates and lawmakers, postponed elections for a year. Then last month, they fundamentally altered the election system and the makeup of the Hong Kong legislative council to ensure it is stacked only with Beijing loyalists.

Every public face of the pro-democracy movement is now either in jail, in de facto "political" house arrests without the rights to free speech and civic engagement, or living in exile.

Two years ago last week, the CECC heard from a delegation of Hong Kongers. Martin Lee, the founding father of democracy - convicted and sentenced. Lee Cheuk Yan, the top labor leader, convicted and jailed. Nathan Law, the youngest legislator ever elected, now in exile in the UK.

The list goes on - Jimmy Lai, the media tycoon and publisher of the opposition newspaper Apple Daily and Joshua Wong, whom some of you nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, have both been relentlessly and serially prosecuted to ensure they remain behind bars indefinitely.

Last month, Bao Choy, an award-winning journalist who investigated one of the most brutal attacks on protesters on July 21, 2019, became the first reporter to be convicted for simply doing her job. 2 weeks later, entire programs were deleted and erased from RTHK, the outlet she reported for.

There have been documented blocking of websites. From June 2019 - July 2020, the government made over 1400 requests for personal data to tech companies like Apple, Google, Facebook, and Twitter. Activists, some just teenagers, have been charged based solely on what they wrote or posted on social media.

This has unfolded in plain sight as the world watched. No one can claim "we didn't know" before setting foot on Chinese snow next year. Allowing Beijing to become the first-ever city to host both summer and winter games would be making the wrong kind of history.

And we have been here before.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC)'s pretext in repeatedly awarding Games to repressive regimes - including China - is that it would lessen their abuses. Despite all evidence to the contrary.

In 2001, to secure the right to host the 2008 Games, the Chinese government made promises to improve human rights, press freedoms, treatments of dissidents, and internet censorship. They not only broke those promises - they have doubled down on the repression and exported it beyond its borders. And by failing to hold China accountable for abuses in the lead-up to and during the 2008 Games, the IOC effectively told the CCP that it could do whatever it wanted without fear of repercussions or sanctions.

Hong Kongers are uniquely trained to refute this line of magical thinking. The Brits handed over Hong Kong back to China with the wishful thinking that it would open up China.

The United States has been through this too. Let's grant China "Most Favored Nation" status and membership into the World Trade Organization without conditions because free trades will inevitably lead to human rights.

Fool me once—shame on you. Fool me twice—shame on me. Fool me thrice. The IOC is probably in on the con.

Some make the argument that the Games are not political, made most recently by Sarah Hirschland, CEO of the US Olympic and Paralympic Committee, in a letter to Members of Congress dated May 12, 2021, when she stated that "the games are not the solution to geopolitical issues."

Yet hosting the Olympics has become the go-to, proven solution for authoritarian regimes to whitewash their crimes, boost their image internationally, and strengthen alliances. And worse, China used the 2008 Olympics as a catalyst for expanding its security and surveillance apparatus.

China should have been banned from hosting all major sports events then.

In 2019, the World Anti-Doping Agency banned Russia from playing and hosting all major sporting events for four years, including the Olympics, for doping violations. The ban was later upheld by the Court of Arbitration for Sport, though reduced to two years, including the 2020 Tokyo and 2022 Beijing Games.

Russia, for the crime of doping, is banned from the Games hosted by a regime committing crimes against humanity. Let that sink in.

If a two-year ban is a justified punishment for doping, what is justified for the lives and freedoms of 13 million ethnic minorities in Xinjiang and 7.5 million Hong Kongers?

The IOC must do what they didn't and refused to do before - ban China from playing and hosting all major sporting events indefinitely. Let individual Chinese athletes compete as "neutral athletes." Their uniforms may not bear the Chinese flag, and the Chinese national anthem should not be played or sung at any official event venue. Same penalties Russia received. Apartheid South Africa was banned from 1964 to 1992.

Extraordinary threat requires an extraordinary response, and the past year has shown that we are capable of meeting urgent, extraordinary challenges. Mr. McGovern spoke during the HKDC Policy Conference last month and said, "if we can postpone the Olympics for a year because of a pandemic, surely we could postpone it for genocide?" The US must build and expand the emerging bipartisan, international coalition to force a postponement of the 2022 Games in order to identify a new host.

I want to make clear that we should not ask individual athletes to bear this burden. It would be unfair to outsource our moral obligation to a small group of young athletes. But neither should we let those who have a choice, who hold power, who are reaping the financial benefits, off the hook.

The windfall in any Olympics is in sponsorships and advertising, for both the corporations who willingly and proudly broadcast their affiliation and the international and local Olympic committees who eagerly take their cut of the profits.

We must call to account every member of the International Olympics Committee, of the executive board, of the finance committee, especially Americans, the paid lobbyists for the IOC, every member of the US Olympic and Paralympic Committee; and every executive and board member of corporate sponsors and companies providing goods and services for the games.

Unlike our athletes, they had and made their choice. It is up to us to exact a real, painful, lasting cost for companies reaping financial gains while ignoring gross human rights abuses and for the IOC to think twice before accepting a bid from an authoritarian regime in the future.

For two years, HKDC and Hong Kong activists have consistently called for coordinated actions among free nations against the CCP's abuses and repressions. Tangible steps and results have been elusive. What if there was a lever readily available? A global platform that would focus the spotlight on the CCP and its crimes and a way to apply unprecedented political and economic pressure based solely on our collective will to act?

The Olympics is that lever. The actions we decide to take together for the 2022 Games might not change the CCP's behaviors immediately, but it will be consequential in determining our power and ability to push back on China moving forward.

In 1996, the year I became a naturalized US citizen, the Summer Olympics took place in Atlanta. That year, the Hong Kong team won its first and only gold medal (it was not in ping pong but instead sailing). It would be the last medal that Hong Kong would win in the games as “Team Hong Kong” before it became “Hong Kong, China.” But that, in the larger scheme of things, is just a minor detail.

The Olympic Games are about something bigger.

The ideals and values of the Olympics movement cannot be achieved or won on the playing fields; they are only realized when they become tangible, lasting, and shared realities for all off the fields.

So, let’s make the Olympics about the bigger things.
