

Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission
Congressional-Executive Commission on China

Hearing
on
China, Genocide and the Olympics

Tuesday, May 18, 2021 – 1:00 p.m.
Virtual vis Cisco WebEx

Statement of Senator Jeff Merkley
Chair
Congressional-Executive Commission on China

- Thank you, Congressman Smith and Congressman McGovern, for your partnership in holding this important hearing.
- It's a testament to the urgency of our hearing today that it draws such bipartisan and bicameral interest and that Speaker Pelosi is joining us to offer her powerful voice as a long-time and steadfast advocate of the human rights of the Chinese people.
- In recent years, the Congressional-Executive Commission on China has painstakingly documented China's assault on basic rights – in Xinjiang, in Hong Kong, in Tibet, among civil society throughout China, and increasingly through the coercion of anybody abroad who challenges the Chinese government's party line.
- As the chairs of the CECC, Congressman McGovern and I are committed to shining a light on these abuses and marshaling coalitions of human rights advocates, civil society, and intergovernmental and interparliamentary partners to hold abusers of human rights accountable and improve the dire human rights situation in China.

- This hearing is an initial step in what we plan to be a concerted effort to elevate voices speaking out for the powerless in China to identify options for Congress, for the U.S. government, for the private sector, for defenders of freedom everywhere to take to protect human rights that continue to be trampled by the Chinese government.
- The International Olympic Committee’s shameful choice to hold the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing and other cities in China sadly makes the Olympics an immediate focal point for our consideration. How did it come to this moment where an event designed to uplift the human spirit is being held in a nation that is crushing the human spirit?
- As Congressman McGovern said, we cannot proceed with business as usual, as cherished as the Olympic Games are to so many around the world and as unfair as it is for the burden of human rights abuses elsewhere to fall on athletes who work so hard to achieve mastery of their sport and to represent their nations with pride.
- We know where business as usual will lead. It will lead to a government that has committed genocide in Xinjiang, flouted its international treaty commitments to Hong Kong, and run roughshod over international law in the South China Sea to continue its behaviors emboldened and unchanged.
- So it falls to all of us to set aside “business as usual” and to explore strategies that give powerful visibility to and support for internationally recognized human rights, that create

momentum to change oppressive behavior by leaders and governments around the world and specifically in China.

- Today's distinguished panel brings enormous expertise to bear. So let's pay close attention and ponder how all of us in our respective roles can entertain such concrete ideas to shape our legislative work and our advocacy work in order to end the oppressive behavior of China against so many.