



China: A gold medal for repression



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The 2022 Winter Olympics will be held in Beijing, China – a country ruled by an increasingly repressive party. The sports of the Olympics have rules, but the Chinese Communist Party has shown that it has little or no respect for international laws and standards. This dossier presents five repressive policies of the ruling party that make China and the world unsafe. These have become the “five rings of repression” that are strangling freedom and rights for many millions of people.

How can the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and its partners be sure that the Winter Olympics will not contribute to oppression and human rights violations and that athletes, their teams, journalists and others attending them are protected in a country ruled by this Party?

Ahead of the 2022 Beijing Olympics 4 – 20th February 2022, the ITUC is demanding that:

the International Olympic Committee guarantee the security and safety of athletes and all others who are attending the Beijing Winter Olympics;

governments guarantee the safety of athletes and supporters traveling to the Beijing Winter Olympics;

international Olympic sponsors, including Airbnb, Allianz, AtoS, Bridgestone, Coca-Cola, Dow, GE, Intel, Omega, Panasonic, P&G, Samsung, Toyota, and Visa, review their association with the Beijing Winter Olympics under the shadow of repressive policies by the Chinese Communist Party; and

the Chinese Communist Party end its policies of repression and allow fundamental rights and freedoms under international rules.

The five rings of repression overshadowing the Beijing Winter Olympics

1. Repression and imprisonment in Hong Kongⁱ

The Chinese Communist Party has rapidly accelerated its political occupation of Hong Kong, making it a dangerous place for anyone who wishes to enjoy basic human rights. Dozens of trade unionists and democracy defenders have been locked up using the new, repressive National Security Law. The Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU), which has a proud history as a defender of human and trade union rights, had to disband, with many of its leaders incarcerated. After enormous pressure from the authorities, the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union (HKPTU) was also disbanded, even though it was Hong Kong's biggest teachers' union, which



represented 90% of the territory's teachers and was 48 years old. Other independent trade unions are subject to campaigns of intimidation, investigation and threats under the new law.



2. Intimidation of LGBT+ people

China is not a safe place for people who identify as LGBT+. In August, Shanghai Pride, China's largest and longest-running LGBT+ festival, cancelled all future activities because activists faced harassment for speaking out against discrimination and homophobia. In 2022, Hong Kong is due to host the Gay Games, the first time the event will be held in Asia. However, local politicians aligned with China's ruling party are attacking the games, with people unable to fight back due to the threat of repression under the new National Security Law.

3. Violations of fundamental rights at work, in supply chains and in societyⁱⁱ

China is not a safe place for working people. Dozens of global multinational corporations have been implicated in human rights violations after abuse was uncovered at their suppliers in China. There is mounting evidence about how people from the Uyghur ethnic group in Xinjiang are being used as forced labour, with credible allegations that this includes suppliers to international companies. The [ITUC Global Rights Index](#) shows how the ruling party does not respect even the most basic rights. The law permits anti-union discrimination, imposing a single trade union system through the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), which can neither defend freedom of association – the right of a workers to join a trade union of their choice – or



Violations at work, in supply chains and in society are widespread. There is mounting evidence of people from the Uyghur ethnic group being used as forced labour and of human rights violations at suppliers to multinational corporations. The ITUC Global Rights Index shows that the ruling party does not respect even the most basic rights.

Credit: STR / AFP

the right to strike, and in many workplaces acts as the transmission belt for decisions by the government or management. The government frequently uses public order laws to crack down on legal advocates and trade unionists. For example, [dozens of workers at Jasic Technology](#) have disappeared or are being detained on charges of “gathering a crowd to disrupt social order”. In Central Asia, an [ITUC report](#) found that basic workers’ rights are routinely violated as part of China’s Belt and Road Initiative.



The ruling party severely represses people it identifies as being from an ethnic minority. The UN has described it as “collective repression” of religious and ethnic minorities in Xinjiang, Tibet and Inner Mongolia.

Credit: Frederic J. Brown / AFP

4. Repression and exploitation of ethnic minoritiesⁱⁱⁱ

The ruling party severely represses people it identifies as being from an ethnic minority. Under the pretence of “anti-separatism”, “anti-extremism” and “counterterrorism”, wide-ranging oppression of ethnic minorities continues, amounting to crimes against humanity. Tactics used in Tibet have been exported to Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia to attack local communities, including heavy securitisation, surveillance and “political education”. The UN has described it as “collective repression” of religious and ethnic minorities in Xinjiang, Tibet and Inner Mongolia.

5. The spread of COVID-19^{iv}

Since SARS-CoV-2 first emerged in Wuhan, China, towards the end of 2019, the ruling party has engaged in a cover-up and still today hides vital information that could help identify the real origins of the virus. From the beginning, the Party silenced doctors in Wuhan who tried to warn colleagues. Furthermore, it threatened doctors in an effort to cover up the outbreak of “atypical pneumonia” and its cause. Instead of informing doctors, the Party withheld vital information – for example, the fact that the virus was already spreading from human to human. Instead of providing health workers with personal protective equipment (PPE), they banned doctors from using PPE for fear it would trigger public alarm and prohibited doctors from discussing or diagnosing COVID-19 pneumonia. Withholding this information led to more than three thousand preventable infections and dozens of needless deaths among health workers. The ruling party denied to the world that it knew the cause of the outbreak for two weeks after the virus had been identified and



sequenced and tried to hide the sequence from the World Health Organization (WHO). It misled the world about the source of the virus and has consistently withheld animal and environmental samples. To this day, it has failed to provide to the world accurate information about COVID-19 infection rates and the origins of the virus and continues to spread erroneous and misleading information.

Endnotes

i <https://www.ituc-csi.org/hong-kong-release-activists>
<https://www.ituc-csi.org/hong-kong-lee-cheuk-yan-sentence>
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ii <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/china-83-major-brands-implicated-in-report-on-forced-labour-of-ethnic-minorities-from-xinjiang-assigned-to-factories-across-provinces-includes-company-responses/>
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iv <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/03/18/china-covid-19-killed-health-care-workers-worldwide/>
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