

## **"My Urgent Call for the International Community to Boycott the 2022 Winter Olympics to be Held in Beijing, China"**

**By Dhondup Wangchen**

First and foremost, sincere greetings to the people and governments of the world!

My name is Dhondup Wangchen. I come from an ordinary farming family from a small village in eastern Tibet. I never had a formal education, nor do I consider myself a person who knows much about politics. But like any other person, I am an ordinary Tibetan man who very much admires peace and equal rights.

When China was declared as the host of the 2008 Winter Olympics, Tibetans and human rights activists across the globe were shocked and saddened. The simple reason being that, the host societies of the Olympics games, we believed, should have basic human rights where discrimination against people is abolished and equal justice prevails. The fact that China, a corrupt and authoritarian country, was awarded to host the Olympic Games was unbelievably hard to bear. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) under the pretence of "liberation" and "aid", has undertaken a murderous campaign of illegal occupation of Tibet over three generations, which is unprecedented in any period in the history of Tibet.

Following the International Olympics Committee's (IOC) statement on China, an emboldened Chinese regime seized the opportunity to tell the world that people under Chinese rule have freedom of expression and free and independent journalism. With full trust in the IOC, I and a group of friends started a documentary film project called "Leaving Fear Behind", capturing the ground reality of Tibet and Tibetans' feelings on the 2008 Olympic games. I was then arrested on 26 March 2008 and detained in an undisclosed location for over a year.

Governments and non-governmental organisations voiced their concerns and rallied for my release but the Chinese government repudiated those calls. After my arrest, I was deliberately and continuously deprived of sleep and food for 7 days and 8 nights. I had to endure the worst unthinkable torture and inhumane beatings. Then I was given a 6 years prison sentence and labelled a separatist. I was denied access to a lawyer. For no good reason, I was punished for my behaviour and sent to hard labour for around 15 to 16 hours a day with constant beatings and starvation. After release, I was punished yet again. This time I was subject to strict surveillance and every move of mine was monitored. I was warned of serious consequences if I travelled to places of my choice and met people including my own friends and relatives. It was like a prison outside the prison. I was forced to live a solitary life for three years and four months. I believed that freedom is a greater cause than my life and thus survived through the harshest of situations and finally made it to the US with help from numerous people and organisations.

I arrived on American soil on 25 December 2017. I had my wife and four children waiting for me. My elderly parents had moved from India to Australia in 2017. When the news of my arrest was first heard by my mother, she had a massive heart attack and had to undergo treatment for a prolonged period. In February 2018, I sought a special travel permit to go and meet my parents and in June that year I went to the Australian embassy in Washington. The staff promised to

grant me a permit as early as possible but the same staff forced a condition on me to never involve myself in political activism on Australian soil. Just a few days later, the Australian embassy changed their mind and rejected my visa application. This decision to me was clearly due to pressure from the Chinese government thus in order to appease them, the embassy took the decision accordingly. Sadly my mother passed away on 28 December that same year, the news of which was similar to a dagger to the heart to this day. My mother's tears and prayers to reunite with her son for over a decade couldn't be fulfilled. When my mother and I had the perfect opportunity to reunite, the embassy's desire to appease the Chinese government loomed over them. In the end, everything turned into tears and pain.

Despite imminent danger, many people risked helping me across checkpoints to safely reach the US and reunite with my family. By taking this opportunity, I would like to sincerely thank everyone involved who immensely cared and supported me. For making "Leaving Fear Behind", a 25-minute documentary film, my parents, wife, and children had to go through immeasurable hardships and pain which can never be summed up in a brief moment.

The people, governments, and non-governmental organizations that cared for human rights and stood for justice had well received the documentary and also expressed solidarity and amplified critical support. Particularly, democracy and human rights-loving Chinese people have supported the cause. Lawyer Mr. Li Donyung has risked so much to help and support me. International non-governmental organizations such as Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), H and several others have given awards and organized rallies for the documentary film. The US and a number of governments have raised their concerns by citing my innocence and demanded my immediate release time and again to the Chinese government. China cannot challenge the international pressure every time and come up with excuses. The kind of recognition received by the documentary was not because it was entertaining but rather the viewers were shell shocked by the reality they have seen in it and decided to stand for truth. The documentary was significant in exposing the Chinese government's blatant lies to the international media about people enjoying human rights and freedom of expression.

The freedom-loving people of nations under Chinese occupation such as Tibet, East Turkestan, Southern Mongolia, Hong Kong, and China are rounded up and imprisoned for "crimes" that never happened. The IOC had the power and many opportunities to bring change to the authoritarian Communist regime of China. These opportunities couldn't go to waste. I urge the IOC to adhere to its commitments and values of the Olympic games and seize these critical opportunities. The IOC should use its position to stand up for the truth and speak up for the millions of stateless and persecuted people. Led by the United Nations, the international leaders, politicians, and businessmen can make a difference and hold China accountable. I firmly believe we have the power and ability to prevent or change the reckless Chinese government based on international norms and human rights. We have to unite to fight against the authoritarian regimes in order to bring peace, human rights, and democracy in the world. We have the shared responsibility to make sure that murderous authoritarian regimes never be assisted over fame and profiteering at the cost of human lives. A murderous Communist government that disrupts international norms and order, was in fact awarded the 2022 Winter Olympics has once again frightened and disappointed

millions of people. The blood that was shed in 2008 is very much fresh. The tears of countless parents have not yet dried. Many children remain orphans and so many innocent people are imprisoned and suffer from "crimes" they have never committed. In 2008, many Chinese and other occupied nationalities protested against the CCP to host the Olympic games. Particularly, millions of Tibetans peacefully protested in unison against the Communist government to raise their voices and discontent for which the police responded by killing thousands of peaceful protesters with total disregard for human life. A great number of people were arrested and are still in prison and countless others disappeared.

Tibetans have successfully exposed the lies and deception tactics used by the Chinese government to fool the people and governments around the world. Since 2009, 156 Tibetans have self-immolated, out of pure desperation to protest against the brutal policies of the Chinese government. No one can say that a similar 2008 uprising will not repeat itself! But the Chinese government is out there threatening and boasting at the same time to the world in order to fulfill the ultimate goal of the CCP.

The chaos and challenges faced all over the globe in recent years are a direct result of the actions of the Chinese government. The consequences of a curtailed freedom of journalism and information flow have led to the worst pandemic in the history of humankind. Covid-19 that originated in Wuhan, China, has killed over one hundred thousand people, over one billion lives endangered and billions of dollars worth of economic meltdown. The Chinese communist government is the real enemy of humanity in that sense. If we remain indifferent and unmoved, this will embolden the Chinese government to create more harm in the world. An ordinary person like me has been tortured beyond imagination but I am never angry at the Chinese government. On the other hand, I am more inspired to expose the lies and deceptive tactics used by the Chinese government till the end. As a human being, I call for the cancellation or change of the host for the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics. It is significant to make this move because this is not an individual matter but rather the world peace, overall well-being, and the benefit of humanity depend on it, thus cannot be ignored.

What you see is a world spectacle where hundreds of young people compete for various sports but for me, I see the suffering and life-and-death situation of people of an occupied nation that is ignored and deprived of much-needed solidarity. The Olympic participants train very hard every day, as do the Tibetans that have to take risks and work tirelessly to safeguard their basic rights. The 2022 Winter Olympics are approaching, hence I also would like to take an oath on the occasion. To the people believing in truth and those who supported me, I would like to assure you that I'll never abandon this fight for truth. I take this pledge for Tibetans and other persecuted people who suffer continuously. Henceforth, I think the Olympics should be held in a country where equal opportunity and joy is prevalent. The promises made by China for the 2008 Olympics have all been broken and have taken many innocent lives. People had to go through all sorts of hardships. It is our responsibility to make sure that such mistakes don't repeat. It's crystal clear that people under the repressive Communist Chinese rule don't even have the right to express their views. Doing so might cost their lives. I had to go through imminent danger to reach safety. So, my dear friends, I request each one of you to support me and make an oath. Thank you.