

International Olympic Committee Background Guide

Considering Human Rights Records as a basis for membership in the Olympics

The concern of whether or not to allow countries abusing human rights should be allowed in the Olympics has been debated for over 50 years. When the International Olympic Committee (IOC) banned South Africa from competing in the Olympics in 1964, it set a precedent that the human rights records of countries should dictate whether or not they could compete in the Olympics.

Today, there is controversy over whether or not the IOC should ban other countries based on their human rights violations, including legal discrimination of women and the LGBT community. The first, and only, instance of banning a country due to its human rights record came in 1964 when South Africa refused to renounce racial discrimination in sports and condemn apartheid. The IOC told South Africa that it would be banned from competing in the Olympics unless it publicly announced that it would rid South Africa of all racial discrimination in sport. Twenty-one years later, the IOC lifted the ban on South Africa competing because South Africa finally worked towards abolishing all racial discrimination in sports. Similarly, Saudi Arabia which had banned females from participating in international and national sports sent its first-ever female athletes to the 2012 Olympic games after being pressured by the IOC. However, gender discrimination still exists in Saudi Arabia: women there aren't even allowed to drive. This sexist discrimination violates Olympic charter and the principles of the United Nations. In other places, such as Russia, legal discrimination against the LGBT community exists, yet the IOC has done nothing to combat this.

Furthermore in preparation for the Olympics, laborers in Sochi and Beijing worked for a long time under unsatisfactory working conditions. People who opposed the deadly construction were immediately imprisoned or executed. In Sochi, the IOC found out that 500 companies had not paid a total 8 million dollars in wages for laborers after the Olympics. Because of these incidents, the IOC has vowed to intervene in labor violations. However, by including Beijing and Almaty as final bidders for the

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2022 Olympics, the IOC has failed to uphold its promise because China and Kazakhstan have been oppressive countries that do not respect the rights of media, laborers, beliefs, and religion.

If the IOC started making human rights requirements, countries in the Middle East and North Africa including Syria, Egypt, Libya, Mali and Guinea-Bissau would be deeply troubled. In these countries, the situation has been deteriorating. Sub-Saharan Africa also has ethnic conflicts and sexual violence violating human rights. In most of these countries, the cause of human rights violations is due to state repression and violence and changes in economy. Campbell, the Maplecroft's head of Societal Risk and Human Rights, stated that since 2008, economic growth has shifted to new markets creating a demand for low-cost workers and other resources. This compromises workers' rights, governments violate freedom of expression, and repress rural and indigenous communities.

The IOC needs to decide whether or not human rights records should continue to be reviewed when deciding whether or not a country is allowed to compete in the Olympics. In addition, if the IOC decides human rights records should be reviewed, it needs to set a standard about what human rights violations would cause countries to be banned from the Olympics. One portions of the IOC's mission is to "act against any form of discrimination affecting the Olympic Movement." The IOC needs to clarify whether this means just discrimination that is directly related to sports or also outside discrimination that indirectly affects the Olympics.

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Ending corrupt practices and relationships with host countries

Previous to 2005, the UN took some action against corruption, but this was negligible compared to what it is now. The UN attempted to prevent corruption from happening, not to end existent corrupt forms of government. For the new host city contract, "Sustainable Human and Environmental Development" is a section that mandates the host city to "take all necessary measures to ensure that

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development projects necessary for the organization of the Games comply with local, regional, and national legislation, and international agreements and protocols, applicable in the host country with regard to planning, construction, protection of the environment, health, safety, and labour laws.” In regards to the anti-gay law controversy in Sochi last year, the IOC has included an anti-discrimination clause to the new host contract.

In addition to anti-discrimination, the IOC has included newer laws on labor and environmental issues as well. After the games in Sochi, the IOC reported that Russia gained one-third of the 50 billion dollars it used through corruption. Anyhow, China and Russia are not the only corrupt countries oppressing its citizens during and after the games. But is this enough? In the 2008 Summer Olympics, Beijing, China made over 146 million dollars in profit and infrastructural advances in the economy. Hosting the Olympics has been a lucrative business for any country. That’s why there is so much competition to win the bid to host. Countries have even gone to extreme extents like bribing the IOC for hosting rights. Because hosting the Olympics is such an attractive deal, the United Nations can use its power to sanction oppressive countries and make sure those countries do not participate nor host the games without recognizing human rights. In fact, the reason the IOC’s new contract is inefficient is because it is only legal during the games. After the games have been completed, China, Russia, and other countries can resume oppressing and disregarding the rights of media, gays and lesbians, and laborers. That’s why it is up to you as the United Nations to cooperate with one another, legislate meaningful resolutions that will manipulate oppressive countries to honor the freedoms of its citizens both during and after the games, and improve government transparency in corrupt countries. By manipulating the Olympic Games and the countries that participate in it, the United Nations can significantly reduce corruption and more effectively promote freedom throughout the world. The UN has acted on corruption in different instances as well. There was a committee formed called the UNCAC,

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the United Nations Convention against Corruption. This committee, that took effect in 2005, has been useful for many cases against corruption.

The importance in ending corruption is extremely prevalent. The UN already has taken so many measures to end corruption and malevolent practices by countries.

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