

Athleten Deutschland e.V.  
Friedbergstraße 19  
14057 Berlin  
E-mail: [presse@athleten-deutschland.org](mailto:presse@athleten-deutschland.org)  
[www.athleten-deutschland.org](http://www.athleten-deutschland.org)

## Sport-Political Recap and Outlook After the Winter Olympics

Berlin, February 19, 2022. The Olympic Games in Beijing are drawing to a close. We were thrilled by the athletes' performances and sporting successes. We congratulate them on their impressive results and pay them our utmost respect. Each participation in the Olympic Games and each outstanding athletic performance has its **own personal story**, and we would like to express our great appreciation to each and every one of them.

The disastrous human rights situation in China, safety concerns and the special circumstances of the pandemic had already cast a shadow on the Games in the run-up. We are impressed by the **will and persistence** of all athletes who have made the journey to Beijing. All athletes will likely return home safely. We hope that they will have access to **sufficient mental support**, which is particularly important in the aftermath of career highlights such as the Games.

The Beijing Games have rightly been the subject to critical debate in recent weeks and months. We have also taken a detailed position on the human rights situation in China and the [responsibility of the IOC, states, federations, and sponsors](#). After the case of Peng Shuai, we also [called on the IOC to nail its colors to the mast in a detailed analysis last year](#): The most powerful organization in the world of sport must finally give top priority to its **duty of care for athletes and its human rights responsibilities**.

Even before the Games, the IOC [failed to take numerous opportunities](#) to fulfill its human rights due diligence obligations in a sufficient and credible manner. Moreover, concerns around inadequate quarantine conditions, increased censorship activities by China, or restrictions on internet and press freedom [have proven to be substantiated](#). The IOC **has not distanced itself strongly enough** from [Chinese threats against critical statements by athletes](#). It has **not been able to credibly put a stop** to the threat of spying and espionage, not least because of [security vulnerabilities in the My2022 app](#) that came to light.

**Several incidents at the Games** also made clear that the **culture of silence at the IOC urgently needs to end**. It continues to be ill-suited, even counterproductive, to mastering the difficult balancing act of sport: not allowing itself to be politically captured, promoting international understanding, and not betraying its values at the same time. The **IOC's continued silence** on the most serious human rights violations and crimes against humanity in China **lend those tacit acceptance**. In dealing with Peng Shuai and Taiwan, the **IOC has offered itself to the Chinese leadership**. As expected **China was able to use the Games as a platform for its propaganda** purposes, including choosing an Uyghur torch bearer in the opening ceremony right at the beginning.

Athletes are the most visible group at the Games. However, they **bear no responsibility** for the situation in which the IOC has maneuvered them into, and collectively they have not enough

weight yet to affect the IOC and the system of international sport at this point. At the beginning of the Games, it [became apparent](#) that the IOC views them as **actors in a play** that it is orchestrating together with China. Athletes are affected by decisions in which they were not involved; they are themselves **exposed to human rights risks in sport**.

No athlete must comment on the circumstances of the Games. However, **everyone must have the right to express themselves freely**, safely and without fearing any kind of disadvantages or reprisals. We have already explained this [position on athletes' freedom of expression in detail](#). Some have made use of their right. We understand if others have also censored themselves out of self-protection. **We are disappointed that the Games were not accompanied by continuous criticism from institutional stakeholders** such as sponsors or federations. A **position of the DOSB on the human rights responsibility of sport** in general and regarding the Games in China is **still pending**.

The Games were also overshadowed by the case of a supposedly doped underage figure skater. The international sports system has long been too lax and **inconsistent in its actions against the Russian doping culture**. It would be inconceivable that a doped athlete from Russia could win a medal at the Olympic Games eight years after the Russian state doping scandal. She herself was a **victim of a merciless system** and must now **pay the price of her instrumentalization by her entourage**. It is her entourage that must bear the blame, not the underage athlete.

Her case saddens and infuriates, because violence and inhumane training methods, especially in aesthetic sports, should not come as a surprise to any of those responsible. We support that the **age minimum to compete in senior events should be raised where advisable**. We welcome that the IOC now also [wants to hold this discussion](#) with the International Federations. At the international level, the IOC and federations urgently need to **implement human rights strategies** to proactively address the risks to human and children's rights in sports and **develop mechanisms to manage and redress rights violations**.

Federations **cannot act independently and are subject to conflicts of interest**. The IOC's and ISU's handling of the Russian athlete's case have shown that intervention is not or cannot take place internationally. By analogy with the current debate on safe sport in Germany, there is also **organized lack of responsibility in the sports system at the international level**. Therefore, in the future, **a global regime<sup>1</sup> for safe sport is also needed**, which safeguards the rights and protection of athletes, provides support for those affected and grants authorizations to intervene, investigate, and impose sport-specific sanctions. This is particularly important in international competitions, but also in cases where neither states nor federations adequately protect athletes at the national or regional level.

However, measures such as these are not sufficient to resolve the **inherent systemic conflicts** of international and national elite sport. **This system must no longer provide incentives for all those involved to exploit athletes for sporting success and in doing so violate their human and children's rights**. Athletes have a right to the best possible protection and a humane elite sport.

---

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, [FINAL REPORT OF THE CONSULTATION PROCESS TO CONSIDER THE CREATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL SAFE SPORT ENTITY](#) commissioned by FIFA dated October 2021.

This requires a profound cultural and structural change, which is difficult even in Western countries like Germany.

The IOC must **critically analyze** the award decision and staging of these Games and engage in an **open debate on the future of the Olympic Movement**. The International Federations must fulfill their **human rights responsibilities** based on the [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#). In the future, **red lines will have to be drawn** in awarding decisions whose criteria are to be based on human rights strategies. **The gigantism of the past must give way to credible sustainability concepts**. There must be a **genuine separation of powers in world sport**, with **independent arbitration and independent oversight organizations** that take consistent action against doping, corruption as well as misconduct, and stand up for the athletes' protection and rights. For this change, **democratic reforms** and a substantial strengthening and **co-determination of independent athlete bodies** in world sport are necessary. **States and sponsors** must consistently link their funding of sport to the implementation of these reform projects.

We hope that the Beijing Winter Games can at least be remembered as a turning point in the history of sport.

#### About Athleten Deutschland e.V.:

Athleten Deutschland was founded in 2017 to give Germany's elite athletes a real say for the first time. The association is committed to fundamentally change the German and international sporting system. Our focus is to represent, protect and empower our members.

We fight for working conditions which allow our members to fulfil their full potential as athletes and human beings alike. We stand for fair and clean sport, free from abuse and violence, manipulation, and mismanagement. To fulfil our mission, we collaborate with various stakeholders from politics, business, science, and civil society, as well as like-minded partners in Europe and around the world.

Athleten Deutschland is funded by the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community based on a resolution of the German Bundestag.