



Christian Solidarity International (CSI)

Zelglistrasse 64

P.O. Box 70

CH-8122 Binz

Switzerland

Tel +41 44 982 33 33

Fax +41 44 982 33 34

info@csi-int.org

www.csi-int.org

Mr. Thomas Bach
President
International Olympic Committee
Route de Vidy 9, 1007
Lausanne, Switzerland

December 20, 2023

Dear Mr. Bach,

We write to urge the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to prohibit Azerbaijan's national team and government officials from participating in the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris, while allowing properly vetted Azerbaijani athletes to participate as neutrals without the presence of their national flag and other national or religious symbols.

It is imperative for the IOC to take such action on account of Azerbaijan's:

- 1) Ethnic cleansing of over 100,000 Armenian Christians from Nagorno Karabakh; and
- 2) Military occupation of swathes of sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia;
- 3) Threats to expand the occupied territories to include the whole of the Republic of Armenia, which it calls "West Azerbaijan";
- 4) Incarceration of ethnic Armenian hostages. Among these hostages are prominent Armenian national figures and the internationally acclaimed philanthropist Ruben Vardanyan, whose global humanitarian efforts are surely known to you and other members of the IOC.
- 5) Institutionalized anti-Armenian racism that extends deep into the realm of sport.

Azerbaijan's ethnic cleansing of Nagorno Karabakh has been widely condemned throughout the international community, with the first Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Luis Moreno Ocampo, CSI and other non-governmental human rights institutions identifying this crime against humanity as an act of genocide.

CSI furthermore calls on the IOC to suspend the membership of Azerbaijan's National Olympic Committee as long as Azerbaijan's ultranationalist dictator Ilham Aliyev – the planner and implementer of the above-mentioned military aggressions and atrocity crimes – functions as President of the Azerbaijani National Olympic Committee. Chapter 4, Article 27, Point 6 of the Olympic Charter requires National Olympic Committees to "preserve their autonomy and resist all pressures of any kind."

We also note that last week, as chair of the IOC's Olympic Refugee Foundation, you presented its "Joint Sport Pledge" with the statement: "Sport is empowerment. Sport is health. Sport is inclusion. Sport is respect. Sport is solidarity. Sport is belonging. Sport is peace."

It is CSI's hope that these stirring words become a reality for the victims of Azerbaijan's ethnic cleansing of Armenian Christians from Nagorno Karabakh, most of whom have sought refuge in the neighboring Republic of Armenia.

We therefore invite you to meet with us and the former and current Human Rights Ombudsmen of Nagorno Karabakh, Artak Beglayan and Gegham Stepanyan – both now refugees – to discuss how the Olympic Refugee Foundation can best do so.

Rapid implementation of CSI's recommendations will greatly increase the prospects of Olympic Games in Paris that conform to the IOC's publicly proclaimed values of "Olympism." Well-established precedents exist for the IOC to take such action in the interest of peace and human dignity.

It would be a tragedy for the Olympic games in Paris and for the Olympic tradition if the IOC were to act selectively on political grounds in the case of Azerbaijan.

Sincerely,



John Eibner
International President
Christian Solidarity International (CSI)



Angélique Gourlay
Présidente
CSI-France

In Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council