

## China attacks US boycott of Olympics

Written by Taipei Times

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Protesters on June 23 hold up placards and banners as they attend a demonstration in Sydney to call on the Australian government to boycott the Beijing Winter Olympics over China's human rights record.

**Photo: AFP**

China has reacted angrily to the US government's diplomatic boycott of next year's Winter Olympics, as more nations said they would consider joining the protest over Beijing's human rights record and New Zealand announced that it would not send representatives to the Games.

Chinese officials dismissed Washington's boycott as "posturing and political manipulation," and tried to discredit the decision by claiming that US diplomats had not even been invited to Beijing.

The White House on Monday said that it would not send any official or diplomatic representatives to the Winter Games and Paralympics in February, "given the PRC's [People's Republic of China's] ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang and other human rights abuses."

"The athletes on Team USA have our full support," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said. "We will be behind them 100 percent as we cheer them on from home. We will not be contributing to the fanfare of the Games."

New Zealand Deputy Prime Minister Grant Robertson yesterday confirmed that his nation would not send diplomatic representatives at a ministerial level.

Robertson cited COVID-19 as the primary reason, "but we've made clear to China on numerous occasions our concerns about human rights issues," he said.

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In Taipei, Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokeswoman Joanne Ou (歐陽) yesterday told a news briefing that the government understands and respects Washington's decision to boycott the Games.

The government is still collecting information about the issue and would convene an interagency meeting before responding to the boycott, she said.

Presidential Office spokesman Xavier Chang (張) gave a similar response, adding that the government would protect athletes' rights to compete at the Games and provide them with all the necessary assistance.

The UK, Canada and Australia have said they are considering their positions, while Lithuania, which is facing trade and diplomatic hostilities from China over its growing relationship with Taiwan, last week announced that neither its president nor any ministers would attend the Games.

Chinese officials responded to the US announcement with outrage and also dismissal.

Former Chinese ambassador to the UK Liu Xiaoming (劉曉明) said the Olympics were "not a stage for political posturing and manipulation."

"US politicians keep hyping a 'diplomatic boycott' without even being invited to the Games. This wishful thinking and pure grandstanding is aimed at political manipulation," Liu wrote on Twitter. "It is a grave travesty of the spirit of the Olympic Charter, a blatant political provocation and a serious affront to the 1.4 billion Chinese people. It will only make the Chinese people and the world see clearly US politicians' anti-China nature and hypocrisy."

Liu's posts mirrored the language of several other Chinese officials before and after the announcement.

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Boycott calls have intensified as dozens of governments mull how to respond to Beijing's continued crackdown on ethnic minorities in China, its intervention in Hong Kong and other human rights issues.

Demands have further escalated over the case of Chinese tennis star Peng Shuai (彭帥), who was not seen for almost three weeks after posting online an accusation of sexual assault against former Chinese vice premier Zhang Gaoli (張高麗).

Rights groups welcomed the US announcement and called for other governments to follow suit.

Mark Clifford, president of the UK-based advocacy group Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong, said global leaders had been “shown the way” by the US.

“Work with the US and Lithuania and take up the only morally justifiable course of action by implementing diplomatic boycotts of the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing — or accept that you are endorsing some of the most horrific abuses inflicted upon a population by their own government in modern times,” Clifford said.

Additional reporting by Lin Chia-nan and CNA

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