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Sep 05, 2016 Human Rights, Sports

Why Do International Sporting Events Always Fail When It Comes To Human Rights?

By [Pratik Ph](#): Before and after any international sporting event, there are reports of widespread human rights violations. Even with ample pieces of evidence, this issue has never been addressed effectively. The 2016 Olympics Games in Rio is not an exception to this either. The Telegraph reported that ever since Rio won the bid to host the 2016 Olympics in 2009, there have been [more than 2,500 police killings](#). Amnesty International, on the other hand, confirmed that [more than 22,000 families](#) have been removed since 2009 in Rio. Now, the world is awaiting the next big events i.e. the 2020 Tokyo Olympics Games and the 2022 FIFA World Cup. And there are already reports of severe human rights violations, especially in the FIFA World Cup site in Qatar. [Amnesty International's report](#) that released this year, based on interviews conducted with the migrant construction workers, has recorded rampant human rights abuses, such as workers not getting their residence permits, employers confiscating passports and so on. The report also states that some workers endure excessive and often dangerous working hours, squalid living conditions, and also have their payments withheld. If we look at some incidents in the past, we would find many such examples. According to [this paper](#) published by Institute of Human Rights and Business, London, as many as 1.5 million people were displaced during the 2008 Beijing Olympics, while some 35,000 families were evicted from public lands for the Delhi Commonwealth Games in 2010. At the Beijing Olympic venue, at least 10 people were killed while some 17,000 workers had complained of workplace exploitation. International sporting events organised by the international sports associations like FIFA and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) capture global attention. In these events, athletes from different continents come together, representing the spirit of harmony and global interconnectedness. The [principles of Olympism](#) clearly talk about "promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity", whereas Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) talks about [values of humanity, equality, and destiny](#). Therefore, these incidents of human rights violations, go against the very principles that the organisations stand for. The question arises - who is responsible for ensuring human rights at all stages of these events? There is essentially a multitude of actors involved in organising an international event, ranging from the host country to local private businesses and



respected throughout the process - starting right from the bidding to the closing ceremony. I say this because it is these associations that set the rules; all other actors follow and deliver the targets determined by the host country. If we take examples of the preeminent sporting associations, like the IOC or the FIFA association, principles of human dignity, integrity and participation are integral to their constitutions. These associations also have their code of ethics that clearly stipulate 'ethical considerations' that host countries need to take into account. However, when it comes to implementation more specificity and coherence is required. There are some steps taken recently by the international sports associations but most of them are on papers and do not talk about how to implement them. For example, very recently in April 2016, FIFA came up with [a commitment](#) that stated that it shall further incorporate human rights in their bidding and hosting process of the 2026 FIFA World Cup. In a welcoming step, the IOC had come up with the '[The Olympic Agenda 2020](#)', in 2014, according to which the contract the IOC's host city adheres to, will include a set of criteria on human rights protections as well. Similarly, The Commonwealth Games Federation in its '[Transformation 2022](#)', talks about its commitment to 'adoption of an industry-leading code of ethics, which promotes integrity, respect, and human rights.' In order to effectively minimise instances of severe human rights violations, we need to ensure that these commitments are translated into practical steps. The first step should include integrating a coherent and uniform approach based on the UN Human Rights Declaration and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights in all its relevant operating procedures. Secondly, it is important that the international sports associations make it mandatory for the local organising committees to publicly disclose the information to protect human rights more effectively. Lastly, it is also important to establish an office to monitor human rights independent of the respective authority in order to keep the transparency. With these important steps, I think we will be able to effectively address and minimise human rights violations in international sporting events. The Guardian rightly puts, that in Olympics 2016, [Rio has missed the gold medal](#) for human rights, but the world has other opportunities to take corrective steps in, and we should not miss out on any other opportunity at any cost. _

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