

H. Res. 837

In the House of Representatives, U. S.,

December 8, 2021.

Whereas, on November 2, 2021, 3-time Olympian Peng Shuai went missing after she said in a since-deleted post on Chinese social media site Weibo that she had been sexually assaulted and forced into a sexual relationship with Zhang Gaoli, who was the senior Vice Premier of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) from 2013 to 2018;

Whereas PRC authorities have imposed a media and internet blackout of discussions of Peng’s case, and the words “tennis” and the surname “Peng” have been censored online within China;

Whereas, on November 14, 2021, after Peng had not been seen or heard from for 12 days, Women’s Tennis Association (WTA) CEO Steve Simon requested a “full and transparent” investigation into Peng’s allegations;

Whereas the hashtag “#WhereIsPengShuai” trended across social media worldwide, with the exception of the PRC where it is censored;

Whereas, on November 17, 2021, the WTA received a statement purporting to be from Peng, recanting her abuse claim and saying “everything is fine”;

Whereas in response, WTA CEO Steve Simon said the response “released today by Chinese state media concerning Peng Shuai only raises my concerns as to her safety and whereabouts”;

Whereas in response, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) said in a statement that it was “encouraged by assurance that she is safe”;

Whereas, on November 19 and 20, 2021, photos and videos of Peng appearing in her home, in a restaurant, and at a youth tennis event in Beijing emerged on Twitter accounts affiliated with government-run media, and at the same time, Peng has not spoken directly with the media or the WTA;

Whereas, on November 19, 2021, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said the White House is “deeply concerned” over Peng’s disappearance and seeks “independent and verifiable proof” of her location and condition;

Whereas, on November 19, 2021, Liz Throssell, the spokesperson of the United Nations Human Rights office, told reporters “. . .it would be important to have proof of her whereabouts and wellbeing, and we would urge that there be an investigation with full transparency into her allegations of sexual assault”;

Whereas, on November 21, 2021, the IOC said in a statement that its President, Thomas Bach, had a 30-minute video call with 3-time Olympian Peng Shuai, joined by a Chinese sports official and an IOC official;

Whereas the statement said that, during the call, Peng appeared to be “doing fine” and “relaxed”, and said she “would like to have her privacy respected”;

Whereas the IOC did not explain how the video call with Peng had been organized, given the difficulties other concerned parties have had reaching her;

Whereas, on November 30, 2021, IOC official Dick Pound in an interview with CNN defended the Chinese Government's handling of the situation and said the "unanimous conclusion" by IOC officials on the call is that Peng Shuai is "fine";

Whereas the annual report of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China for 2020 finds that gender-based violence in China remains a serious issue, and highly publicized cases of sexual assault continue to surface;

Whereas, on December 1, 2021, the WTA suspended all WTA tournaments in China and Hong Kong;

Whereas WTA chairman Steve Simon stated, "In good conscience, I don't see how I can ask our athletes to compete there when Peng Shuai is not allowed to communicate freely and has seemingly been pressured to contradict her allegation of sexual assault. Given the current state of affairs, I am also greatly concerned about the risks that all of our players and staff could face if we were to hold events in China in 2022.";

Whereas the PRC has repeatedly detained "#MeToo" activists in China and censored online and public discussion around sexual assault and harassment; and

Whereas athletes from the around the world are headed to Beijing for the Olympic games starting in February 2022: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the House of Representatives that—

(1) the case of Peng Shuai is directly related to broader international concerns around the freedom of speech and safety of athletes participating in the 2022 Olympics in Beijing;

(2) the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) role in legitimizing the People's Republic of China's (PRC) claims about Peng's safety raise questions about the organization's ability and willingness to protect the rights of athletes participating in the 2022 Olympic and Paralympic games in Beijing;

(3) the PRC would help reduce concerns about athlete safety at the Beijing Olympics by assuring Peng's freedom and safety and investigating her allegations in a fair and transparent manner;

(4) the PRC should immediately take steps to—

(A) provide independent and verifiable proof of Peng's whereabouts and that she is safe;

(B) allow Peng to engage directly with the WTA and the United Nations to independently verify her safety and explain her absence from public life since making her allegation;

(C) open an independent and transparent investigation into Peng's allegations against former senior Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli;

(D) publicly commit to hold sexual violence abusers accountable;

(E) cease all censorship of reporting and discussions of Peng's case; and

(F) allow Peng to leave China if she so desires, and prevent any retaliation against family members remaining there;

(5) by acquiescing to the Chinese Communist Party's narrative, the IOC failed to adhere to its own human rights commitments and protect the safety and free speech of Olympic athletes;

(6) the IOC's conduct has undermined the efforts by the United States Government, human rights organizations, the Women's Tennis Association, and other international bodies and individuals to secure Peng's safety; and

(7) in an effort to regain lost public confidence, the IOC should publicly call on the Government of the PRC to undertake the actions called for in paragraph (4).

Attest:

Clerk.