

Make the Olympics history: “Anti-Olympics one year to go! International Get-Together!”

Kumiko Sudo

For the six years since Tokyo won the bid to host the 2020 Olympics and Paralympics, the second time Tokyo will host the Olympics, we have witnessed how extrajudicial the Olympics are as an event. Anyone in the way, the Olympics push out of the way, they inflict a heavy sacrifice, and squeeze public funding and public space from us on an exorbitant scale. While there are more and more construction sites and Olympic emblems around the town, most of the mass media have fallen into subservience to Olympics sponsors. Olympics scandals such as the constantly changing construction plans of the new National Stadium¹ and the alleged bribing in the bidding process², have no follow-up reports because these issues are soon relegated to 'old news'. We have been facing crises that threaten our lives: violent eviction, removal of rough sleepers, continuous deadly accidents of construction workers, mobilization of volunteers in intense heat, and the widening gap of income and normalizing of poverty because of the priority given to the Olympics.

Furthermore, regarding the accident at Tokyo Electric Power

Company's (TEPCO) Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant³, the government is attempting cover up the damage caused by this accident by proclaiming the “Olympics for the reconstruction of Fukushima,” starting the torch relay from Fukushima. This is part of their policy of repatriation that totally ignores the evacuees. As in 1964 when the first Tokyo Olympics were held, it is only necessary to hold the games spectacularly, such negative memories will be easily modified and will be forgotten in history.

However, no one can erase the memories of those who have been unfairly deprived. The Olympics should be buried, as the cause of suffering of many people in the world. As we are opposing the Olympics, we have naturally met many people who continue to offer resistance to the Olympics from future and past host cities. Many of them are women and they all said they would like to come to Tokyo this July. With powerful support from translators and interpreters, we held a week of “Anti-Olympics one year to go! International Get-Together!” organized

with cooperation from each city. It was more powerful and empowering than we had imagined. More than fifteen members of “NOlympics LA” came from Los Angeles where the games are going to be held in 2028. Members of “Rio on Watch” and those of “Non aux JO 2024 à Paris” from the host city of Paris for the 2024 Olympics joined as well. We were happy to reunite with South Korean “Anti-PyeongChang Olympics Alliance” for the first time since two occasions in last year, on the site of the PyeongChang Winter Olympics in February and at the event of passing of the Anti-Olympic Torch held in Tokyo in November.

On July 20, one week of global alliance started with a study tour of the new National Stadium and Tokyo bay area, which was hosted by Tokyo-based anti-Olympics network “No Thank You to 2020 Olympic Disaster Association (2020okotowa.link)” which we are part of. When the week started, there were more than 30 participants from overseas—London (the host of 2012), Indonesia (a would-be candidate city for 2032), Toronto, cities in Malaysia, and Hong Kong. The full week of events were covered in *The Nation* almost daily by Jules Boykoff, a former professional soccer player who advocates opposition to “Celebration Capitalism,” and Dave Zirin, a sports journalist. On the night of July 24, one year before the opening day of the Tokyo Olympics, about 230 people participated in the Hottest Shinjuku Street Protest, chanting “No Olympics Anywhere.” At the same time, SNS was

flooded with the messages of solidarity from various cities such as Denver, Hamburg, and Calgary, which all successfully stopped the Olympics from taking place; as well as Vila Autódromo where residents protected their rights to reside against the Rio Olympics.

Events hosted by “Hangorinn No Kai (No Olympics 2020)” put emphasis on creating meaningful gatherings and collaborating with people from various countries. In the evening of July 22, we had a “night picnic” as a welcoming party in a park in Tokyo. Before the protest started on 24th, standing in international solidarity, we dared to demand the end of the Olympics on streets in front of Asakusa-Kaminarimon and the Tokyo International Forum in Yurakucho to oppose the festivity held there. Many of the passersby were drawn to a speech by an immigrant family living in LA, expressing their outrage and telling of their fight against eviction. A performance using masks by PyeongChang members, braving the summer heat, was also popular.

On the 26th, two workshops were held at Sendagaya Community Center with more-than-expected participants. In part 1, “Environmental Issues and the Olympics,” Masao Eazawa, from Nagano, was the speaker. He is a member of the Anti-Olympics People's Network which is a member organization of Anti-PyeongChang Olympics Alliance; in addition, a participant from Malaysia reported on the issue of illegally logged

tropical forests for the Tokyo Olympics. In part 2, "HOMES NOT GAMES: Housing Rights and the Olympics," by NOlympicsLA, participants broke up into small groups and had a discussion on the status of gentrification in each area, and then as a whole shared the contents with each other. Our comrades from Osaka, who are protesting against the closure of Kamagasaki (Airin) Labor Welfare Center, came all the way to Tokyo and supported a string of events using their knowledge of outside cooking by providing meals for us all. And at the final event "Make the Olympics History" on the 27th, there were reports on topics such as gender, Paralympics, school education, labor and militarization. An intercity panel discussion was held as well. Finally, we read out the joint statement which we had discussed among the participating cities. Make the Olympics History, we will!



Shouting out "anti-Olympics" slogans. International solidarity in front of the Tokyo International Forum in Yurakucho. (July 24)



Panel discussion: Make the Olympics History at Sophia University. Reading out the joint statement of anti-Olympics. (July 27)



The new National Stadium and Tokyo bay study tour. (July 20)

Kumiko Sudo, Hangorin-no-kai (No Olympics 2020)

Translated by Chie Michihiro

¹ It was decided that the new National Stadium which is to be the main venue for the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics 2020 would be designed by an architect Zaha Hadid, under the condition that the total construction costs were 130 billion Japanese yen (some 1.19 billion USD). However, because the estimated total construction costs ballooned to 300 billion yen (some 2.75 billion USD), Japan Sport Council—which manages construction and is under the control of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)

—revised its plan. In June 2015, Hakubun Shimomura, then-Minister of MEXT, announced the total construction costs were 252 billion yen (some 2.3 billion USD). Then mounting criticism made the Japanese government call off the construction plan. According to the new plan, the total construction cost was to be a maximum of 155 billion yen (some 1.41 billion USD), but it is said that most of the 5.9 billion yen (some 53.8 million USD) that had been already paid under the contract of the former plan would not be returned.

² In January 2019, it was reported that the French prosecutors had officially started to investigate Tsunekazu Takeda, then-president of Japanese Olympic Committee, for suspected bribery during Tokyo's bid to host the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. In the spring of 2016, the French authorities indicated that they were investigating suspicions of bribery, that the Japan's Bid Committee had paid 2.8 million Singapore dollars (some 220 million yen or 2 million USD) to the son of Lamine Diack, a member of International Olympic Committee (ICO) and a former president of the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF).

³ The Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident was triggered by the earthquake and tsunami that occurred off the Pacific coast of the Tohoku region on March 11, 2011. It caused a meltdown of the reactors and resulted in the release of radioactive materials.

NOlympics anywhere: A joint statement in solidarity

**Anti Pyeongchang Olympics Alliance
Hangorin no kai No Olympics 2020
No 2020 Olympics Disaster OkotowaLink
NOlympics LA
Non aux JO 2024 à Paris**

The specifics may differ in scope and scale, but the broad forces that the Olympics unleash wherever they take root are the same: the expansion of police and military surveillance, rampant corruption, crippling financial waste, environmental degradation, mass displacement, and the trampling of individual rights.

These outcomes are not the symptoms of an otherwise benign project. They are built into the Olympic movement by design and serve the needs and goals of Olympic organizers, who represent some of the most elite and powerful interests in the world. The games are extremely political events that make athletes compete under the banner of nationalism, while inflaming rivalries and international conflict. Despite the claim that the Olympics transcend the violence of wars and conflicts, the Olympics provide an excuse to exploit local residents; oppress the already marginalized; and bring benefit to the few selected wealthy, all of which are justified by the celebration of the victorious athletes who take the

stage. This is true regardless of where the games are situated, and it is untenable.

The stakes of disregarding urgent social and environmental crisis have never been higher. Access to shelter across the globe has not been so fragile in generations. The power technology grants to police and military forces has made our ever expanding surveillance apparatus all the more insidious. We sit on the precipice of ecological disaster. It is in this moment of global fragility that we can least afford the corrupt largesse of the Olympics Games, which exacerbates each and every one of the critical issues and crises that our cities face today.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) members know their project is in crisis. In recent years, wherever residents have been given an opportunity to express their opinion about bidding, the answer has almost always been « NO ». And today, we want to emphasize that the IOC's meager promises for reforming the candidature procedure and bidding costs are not enough. Until we remove the incentives for exploitation and profit that currently ensnare global sports, no reform will be enough. Until we remove the incentives that send politicians racing to serve the whims of the global elite instead of their needs of their constituents, no reform will be enough.

Instead of the Olympics, we want permanent and truly affordable housing for all our cities' residents, in healthy and sustainable environments, with access to jobs, education, culture, and community ties. Instead of the Olympics, we want a radical rethinking of existing surveillance and policing methods so that our poor, minority, and immigrant communities are no longer criminalized for existing and surviving. Instead of the Olympics, we want the power to decide what happens in our city in accordance with our real needs, not the speculative interests of the global financial elite.

Today, this vision for our cities is far from a reality. The crises of displacement, poverty, authoritarianism, fascism, environmental collapse and more are felt globally. In each of our cities and communities, we experience their effects on a daily basis. We recognize that the same forces, institutions, and individuals responsible for bringing the Olympics to our cities are responsible for driving each one of these crises. The politicians, corporate oligarchs, and real estate speculators who make up the global power network behind the Olympics will never offer meaningful reform because they directly profit from these crises.

So today we stand together; we do not merely oppose the Olympics in the cities from which we hail. We do not want the Olympics to find another home to spare our hometowns of Tokyo, Paris, and Los Angeles. We do not merely stand with our brethren from Rio and Pyeongchang, and with communities across the globe that have been affected by the games or have successfully resisted them in the past. We go further: we demand an end to the International Olympic Committee. Until the corrupt forces that drive these parasitic events relinquish control, we oppose the Olympic Games in any and all locations.