

This summer marks 40th anniversary of tragedy in which 11 Israelis were killed

Washington, D.C.— Today, Reps. Steve Israel (D-Huntington) and Richard Hanna (R-Barneveld) called on the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to reconsider its rejection of recent requests to hold a moment of silence during the opening ceremonies of this year's Olympic Games in commemoration of the victims of the 1972 Munich Massacre.

Rep. Israel said, "By rejecting multiple requests to hold a moment of silence in memory of the victims of the 1972 Munich Massacre, the IOC has blatantly disregarded the very ideals on which the Olympics are predicated—international friendship and fraternity. I am hopeful that the IOC will reconsider its decision and give the 11 Israeli lives that were lost the moment of remembrance they deserve."

Rep. Hanna said, "I hope the International Olympics Committee will reverse its decision to deny a moment of silence in honor of the victims of the Munich Massacre. A life can never be repaid but it can be honored. This gesture would respect and honor the 11 Israeli citizens who lost their lives. Moving forward, it would build confidence and trust in the hearts and minds of the international community that horrific acts like those of 1972 will never be tolerated."

Reps. Israel, Hanna and 21 other Members of Congress sent a bipartisan letter to Dr. Jacques Rogge, president of the IOC.

The cosigners of the letter include: Reps. Engel, Lowey, Turner (OH), Berkley, King (NY), Waxman, McCollum, Grimm, Nadler, Deutch, Beurkle, Schwartz, Burton, Thompson (MS), Kaptur, Olver, Richardson, Franks, Towns, Hirono and Rothman.

The text follows below:

May 31, 2012

Dr. Jacques Rogge
President
International Olympic Committee
Château de Vidy
1007 Lausanne, Switzerland

Dear President Rogge:

We are writing to express our deep disappointment that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) rejected recent requests to hold a moment of silence during the opening ceremonies of this year's Olympic Games in commemoration of the victims of the 1972 Munich Massacre.

On September 5, 1972, two weeks into the Munich Olympic Games, members of a Palestinian terrorist group Black September broke into the Olympic village where members of the Israeli Olympic team were staying. While some team members were able to escape, others were not so fortunate. After killing two team members, the terrorists took nine Israelis hostage and called for the release of 234 Palestinian prisoners in exchange for their release. At the end of the standoff all Israeli hostages were killed.

The Olympic Committee of Israel in conjunction with local Israeli Embassies has coordinated a memorial ceremony for the Munich victims during recent Olympic Games. While we commend the IOC for participating in these memorial services, your participation is simply not enough. We regret that these ceremonies have never been incorporated into official IOC programming.

The Summer Olympics taking place in London later this summer will mark the 40th anniversary of the Munich Massacre. To hold a moment of silence during the opening ceremony would send a clear signal that the global community will never forget the terrible tragedy that happened 40 years ago. But in rejecting such requests the IOC has sent a powerful message that this tragedy does not deserve the respect of a moment of silence and remembrance. It is a disgraceful message, especially considering the very ideals on which the Olympics are predicated- fraternity and international friendship. We hope you will reconsider your decision and send the right message to the world.

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