

# IOC Head Defends Russia's Handling of Games

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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International Olympic Committee head Thomas Bach said Monday that heavy security and criticism of Russia's anti-gay law will not detract from the Sochi Olympics.

Bach also reiterated his defense of Russia's spending on the Games, saying the money is going to the long-term transformation of the region.

Speaking at a news conference four days before the opening ceremony, Bach voiced confidence in Russia's ability to deliver a safe Olympics amid threats of terror attacks by insurgents from the North Caucasus.

"I have been assured before coming here and I am still assured being here," Bach said, adding: "We have to address this because anything else would be surrender to terrorists."

"This is last thing we all want to do."

Amid the controversy over Russia's anti-gay "propaganda" law, Bach announced that United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon will deliver a keynote speech at the IOC session this week before the start of the Games.

Ban would become the first secretary general to address the session, Bach said. The IOC has observer status at the UN.

Several heads of state, including U.S. President Barack Obama, German President Joachim Gauck and President Francois Hollande of France, will not attend the Games in what many see as a snub to Russia. The country has come under mounting criticism over its human rights record.

As the Games' opening ceremony approaches, the IOC released the final list of national Olympic committees that will be participating in the Sochi Games.

Athletes from 88 countries are set to compete in Sochi, a record for the Winter Olympics. The previous record was set at the 2010 Vancouver Games, where 82 national teams took part.

Among those competing in the Winter Games for the first time is the southern African nation of Zimbabwe, represented by Alpine skier Luke Steyn. Togo and Morocco have also qualified.

Three athletes from India will be competing as "independent participants" under the Olympic flag. Their national Olympic committee remains suspended by the IOC pending election of new officials.

A total of about 3,000 athletes will be competing in 98 medal events.

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