



## Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'Homme

ORGANISATION INTERNATIONALE NON GOUVERNEMENTALE AYANT STATUT CONSULTATIF AUPRES DES NATIONS UNIES, DE L'UNESCO,  
DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE ET D'OBSERVATEUR AUPRES DE LA COMMISSION AFRICAINE DES DROITS DE L'HOMME ET DES PEUPLES

International Federation  
for Human Rights

Federación Internacional  
de los Derechos Humanos

الفدرالية الدولية لحقوق الإنسان

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

via fax : 0041 21 621 62 16

Paris, 11<sup>th</sup> February 2008

### **Re : Regarding IOC's role ahead of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games**

Dear Mr. Rogge,

Six months before the opening ceremony of the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, I'm writing to you in order to request the intervention of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) before the authorities of the People's Republic of China, regarding their human rights record.

The International Federation for Human Rights has expressed, on several occasions, its serious concerns regarding the general human rights situation in China, in particular ahead of the Olympic Games. IOC is aware of serious human rights violations occurring, on daily basis, in People's Republic of China. We launched strong appeals against the severe repression of human rights defenders and the Chinese civil society, against the restrictions on freedom of the media and the wide application of death penalty without effective legal remedies as well as the persecution of religious minorities and political dissidents. FIDH has documented cases of grave violations in the field of economic and social rights, such as forced expulsions<sup>1</sup> and their disastrous impact on dozens of thousands Chinese citizens as well as the absence of effective actions for victims of AIDS.

In July 2008, FIDH and OMCT, in the framework of their joint programme *The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders* have addressed an open letter to Mr. Verbruggen, Chairman of the Beijing 2008 Coordination Commission, expressing their strong disappointment and disagreement for his statement made in Guatemala on July 5, 2007 regarding the role of political and social advocacy organisations ahead of the Games<sup>2</sup>.

In response to all these appeals, joined by several other organisations and citizen's associations throughout the world, the International Olympic Committee expressed its belief that the Olympic Games would be *a force of good*. You, personally, reacted by stating that they are not a panacea for China<sup>3</sup>. While we do not

1 See FIDH report « *China : developing at the expense of residents, forced evictions in Chongqing* », June 2007 : <http://www.fidh.org/spip.php?article4345>

2 Open Letter of the Observatory to Mr. Hein Verbruggen, Geneva Paris 13 July 2007 : <http://www.fidh.org/spip.php?article4481>

3 Reuters Press Release, Monday 6 August 2007.

disagree with this assessment, we firmly believe that indeed the Olympic Games do represent a major opportunity to promote genuine efforts of the Chinese authorities to respect human rights universal standards. In addition, as far as human rights are concerned, we strongly disagree with IOC's opinion that *over the course of the last seven years, there has been enormous changes that has taken place in China* and that the above mentioned issues are outside IOC's mandate<sup>4</sup>.

IOC is responsible for the respect of the provisions of the International Olympic Charter. It is IOC's role to uphold the Olympic ideals when it comes to a strong contradiction with the reality on the ground. For FIDH it's not a question of separating political and social agendas from a famous athletic event. It's just a question of protecting the very core values of the athletic movement, as the Charter itself declares that *Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on respect for universal fundamental ethical principles* and its goal is *to promote a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity* .

Furthermore, the Charter stipulates that *under the supreme authority of the International Olympic Committee, the Olympic Movement encompasses organisations, athletes and other persons who agree to be guided by the Olympic Charter* . If IOC wishes to reinforce the legitimacy of its role as a guardian of the Olympic Charter, it should address, as soon as possible, the crucial human rights issues; otherwise, the occasion to promote the spirit of Olympism in China would be lost.

Dear Mr. Rogge,

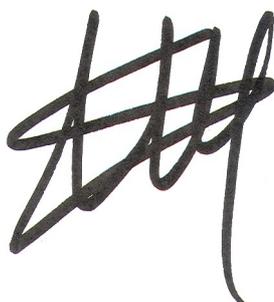
The negation, until now, of IOC's of human rights claims by stating that they are not related to the Olympic Games and the Olympic movement is not only contradictory to the Charter's provisions but also a sign of a flagrant hypocrisy. Several times IOC officials stated that history will judge IOC's decision to attribute the Games to China<sup>5</sup>. FIDH believes that history, together with Chinese civil society, will judge you and IOC for the absence of any effective action before being present to an opening ceremony at the very same place where thousands of people were victims of a harsh repression while fighting for democracy and the rule of law in their country. It constitutes a discredit not only for the Olympic ideals but also for the Chinese civil society aspiring to democratic change thanks to the Olympics.

FIDH sincerely hopes that the following months will be the occasion for IOC to undertake all necessary measures and intervene before the Chinese government calling it to improve its human rights record. I personally, would be willing to meet you at your earliest convenience in order to discuss this crucial issue.

Urging the International Olympic Committee and you personally, to take, at last, into consideration these concerns and translate them into action, I remain,

Sincerely yours,

Ms. Souhayr Belhassen  
President



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<sup>4</sup> Reply of Mr. Verbruggen to the Open Letter of the Observatory, Lausanne 19 July 2007.

<sup>5</sup> « Beijing decision defended by IOC » BBC Press Release, Friday, 8 February 2008.