



INTERNATIONAL
OLYMPIC
COMMITTEE

Minky Worden
Director of Global Initiatives
Jane Buchanan
Director, Europe and Central Asia
Division
Human Rights Watch

Joel Simon
Executive Director
Nina Ognianova
Program Coordinator, Europe and
Central Asia
Committee to Protect Journalists

Office of the Director General

wordenm@hrw.org
buchanj@hrw.org
jsimon@cpj.org
nognianova@cpj.org

Lausanne, 15 August 2013
Ref. No CDK/BJE/cee
By e-mail

Dear Minky and Jane,

Dear Mr Simon and Mrs Ognianova,

Thank you for your joint letter of 2 August to the six presidential candidates which we have forwarded to them. All six subsequently entrusted me with coming back to you directly, the reason being that they all approve of the IOC's position on the important topics you raised.

The IOC agrees with you that ensuring human rights and media freedom in the context of the organisation and staging of the Olympic Games is crucial. At the same time, it is clear that the environment of each country in which the Games are held is different and poses different opportunities and challenges. As the Olympic Movement is universal, the bid and host cities come from all corners of the world.

Whilst we clearly expect any Olympic Games, regardless of their location and including the next edition in Sochi, to take place without any form of discrimination, it is important to stress that the IOC's remit is limited to the scope of the Games. For instance, the IOC cannot influence national legislation and has to respect the law of any host country.

In addition, a host city is chosen seven years before the staging of the Games and, within this period, new legislative proposals may arise. The IOC will always take the position – in private or publicly – that if such new law may have an impact on the Olympic Games in one way or another, then it will work together with the Organising Committee and the government authorities to find a solution in line with the Olympic Charter.

This is exactly what we are currently doing with Sochi 2014 and the Russian authorities on the question of LGBT rights. Human Rights Watch has confirmed in meetings that such an approach has already brought about tangible results in the past.

With regard to your request for a specialised monitoring body within the IOC, we believe that there are many organisations, including the United Nations and human rights NGOs, that are far more qualified than the IOC to measure improvements concerning human rights. Since our work is specifically focused on the Games, we have to rely on experts and news reports for broader issues of human rights. At the same time, the IOC's Coordination Commissions that are set up for each edition of the Games closely monitor the various aspects of the Games preparations and visit the host cities several times a year. Human rights violations directly linked to the Games are reported to and followed up by them.

As discussed with you on several occasions, it is of the utmost importance for the IOC that the media can report freely during the Olympic Games. So far we have not heard of any cases directly linked to the Olympic Games that would give us a reason to doubt that Sochi 2014 can fulfil its commitments in this important area. Indeed, when we looked into the one specific case Human Rights Watch has raised surrounding press conferences organised by Sochi 2014, the complaint was found to be unfounded. However, as in the past, should you have any information on specific cases directly linked to the Olympic Games preparations, please share this with us, as we have not received any complaints from media or other organisations and can act only in response to concrete incidents.

I have also asked our six presidential candidates if they would have time to meet with you, but unfortunately, with such little time to go until Buenos Aires, this is just not feasible.

Thank you for your important work and our ongoing dialogue.

With best regards,



Christophe De Kepper
Director General

Cc: Thomas Bach, IOC Vice-President
Sergey Bubka, IOC Executive Board member
Richard Carrión, IOC member and Chairman of the IOC Finance Commission
Ser Miang Ng, IOC Vice-President
Denis Oswald, IOC member
Ching-Kuo Wu, IOC Executive Board member