

# Open letter to the Executive Board of the IOC

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## International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)

China/Olympic Games

Open letter to the Executive Board  
of the International Olympic Committee

Dear Members of the Executive Board,

**We are writing you in view of your forthcoming visit to Beijing next April. This represents an opportunity which the IOC cannot afford to miss this time.**

Since the People's Republic of China was selected to host the Olympic Games, the possibility of a boycott has been an issue. However, our Chinese partners consider that the Olympics may present an important opportunity to strengthen bridges between Chinese human rights defenders, democrats, citizens and the world. Boycotting the games would risk fostering nationalism, which could be instrumentalised by the Chinese authorities in their favour. It would also require the competing sportsmen and women to bear the burden of responsibility that should primarily rest with the IOC, states and the sponsors of the Games.

BUT, the Olympics cannot be held in Beijing unless a strong message and clear human rights demands are conveyed to the Chinese government.

The people of Tibet who denounce continuous attacks on their cultural rights and their freedom of religion and who protest against systematic repression are facing high risks in seizing the occasion of the Olympics to make their voices heard. This phenomenon is not new: for the past several years, anonymous citizens have been claiming on a daily basis the respect of their rights, protesting against forced eviction from their homes, unpaid salaries and corruption of public officials. Human rights defenders, journalists and workers' leaders are facing harsh repression for the mere exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and association. Repression is on the rise with the approach of the Olympics and it may further increase over the coming months.

In this context, your forthcoming visit to Beijing must be the occasion to raise your concerns about the increasing repression of all dissenting voices. The most recent illustration of this repressive policy is yesterday's conviction of Yang Chunlin who was sentenced to five years' imprisonment and two years' deprivation of political rights for "inciting subversion of state power." Yang's conviction is related to his open letter collecting more than 10,000 signatures: "We Want Human Rights, not the Olympics".

FIDH consequently calls upon you to raise the situation of Yang Chunlin and all other prisoners of opinion on the enclosed list (<http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/observatory-china.pdf>) during your discussions with the Chinese authorities.

We also reiterate our request for a meeting with you before your visit to China. I would personally

participate in such a meeting, on the date and at the place of your convenience.

Today, more than ever, we must keep our eyes open on what is happening in China.

Yours sincerely,

Souhayr Belhassen,

President of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)

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