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May 11, 2021

Thomas Bach  
President, International Olympic Committee

Dear Mr. Bach,

The Overseas Press Club of America represents about 500 journalists engaged in international reporting and editing, including many who have been based in China. We and the organizations listed below appeal to you to include press freedom issues in your dialogue now with the Chinese government as you prepare to stage the Winter Olympics in February 2022. We ask that you use press freedom requirements in the Olympic Charter, the Host City Contract and your media accreditation process in a way that promotes Olympic values, including free and robust coverage of China.

The working environment for journalists in China has deteriorated, as this [report](#) from the Foreign Correspondents' Club of China documents. If these conditions are applied to journalists covering the Winter Olympics, they will compromise the media's ability to do its job properly and professionally.

It is essential that the IOC not allow this to happen. Rule 48 of the Olympic Charter states that all decisions concerning coverage of the games rest within the IOC.

We also believe it is not good enough to allow only sports journalists into the country to cover a limited number of events in a controlled bubble. Press freedom of the sort championed by the Olympics is not limited to coverage of the actual games. The Olympic Charter states that the IOC will "take all necessary steps to ensure the fullest coverage by the different media and the widest possible audience in the world."

One of the responsibilities—and opportunities—of any nation hosting the Olympics is to allow the world to take stock of it as a society and an economy. The world recognized the emergence of Japan when it sponsored the 1964 Summer Olympics and it welcomed South Korea to the world stage in 1988. It was China's moment in 2008 to be in the spotlight, and at that time it

allowed much more press and internet freedom, due in part to the IOC's insistence that China play by the rules.

We respectfully ask the IOC to:

- Require Chinese government assurance of non-surveillance and non-interference with international journalists and their Chinese sources.
- Receive assurances in writing from Chinese authorities that international news organizations can hire local staff of their choosing, without seeking approval from the Chinese government or going through state-affiliated personnel organizations.
- Receive assurances in writing from Chinese authorities that international journalists may interview without interference whoever agrees to be interviewed. The Chinese government should not retaliate against or arrest sources after the fact and should establish a hotline for violations.
- Urge China to establish clear guidelines for processing times for journalist visa applications, and to extend journalist visas to online-only media organizations and freelance journalists.
- Urge China to create a dedicated point of contact in the Public Security Bureau, staffed by people who are conversant in the law regarding foreign journalists and who can speak with authority to security officials elsewhere in China.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues further.

Sincerely,

Patricia Kranz

Executive Director

William J. Holstein

Co-chair, China Working Group

**Supporting Organizations:**

Alliance for Journalists' Freedom (Sydney)

ARTICLE 19 (London)

Coalition For Women In Journalism (New York)

A Culture of Safety (ACOS) (Barcelona)

Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma, Columbia University (New York)

Ethnovision (Belgrade)

Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan (Tokyo)

Foreign Correspondents' Club of South Asia (New Delhi)

Foreign Press Association (New York)

Frankfurter PresseClub (Frankfurt)

Geneva Press Club (Geneva)

Global Journalist Security (Washington)

International Press Institute's North American Committee (New York)

James W. Foley Legacy Foundation (Portsmouth, N.H. USA)

National Press Club of Australia (Canberra)

Overseas Press Club Foundation (New York)

National Press Club Inc. of New Zealand (Wellington)

PEN America (New York)

Press Club de France (Paris)

Polish Club of International Columnists (Warsaw)

Press Club Polska (Warsaw)

Presseclub Concordia (Vienna)

Press Club in Lille (Lille, France)

Rory Peck Trust (London)

Samir Kassir Foundation (Beirut)

Signals Network (Paris, San Francisco)

World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) (Paris)