

Mr Richard Kevan Gosper
Chairman, IOC Press Commission
Milton House
25 Flinders Lane
Melbourne VIC 3000
Australia

Dear Mr Kevan Gosper,

We appeal to you as the head of the IOC's Press Commission, to keep your promises and ensure that the Chinese government allows full media access to Tibet now before it's too late.

The situation inside Tibet remains critical as protests continue and thousands remain detained or missing as a result of the crackdown that has been sweeping across Tibet since March. Tibetans are being subjected to intimidation and harsh suppression of religious and other freedoms, as Chinese authorities carry out house-to-house searches, detentions, "patriotic re-education," and force Tibetans to engage in other displays of "patriotism." Most recently, on May 28th, three nuns were arrested and a 21-year-old female protester was fired on by security forces in eastern Tibet, following at least six protests by nuns in the area throughout May that resulted in more than 80 arrests, 10 monks from the Shelkar Choede monastery in Tingri were imprisoned because they refused to denounce their spiritual leader the Dalai Lama.

The IOC has already failed to keep its promises of media freedom in China before and during the Olympics, and now you are allowing the Olympic Torch to become a tool for further military build-up and crackdown in Tibet. Every IOC Board Member has a moral obligation to stand up to China's politicization of the Olympics and find the courage to take action to prevent a humanitarian disaster in Tibet.

The work you have done to secure legislation in China providing for limited media freedoms in the lead-up to and during the Beijing Games is to your credit. However, I am deeply concerned that the International Olympic Committee has pressed ahead with plans to have the torch pass through Tibet - including parts of Yunnan and Qinghai - without taking any action to ensure that members of the press have free access to the region.

As you know, independent journalists were expelled from all Tibetan areas in late March in defiance of the temporary media regulations that you helped institute, and have not been allowed in since. Accredited journalists are unable to gain access to either the Tibet Autonomous Region or Tibetan areas in Yunnan, Qinghai, Gansu, and Sichuan.

Sending the torch into Tibet in this tense climate is already having negative repercussions for Tibetans and is likely to lead to bloodshed should any of them protest when the torch is there. For the IOC to allow the torch to pass through Tibet without even ensuring that journalists are given free access to the region would be dangerously irresponsible.

The IOC's commitments to media freedom are well-known, but ring hollow unless they are backed up by action that ensures media freedom in all areas under Chinese jurisdiction, including Tibet.

I urge you to use your influence with BOCOG to immediately ensure that the temporary media regulations are enforced and that journalists are granted access to the Tibet Autonomous Region and all Tibetan areas in Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan.

If the IOC refuses to stand up for media freedom in Tibet in accordance with its own commitments and China's own laws, what are they afraid, reporters will find there?

Thanking you, yours faithfully,