

International Olympic Committee
Château de Vidy
1007 Lausanne
Switzerland

Dear Committee Members:

I am writing to express my concern regarding the ongoing harassment and detention of lawyers in China.

In 2001, Liu Jingmin, a Beijing Olympic official, stated that the “Games are an opportunity to foster democracy, improve human rights and integrate China with the rest of the world.” An independent bar is fundamental to achieving that goal, and yet lawyers in China are prevented from doing their jobs through harassments, intimidations, beatings, and detentions.

The detention or harassment of lawyers in China for providing a zealous defense of their clients is of serious concern. More serious, however, are reports of physical attacks carried out on lawyers in China. In 2007, lawyers continued to be targeted for attacks. For example, Li Heping (李和平), a Beijing-based rights-defense lawyer, was kidnapped, beaten, and tortured with electric rods by a group of unidentified masked men on September 29, 2007, the weekend before National Day celebrations in China. Li was held in a basement outside Beijing until early September 30, when he was dumped in the woods outside the city. As he was beaten, Li was told to leave Beijing with his family or face the consequences. When he returned home, Li discovered that his license to practice law and other personal belongings were missing. His computer had also been completely erased.

I urge you to look seriously at the situation of lawyers in China, which remains dangerous. Hold China to its promise for a “Free and Open” Olympics by demanding the release of lawyers in China, like Chen Guangcheng, Guo Feixiong, and other lawyers in prison. We especially urge the immediate release of all individuals in who the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has determined to be in detention arbitrarily and in violation of international norms. These individuals include: Shi Tao, Chen Guangcheng, Yao Fuxin, Hu Shigen, and Li Chang.

Sincerely,