



Cultural Action

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Dear, Thomas Bach, President of the IOC;

On behalf of Korea's sports-related three non-governmental organizations such as 'Cultural Action', 'Center for Sport Culture', and 'Civic Network for Justice in Sport', and 5 civic, woman's, and human rights NGOs listed below, I, Choi Jun-young, the Secretary General of 'Cultural Action' write this letter. We would like to inform you about the athletes' human rights abuses in Korea and request your prompt action.

Last month, CNN reported on sexual abuse and violence against athletes in Korea ('The female athletes speaking out about South Korean skating's culture of abuse' reported by Paula Hancocks, January 20, 2019). In this report, an Olympic gold medalist Shim Suk-hee's experiences about persistent physical violence and sexual abuse have been reported. In Korea, as her story unfolds, social interest of sexual violence toward athletes has been rising. Former national team coach Cho Jae-beom, who assaulted Sim, was sentenced to one year and six months imprisonment on January 30. Separately, coach Cho was sent to prosecution (on Feb. 7, 2019) for alleged sexual assault. He is suspected of raping Sim at the National Athlete's Villages for several occasions for 3 years since 2014. Now, the government is in preparation of measures for sports reform.

Human rights violations against athletes are not a thing of the day yesterday. It does not discriminate sport events. This is happening quite often in almost all sports such as Judo, Archery, Taekwondo, and Swimming, as well as Ice Skating. It seems to be hidden, but in fact, almost all the players and coaches of the sport events are experienced and know, the parents of the athlete are well aware, and the officials of each event group are also aware. However, human rights violations were tolerated and even actively concealed in the sports scene, as winning medals in international games like the Olympics is the only way to gain social status and national rewards. The athletes are even being trained in the arena to accept these human rights violations.

The Articles of Korean Sport & Olympic Committee (KSOC) stipulate the obligation to protect the athletes and comply with the Olympic Charter. We all know that the Olympic Charter is securing human dignity and human rights, and we know that it must be given priority over anything else. Unfortunately, KSOC has not been able to cope with violence, sexual abuse, and human rights violations in sporting venues that have been open to the public since the past. KSOC is even suspected that she helped permanently disciplined coaches and officials could return to the scene.

The KSOC has the articles, regulations, and committees for the protection of athletes. However, the regulations and committees are not efficient and powerful, but they also serve as an excuse. This attitude of the KSOC means that the current problems can not be solved at all. That's why athletes can not get help anywhere.

The Government of the Republic of Korea has organized and launched the Sports Innovation Committee, and the National Human Rights Commission of the Republic of Korea prepares to investigate cases of human rights violation to athletes and sports. This is an effort to identify and correct the anti-human rights behavior in the Korean sports scene. But, the KSOC is strongly opposed to the government's efforts.

Mr. President ! We all appreciate that you are making every effort to achieve peace on the Korean peninsula. We also know that the Olympics can play an important role in the way of peace settlement. We hope that the KSOC will not be a stumbling block in your journey. We are requesting the IOC. We would like you to investigate the actual situation of human rights abuses in Korea, to point out the violation of the Olympic Charter of the KSOC, and ask for the necessary amendment to the KSOC that encouraged and engaged the human rights violation. If necessary, please make appropriate sanctions against the KSOC.

The KSOC is actively neutralizing the current social issues and government's authority on the basis of the principle that NOC should be free from the political pressure. There are some signs of rejection before the government began its efforts to innovate the sport in Korea. Therefore, please understand that it is difficult for us to correct the insolvency of the KSOC in Korea.

If you need more information, please do not hesitate to contact me and/or the 'Cultural Action' at the address below.

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We look forward hearing from you.

Best,

Choi, Jun-young
Secretary General
Cultural Action, Seoul, KOREA

A handwritten signature in brown ink that reads "Junyoung Choi". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

(List of participating NGO, a total of 8, alphabetical order)

Center for Sport Culture
Civic Network for Justice in Sport
Cultural Action
Korea Women's Associations United
Korea Women's Hot Line
MINBYUN - Lawyers for a Democratic Society Women's Rights Committee
National Solidarity against Sexual Exploitation of Women
Solidarity of New-spirited Skaters