



September 24, 2024

Dr. Thomas Bach,
President, International Olympic Committee
Château de Vidy 1007
Lausanne, Switzerland

(Cc: Mr. Christophe De Kepper, IOC Director General)

Dear Dr. Bach,

First, please allow us to congratulate you on your success in organizing the 2024 Paris Olympics. There were many touching moments, demonstrating the ideals of the Olympic objective and spirit.

We, the fifty-one undersigned organizations and individuals, believe that the opportunity to learn, practice, and compete in sports at the highest level should be available to all. We urge the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to conduct an immediate investigation into flagrant discrimination against Coptic athletes in Egypt and to enforce corrective actions if the Egyptian Olympic Committee is found to be undermining and operating in contravention of the Olympic charter, code of ethics, and values. Despite comprising nearly 15% of the Egyptian population, Copts are virtually absent from the Olympics and all international competitions, as they are prevented from competing and representing their nation.

Discrimination against Coptic athletes starts at a young age. Once a player is identified as a Christian, they are disqualified at nearly every level of sport. The few who arrive at higher levels are removed in the process of signing with an athletic team (especially because faith is a required field on Egyptian ID cards), irrespective of their skill.

Proof of this systematic discrimination against Coptic athletes is best observed in their complete absence from the Egyptian Olympic Mission to China and Brazil, in 2012 and 2016 respectively. There was a single Copt in the Egyptian delegation of 141 athletes to the Olympic games in Tokyo 2020 and one Copt of 157 Egyptian athletes competing in Paris 2024.

Flagrant discrimination against Copts in all sports is rampant in Egypt. Despite football's popularity worldwide and in Egypt, **no Copts** are to be found on the Egyptian National Teams in World or Regional Cups. To this day, not a single Copt can be found on either the national main team, reserve, or youth football teams. There are currently about three Copts among some 540 players in the top-light football clubs in Egypt.

One of the international NGOs in our community, Coptic Solidarity, reports contacting the IOC in 2016, first alerting you to this discrimination. They followed up in 2018 by submitting a complaint through the online complaints mechanism and sharing their newly published report “**Discrimination Against Copts in Egyptian Sports Clubs**”, and again this year by submitting a new complaint to the IOC's Integrity and Compliance Hotline, and sending a third letter to you.

The Olympic Charter prohibits discrimination of any kind and mandates that all members of the Olympic Movement adhere to its principles (Olympic Charter, Rule 2 and Principle 6). The IOC has the authority to investigate and sanction National Olympic Committees (NOCs) that violate these principles (Olympic Charter, Rule 27).

The IOC is the guardian of the Olympic Spirit and is bound by the Olympic Charter to ensure that all NOCs adhere to principles of fairness and non-discrimination. It is the responsibility of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to investigate and take appropriate actions against discrimination within an NOC. If a NOC practices religion-based discrimination against a large segment of the nation's citizens and ignores protests, the IOC has the responsibility to correct the situation, and has several tools at its disposal to that end. These include sanctions, which range from warnings and reprimands to suspension or even exclusion, and other measures to enforce compliance with its principles. The IOC is known to have applied sanctions against South Africa (1964- 1992) and Kuwait (2015- 2019).

To **negate or minimize** this issue of religious discrimination in Egypt, some argue that the absence of a percentage (such as 15%) of a national population in sports does not indicate that discrimination exists; rather, they counter that this segment ‘was simply not capable or interested in sports.’ Coptic Solidarity refers to the IOC's 11th Recommendation of the Olympic Agenda 2020, which aimed for 50:50 gender balance between athletes, to counter such arguments, using equivalent reasoning.

For the Olympics to succeed in its mission, the IOC is expected to forcibly engage its duty and take serious action in cases of overt discrimination. Only this level of international pressure will affect change for Coptic athletes.

To this end, we strongly recommend that the IOC conduct an immediate investigation and enforce corrective actions if the Egyptian Olympic Committee is found to be undermining and operating in contravention of the Olympic charter, code of ethics, and values. The same demand applies to other sports federations, especially those handling popular sports such as football.

We respectfully urge the IOC to warn Egypt that it will be suspended from participating in future Olympics unless the IOC can verify that the Egyptian Olympic Committee has taken concrete steps to:

- Create an online mechanism for athletes to report discrimination and have an independent, neutral, and qualified entity to investigate these claims in a timely manner. A policy of non-retaliation is critical to the success of a reporting mechanism.
- Appoint a contact person for diversity and anti-discrimination in Egyptian sports
- Create an action plan with measurable steps, to combat discrimination
- Make it a goal for Egypt's NOC that its participation in the 2028 Olympics will be conditional on having at least 10% Coptic participation, and to endeavour to facilitate gender equality, including increased funding for national women's sport federations.
- Ensure the Egyptian Football Association has instituted a quota of at least 10% for Coptic footballers at the club level and on the National team, reserve team, and youth team.
- Remove religion from sports clubs' admission formalities

Some situations require creative solutions such as you did by creating the IOC Refugee Olympic Team. We commend this innovative initiative and ask that you carefully review the situation of Coptic athletes in Egypt, along with our recommendations to enable them to participate in sports, at all levels, throughout Egypt and internationally.

Because Egypt is reportedly considering submitting a bid to host the 2036 or 2040 Olympics, your attention to this matter is of great urgency. We are available to discuss the situation of Copts and our recommendations in person or in a virtual meeting.

Sincerely,

ORGANIZATIONS

1. CAIRO INSTITUTE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS STUDIES
2. CANADIAN YAZIDI ASSOCIATION
3. CHURCH OF SCIENTOLOGY NATIONAL AFFAIRS OFFICE
4. COORDINATION DES ASSOCIATIONS ET DES PARTICULIERS POUR LA LIBERTE DE CONSCIENCE
5. EGYPT MIGRATIONS
6. ELMAHABA CENTER
7. EX-MUSLIMS OF NORTH AMERICA
8. FIACONA
9. FRIENDS OF THIEN AM AT THE EDGE OF THE UNIVERSE
10. FWM GROUP
11. GLOBAL PEACE AND LOVE FOUNDATION
12. HUDSON INSTITUTE'S CENTER FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM
13. IN DEFENSE OF CHRISTIANS
14. INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN CONCERN
15. INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN VOICE
16. JUBILEE CAMPAIGN
17. LAW & LIBERTY TRUST
18. MONTAGNARDS STAND FOR JUSTICE
19. MUSLIM WOMEN SPEAKERS
20. PARITY
21. PRAYER PIONEERS
22. SAVE THE PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS
23. SUSEK EVANGELISTIC ASSOCIATION

INDIVIDUAL

1. Adel Benjamin
2. Ashuriena Abraham
3. Lord. David Alton of Liverpool, UK House of Lords
4. Dede Laugesen, Executive Director, Save the Persecuted Christians
5. Dr. Fatin Guirguis, Professor, Polk State College
6. Frank Wolf, Former U.S. Congress Member

7. Mr. Girgis. F. Girgis, Coptic Solidarity
8. Hulda Fahmi, International Director, Set My People Free (Sweden)
9. Kamal Ibrahim, President, Global Peace and Love Foundation, LTD
10. Kaylee Fisher, Global Operations Director, IRF Secretariat
11. Lauren B. Homer, President, Law and Liberty Trust
12. Mr. Maher Rizkalla, Coptic Solidarity
13. Dr. Mark Eid
14. Dr. Michael Akladios, Founder and Executive Director, Egypt Migrations
15. Nathan Haddad, Coordinator
16. Nina Shea, Director, Hudson Institute's Center for Religious Freedom
17. Professor Paul Marshall, Baylor University
18. Mr. Raymond Ibrahim
19. Rev. Dr. Marian Edmonds-Allen, Executive Director, Parity
20. Sameeh Tadros, DDS, Tadros Dentistry
21. Scott Morgan, Co-Chair, African Working Group IRF Roundtable
22. Sharyn Runyon, Consultant, IRF Secretariat
23. Miss. Sonja Dahlmans
24. Soraya M. Deen, President, MuslimWomenSpeakers
25. Tanya Nguyen-Do, Founder, Friends of Thien Am at The Edge of the Universe
26. Thierry Valle, President, Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience
27. Walid Tamtam, Writer and Founder, United Christian Front
28. Y Phic Hdok, Co-founder, Montagnards Stand for Justice (MSFJ)