



INTERNATIONAL
OLYMPIC
COMMITTEE

To: Presidents of all National
Olympic Committees

Lausanne, 28 April 2008
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By fax only:

Dear Presidents,

Following up on the meeting between the IOC and the NOCs in Beijing, I am pleased to enclose, as announced by the IOC President, some guidelines on the interpretation of Rule 51.3 of the Olympic Charter (OC).

Each NOC should inform its athletes and all other accredited persons of these guidelines and assist them with regard to their interpretation and application.

The IOC will be very happy to provide further interpretation to the NOCs if need, in order to avoid any kind of misunderstandings or uncertainties. It is indeed impossible to publish an exhaustive list of all the different kinds of actions and attitudes permitted or not permitted according to Rule 51.3 of the OC.

I am happy to be at your disposal should there be any questions related to this matter.

With best regards,

Pere Miró
IOC Director, Relations with the National Olympic Committees

GUIDELINES ON THE INTERPRETATION OF RULE 51.3 OF THE OLYMPIC CHARTER

In relation to the various discussions held recently, in particular during the ANOC meetings in Beijing, this is to advise you that the IOC has received a number of queries from NOCs as to the conduct of participants, in particular athletes, at the Olympic Games. It is appropriate for the IOC to assist the NOCs – and the members of their delegations including the athletes – by offering the following advice:

1. Participants at the Olympic Games may of course express their opinions. Such expression of opinions and the conduct of participants should be inspired by full compliance with the Olympic Charter.
2. According to the Olympic Charter, the peak of the Olympic Movement's action is "the bringing together of the world's athletes at the great sports festival, the Olympic Games". The Games are about sport. They are not a stage for different kinds of political statements about issues such as armed conflicts, regional differences, religious disputes and many others. This is well known by all the athletes because it applies not only to the Olympic Games but to any other sports event in the world.
3. Rule 51.3 of the Olympic Charter provides that "no kind of demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda is permitted in any Olympic sites, venues or other areas". For the purpose of these guidelines, these areas are defined as every area for which an official Olympic accreditation is required. Compliance with this Rule implies avoiding the display of any sign, banner, poster, piece of equipment or clothing which could be perceived as any kind of demonstration or propaganda.
4. The conduct of participants at all sites, areas and venues includes all actions, reactions, attitudes or manifestations of any kind by a person or group of persons, including but not limited to their look, external appearance, clothing, gestures, and written or oral statements. As in all Olympic Games, such conduct must also, of course, comply with the laws of the host state.
5. The participants at the Olympic Games will have many opportunities to express themselves upon the occasion of the Games, whilst respecting the Olympic Charter, for instance by giving interviews including in Olympic Press or Broadcasting Centres or in mixed zones, statements and discussing with their fellow athletes, officials and others – to name but a few. The IOC relies on the common sense of all athletes and other participants in showing respect for the dignity of all fellow athletes, including those of the host country, and of all other spectators and attendees.
6. The IOC requests the NOCs to contact their athletes with a view to explaining the above and to responding to their queries. Everyone concerned, including NOCs, NGOs and the media, should also respect the personal rights of each individual athlete, which include both the right to express themselves and the right not to comment on political issues.

Should there be any doubt, the NOCs may at any time contact Mr Pere Miró, Director of the IOC NOC Relations Department, for assistance.