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February 6, 2014

Mr. Thomas Bach
President
International Olympic Committee
Château de Vidy
Case postale 356
1001 Lausanne
Switzerland

Dear Mr. Bach,

As a former Olympic athlete, I feel an enduring sense of pride and privilege to have been a part of an international event showcasing excellence and promoting tolerance, goodwill and peace on a global stage. Young people around the world look to athletes to inspire and motivate them to reach the highest rungs of physical achievement. Countries look to us to be model representatives and bring home hard won victories. We know what is expected and we work hard to live up to those demands. But athletes alone do not make the Olympic Games the crowning spectacle that it is today. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) sets the standards for the entire event, while the host countries contribute equally to the success, grandeur and character of the games.

The Olympic Charter states in part: “Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy of effort, the educational value of good example, social responsibility and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles.”

In the last few days I’ve learned to my great horror of the mass killing of street dogs in a misguided attempt to “clean up” Sochi in preparation for the games. I have also heard reports that the government hired a private “killing” company to exterminate what spokespersons called “biological trash.” Mass dog extermination programs as part of Olympic preparations stand in stark contrast to Olympian values. The socially responsible and ethical way forward is to adopt and implement easily available humane methods rather than hunting down and poisoning these animals as all the world watches. Just as Olympic athletes became role models for billions of young people, so do host countries’ preparations serve as examples for future Olympic venues to follow.

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Regrettably, this is not the first time a city has executed its dogs as it prepared to host the Olympics—but for the sake of the majesty and integrity of the games, it must be the last.

As a former Olympian and as a current board member of The Humane Society of the United States, I call on the IOC to urge the Sochi authorities to stop this slaughter and to make humane methods of dog control an integral part of future host selection processes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Thomas McMillen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

C. Thomas McMillen
1972 Olympian - U.S. Olympic Basketball Team
Director, The Humane Society of the United States