Dr. Clark,

I am writing in response to your request for documentation of Human Rights Watch's approval of research conducted by J. Elizabeth Cohen and Joseph J. Amon related to recently detained injection drug users (IDU) in Guangxi Province, China (manuscript 08-PLME-RA-0726R2).

All researchers who are setting out on field investigations supported by Human Rights Watch are required to submit a pre-mission memo outlining the aims of the research mission; the methodological approach to be taken and likely sources of information. The memo must explain security measures to be taken to protect Human Rights Watch's own staff and consultants, direct collaborators such as translators and fixers, partners on the ground – especially local government and non-governmental officials – and the individuals, especially witnesses to and victims of human rights violations, who provide testimony to our staff – from their association or cooperation with Human Rights Watch. The memo details methods to ensure the anonymity of individuals and protection of the information collected, including the coding of information given and the encrypted storage of sensitive testimony.

The pre-mission memo for the Guangxi IDU project was reviewed by staff in our Asia Division, including experts on China, by our legal and policy department, and by myself, and approved in May 2007, prior to the commencement of field research in July 2007.

In all of our work we put the protection of individuals as our utmost concern and we carefully consider how our public and private statements might impact upon the wellbeing of those we are trying to protect. I appreciate your dedication to ensuring that the research you publish meets the highest standards of protection for individuals subject to our work and can assure you that our internal review and assessment of the ethics of our work and the protection of individual subjects is both thorough and rigorous.

Sincerely,

Iain Levine

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