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Reaction: IOC Recommendation for Conditional Readmission of Russian Athletes

Berlin, March 28, 2023. Athleten Deutschland is disappointed by the expected recommendation of the IOC to the world federations to allow Russian and Belarusian athletes back into international sports under certain conditions. The IOC is committed to peace, respect for human dignity and harmonious development of humankind. It takes this decision at a time when Russia is continuing its war of aggression with unabated ferocity, claiming daily victims among the Ukrainian civilian population and athletes.

We consider the re-admission of some athletes under certain conditions to be wrong. In our view, this instrument is not suitable to stop the instrumentalization of sports and athletes for Putin's war propaganda. A collective exclusion would have been - after multiple breaches of the values and rules of the Olympic movement - a suitable and legitimate means, and without violating the prohibition of discrimination. The IOC's recommendations fail to take into account the rights and protection needs of Ukrainian athletes on the one hand and Russian athletes on the other.¹

The recommendation to exclude members of the military and security forces as well as teams can only be considered a minimal solution. After all, this should exclude the majority of athletes. Nevertheless, we are concerned that even the re-admission under conditions could push Ukrainian athletes in particular, the victims of this war of aggression, to withdraw from international sport.

The [criteria](#) for the neutrality of individual athletes ("Individual Neutral Athletes AIN") were specified. However, they are unlikely to prevent individual athletes from being used for Putin's war propaganda, whether or not they actively support the war. Moreover, the IOC has once again failed to announce an independent investigation into Russia's targeted influence on parts of international sport.

Overall, the recommendations leave numerous questions unanswered in dealing with Russia and Belarus in world sport, which is likely to cause further uncertainty among athletes. The national and international federations are now obliged to protect the athletes, to pay attention to the rights and protection needs of the Ukrainians, to press for the implementation and monitoring of the requirements and not to leave the athletes alone in the upcoming time. Among the questions we raise are the following:

1. The recommendations can be circumvented or implemented differently by international federations. How is harmonization in the implementation of the recommendations

¹ Prof. Patricia Wiater provided such an analysis in her [human rights expert assessment](#) for the DOSB. According to her, a collective exclusion of the Russian athletes is permissible and, despite unequal treatment, not to be evaluated as a violation of international prohibitions of discrimination.

ensured? How will organized irresponsibility between the IOC and the federations, as athletes have often experienced in the past, be prevented?

2. Can the recommendations presented prevent members of the military and security forces from concealing their affiliation? What happens when athletes receive government funding as civilians and no longer as members of the military and security forces?
3. How far do the criteria for active war support (in Russia) extend, for example, after international competitions?
4. How are the criteria for active war support of Russian and Belarusian athletes checked at home and abroad? Is there continuous monitoring, for example on social media?
5. How will the investigation and proceedings in such cases be organized? Will the international federations - as recommended - agree on a uniform independent arbitration panel? What if they do not?
6. How is the political instrumentalization of the remaining athletes by third parties for the purposes of war propaganda to be prevented - despite the neutrality criteria?
7. How will competitions between Ukrainian and Russian athletes be handled?
8. What happens if (Ukrainian) athletes boycott competitions against Russian athletes?
9. Are protests against the war and expressions of solidarity with Ukraine supported and/or tolerated by the IOC and the federations? Are they sanction-free and are demonstrating athletes protected?
10. The IOC has announced a monitoring process to oversee the regulations and conditions. Is this monitoring process transparent and is it reported to the athletes and the public on an ongoing basis?
11. What will be the IOC's criteria for decision-making on participation in the upcoming Summer and Winter Games? When will these be disclosed?
12. How can it still be verified that Russian athletes have been subjected to complete and independent doping controls in recent months and how are regular tests and their analysis currently guaranteed?
13. How much trust can still be put in the effectiveness of the Russian doping control system after Russia systematically deceived world sport and RUSADA still has not been reinstated?

About Athleten Deutschland e.V.:

Athleten Deutschland was founded in 2017 to give Germany's elite athletes a real say for the first time. The association is committed to fundamentally change the German and international sporting system. Our focus is to represent, protect and empower our members.

We fight for working conditions which allow our members to fulfil their full potential as athletes and human beings alike. We stand for fair and clean sport, free from abuse and violence, manipulation, and mismanagement. To fulfil our mission, we collaborate with various stakeholders from politics, business, science, and civil society, as well as like-minded partners in Europe and around the world.

Athletes Germany is funded by the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community based on a resolution of the German Bundestag.