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## **Response to the Recommendations on the Revision of Rule 50**

The recommendations to revise Rule 50 miss the core problem of the blanket restriction of freedom of expression. In the view of Athleten Deutschland, athletes should be able to peacefully declare their support for the values of our free and democratic society at any time. If the sanctioning practice in such cases would fall under the responsibility of the DOSB, we ask to refrain from imposing the corresponding sanctions. If necessary, Athleten Deutschland will provide legal assistance to its members.

Berlin, April 22, 2021. After yesterday's decision by the IOC on Rule 50.2, [our position](#) remains unchanged: Athletes should be free to peacefully declare their support for the values of our free and democratic society at any time. Peaceful protest must be possible – also in the arena. We respect the fact that the majority of athletes surveyed by the IOC have formed a different opinion. Athleten Deutschland concurs in so far that the sporting achievements of athletes should be honored appropriately and as undisturbed as possible.

However, human rights, such as freedom of expression, are universal. Freedom of expression enables criticism of power and protects particularly the stances of minorities. We therefore doubt whether a survey result can be the basis for a blanket restriction of freedom of expression. Such restriction should not be enabled and legitimised by a survey.

From our point of view, the IOC Athletes' Commission's recommendations published yesterday miss the core problem of the sweeping and far-reaching restriction of freedom of expression at sporting competitions. They suggest shifting free expression to other venues and occasions at the Games. Moreover, the recommendations partly contain specifications in terms of content that make a differentiated expression of opinion very difficult.

An amendment to Rule 50.2 of the Olympic Charter would have to include sufficiently specified, least-intrusive and duly justified restrictions on athletes' expressions of opinion. Of course, freedom of expression can and should find its limits in other fundamental and human rights; a violation of the honor and dignity of others through expressions of opinion, for example, is unacceptable.

We welcome the IOC Athletes' Commission's recommendations to bring more clarity to the sanctioning practice after a rule violation. We suggest that a violation of the rules should not be followed by sporting sanctions. In addition, we ask the DOSB to examine its role and possible responsibilities in the sanctioning practice of rule violations. If the DOSB is responsible, we ask that sanctions not be imposed on German athletes who exercise their right to freedom of expression peacefully and within the framework of the values of our free and democratic society.

Johannes Herber, CEO of Athleten Deutschland: *"The report makes clear that the IOC places a higher value on maintaining "political neutrality" than on the fundamental rights of individual athletes. As an organisation that advocates for these very rights, our assessment is different. Should German athletes decide to peacefully stand up for fundamental values such as fighting racism during the Olympic Games, they can rely on the legal support of Athleten Deutschland in the event of a sanction."*

About Athleten Deutschland e.V.:

Athleten Deutschland was founded in 2017 to give Germany's top-level athletes a real say for the first time in the sporting system. The association is committed to deep changes in the German and international sport system. Effective athletes' representation as well as athletes' development and protection are always at the heart of our activities. Together with our members, we strive for world-class conditions that offer them the opportunity to develop their sporting and personal potential. We stand up for fair and clean sports, free of abuse and violence, manipulation and mismanagement. To fulfil our mission, we cooperate with various actors from public authorities and political stakeholders, business, science and civil society, as well as with likeminded partners in Europe and the world. Athleten Deutschland e.V. is financially supported by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community on the basis of a resolution of the German Bundestag.