

Russia Joins U.S. and Iran in Bid to Save Olympic Wrestling

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Wrestling squads from a trio of unlikely allies — Russia, Iran and the U.S. — teamed up Wednesday in New York for grandiose World Wrestling Month celebrations as the sport seeks to recover its place at the Olympics.

Wrestling was cut from the program for the 2020 Olympics in February and must beat seven other candidate sports in a vote to fill the sole remaining spot.

Various reasons have been given for the International Olympic Committee's decision to cull wrestling, including low TV audiences, complex rules, poor management and regular allegations that major bouts have been fixed.

Since then, a Bulgarian wrestling official has gone on hunger strike, and several Olympians have returned their medals in protest.

Wednesday's event continues a broad PR push by world wrestling's governing body FILA, and sees an all-day marathon of wrestling around the world, starting in Japan before climaxing with the three-country tournament in New York.

At the event, wrestlers and officials wore shirts in support of the Wrestling 2020 campaign to reinstate the sport. Later in the month, the U.S., Canada and Ukraine will team up to hold a women's tournament at Niagara Falls.

Wrestling's cause has brought together unlikely allies, with U.S. and Iranian national Olympic officials among those to call for the sport's reinstatement. President Vladimir Putin, a judo fan, has also thrown his weight behind the campaign.

In the aftermath of the IOC vote to cut wrestling, the president of FILA resigned and has since been replaced by new head Nenad Lalovic, who launched Wednesday's grappling marathon.

The final decision on the Olympic program for the 2020 Games will be made by the IOC in Buenos Aires in September along with the announcement of the host city.

The sport has been included in various forms at every Olympics since 1904.

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