

Olympic Star Refuses to Compete Under Any Flag but Russia's

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Yelena Isinbayeva

World renowned Russian pole vaulter Yelena Isinbayeva will not be applying to compete at the Olympics as a neutral athlete, All-Russian Athletics Federation (ARAF) President Dmitry Shlyakhtin said Monday.

“She will not be taking part under any flag except the national flag of Russia,” Shlyakhtin said, the TASS news agency reported. It was an individual decision and some Russian athletes are prepared to compete under the Olympic flag, he added.

Russian track and field athletes are currently ineligible for international competition — including the upcoming summer Olympics in Brazil's Rio de Janeiro — after the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) decided to uphold the ban.

The IAAF initially imposed the ban on Russian athletes in [November 2015](#) following an independent commission by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). The WADA report recommended that the ARAF be declared "non-compliant" with the IAAF's anti-doping code

and be suspended from competition.

During a press conference on June 17, the IAAF council announced that individual Russian athletes can apply to the IAAF for reinstatement to compete internationally as a [neutral athlete](#).

Athletes will have to demonstrate that they have been subject to a credible anti-doping system and that they are not tainted by the Russian system, Rune Andersen, the independent chairperson of the IAAF monitoring task force, said at the press conference. Four athletes competed under the Olympic flag at the 2012 London games.

Russia has accused the IAAF of discrimination as the ban applies to the country's athletics federation rather than individual athletes.

There is “systemic doping rooted in many parts of [Russian] society,” the IAAF's Rune Andersen said. “Because the system in Russia has been tainted by doping from the top level down, we cannot trust that whom we call ‘clean athletes’ really are clean,” he added.

Two-time Olympic pole vaulting champion Isinbayeva announced that she is going to appeal the IAAF decision, claiming that it violates human rights. On June 15, The New York Times published a letter written by Isinbayeva titled “[Let Me Compete in Rio](#),” in which Isinbayeva urged the commission to permit her to participate in the Olympics. “I understand that the IAAF has to take strong action to eradicate doping, but I think it is not fair to forbid me or other clean Russian athletes from competing,” she wrote.

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