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Russian Doping Whistleblower Stepanova to Participate in Olympics

By The Moscow Times

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Yulia Stepanova

The International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) has allowed Russian runner Yulia Stepanova to participate in this summer's Olympic Games, a statement on the association's website announced Friday.

Stepanova will be able to compete in Rio de Janeiro as an independent neutral athlete under the Olympic flag. She will also be allowed to take part in other international competitions if given permission from tournament organizers.

The athlete is the first Russian to be cleared for the games by the IAAF, with another 80 applications still to be considered.

Stepanova has made a "truly exceptional contribution to the protection and promotion of clean athletes," the IAAF statement read.

The 800-meter runner was one of the first whistleblowers to reveal information on Russian sport's widespread doping problems to the Western media, taking part in one of two documentaries on the issue filmed by German television channel ARD last year. Stepanova had previously been caught taking performance-enhancing drugs, with her two-year ban from competition expiring in 2015.

The documentaries provoked a large-scale investigation into Russian sports by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), leading to a ban on Russian track and field athletes competing internationally. The organization later provided "some financial assistance" to Stepanova, Reuters reported.

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