

Russian Doping Whistleblower Stepanova Fears for her Life

August 16, 2016



Russian doping whistleblower Yuliya Stepanova **Geert Vanden Wijngaert / AP**

Yuliya Stepanova, the 800m runner who exposed Russia's state-backed doping program, has revealed that she fears for her safety after details of her location were exposed by hackers.

Hackers broke into computers used by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) to track Stepanova's exact whereabouts, WADA revealed Saturday. Athletes use the WADA computer system to record their location in order to better coordinate drug-testing locations.

The athlete is currently in hiding in the United States with her family after giving evidence on Russia's state-sponsored doping program. The evidence of Stepanova and her husband, a former anti-doping official, formed part of the [report](#) which saw the country's athletics team banned from this summer's Olympic Games.

"If something happens to us then you should know that it is not an accident," Stepanova said in a conference call to journalists. "The only reason someone would hack a [WADA] account is to find out your exact location," she said.

In a separate interview, she also revealed that “we have made plans with certain people that if something should happen to us they take care of our son.” The family has since relocated.

Stepanova has criticized the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) handling of the Russian doping scandal, claiming she was “certain” that a number of Russians using performance-enhancing drugs were competing in Rio. The IOC ignored calls for a blanket ban on Russian athletes at the Games, instead handing responsibility to individual sporting federations to determine individual athletes’ eligibility. A total of 268 Russians are currently at the competition.

Stepanova had hoped to compete in Rio, but fell foul of the IOC’s ban on Russian athletes with previous doping convictions. Athletes from other countries who have served bans related to doping are still allowed to compete.

Both WADA and the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) [have come out in favor](#) of Stepanova competing, but were overruled by the IOC. Stepanova was invited to the Games as a VIP spectator, an offer she refused.

The chair of WADA’s Athlete Commission, Becky Scott, has praised Stepanova’s contribution to clean sport, calling her situation “unacceptable, devastating and heartbreaking.”

“We need whistleblowers and informants more than ever, but if this is the price they have to pay it’s little wonder so few come forward,” she said.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2016/08/16/russian-doping-whistleblower-stepanova-fears-for-her-life-a54994>