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Belarus to Carry Russian Flag at Paralympic Opening Ceremony

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The Belarussian Paralympic team are set to carry Russia's flag at the opening ceremony of the upcoming Paralympic Games.

“As the head of the Belarussian Paralympic Committee, I cannot be silent either here or in Brazil,” Oleg Shepel said, the Sputnik Belarus news outlet reported Tuesday. “I have even asked that we carry the Russian flag alongside Belarus' at the opening ceremony in Rio. I am sure that in half a year or so, the Russian Paralympic Committee will be receiving an apology.”

The move is to show solidarity with Russia's disabled athletes, who were banned from taking part in this year's Games by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC).

The IPC made the announcement on Aug. 7 after damning reports surfaced of widespread,

state-sponsored doping within Russian sport. Their decision was later upheld by The Court for Arbitration in Sport (CAS) on Tuesday following an appeal.

The IPC decision has caused widespread controversy both in Russia and abroad, with top Russian officials calling the ban
"cruel and inhumane."

The International Olympic Committee faced similar calls to ban the Russian squad, but ultimately gave the decision on individual athletes' eligibility to their respective sporting federations. Russia came fourth in this year's Olympic medal table, despite almost all of their track-and-field athletes being barred from taking part.

The Paralympic Games are due to begin in Brazil's Rio de Janeiro on Sept. 7.

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