The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Official Slams 'Fascist' Paralympic Sporting Body

September 08, 2016



Athletes from Belarus take part in the opening ceremony. **Sergio Moraes / Reuters**

A Russian official has described the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) as "fascist" after the group announced that a Belarusian athlete who carried a Russian flag could face an investigation.

The Belarusian athlete unfurled the Russian tricolor at the opening ceremony of the Paralympic Games. Event☒ officials confiscated the flag as the team ☒entered Rio de Janeiro's Maracana Stadium on Wednesday evening.

The gesture ☒was a protest against the Russian Paralympic team's exclusion from the ☒Games by the IPC, who ruled that the squad could not compete following ☒reports of state-sponsored doping.

"This☒ is real fascism," said spokesperson for Russia's Foreign Ministry, ☒Maria Zakharova. "It's just disguised as something civilized and is ☒allegedly part of the law."

The IPC decision to suspend Russia from the Games has caused widespread controversy in Russia and abroad, with top Russian officials calling it “cruel and inhumane.” Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev is among the many high-ranking Russians who have called the decision "politically motivated."

"This ⊠gesture by the members of the Belarusian delegation was made in ⊠solidarity with the Russian Paralympians who have been excluded without any confirmation that anti-doping rules have been violated," the head of the Belarusian Paralympic Committee, Oleg Shepel, told the Belarusian state news agency ⊠Belta.

Members of ⊠the Belarusian team had
previously spoken of their intention to carry the flag,
despite the IPC's warning that doing so would be considered a "political gesture."

The IPC is now working to establish the identity of the flag carrier before beginning disciplinary procedures, the BBC Russian Service reported.

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