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Russian Flag 'May' Appear at 2018 Olympics, Says Chief Organizer

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Brian Snyder / Reuters

The chief organizer of the 2018 Winter Olympics said on Tuesday that Russians may be able to see their national flag hoisted during the closing ceremony.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) earlier this month barred Russian from competing in the Games in South Korea. The ruling does allow clean Russian Olympians to compete in February, but those athletes would wear neutral uniforms, and Russia's national anthem and flag would not be allowed.

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On Tuesday, the Russian Olympic Committee (ROC) said it would back Russian athletes who decided to go to the Pyeongchang Games under a neutral flag.

Lee Hee-boem, the top organizer for next year's Winter Games, was cited later on Tuesday by the South Korean Yonhap News Agency as saying that the decision was "fortunate."

"We expected Russian athletes to compete from the beginning," Lee said. "Even though the athletes won't be able to wear their national flag, they may be able to hoist it during the closing ceremony."

According to the Yonhap News Agency, Lee was referring to a slight opening in the IOC ruling: that the committee "may partially or fully lift the suspension of the ROC from the commencement of the closing ceremony" if the Russian officials and athletes fully comply with the IOC's requirements.

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