The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Putin Rooted for Nurmagomedov in Fight With McGregor, Kremlin Says

October 08, 2018



Khabib Nurmagomedov (Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency)

President Vladimir Putin supported champion Khabib Nurmagomedov in his fight with Ireland's Conor McGregor for the UFC lightweight title, the Kremlin said on Monday.

Nurmagomedov, a native of Russia's republic of Dagestan, retained his title with a submission victory over McGregor on Sunday morning. Members of his support team were arrested for an all-in brawl that broke out after the fight when Khabib jumped the octagon cage to attack one of McGregor's teammates in Last Vegas.

Related article: Dagestan: Russia's Wrestling Goldmine

"All media talk about he [McGregor] tak[ing a] picture with Putin," Nurmagomedov said in a press conference after the fight. "[Putin] just called me and said he is very proud of me and my win," he added.

McGregor, who posed for a photograph with the Russian president during the football World Cup final in July, called Putin "one of the greatest leaders of our time."

Embed:

A post shared by Conor McGregor Official (@thenotoriousmma) on Jul 15, 2018 at 11:08am PDT

The Kremlin spokesman said that Putin had watched recorded highlights of the fight while celebrating his birthday on Sunday.

"Of course he rooted for Khabib. He's a Russian after all, it's natural," the Govorit Moskva radio station quoted Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov as telling reporters on Monday.

After the fight, Nurmagomedov issued an apology for attacking McGregor's team, saying it was not his "best side," while adding that McGregor had "talked about my religion, my country, my father."

Gadzhimet Safaraliev, a Russian Duma deputy from Dagestan, expressed support for Nurmagomedov in comments to Govorit Moskva, saying that: "Khabib jumped out of the octagon like a mountain fighter jumps out of a tree on his enemy."

"He answered the insults against his parents and his motherland like a man," he added.

UFC President Dana White revealed that Khabib's winnings of $2 million from the fight are currently being withheld while he is under investigation, and that three people had been arrested in connection with the brawl but no one has yet been charged. McGregor was awarded $3 million.

The victory stretched Nurmagomedov's professional record to 27-0 and handed the Irishman his second defeat in the UFC, both to the same chokehold, before the chaos began.

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2018/10/08/putin-rooted-nurmagomedov-fight-with-mcgregor-kremlin-says-a63115