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Promising Skier Flees Belarus After Banned Over Political Views – Reuters

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Darya Dolidovich **Sergei Dolidovich / facebook**

A promising cross-country skier and her family have fled Belarus days into the Beijing Winter Olympics after she was barred from competing over her family's political views, Reuters reported Wednesday.

Daria Dolidovich, 17, had her International Ski Federation (FIS) code deactivated by the Belarus Ski Union in December as part of the Belarus Cross-Country Skiing Federation decision, the athlete and her father told Reuters.

Another Belarusian cross-country skier, Svetlana Andryuk, was also stripped of her FIS code on accusations of supporting the country's opposition.

"Daria has been stripped of her right to take part in competitions," Dolidovich's father Sergei told Reuters.

Sergei Dolidovich, a seven-time Olympian and coach, had taken part in protests against the

2020 re-election of Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko that was widely seen as fraudulent.

He said the family has fled to Poland, where the young skier hopes to continue training, because of fears of imprisonment on accusations of staging a demonstration and shouting opposition slogans.

“I'm upset, of course. It would have been simpler to stay a few months and finish school,” Reuters quoted Dolidovich as saying.

“I don't see the possibility of her continuing her career in Belarus,” Sergei Dolidovich told Reuters.

Dolidovich and Andryuk are two of several Belarusian athletes to be kicked off national teams or even jailed for participating in the 2020 election protests and voicing opposition views.

In 2021, Belarusian sprinter Kristina Timanovskaya was granted a Polish humanitarian visa after she was nearly forcibly returned to her home country for criticizing her coaches during the Tokyo Olympics.

The United States imposed visa restrictions on several Belarusians last week, citing Timanovskaya’s case and similar activities against perceived dissidents outside Belarus.

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