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Moscow Says Calls to Ban Russians from Olympics 'Unacceptable'

By AFP

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Russian Sports Minister Oleg Matytsin **Kirill Zykov / Agentsvo Moskva**

The Russian sports minister said Saturday that Ukraine's call to ban Russian athletes from the 2024 Paris Olympics, which has gathered support from several countries, was "unacceptable."

"The attempt to dictate the conditions of athletes' participation in international competitions is absolutely unacceptable," Sports Minister Oleg Matytsin was quoted as saying by Russian state-run news agencies.

"We see a blatant desire to destroy the unity of international sport and the international Olympic movement."

Ukraine has reacted furiously to the International Olympic Committee's announcement last month that it was exploring a "pathway" to allow Russian and Belarusian competitors to take

part in the Paris Games, under a neutral flag.

The International Olympic Committee's President Thomas Bach has described Ukraine's calls for a boycott of the Games as contrary to the "principles we stand for."

On Friday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky renewed his calls, saying that "the mere presence of representatives of the terrorist state is a manifestation of violence and lawlessness."

"It would be better to organise sport within countries and do everything necessary to make sport an ambassador of peace and build bridges between nations," Matytsin answered Saturday.

Nordic and some eastern European countries have indicated they would join a boycott.

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