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Over 200 Russian Athletes Change 'Sport Nationality' to Keep Competing – Reports

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Russian chess Grandmaster Alexandra Kosteniuk. **Artur Lebedev / TASS**

At least 204 Russian athletes have changed their sport nationality in order to continue competing in international events and avoid bans over Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the independent Kholod news website reported Thursday, citing publicly available information.

An athlete's sport nationality refers to the country they officially represent in their sport, which may differ from their actual country of citizenship. However, some of the athletes in Kholod's report did change their country of citizenship as well.

Chess players represented the largest share of those who have switched their sport nationality, with 141 athletes transferring from Russia's chess federation to those of other countries over the past year.

Alexandra Kosteniuk, a Russian chess grandmaster, announced that she would represent

Switzerland in competitions shortly after signing an open letter to President Vladimir Putin last March demanding an end to the war in Ukraine.

A number of other sports disciplines have seen Russian athletes changing their national affiliations, including figure skaters, equestrians, tennis players, and racing drivers, as reported by Kholod.

Israel has welcomed the highest number of athletes, with 25 former Russian athletes now competing under the Israeli flag. Serbia followed closely with 19 athletes, while Germany and France attracted 13 and 12 athletes respectively.

Kholod wrote that the actual number of Russian athletes changing their sports citizenship was likely higher, especially when accounting for younger performers in lesser-known competitive games.

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