The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Kyiv Says World Olympic Body Allowing Russian Athletes is 'Encouraging' War in Ukraine

By AFP

December 09, 2023



Russian Olympic Committee athletes carry a flag into the stadium during the opening ceremony of the 2022 Winter Olympics on Feb. 4, 2022, in Beijing, where Russian athletes competed under the acronym ROC, for Russian Olympic Committee, for the third time. **AP Photo/Jae C. Hong/TASS**

Ukraine on Saturday criticized the decision of Olympic chiefs to allow Russian and Belarusian athletes to compete next year as neutrals, outside of team events and if they do not actively support the invasion.

"The members of the International Olympic Committee Executive Board who made this decision bear responsibility for encouraging Russia and Belarus to continue their armed aggression against Ukraine," the Ukrainian foreign ministry said.

Athletes from Russia and Belarus have faced sanctions from a multitude of sports since

Moscow launched its assault on Ukraine in February 2022, but a number of sports have eased restrictions over the past year.

Moscow denounced the conditions imposed to take part in the Paris 2024 Olympic Games as "discriminatory" but that athletes who could fulfill them would go.

According to the IOC, 11 athletes — eight Russians and three Belarusians — have so far qualified by meeting the neutrality criteria for the 2024 games.

Related article: World Olympic Body Clears Russian Athletes to Compete in Paris as Neutrals

Kyiv said Russian athletes often represent "sports organizations associated with the armed forces" and that "some of them are on active duty in the Russian military."

The ruling means welcoming back sportsmen and women who "not only sympathize with the murders of Ukrainian women and children, but are likely to be directly involved in these terrible crimes," the foreign ministry said.

"The International Olympic Committee has effectively given Russia the green light to weaponize the Olympics," it added.

The committee said no athletes under contract with military or national security agencies would be allowed to compete.

It also said that no Russian and Belarusian flags or symbols will be displayed at the games.

"Moscow will not be raising white neutral flags... but will be demonstrating the triumph of its ability to avoid responsibility for the largest armed conflict in Europe since World War II," Ukraine said.

More than 60 Ukrainian athletes have qualified for next year's Paris Olympics.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/12/09/kyiv-says-world-olympic-body-allowing-russian-athletes-is-encouraging-war-in-ukraine-a83371