

Russian Gymnasts Granted 'Neutral Status' Refuse to Compete

By [AFP](#)

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Russian gymnast Alexandra Skubova. **Sergei Kiselev / Moskva News Agency**

The Russian gymnastics federation said Saturday that its gymnasts who have been granted "neutral status" have decided not to compete in international events in protest at the exclusion of others.

The Swiss-based world ruling body for gymnastics, FIG, in late March permitted 12 Russian gymnasts to enter international competitions as "neutral" athletes.

This status requires them to compete without any Russian emblems and to have not publicly supported Moscow's Ukraine offensive.

FIG initially banned Russians and Belarusians from competition when Russia launched its military offensive in Ukraine in 2022.

This has had a major impact on the sport where Russia excels.

On Saturday, Russia's gymnastics federation said in a statement that "all the Russian athletes... who have received neutral status have taken a decision to abstain from participating in upcoming competitions under the aegis of FIG."

It said they were motivated by "numerous groundless and prejudiced rejections" of other gymnasts, saying the federation "shares the athletes' position."

Contacted by AFP, FIG declined to comment. "The FIG does not comment on any AIN [individual neutral athletes] decisions," it said.

Russian Sports Minister Mikhail Degtyarev praised the athletes' decision, saying the gymnasts followed the "principle of one for all and all for one."

FIG ruled in 2023 that Russian and Belarusian gymnasts would be allowed to compete in international competitions as "individual neutral athletes" from Jan. 1, 2024.

But the Russian federation refused to comply with the conditions.

In February, though, its First Deputy President Vasily Titov told Match TV that it was applying for about 100 Russian gymnasts to get the status.

FIG president Morinari Watanabe visited Ukraine and Russia in March.

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