

International Paralympic Committee Lifts Partial Suspensions of Russia, Belarus

By [AFP](#)

September 27, 2025



President of the Italy's Lombardy region, Attilio Fontana, stands with the mascots of the 2026 winter Olympic and Paralympic Games. **PA via ZUMA Press**

The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) decided Saturday to lift a partial suspension of Russia and Belarus imposed after Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

The decision, taken at the IPC General Assembly in Seoul, opens the way for Russian and Belarusian athletes to compete under their national flags at the 2026 Milan-Cortina Winter Paralympics despite the ongoing war and occupation.

However, final participation in the six winter sports remains up to the international federations, which have so far maintained bans on Russian and Belarusian athletes.

"This decision means NPC Belarus and NPC Russia now regain their full rights and privileges of IPC membership," the committee said in a statement.

It added: “The IPC will work with the two members involved to put practical arrangements in place as soon as reasonably possible.”

The Russian Paralympic Committee welcomed the move, calling it “a fair decision” and “an example of how athletes’ rights should be protected without discrimination on national or political grounds.”

Ukraine’s Sports Minister Matviy Bidnyi condemned the decision, saying those who voted for it had betrayed “their conscience and the Olympic values.”

“We call on our European partners, who will host the upcoming Winter Paralympic Games, not to allow the flag of the aggressor state to be raised over the free and democratic space while the war of aggression continues,” he said.

He added that Ukraine’s “decision on whether to participate will be made collectively at a later stage.”

To be eligible, athletes must hold an active license for the 2025–26 season from their international federations in para alpine skiing, para cross-country skiing, para snowboarding, para biathlon, para ice hockey, or wheelchair curling.

The six sports on the Milan–Cortina program remain dependent on federations that have not reinstated Russian or Belarusian athletes, even under neutral banners.

“It may seem short notice, since many selection paths are already advanced,” said Marie-Amélie Le Fur, president of the French Paralympic Committee, in an interview with AFP. “To date, not all quotas have been filled by national Paralympic committees. When the quotas are re-established under the guise of universality, this could also open slots for the Russian and Belarusian committees, which have regained their rights. We must wait for the positions of the international federations and how the final selection process unfolds.”

Related article: [Feeding Olympic Athletes the Soviet Way](#)

The Russian flag has not appeared at the Paralympics since the 2014 games in Sochi.

In Rio in 2016, the IPC suspended Russia following a doping scandal. Russian athletes then competed under a neutral banner in Pyeongchang in 2018 and Tokyo in 2021.

The IPC excluded the Russian and Belarusian Paralympic Committees from the 2022 Beijing Winter Paralympics.

The partial suspension was adopted by the IPC General Assembly in 2023.

Some Russian and Belarusian athletes were later permitted to compete at the 2024 Paris Summer Paralympics under a neutral flag and strict neutrality conditions.

The IPC’s latest decision comes eight days after the International Olympic Committee authorized Russian and Belarusian participation at the 2026 Winter Olympics, provided athletes compete under a neutral flag and meet neutrality conditions.

“This is the exact same approach as in Paris,” said IOC President Kirsty Coventry, referring to last year’s Olympics where Russian athletes could take part only under a neutral flag and in individual events.

For the 2026 Games, the size of the Russian and Belarusian delegations now depends on the international federations, which oversee qualification processes and in some cases continue to ban their participation.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/09/27/international-paralympic-committee-lifts-partial-suspensions-of-russia-belarus-a90644>