The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Athletes Appeal for End to World Athletics Ban

By Reuters

September 13, 2026

Russian athletes have appealed to international sporting and human rights bodies to help end World Athletics' ban on Russian competitors. **Sergei Bulkin/TASS**

Russian athletes have appealed to international sporting and human rights bodies to help end World Athletics' ban on Russian competitors, arguing that more than four years of exclusion has deprived a generation of athletes of their careers.

In an open letter dated Sept. 10, seen by Reuters and addressed to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Athletes' Commission, the IOC Advisory Committee on Human Rights and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the athletes said the continued ban was having a devastating impact.

“For us, this is not an abstract legal or political issue. Athletics is our life,” the letter said. “Four years is a long time in any life. In an athlete's life, it can be the most significant years.”

The World Athletics Council reaffirmed its decision to exclude Russian and Belarusian athletes from international competition on July 3, maintaining sanctions first imposed following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Russian Athletics filed an appeal with the Court of Arbitration for Sport on July 9 challenging the decision and lodged a further appeal last month.

While World Athletics have been contacted for comment, federation president Sebastian Coe reiterated earlier on Sunday that the governing body's position had not changed ahead of the arbitration proceedings.

“This isn't about politics or passports. It's about the integrity of competition,” Coe told reporters at the Ultimate Championship in Budapest.

Coe said he recognized the importance of ultimately restoring full global participation in the sport.

“We want a full complement of people on a global level competing in our sport, and that has to be our overall objective,” he said. “Of course, it does.”

The Russian athletes argued that the federation's stance amounted to collective punishment and was out of step with other international sports federations, many of which have gradually reintroduced Russian and Belarusian athletes under neutral status.

The IOC provisionally lifted their suspension of the Russian Olympic Committee on July 8, marking a significant step toward the nation's reintegration into the Olympic fold ahead of the Los Angeles 2028 Games.

“Athletics remains one of the very limited exceptions where Russian athletes continue to face a full blanket exclusion,” the letter said.

The athletes said they had separately asked the Court of Arbitration for Sport on July 17 for permission to participate in the appeal proceedings, but had yet to receive a response.

They added the prolonged uncertainty was taking a personal toll.

“A legal or institutional process can continue for years. An athlete's career cannot,” they wrote.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2026/09/13/russian-athletes-appeal-for-end-to-world-athletics-ban-a93697