

Russia Fumes as Top Gymnasts Blocked From World Championships in Netherlands

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Angelina Melnikova. **Yasuyoshi Chiba / AFP**

Russia has accused Dutch authorities of denying visas to three of Russia's leading female gymnasts for the World Championships in Rotterdam, which kick off this weekend, and jeopardizing their qualification path for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

Reigning world all-around champion Angelina Melnikova, Tokyo 2020 team Olympic champion Viktoria Listunova and 2026 European silver medalist Anna Kalmykova have all reportedly been refused visas, the Russian Gymnastics Federation [said](#) Tuesday, citing the Dutch Embassy in Moscow.

The refusal notices apparently expressed diplomatic concerns, [stating](#) that "one or several Schengen member states consider the athletes a threat to their international relations."

"We view the actions of the Dutch authorities as a deliberate elimination of the strongest

gymnasts from competition for world medals and Olympic quotas,” the Russian Gymnastics Federation said.

The Dutch foreign and sports ministries [declined](#) to comment on individual visa applications, but clarified to local media that the refusals were unrelated to athletic performance.

The three denied athletes have faced [scrutiny](#) from Ukrainian sports authorities over their ties to the Russian military and public displays supporting the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

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Melnikova represents the military-affiliated CSKA sports club and has previously posted social media photographs featuring the pro-war “Z” symbol.

Listunova took part in a March 2022 pro-war rally with President Vladimir Putin and was previously denied neutral status by World Gymnastics over pro-military social media posts.

Kalmykova holds a sports contract with the Russian National Guard, according to Ukrainian officials.

Russia's Ambassador to the Netherlands Vladimir Tarabrin [said](#) he personally visited the Dutch Foreign Ministry to demand visas, but was presented with “utterly unconvincing arguments that defy any reasonable criticism.”

Russian Sports Minister Mikhail Degtyaryov [said](#) the Russian Olympic Committee will lobby to strip the Rotterdam championship of its official Olympic qualifying status.

The Oct. 17-25 World Artistic Gymnastics Championships in Rotterdam serve as the opening team qualifier for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Games.

Out of 61 members of the Russian delegation, 47 were [granted](#) Dutch visas, including five male and three female gymnasts.

World Gymnastics and European Gymnastics [lifted restrictions](#) on Russian and Belarusian gymnasts after the International Olympic Committee provisionally lifted its ban on the countries' Olympic committees in July.

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