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Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Latvia and Czech Republic to Boycott Russia at 2027 Ice Hockey World Championship

By Reuters

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FABRICE COFFRINI / AFP

Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Latvia and the Czech Republic will refuse to play Russia at next year's men's Ice Hockey World Championship in Germany due to safety concerns and geopolitical tensions, their national federations said on Tuesday.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) ruled last week to allow Russia to compete in International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) events again, overturning the governing body's decision to exclude Russian teams following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

"Norway will – based on the current situation and the information available to us today – not play against Russia at the World Championship in Germany in May 2027," the Norwegian Ice Hockey Federation (NIHF) said in a statement.

"The remaining games in the group will be played as scheduled. Our position that Russia should be excluded from all international championships as long as the war in Ukraine continues remains unchanged," the Norwegian association added.

Alongside political concerns, the organizations cited athlete protection as a core reason for the decision, highlighting potential security threats to their squad and coaching staff.

"For the sake of the integrity of ice hockey, we cannot see ourselves playing against Russia as things stand. It will end in utter chaos if we do so," Danish Ice Hockey Union chairman Henrik Bach Nielsen told Danish Media.

The Swedish Ice Hockey Association (SIF) also said its team would refuse to face Russia.

"Our stance remains firm, and together with several other countries, we were in agreement that we would announce this decision jointly," said Anders Larsson, chairman of the SIF, adding that it was unthinkable for Russia to participate in international ice hockey as long as the war in Ukraine continues.

Norway, Denmark and Sweden have confirmed they will play their other matches at the tournament.

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The Latvian Hockey Federation (LHF) said in a statement that it "firmly opposes" Russia's return to competition and that its position remains unchanged: "as long as Russia's war against Ukraine continues, Latvian national teams will not play against Russia or Belarus."

The Czech Ice Hockey Association said it was following suit.

"Czech ice hockey is joining the stance of other European ice hockey federations which have announced that their national teams will not take part in matches against Russia," it said in a statement.

The Czech government also said on Monday it was keeping in place a ban on short-term visas for Russians, which could affect the planned under-18 women's championship which the country is set to host in January.

The 90th edition of the men's World Championship will take place May 13–30 in Duesseldorf, Gelsenkirchen and Mannheim.

Strong opposition to Russia

The CAS ruling sparked fierce opposition from European hockey federations, host cities and sponsors, prompting threats to boycott tournaments, including next year's World Championship and the 2028 World Junior Championship in Finland.

The Finnish Ice Hockey Association said on Monday it would use all available means to keep Russia out of international competition.

"Our own position is that Finland will not play against Russia," Heikki Hietanen, head of the Finnish Ice Hockey Association, told Finnish broadcaster YLE.

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Officials in Turku said the city would relinquish hosting duties for the World Junior Championship if Russia is allowed to compete.

Commercial partners have also taken action.

AJ Products, the Swedish furniture firm that has sponsored the men's World Championship since 1989, announced on Monday it would withdraw its sponsorship of next year's tournament due to Russia's participation.

Finnish company Nokian Tyres said it would end its sponsorship of the 2027 World Championships if Russia is permitted to compete, adding that continuing the deal under such conditions would violate its corporate values.

The IIHF was not immediately available to comment.

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