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After Suspected Kidnapping Attempt: Protect Kristina Timanovskaya and Examine Possible Consequences

Berlin, August 2, 2021. Athleten Deutschland is deeply appalled by the alleged attempted kidnapping of the Belarusian athlete Kristina Timanovskaya. This would constitute a shocking culmination of systematic persecution of athletes by the Belarusian regime. Since the rigged presidential election in the summer of 2020, numerous oppositional athletes have been targeted by the regime. Dozens of such cases have been documented and reported thanks to the courageous efforts of the [Belarusian Athletes' Movement \(BSSF\)](#).

The priority must now be the protection and safety of Kristina Timanovskaya. Her case must be thoroughly investigated. Possible remedies for the loss of participation in the sporting competition must also be examined. We thank the BSSF, the IOC, the Japanese authorities, the UNHCR, athletes' groups as well as the international community for their quick intervention and the support they offered. Athleten Deutschland is in close contact with the BSSF and was already able to arrange legal support on site yesterday.

Together with his son Viktor Lukashenka, the dictator Alyaksandr Lukashenka is and was responsible for the repressive measures against Belarusian athletes as a politician and (former) sports official at the same time.

Maximilian Klein, Representative for International Sport Policy, therefore, calls for the examination of far-reaching consequences: *"If the allegations prove to be true, the IOC must urgently examine further sanctions against Belarus. In this case, an exclusion of the Belarusian regime from the international sport system and a suspension of the Belarusian National Olympic Committee may also be considered. Belarusian athletes should then continue to be allowed to compete under a neutral flag and be protected accordingly."*

Background on Belarus:

The courageous advocacy of the Belarusian athletes' movement and their commitment to human and athletes' rights played a decisive role in the IOC [imposing far-reaching sanctions](#) against the Belarusian National Olympic Committee at the end of 2020. According to our information, the BSSF has documented more than 70 cases of reprisals to date, some of which involved psychological and physical violence as well as imprisonment.

Since autumn 2020, Athleten Deutschland has been in close contact with the BSSF and has written open letters to [the IOC](#) and [German politicians](#) to draw attention to the human rights responsibility of sport in the case of Belarus and the overall situation of Belarusian athletes. In light of the recent events, Athleten Deutschland reiterates its support for the Belarusian athletes' movement led by the Belarusian Sport Solidarity Foundation ([BSSF](#)). The regime's repressive measures and human rights violations are not sparing sport either.

Background on the human rights responsibility of sport:

Many facets of sport have a human rights component. Its rules can conflict with universal human rights. These include extreme cases, such as the repression of athletes in Belarus, the persecution and execution of Iranian athletes, or human rights violations of groups of people connected to sport, as exemplified by the working conditions for the construction of sports facilities to host major sporting events.

The protagonists of sport – the athletes themselves – are also to be understood as a group that is confronted with regulations and structures that are problematic from a human rights perspective. The difficulties in establishing independent athletes' associations, the restrictions on freedom of expression on the podium and in the competition environment, the unequal treatment of female and male athletes, discrimination and racism in sport, the restrictions on self-marketing during the Olympic Games and the serious cases of violence and abuse of power against athletes are just a few examples.

Athleten Deutschland therefore advocates for a more intensive debate on human rights in sport. Together with a large number of sports and human rights organisations, [we demand](#) that the Olympic Movement coherently commits to respecting and implementing human rights in its sphere of influence, implements a comprehensive human rights strategy and finds a proactive way of dealing with human rights risks in the sphere of sport.

About Athleten Deutschland e.V.:

Athleten Deutschland was founded in 2017 to give Germany's elite athletes a real say for the first time. The association is committed to fundamentally change the German and international sporting system. Our focus is to represent, protect and empower our members.

We fight for working conditions which allow our members to fulfil their full potential as athletes and human beings alike. We stand for fair and clean sport, free from abuse and violence, manipulation, and mismanagement. To fulfil our mission, we collaborate with various stakeholders from politics, business, science, and civil society, as well as like-minded partners in Europe and around the world.

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