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Rekabi case: Ensure athlete's safety and impose sanctions

Athleten Deutschland calls on the IOC and world sport to stand up for the freedom and safety of Elnaz Rekabi and to impose sanctions against the Iranian regime. Human rights violations of athletes must be independently investigated. An honest debate on red lines and thus also on sanction criteria in the international sporting system is overdue.

Berlin, October 19, 2022. Athleten Deutschland is deeply concerned about the safety and freedom of climber Elnaz Rekabi. Iran has long been trampling on the human rights of athletes. Elnaz Rekabi's case continues the appalling history of multiple human rights violations in Iranian sports. These range from discrimination against women to reprisals against and killings of athletes. The IOC and international federations have tolerated such human rights violations for years. Their lack of action was and is unacceptable.

Johannes Herber, Managing Director at Athleten Deutschland, demands: *"The international federation and the IOC need to do everything in their power now to ensure Rekabi's safety and freedom. The cruel execution of wrestler Navid Afkari two years ago made clear that the Iranian regime also sets examples by punishing athletes. [Since then, we have been calling for Iran's ban from world sport.](#)"*

Sanctions should be directed against the political leadership and the national federations. Athletes should continue to be allowed to compete under a neutral flag if possible. This also means that FIFA must act coherently and consider excluding Iran from the World Cup.

In principle, the IOC must intervene when athletes' human rights are violated in connection with their sporting activities. In its [recently published human rights strategy](#), the IOC has finally acknowledged its overarching human rights responsibility as the leader of the Olympic Movement. These words must now be followed by actions and consequences.

Maximilian Klein, responsible for sports policy and strategy, emphasizes: *"Respect for human rights is a fundamental requirement for the integrity of sport and the values that the Olympic Movement claims for itself. After all, it is not least state actors who disregard human rights in sports and damage its set of values. [Russia](#), [China](#), [Qatar](#), [Belarus](#) and [Iran](#) are just recent examples. Sport must now engage in an honest debate on red lines and thus also on sanction criteria in the international sporting system. States and sponsors are needed to call for such a debate."*

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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