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Execution of Navid Afkari: Athleten Deutschland (Athletes Germany) Calls for Far-reaching Consequences

Berlin, September 15, 2020. The killing of Navid Afkari by the Iranian regime is a terrible act against humanity and an intolerable violation of the human rights of an athlete. This act cannot remain without consequences for Iran. Its government instrumentalizes sports for its purposes and has made an example of Navid Afkari, a protesting athlete. Iran is not the only country in international sports that disregards human rights, but with the killing of the 27-year-old wrestler Navid Afkari it has crossed a line.

His execution is the appalling culmination of repeated attacks on the values that form the foundation of the international sports community. The actions of the Iranian regime are fundamentally irreconcilable with Iran's continued membership in this group.

Maximilian Klein, Representative for International Sports Policy at Athleten Deutschland:
"The International Olympic Committee and the International Sports Federations must exclude the Iranian regime from the international sports system with immediate effect. The inaction of the IOC is unacceptable. Iranian athletes should continue to be allowed to compete under a neutral flag and should be protected. Sanctions must be directed against the regime and the political leadership. The Iranian Olympic Committee must also be suspended by the IOC."

Considering the events, the rules of the Olympic Charter provide sufficient grounds to justify the expulsion of the Iranian NOC. Expelling a NOC has happened before and would not set a precedent.

Other mandatory sanctions include the suspension of Iranian federations by the respective international federations and a ban of hosting any international sporting events in Iran. The Iranian regime and its representatives must not be allowed to gain positive public attention from international sports. The sponsors of the Olympic Movement must clearly distance themselves from the Iranian regime.

The elevated position of sport can make such atrocities, which are inflicted on countless people every day, visible worldwide. Sport and the athletes can be an important force to bring attention to such grave injustices and bring about social change. It is therefore imperative that the sporting system itself is based on human rights and that it protects those people who are in its sphere of influence.

At the intersection between human rights and sports, sanctions can only be one aspect. Athleten Deutschland proposes further minimum measures:

- IOC, the IFs, and the sponsors of the Olympic Movement must commit themselves to freedom of expression and to athletes that demand social change.
- The IOC, the IFs, and the sponsors of the Olympic Movement must condemn the death penalty, torture, and all forms of inhumane treatment of athletes and other affected groups who are part of the Olympic Movement or are within its sphere of influence.
- The IOC and the IFs must accelerate the development of their human rights strategy and swiftly implement it. It is long overdue that the strongly humanistically shaped Olympic Movement [commits](#) itself to the protection of human rights.

Athleten Deutschland welcomes the stance [of the EU](#) and [the German Federal Government](#), which strongly condemned the execution of Navid Afkari. It is now up to politics to find a wise approach to Iran in light of these recent developments.

Maximilian Klein adds: *"At the same time, we would like the issue of human rights in sports to become a stronger part of the foreign policy agenda. The German government has committed itself to internationally and universally recognized human rights and must also stand up for them internationally, which also includes advocating for them vis-à-vis the IOC and the IFs. Only if international sports make a binding and coherent commitment to human rights can human rights violations within its sphere of influence be held accountable both nationally and internationally. The autonomy of sports must not justify the decoupling of universally and globally applicable rights. To this end, politics must also stand up for sport and support the growing athletes' movement calling for far-reaching change."*

Athleten Deutschland calls upon athlete associations, athlete groups and athletes all over the world to join these calls.

About Athleten Deutschland (Athletes Germany):

Athleten Deutschland was founded in 2017 to give athletes starting for Germany a real say for the first time. The association is committed to fundamental changes in the German and international sports system. The protection, the perspective and the effective co-determination of the athletes are always in the center of attention.

Together with our members, we fight for world-class conditions that offer them the opportunity to develop their sporting and personal potential. We stand up for fair and clean sports, free of abuse and violence, manipulation and mismanagement. To fulfill our mission, we collaborate with various actors from politics, business, science and civil society, as well as with likeminded partners in Europe and the world.

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