

Athleten Deutschland e.V.
Friedbergstraße 19
14057 Berlin
E-mail: presse@athleten-deutschland.org
www.athleten-deutschland.org

Belarus: Athleten Deutschland welcomes announcement of IOC

investigations Berlin, October 8, 2020. Athleten Deutschland is deeply concerned about the current situation for athletes in Belarus, which has sadly culminated in the imprisonment of basketball player Yelena Leuchanka on September 20, 2020. Numerous athletes in the country joined the mass protests against the presidential election results in August and against the Belarusian dictator Alyaksandr Lukashenka.

We condemn the regime's reprisals against civil society in general and against Belarusian athletes in particular. We therefore express our solidarity with the demands of the Free Association of Athletes of Belarus, a group which now brings together almost 700 athletes and people associated with Belarusian sport.

On the occasion of yesterday's meeting of the IOC Executive Committee on October 7, the group had [sent a letter](#) to the IOC Executive Committee informing it of the far-reaching human rights violations against Belarusian athletes by the regime in almost two dozen documented cases. According to the letter, athletes were tortured, beaten, and arrested. Athletes who opposed the regime were also sanctioned with dismissals, suspended from competitions and sports, and punished with other forms of systematic discrimination and violence.

Athleten Deutschland welcomes Thomas Bach's announcement to stand up for the Belarusian athletes and investigate more thoroughly whether the National Olympic Committee (NOC) is fulfilling its obligations to its athletes as stipulated in the Olympic Charter. Belarusian sport is under the de facto control of the dictator, who is also the president of the Belarusian NOC. His son, Wiktar Lukashenka, also serves as vice-president of the NOC and is directly affiliated to the repressive state apparatus in his capacity as his father's security advisor and important member of the National Security Council.

Maximilian Klein, Representative for International Sports Policy, points out: *"Both are sports officials and political potentates at the same time and are responsible for the reprisals against the Belarusian athletes, which are undoubtedly politically motivated. The IOC is directly responsible for the National Olympic Committee in Belarus and must now react quickly. Without question, the expectation towards the Olympic Movement cannot be to stop human rights violations and injustice everywhere in the world. Nevertheless, sport has a human rights responsibility in its sphere of influence, which must be backed not only by words but also by actions."*

Unfortunately, the serious human rights violations of athletes in Belarus are part of a multitude of

human rights violations of athletes and individuals in the sphere of sport all over the world, also in Germany. Athleten Deutschland is therefore committed to a stronger focus on human rights in sport and is keen to start a conversation on this highly relevant topic in Germany as well. In line with a variety of sports and human rights organizations, we call on the Olympic Movement to make a coherent commitment to respect and implement human rights in its sphere of influence. To this end, the support of public authorities and sponsors is also needed.

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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