



Mr Thomas Bach  
President of the International Olympic Committee  
Château de Vidy - C.P. 356  
CH-1007 Lausanne/Switzerland

October 23, 2020

## The Open Letter

Dear Mr Bach,

Following brutal suppression of peaceful protests by the police forces controlled by Alexander Lukashenka, **about 900 Belarusian athletes have signed an open letter demanding that Mr. Lukashenka stops violence and ensures that the representatives of the sports community are not persecuted.**

Belarusian sports authorities have reacted by pressuring these athletes to recall their signatures. Those who have refused to do so have been persecuted, dismissed from their jobs or denied training opportunities. The National Olympic Committee of Belarus, that is chaired by Alexander Lukashenka himself, did nothing to protect the athletes from violence and discrimination. As of the date of this Letter, 15 Belarusian athletes have served prison terms for taking part in peaceful protests, 4 athletes remain behind the bars and over 20 other athletes have been banned from training in Belarus. Belarusian authorities are explicitly targeting the athletes who have signed the open letter.

We have greatly appreciated the statement issued by the IOC on October 7th, which expressed strong concern over the complaints from Belarusian athletes and any alleged undue politically motivated pressure exerted by Belarusian sports officials. This statement has shown the readiness of the IOC to stand for the values of the Olympic Charter and has been a great encouragement to the Belarusian athletes. However, this statement has been ignored by the Belarusian authorities, and the repressions against Belarusian sports community have continued to escalate. The National Olympic Committee of Belarus seems confident that any violations of the Olympic Charter committed by it will go unnoticed.

**Therefore, the Belarusian Sport Solidarity Foundation and the Association RAZAM.CH are now appealing for the urgent action by the IOC.**

Specifically, we are calling on the IOC **to accelerate its investigation of the facts of discrimination and violence against Belarusian athletes.** As a part of such investigation, we are asking the IOC to work closely with the Belarusian Sport Solidarity Foundation and, as a matter of urgency, to arrange a meeting between the IOC leadership and the repressed Belarusian athletes to jointly discuss and review all major documented cases of politically motivated persecution of Belarusian sport representatives.

Given the fact that the National Olympic Committee of Belarus is not autonomous from politics but rather encourages continuous violence (both through the actions of its chair Alexander

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Lukashenka and through turning its blind eye to the ongoing multiple cases of discrimination and violence), which is a clear breach of Article 27 of the Olympic Charter, **we are calling on the IOC and its Executive Board to trigger, without further delay, the measures provided for by Article 59(1.4)(a) and to suspend the National Olympic Committee of Belarus and any funding to it for as long as the breach of the Olympic Charter in Belarus continues.**

We are also appealing to the IOC for **help (including within the framework of the Olympic solidarity programs) to those Belarusian athletes, who have, for political reasons, been denied the opportunities to train in Belarus or have been unfairly suspended from the sports events or forced out of the country.** The IOC could help by facilitating communication with international sports federations to ensure that these athletes can compete in major sports events and get to participate in the qualifications to the Olympics and consequently in the Olympics as well, under the neutral flag if required.

Moreover, we believe that in the current situation of open violence towards athletes triggered by Belarusian authorities, no sport event in Belarus can run in the spirit of freedom and honest competition. Therefore, we request that **all planned international qualifying sport events and competitions are relocated from the territory of the Republic of Belarus** and take place elsewhere, for as long as violence and discrimination of athletes continues.

We would like to thank the IOC for its continuous effort to strengthen the unity of athletes, promote political neutrality and preserve autonomy in sport. We look forward to your prompt response and to further cooperating with the IOC for the achievement of the Olympic values and restoration of the right to sport as a fundamental human right in Belarus.

Yours faithfully,

Belarusian Sport Solidarity Foundation

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