

Mr Thomas Bach
President of the International Olympic Committee

Executive Board
of the International Olympic Committee

Athletes' commission of the International Olympic
Committee

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Minsk, 5 October 2020

On 5 pages

Dear Mr Bach,

Distinguished Members of the Executive Board of the International Olympic Committee,

Dear colleagues of the Athletes' commission of the International Olympic Committee,

We, Belarusian athletes, are addressing you with a statement that the National Olympic Committee of Belarus has violated the principles of the Olympic Charter.

According to Article 27 (6) of the Olympic Charter, the National Olympic Committee must maintain its autonomy and resist any pressure of any kind, including, but not limited to, political, legal, religious or economic pressure that may prevent it from complying with the Olympic Charter. In accordance with paragraph 2.5 of the same article, the National Olympic Committee must act against any form of discrimination and violence in sport.

Despite this, the National Olympic Committee of Belarus does not pay any attention to the fact that violence, torture, threats and discrimination, including against athletes, has not stopped in the country over past two months.

Many athletes have been tortured, beaten and arrested. Those who disagree with the authorities' policies and the use of force are subject to various forms of psychological violence and discrimination in sporting activities by state authorities, including the NOC and the Ministry of Sport of Belarus: dismissals, suspension from competition, banning national teams, constant psychological pressure and other forms of personal violence. The list of fact of discrimination of sportsmen is attached to this letter (see Annex 1).

On 30 September 2020, two-time Olympian basketball player Yelena Leuchanka, who was to sign the letter, was arrested and sentenced to 15 days in prison for participating in a peaceful protest demonstration. Yelena was detained at the airport when she intended to fly abroad for treatment to a sports clinic. Apparently, due to an untreated injury, she will have to skip this season. Yelena was charged based on the photos on social networks as well as the testimony

of the police witness who did not even appear in court. Above all she was denied in the access to her lawyer.

The list of sportsmen discrimination facts is attached to this letter (see Annex 1). Please also kindly examine the open letter of representatives of the sports industry of Belarus, which **more than 680** athletes from our country have signed (see Annex 2).

The current President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko is fully responsible for what is happening in Belarus. It should be noted that for many years he has been watching the NOC of Belarus. The first vice-president of the NOC since 2019 is Alexander Lukashenko's son, Viktor Lukashenko, who from 2005 to the present day has been working as Assistant to the President of Belarus for National Security; since 2007 he has been a member of the Security Council of Belarus, i.e. he practically heads the law enforcement and security services of the country.

Thus, the NOC, designed to carry the ideas of Olympism in the country, has become an accomplice of disenfranchisement and discrimination and is headed by people, primarily responsible for what is happening now in Belarus.

Such leadership and inaction by the NOC compromise the spirit of Olympism and the implementation of the ideas and objectives of the Olympic Charter in Belarus. We believe that the International Olympic Committee cannot ignore this situation and should extend a helping hand to sportsmen and all people of good will in Belarus.

Olympic family in general claims that sport should restrain from political activity. We fully support such approach but in our situation it's really impossible to differentiate and to stay neutral. Problems Belarusian athletes are facing now is a result of deep internal political crisis.

On 9 August 2020, presidential elections were held. They were held with massive gross violations and falsifications, which were documented by numerous independent observers.

The election results were not recognised by most countries, including the USA and EU member states. As a result of an emergency meeting of the European Council held on 19 August 2020, the results of the elections in Belarus were found to be rigged, with regard to persons involved in violence and repression; it was decided to prepare for the introduction of sanctions by the European Union.

Even more importantly, the election results were not recognised by the Belarusian people. In response to the peaceful expression of simplicity and the demand for repeat elections, the authorities used military equipment, special means (light-noise grenades, gas, rubber and plastic bullets).

Considering the expressed above and in view of articles 2 (5), 2 (6), 2 (11), 2 (18), 15 (3), 22, 27, 59 (1.4) we respectfully ask the Executive Committee to:

- 1) make proper investigation of facts of discrimination and violence against sportsmen in Belarus, and

- 2) take the measures provided for in the Olympic Charter regarding the NOC of Belarus, in particular – suspend the financing membership of NOC of Belarus until the normalisation of the situation.
- 3) To help athletes who have suffered from illegal reprisals to participate in sporting events under the auspices of the IOC in case they have been unfairly suspended from such events by the NOC of Belarus.

We kindly ask the management of the International Olympic Committee to show solidarity with athletes and the people of Belarus and not to remain indifferent to the actions of the NOC of Belarus, which are associated with discrimination and violence.

Respectfully yours,

The initiative group of the Free Association of Athletes of Belarus «SOS_BY»



Aliaksandr APEIKIN

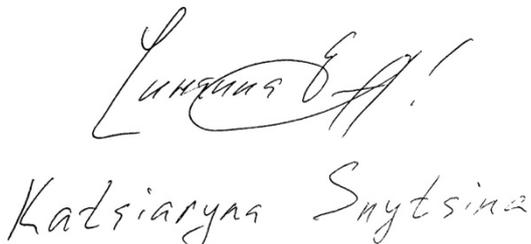
*Belarusian Sports Solidarity Foundation
Coordinator Vityaz Handball Club Founder
European Handball Federation Marketing Inspector*



YAKAULEU K.

Kanstantsin YAKAULEU

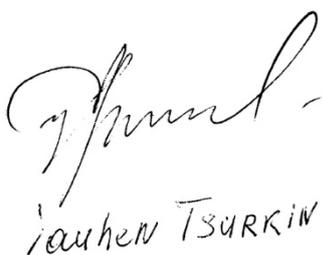
*Vityaz Handball Club Head
Coach Master of Sports
Multiple Champion and Cup Winner of
Belarus Silver medallist of the Polish Cup*



Katsiaryna Snytsina

Katsiaryna SNYTSINA

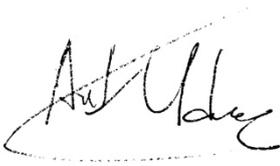
*Captain of the National Basketball Team of the
Republic of Belarus
Bronze medallist of the European
Championships Participant of two Olympic
Games*



Yauhen TSURKIN

Yauhen TSURKIN

*National team member
European champion in swimming
World championships medallist.
World university games champion.*



Artur Udrys

National record's holder.
Artur UDRYS

*Member of the National Volleyball Team
Bronze medallist of the FIVB Club World Cup
and the Russian Volleyball Super League
Korean Cup medallist
Qatari Cup and the Qatari Championships
medallist Three-time champion of the Republic
of Belarus*



Yegor Mescheriakov

Yegor MESCHERIAKOV

*Basketball Master of Sports
1994 European Champion 'U22', the Republic of
Belarus Champion, Ukrainian Champion, Russian
Vice- Champion
Player of the National Team of Belarus 1995-
2012 Five-time Belarusian Player of the Year:
1998, 2001, 2002, 2008, 2009*



MESHCHARAKOLI
MIKITA

Mikita MESHCHARAKOU

*Member of the National Basketball Team
(3×3) European Games medallist
Eight-time basketball champion of Belarus*



HERASIMENIA

Aliaksandra HERASIMENIA

*Three-time Olympic medallist in
swimming World and European
Champion*

Yelena LEUCHANKA

*Bronze medallist of the European Championships
Champion of the Western Conference Women's
NBA (WNBA)
Best Center of the 2010 World
Championships WNBA finalist
Participant of two Olympic Games*

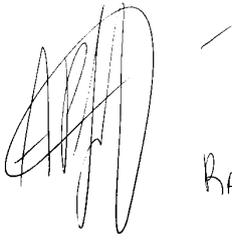
JAILED AND REPRESSED



Papou Stsiapan

Stsiapan PAPOU

*World and European Sambo
Champion Winner of the 1st
European Games
Honored Master of Sports of the Republic of
Belarus The laureate of "Triumph. To the Heroes
of Sports" The winner of the International Fair
Play award*



RAMANOUSKAYA
Aliaksandra

Aliaksandra RAMANOUSKAYA

*Freestyle World Champion 2019 (acrobatic
discipline) Multiple medallist and winner of
world cups
Two-time champion of the Winter Universiade.
Honoured Master of Sport.*



KHAMUTOUSKI VASILI

Vasili KHAMUTOUSKI

*Former goalkeeper of the national team of
Belarus.
Champion of Belarus.
2 times Champion of Romania.
Winner of the Cup of Romania.
Silver and bronze medal winner at the Romanian
Championship.*



Andrei KRAUCHANKA

*Olympic Games silver medallist
European Champion decathlon and heptathlon
World championships 2 times silver medallist
European championships decathlon and heptathlon
bronze medallist*



Ivan Hanin

*WAKO World Championships silver 2017, 2019
WAKO World Cup winner 2008, bronze 2009,
2012*

**Cases of arrest, pressure and dismissal
regarding athletes and sports specialists in Belarus
(25.08.2020-27.09.2020)**

1. **Andrei Krauchanka**, a silver medalist in athletics of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, European champion, signed an open letter condemning violence and rigged elections and was forced out of the national team and out of his job, left unemployed with no salary.
2. **Aliaksandra Herasimenia**, a two times silver medalist in swimming of the London 2012 Olympics, bronze medalist of the Rio 2016 Olympics, world and European champion, swimming coach, received a refusal to prolong a rental of swimming pool for her sports club due to her active civil position and membership in the Belarus Athletes Free Union.
3. **Sviatlana Kudzelich**, a silver medalist in athletics of the European Championships, excluded from the national team, lost her job at the Ministry of Emergency Situations for her civil position and signing the Open Letter.
4. **Anatol Kotau**, a former Secretary General of the National Olympic Committee of Belarus, Vice President of the Directorate of the 2nd European Games, resigned from the Presidential Property Management Directorate, because of his unwillingness to keep silence and accept violence and tortures undertaken by the law enforcement agencies.
5. **Gennady Savilov**, the President of the Ice Hockey Federation of Belarus, Deputy Chairman of the 2021 IIHF World Championships Organizing Committee, dismissed from his two positions for his refusal to participate in action in support of the dictatorship regime.
6. **Nikolay Kozeko**, the head coach of National Freestyle Skiing Team, a coach of the 4 Olympic champions, lost his scholarship from the special fund of the President of Belarus; obliged to pay back all the money given to him during the last year for signing the Open Letter and expressing in mass media his position against violence and political repression.
7. **Aliaksandr Rummo**, the head coach of the U17 National Ice Hockey Team, forced to resign from his job for signing the Open Letter, expressing his civil position against violence and because “the coach of the national team must support the authorities and the general line of the party”.
8. **Gennady Tapunov**, the director of National Olympic Athletics Training Center, dismissed after a large number of athletes and coaches of the center signed the Open Letter, expressed their protest against violence towards civilian population in the mass media and published their civil position in social media.

9. **Vadzim Kryvasheeu**, the director of Freestyle Olympic Center, dismissed under article of the Labour Code for “pure ideological work with the staff”.
10. **Mikhail Zaleuski**, the general director of FC BATE, dismissed after expressing protest against violence towards civil population from the side of the law enforcement agencies in social media.
11. **Vladimir Nesterovich**, a Press Secretary of the Ministry of Sports and Tourism, resigned after his refusal to support violence towards civil population and propagandize the dictatorship regime.
12. **Eduard Venskij**, President of the Belarusian Volleyball Federation, resigned after Belarusian volleyball players supported peaceful protests and signed the Open Letter.
13. **Viktor Bulat**, a massage therapist of the National Football Team, no longer involved in the work with the National Team due to signing the Open Letter expressing his civil position and condemning the actions of Belarusian authorities and law enforcement agencies.
14. **Pavel Sitenkov**, a swimming coach, experienced violent drubbing and other tortures from the riot police, with four spins broken stay under recovery treatment in a hospital.
15. **Kanstantsin Yakauleu**, the head coach of the handball club Viciaz-Leon, dismissed after signing the Open Letter and expressing protest against violence towards civil population.
16. **Alena Maseikava**, a manger of the Raubichi National Olympic Winter Sports Training Center, dismissed after signing the Open Letter.
17. **Dzianis Kulaga**, a Greco-Roman wrestling coach, dismissed from two positions in sports schools after signing the Open Letter.
18. **Valiantsina Zeliankevich**, a triathlon athlete, swimming coach, expelled as an athlete from National Olympic Cycling Training Center, dismissed from two positions: as an athlete of Minsk Cycling Club and as a coach in Tristyle triathlon club after publishing her civil position in social media.
19. **Sergey Sheluta**, a taekwondo coach, dismissed from his job in a sports school after signing the Open Letter.
20. **Andrey Radziuk**, a volleyball player, dismissed from his job at the Ministry of the Emergency Situations after signing the Open Letter.
21. **Vladislav Zhurkevich**, head of the Ice Preparation Department at the Minsk Arena (the major ice hockey arena in Belarus), dismissed for his civil position and unwillingness to remain indifferent to the events taking place in Belarus.
22. **Aliaksandra Ramanouskaya**, Freestyle World Champion 2019, multiple medalist and winner of World Cups, two-time champion of the winter Universiade dismissed from the National Team on an order of Republic Center of Olympic Preparation that takes effect on October 16th. Earlier, she signed the Open Letter and expressed her position in mass media against the violence and authoritarian regime, fired after publicly expressing her civil position in the media.

OPEN LETTER

from Representatives of the sports industry of the Republic of Belarus

We, the undersigned, being people involved in Belarusian sports, participating in national championships and competitions of the country, as well as defending the interests of the Republic of Belarus on the international sports arena, strongly and forcefully condemn numerous facts of falsification of Belarus presidential election results, as well as severe violence of the security agencies against peacefully protesting citizens.

We all believe that there are worthy people and real professionals among law enforcement officers. Nevertheless, it is obvious that some officers delivered and others executed illegal orders on the use of unjustified, often disproportionate, force against citizens of the Republic of Belarus.

Subject to the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, its legislation, we, the undersigned, being a part of the people of the Republic of Belarus - the source of power, demand:

1. To recognize the elections of the President of the Republic of Belarus that took place on August 9, 2020 invalid due to numerous facts of falsifications and pressure on the election commissions. We demand that repeated elections of the President of the Republic of Belarus be held in accordance with all international standards, as well as we demand the resignation of the CEC current members with bringing them to legislatively prescribed responsibility.
2. To release all citizens detained during the demonstrations, which are not involved in illegal activities.
3. To release and rehabilitate all political prisoners.
4. To stop the illegal activities of law enforcement officers and carry out checks of legality of their actions starting from the moment of signatures collection for nomination of candidates for President of the Republic of Belarus.
5. To identify and punish the guilty ones for the beatings and brutal tortures of the citizens detained during peaceful demonstrations. The leaders of the security agencies responsible for the violence must resign.
6. To provide full-fledged medical, psychological, legal and material assistance to all victims of illegal actions of security agencies representatives.

In case of information about attempts to exercise pressure, threats of dismissal or violations of rights of sports representatives who signed this letter, all athletes will get their act together up to and including a possible refusal to play for the national team of the country or refusal to organize international and national sporting events. Besides, such facts will be immediately sent to the IOC, international sports federations and committees.

Original letter with updating list: <https://www.pressball.by/pbonline/other/87900>