

# IOC Stance on Russian Athletes Casts Shadow over 2024 Olympic Games



<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/videos/20230216155925264/>

As we approach a year since Russia first moved its troops into Ukraine, controversy is brewing over next year's Olympic games in Paris. Despite calls to ban Russia and Belarus from taking part, the International Olympic Committee says it wants to find a way to include them. NHK World's Ishikawa Chiaki has the latest.

The IOC announced last month that it might allow athletes from Russia and its close ally Belarus to win slots at Paris through Asia qualifying, but it said they would compete at the games as neutrals. Ukraine reacted sharply, threatening to boycott the games. IOC President Thomas Bach responded saying any boycott would violate the Olympic charter. At a meeting of sports ministers from 35 countries last week, Volodymyr Zelensky said 184 of his country's athletes have been killed in the war already.

While Russians kill and terrorizes, representatives of their terrorist state have no place at sport and Olympic competitions. And it cannot be covered up with some pretended neutrality or white flag, because Russia is now a country that stains everything with blood. Even their white flag.

Those 35 countries including the US, Germany, and Australia say they will demand Russia and Belarus be banned outright from the games. We spoke to Olympic history expert, Professor Raita Kyoko, who cautions of the impact on international politics. A diplomatic boycott of last year's Beijing Winter Olympic games by the US and others came over concerns of human rights in China.

In the case of Ukraine, so many people there have been killed and their territory is being violated. The

situation is almost unprecedented since World War II, so from the perspective of the Olympics, it is very difficult to strike a balance.

Russia and Belarus have repeatedly been banned from international sporting events for almost a year now. But several Russian sports federations say they have received invitations to this fall's Asian games in the Chinese city of Hangzhou.

Ultimately the IOC wants to create a space where all athletes can compete together. It thinks the path for Russian and Belarusian athletes could start not in Ukraine, but somewhere in Asia. Officials may think that's the best option.

With the war dragging on Olympic organizers face a related challenge. Raita says there's no way to sanction countries like Russia that bridge the Olympic truce which was established in 1993 after the conflict in former Yugoslavia.

I believe the national Olympic committee of a country that violates the Olympic truce will not be able to participate in the games. Officials should establish a clear process or there can be no compromise until that is clarified.

The Olympic charter says the goal of the games is to promote peace and the preservation of human dignity. But just 18 months out from Paris 2024, the suffering in Ukraine continues to cast a shadow over the IOC's next flagship event.

**Now discuss the questions with a partner.**

1. Do you think Russian and Belarusian athletes should be allowed to compete in the games? Why or why not?
2. Do you think Japan should boycott the games if Russian and Belarusian athletes join?
3. Why do you think there is always controversy shadowing the Olympic games?
4. How can the IOC restore its image?
5. Have you heard any other news related to the Paris 2024 Olympics?