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Australia joins international pushback against attempt to allow Russians in Olympics

Австралія приєднується до міжнародного протесту проти спроби допустити росіян на Олімпіаду

Австралія приєдналася до міжнародної коаліції країн, які протистоять спробі дозволити російським спортсменам брати участь в Олімпійських іграх 2024 р. в Парижі. Уряд Австралії приєднався до 30 країн, включаючи приймаючу країну Францію, Сполучені Штати, Сполучене Королівство та Німеччину, у виданні спільної заяви, в якій обіцяють підтримувати заборону на участь російських і білоруських спортсменів, поки триває війна в Україні.

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/australia-pushes-back-against-attempt-to-allow-russians-in-olympics-20230221-p5cm96.html>

Australia has joined an international coalition of nations pushing back against an attempt to allow Russian athletes to compete in the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris.

The Albanese government has joined 30 nations including host nation France, the United States, United Kingdom and Germany in issuing a joint statement pledging ongoing support for a ban on Russian and Belarusian athletes as long as the war in Ukraine continues.

The statement was prompted by the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) announcement in January that it was exploring a "pathway" for participation for competitors from countries responsible for war as neutral athletes who would not wear their national colours or compete under a flag.

"Russia and Belarus have it in their own hands to pave the way for their athletes' full return to the international sports community, namely by ending the war they started," the joint statement said. "We firmly believe that given there has been no change in the situation regarding the Russian aggression in Ukraine, and as an imperative for fairness and solidarity towards the Ukrainian athletes whose facilities have been destroyed and who have had to leave their country ... there is no practical reason to move away from the exclusion regime for Russian and Belarusian athletes." Australia, which will host the Games in 2032, was not one of the 30 nations listed on the joint statement circulated to reporters on Monday afternoon AEST.

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However, a spokesman for Sports Minister Anika Wells said Australia was part of the group and had not been included in the document due to an issue posed by the time difference between Australia and some countries in the northern hemisphere. An updated document listed Australia as part of the coalition, the spokesman said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy addressed senior officials from a group of nations opposed to the IOC's plans in a meeting on February 10, imploring them to retain a tough stance on Vladimir Putin's war, which he said had led to the death of 228 athletes and coaches.

The IOC has argued locking out Russians and Belarusians could violate the Olympic Charter and the inclusion of all athletes was based on a United Nations resolution against discrimination in the Olympics.

But the 30 nations allied with Ukraine said: "Through their choices, action and ongoing invasion, Russia broke the Olympic Truce that has been continuously supported by the United Nations General Assembly since 1993."

Joe Biden's Ukraine visit is a symbol of American resolve

"In our collective statement of 4 July 2022, in view of the non-discrimination principle, we recognised that Russian and Belarusian nationals could be allowed to compete as 'neutral' individuals, subject to conditions to ensure they are clearly not representing their states."

“However, in Russia and Belarus, sport and politics are closely intertwined. We have strong concerns on how feasible it is for Russian and Belarusian Olympic athletes to compete as ‘neutrals’ – under the IOC’s conditions of no identification with their country – when they are directly funded and supported by their states (unlike, for example, professional tennis players).”

The statement also expressed concern about “strong links and affiliations” between Russian athletes and the military.

“As long as these fundamental issues and the substantial lack of clarity and concrete detail on a workable ‘neutrality’ model are not addressed, we do not agree that Russian and Belarusian athletes should be allowed back into competition,” it said.

A final decision by the IOC has not been made. The joint statement represents an attempt to ensure the organising committee does not reach an outcome that could be used as a propaganda tool by Putin, who continues to escalate the war in Ukraine.