

International Olympic Committee (IOC)
Maison Olympique 1
Route de Vidy
1007 Lausanne, Suisse

Brussels, 13 February 2026

Open letter to the International Olympic Committee

Subject: Exclusion of Wladyslaw Heraskewytsch from the Olympic Winter Games

Dear President Coventry,
Dear Executive Board Members,

We are writing to you regarding the decision of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to prohibit the Ukrainian skeleton athlete Wladyslaw Heraskewytsch from competing at the Olympic Winter Games in connection with his “Helmet of Remembrance”.

The helmet in question displays images of Ukrainian athletes who lost their lives as a result of Russia's war of aggression. It does not contain any slogans or explicit political messages. The stated intention is to commemorate the athletes who were killed.

We respect the independence of the IOC and the rules of the Olympic Charter, in particular Rule 50. At the same time, the Olympic Movement refers to peace and respect for human dignity as core principles. The Charter defines the goal of Olympism as placing sport at the service of the harmonious development of humankind and promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity.

Remembering athletes who were killed in a war that violates international law is not propaganda or a political demonstration. Rather, it is a gesture of commemoration that aligns with the values the Olympic Movement itself sets out.

Ukrainian athletes have seen teammates killed, training facilities destroyed and careers interrupted. Acknowledging this reality does not politicise the Games; it reflects the lived experience of members of the Olympic community. It would be devastating if the IOC were to turn a blind eye to this cruel reality.

Participating in the Olympic Games is a lifelong dream for many athletes. We ask you not to extinguish such a dream simply because it draws attention to the many lives and dreams already destroyed by Putin's war of aggression against Ukraine.

In this context, we believe the disqualification of Wladyslaw Heraskewytsch and the ban on his helmet were unjustified. Sanctioning an act of remembrance risks being perceived as a political decision and thereby undermining confidence in the Olympic ideal itself.

We therefore urge the IOC to reconsider its decision. Proportionality and equal treatment are essential for maintaining trust in the International Olympic Committee.

Respectfully,

Erik Marquardt, Member of the European Parliament, Greens/EFA
Rasmus Andresen, Member of the European Parliament, Greens/EFA
Wouter Beke, Member of the European Parliament, European People's Party
Hildegard Bentele, Member of the European Parliament, European People's Party
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Offener Brief an das Internationale Olympische Komitee

Betreff: Ausschluss Wladyslaw Heraskewytschs von den Olympischen Winterspielen

Sehr geehrte Frau Präsidentin Coventry,
sehr geehrte Mitglieder des Exekutivrats,

Wir wenden uns an Sie wegen der Entscheidung des Internationalen Olympischen Komitees, dem ukrainischen Skeletonfahrer Wladyslaw Heraskewytsch aufgrund seines „Helms der Erinnerung“ die Teilnahme an den Olympischen Winterspielen zu untersagen.

Der besagte Helm zeigt Bilder ukrainischer Athletinnen und Athleten, die infolge des russischen Angriffskriegs gegen die Ukraine ums Leben gekommen sind. Er enthält keine Slogans und keine expliziten politischen Botschaften. Laut erklärter Absicht dient er ausschließlich dem Gedenken an die getöteten Athletinnen und Athleten.

Wir respektieren die Unabhängigkeit des IOC sowie die Regeln der Olympischen Charta, insbesondere Regel 50, die politische Demonstrationen und Propaganda untersagt. Zugleich versteht sich die Olympische Bewegung selbst als Wertegemeinschaft, die Frieden und die Achtung der Menschenwürde als Kernprinzipien hat. Die Olympische Charta definiert als Ziel des Olympismus „den Sport in den Dienst der harmonischen Entwick-

lung der Menschheit zu stellen, um eine friedliche Gesellschaft zu fördern, die der Wahrung der Menschenwürde verpflichtet ist“.

Eine Erinnerung an das Leid des Krieges und die in einem völkerrechtswidrigen Krieg getöteten Sportlerinnen und Sportler ist keine Propaganda oder politische Demonstration. Dieses Gedenken ist Ausdruck von Respekt und Erinnerung. Damit entspricht es dem Kern des Olympischen Gedankens.

Ukrainische Athletinnen und Athleten haben miterleben müssen, wie ihre Teamkollegen getötet, ihre Trainingsanlagen zerstört und ihre Karrieren unterbrochen wurden. Diese Realität anzuerkennen, politisiert die Spiele nicht; sie spiegelt die Lebenswirklichkeit von Mitgliedern der olympischen Gemeinschaft wider. Es wäre verheerend, wenn sich das IOC dieser grausamen Realität entzieht.

Die Teilnahme an den Olympischen Spielen ist ein großer Traum für Sportlerinnen und Sportler. Bitte zerstören Sie diese Träume nicht, nur weil daran erinnert wird, wie viele Menschenleben und große Träume Putins Angriffskrieg gegen die Ukraine bereits zerstört hat.

Wir halten den Ausschluss von Wladyslaw Heraskewytsch und das Verbot des Helmes für falsch. Die Sanktionierung des Gedenkens birgt die Gefahr, selbst als politische Entscheidung wahrgenommen zu werden und damit den Olympischen Gedanken zu untergraben.

Wir fordern das IOC daher dringend auf, diese Entscheidung zu überdenken. Verhältnismäßigkeit und Gleichbehandlung sind für die Aufrechterhaltung des Vertrauens in das Internationale Olympische Komitee unerlässlich.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen

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