



## **ALL-UKRAINIAN BOBSLEIGH AND SKELETON FEDERATION**

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Not so long ago, Mr. Thomas Bach stated, “We cannot judge the person for her citizenship. This war is Putin’s fault - not the fault of Russian athletes or Russian people”.

We, Ukrainians, could understand that position, but we cannot agree.

Because, it wasn’t Putin who raped dozens of minor girls in Bucha. It wasn’t Putin who planted mine on children's toys, a crippled dog, or even on between the body of a dead woman and her live toddler daughter. It wasn’t personally Putin, Lavrov, or any Russian higher official, who shelled Ukrainian cities, tortured prisoners, shot peaceful people for fun, or destroyed civilian objects. It wasn’t some specific people, some members of a secret organization, or an evil cult. It was ordinary Russian soldiers, sometimes professionals, sometimes conscripts. It was simple Russian men from simple Russian streets. Maybe some visited the same kindergarten with Tretyakov or the same school with Sergeeva, played outdoors with Adrianov, lived near Tregubov, trained with Rukosuev, and served in one unit with Nikitina.

That were ordinary Russian people under a familiar Russian flag - the same we’ve seen at our events and competitions.

However, there is a place for Putin in this story. He was the one who orchestrated all that atrocities; he was the one who gave medals and badges to these murderers because they helped him to create his version of Great Russia. He also gave trophies and awards to Russian athletes for the exact same reason. As one of his mustached predecessors of the XX century, he considers sports and war victories to be of the same origin and serve the same purpose.

A few weeks ago, one of the prominent Russian cultural figures, the chairman of the Hermitage museum Michail Piotrovsky revealed a secret that many Europeans could not comprehend or accept. "War ... is a nation's form of self-assertion," - he said. "We militarists and imperialists understand our historical mission... Our recent exhibitions abroad are just a powerful cultural offensive. If you want, a kind of 'special operation', which many people don't like. But we are coming. And no one can be allowed to interfere with our offensive."

He just expressed something that isn't a secret for Ukrainians, Poles or Latvians, but maybe not so evident for other countries of the world.

Russian culture is weaponized and serves as an instrument of Russian political and military ambitions. Russian oil and gas supplies are weaponized. Even Russian religion is! The sport is no exception here. Putin used the psychological aftermath of the Sochi Olympics to ease the invasion of Ukrainian Crimea. That's why that's so important for them that they use FSB to swap the piss of their athletes. Because that's not just sports - that's politics.

That's why Russian athletes are integrated into politics, the army, and special services. May I remind you that high jump Olympic champion Mariya Lasithkene is a captain of the Russian Armed Forces and was a personal trustee of Vladimir Putin during his election campaign in 2018?

Dear bobsleigh and skeleton colleagues, could we really assume that the captain of the Russian Armed Forces and Putin's trustee has nothing to do with Russian politics or aggression?

How about Mr. Pozdnyakov - the chairman of the Russian Olympic Committee and the colonel in the same army that is now shelling my native city? Or about 214 Russian athletes that competed at the Winter Olympics 2022 in Beijing?

Almost every one of them has a rank and position in the Russian army. Could we say there are neutral?

I think not.

I think they are, actually, responsible. They are tools of aggression, but not blind tools, not hostages of their government - they are accomplices.

Let's remember that we don't talk about ordinary war. Many Russian officials and columnists revealed its real goal. It's not the war against Ukraine; it's the war against Ukrainity. Not only the existence of Ukraine as a separate state but the existence of Ukrainians as a separate nation, is now considered to be against Russian national interests. That's why the behavior of Russians now has all features of genocide, that's why entire cities are reduced to rubble, that's why millions of Ukrainians become refugees, that's why prisoners of war are tortured and thousands of civilians are killed. They want to erase Ukraine not as a state but as a concept.

We now face full-scale aggression, ethnic cleansing, and genocidal attempts against my people. And what are we discussing? Could we hurt the feelings of Russian athletes by canceling their participation in sports events? I suppose they will survive that - after all, that's not the missiles that are killing Ukrainian athletes right now, as we're talking. Or maybe that's not about the Russian athletes, but about Russian money? Say that aloud, and we'll discuss.

Let's go back to sports. We could remember the grand tradition of Olympic peace. Not only did Russia ignore this principle - they used Olympics as a good background for aggression against other countries and did it three times - against Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014 and 2022.

We can talk about Ukrainian sports objects destroyed by Russian bombs and missiles. About thousands of Ukrainian athletes, both men and women had to go to protect their country and those who won't come back. About Julia Taira Payevska, a constant participant in Invictus Games, that worked as a medical volunteer in Mariupol, saving young and old, friends and foes. Russians captured her, lied about her being a Nazi, lied about her killing children, tortured her, and made her lose a third of her weight from malnutrition.

We can talk about constant Russian attempts to cheat the international community, about using doping not on a personal but a national level. We can speak of Russians ruining figure skating with conveyer of pre-pubertal girls. But all of that is just the different aspects of a straightforward truth: Russian has an absurd desire to dominate and absolute disregard for rules and lives.

That's not what the sport is about. That's not how it should be.

I ask you not to become the accomplices yourself. I ask you not to hide under the apologetic do-good blathering. We all deserve better. No one should bear the shame till his grave, as did some people involved in the Olympics of 1936. I ask you to show the will to fight on the side of truth.

All-Ukrainian Bobsleigh and Skeleton Federation ask you to ban Russian representatives from any competitions until the end of next requirements:

- 1 Complete withdrawal of Russian soldiers from all territories of Ukraine, including Crimea and Donbas. Ukrainian athletes cannot enjoy sports when there is a war in Ukraine.
2. Reconstruction of all sports facilities destroyed by the war. Ukrainian athletes must have the opportunity to train.
3. Payment of all reparations to be awarded by international courts in favor of Ukraine. Ukrainian athletes whose homes were destroyed by the Russian army have the right to receive new housing.
4. Their aggression against other countries.

I know it will help. I know it will be painful for the Kremlin regime. I know - and I assure you - it will save the lives of my fellow compatriots. I ask you to do the noblest thing a person could do - to protect the weak and innocent Ukrainian children from the brutal and ruthless russians.

Help us - and you'll have what to tell your grandchildren, making them proud.

Thank you



