

Freedom of expression of athletes

Forum on Sport and Human Rights

**Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport
Council of Europe**

**Wednesday, the 30th of November 2022
Strasbourg, France**



**Paulina Tomczyk
General Secretary**

Art. 10

Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. (...)

Athletes are people first. Athlete rights are human rights.

Athletes have right to freedom of expression in line with internationally recognized human rights.

It is not an absolute right and ***may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society (...)***.



IOC Rule 50.2 and Guidelines

No kind of demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda is permitted in any Olympic sites, venues or other areas.

Athletes should not be forced to follow the so-called political neutrality of sport.

In 2021, IOC claimed to 'extend opportunities for athlete expression'.

It is not up to IOC to regulate athletes' human rights and a survey cannot justify human rights restrictions.

The IOC does not consider the positions of independent athlete associations or human right organisations.

Athlete activism



Organised sport needs to uphold the values they claim to support, such as the respect for human rights.

Athletes should be able to use their platforms to speak up and peacefully protest about issues that they care about.

Some sport organisations simultaneously expect athletes to be role models or keep silent – whichever is more convenient.

Athletes do not have a say when it comes to hosting nations of sporting events and are put in a very difficult position.



Way forward

Sport organisations need to recognise their responsibility to respect, protect and promote human rights of athletes.

For sport to be a force for good, sport organisations need to ensure athletes are safe to enjoy their human rights and embrace their activism.

Governments have an important role to play to hold the sport organisations accountable and to ensure the protection of human rights.

Sport, governments and athlete associations need to work in partnership to achieve these goals.

Thank you

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 **EU Athletes**