

Open Letter from the Ukrainian Community and Leaders of Ukrainian Organisations in the United Kingdom

To: The President and Members of the International Olympic Committee (IOC)

Cc: International Bobsleigh & Skeleton Federation (IBSF), National Olympic Committees, and the International Sporting Community

Subject: Condemnation of the Disqualification of Ukrainian Skeleton Racer Vladyslav Heraskevych

Dear President and Members of the International Olympic Committee,

We write on behalf of the Ukrainian community in the United Kingdom and as leaders of Ukrainian organisations representing thousands of Ukrainians who have found refuge, support, and solidarity here during the most difficult period in our nation's modern history.

We express our profound disappointment and unequivocal condemnation of the decision to prohibit Ukrainian skeleton athlete Vladyslav Heraskevych from using a memorial helmet during the competition on the Olympic track, and the subsequent decision to disqualify him.

Vladyslav Heraskevych is not only an elite athlete representing Ukraine at the highest level of international sport, he is also a young man whose homeland continues to endure immense suffering due to Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine and the largest war in Europe since the WWII. The memorial design on his helmet was not a political provocation, nor an act of protest directed at the Olympic Movement. It was a dignified and deeply human tribute to Olympians who were killed for defending their homeland and freedom — a symbol of remembrance, loss, and resilience.

The Olympic Charter speaks of promoting peace, human dignity, and solidarity among nations. It enshrines respect for universal fundamental ethical principles. To prohibit an athlete from honouring the memory of innocent lives lost — particularly during training sessions — undermines those very principles.

Sport does not exist in isolation from reality. Ukrainian athletes continue to train under the constant threat of missile attacks. Many have lost friends, teammates, and family members. Some have lost their lives. For these athletes, remembrance is not politics — it is personal.

We respectfully and firmly call upon the IOC and relevant governing bodies to:

- 1. Immediately review and overturn the decision** prohibiting the memorial helmet and disqualifying Mr Heraskevych.
- 2. Provide a transparent explanation** of the grounds upon which this decision was made.
- 3. Clarify and amend regulations** to ensure that tributes of remembrance and humanitarian significance are not mischaracterised as political statements.
- 4. Engage in dialogue** with Ukrainian sporting authorities to prevent similar injustices in the future.

The Olympic Movement must not appear indifferent to human suffering. Neutrality must never mean silence in the face of tragedy, nor the suppression of remembrance.

We urge the IOC to act swiftly and justly to restore fairness to this situation and to reaffirm its commitment to human dignity, compassion, and the true spirit of the Olympics.

The world is watching how institutions respond in moments that test their principles. We hope the IOC will choose to stand on the side of humanity and remembrance. We hope your enduring message will not be one that placates the vile aggressor by penalising the memory of brave and unjustly killed Olympians.

Respectfully,

Peter Revko, Chair of Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain

Marta Mulyak, Head of Plast Ukrainian Scouts Organisation in Great Britain

Inna Hryhorovych, Chair of the Association of Ukrainian Teachers in Great Britain

Orysya Novetska, Ukrainian St Mary's Trust

Natalia Ravlyuk - co-founder and director of Support Ukraine Ltd, British-Ukrainian Aid in United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Oksana Nepijvoda, Chairperson, Charity „Sunflower Manchester”

Mykhaylo Yatsyshyn, Ukrainian Children Sos

Anna Fedeczko, Chair of the Ukrainian Youth Association in Great Britain

Marianna Vaszylyiv, Co-Founder & Project Lead — United for Ukraine

Dr Valentyna Shkuro, University of Cambridge, Trustee Cambridge4Ukraine

Oksana Lovochkina, CEO Ukrainian Medical Charity

Iryna Terlecka, Association of Ukrainian Women.

On behalf of the Ukrainian Community in the UK