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Statement regarding the disqualification of Vladyslav Heraskevych

We condemn the decision to disqualify Ukrainian skeleton athlete Vladyslav Heraskevych from the Milano Cortina 2026 Olympic Winter Games for wearing a helmet bearing portraits of Ukrainian athletes killed during Russia's war against Ukraine.

There is also troubling confusion in public reporting as to the legal basis for this sanction, with some accounts citing Rule 50.2 and others referring to Rule 40.2 and the IOC Executive Board Guidelines on athlete expression. That confusion does not mitigate the substance. Under either provision, a dignified memorial tribute to fellow athletes is not "political propaganda," and freedom of expression consistent with Olympic values cannot be interpreted as a mechanism to suppress remembrance.

The suggestion that permitting such commemoration would open the field of play to "130 conflicts" is a false equivalence. Ukraine is facing a full-scale war of aggression with an extraordinary, documented, human cost across its sporting community. The Olympic Movement cannot credibly claim to stand for peace, dignity and solidarity while allowing athletes connected to the aggressor state to compete under "neutral" status yet excluding an athlete for honouring the dead.

The IOC should reverse this decision, reinstate Mr Heraskevych's right to compete, and issue an unreserved apology.

**AUGB Board of Directors
London, 13 February 2026**