

# A Team Of Refugees Will Compete At The Olympic Games In Rio

A team of refugees will compete alongside athletes representing their home countries at the Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, the International Olympic Committee has announced.

Previously, athletes who did not represent a country were not allowed to compete.

The team will likely number between five and 10 athletes, the committee said in a statement, and "will be treated at the Olympic Games like all the other teams."

"By welcoming the team of Refugee Olympic Athletes to the Olympic Games Rio 2016, we want to send a message of hope for all refugees in our world," IOC President Thomas Bach said in a statement.

Here's more from Bach:

"Having no national team to belong to, having no flag to march behind, having no national anthem to be played, these refugee athletes will be welcomed to the Olympic Games with the Olympic flag and with the Olympic Anthem. They will have a home together with all the other 11,000 athletes from 206 National Olympic Committees in the Olympic village."

The IOC said it has identified 43 contenders for the places on the team and the final group will be announced in June. Along with athletic prowess, potential team members will be assessed by "official refugee status verified by the United Nations, and personal situation and background."

There are some 20.2 million refugees globally, according to U.N. figures. That includes 5.1 million registered refugees in camps in the Middle East, and an additional 15.1 million "refugees of concern."

According to The Guardian, the IOC identified three possible refugee-team contenders in December: "They were a Syrian swimmer based in Germany, a judoka from the Democratic Republic of Congo who was living in Brazil and an Iranian taekwondo fighter training in Belgium."

The chosen athletes will march in the opening ceremony under the Olympic flag, just in front of home team Brazil. Uniforms and coaches will be provided by the IOC.

Prior to Thursday's announcement, CNN highlighted a group of elite refugee athletes.

"I ask God to bring peace back to my country," Congolese karate champion Martial Nantoura told the network. "But I am still on the national team. If someone tells me to go to the mat, I will go."

<http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/03/03/469044261/in-a-first-team-of-refugees-will-compete-at-the-olympic-games>

National Public Radio

Merrit Kennedy

March 3, 2016

## A Team Of Refugees Will Compete In Rio Olympics

LAUSANNE, Switzerland (Reuters) - A team of refugees that will compete at this year's Rio de Janeiro Olympics could number as many as 10 athletes, International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach on Wednesday.

The team, which was officially approved by the IOC Executive Board and called Team of Refugee Olympics Athletes (ROA), will be made up from a pool of 43 prospective Olympians, already identified by the IOC and supported with funds to train.

Nomination criteria included sporting level, official United Nations-verified refugee status and personal situation and background, the IOC said.

"We have no target," Bach said when asked how many athletes would be in the team. "It depends very much on the sporting qualifications. This team may end up between five and 10 athletes maybe."

Hundreds of thousands of refugees, many from Syria, have crossed via Turkey and Greece into Europe.

The plight of those fleeing conflict, as well as economic migrants escaping poverty, has polarized opinion in Europe, with the amount of new arrivals stretching the European Union's asylum system.

"By welcoming ROA to the Olympic Games in Rio, we want to send a message of hope to all the refugees of the world," Bach said. "Having no national team to belong to, having no flag to march behind, having no national anthem to be played, these refugees will be welcomed to the Olympic Games with the Olympic flag and with the Olympic anthem," he said. ROA will be housed in the athletes' village along with all other national teams and will enter the stadium as the penultimate team at the opening ceremony, ahead of the host nation.

"This team will be treated during Olympics like all the other teams," Bach said. "It will enjoy all the privileges like the other teams and athletes."

The athletes and the sports they will compete in will be named at the next IOC executive board meeting in June.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/refugees-compete-rio-olympics\\_us\\_56d9ac2be4b0ffe6f8e91072?utm\\_hp\\_ref=2016-summer-olympics](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/refugees-compete-rio-olympics_us_56d9ac2be4b0ffe6f8e91072?utm_hp_ref=2016-summer-olympics)

The Huffington Post

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March 4, 2016