



INTERNATIONAL  
OLYMPIC  
COMMITTEE

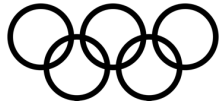
# **MEDIA KIT**

REFUGEE OLYMPIC TEAM

A MESSAGE OF HOPE AND SOLIDARITY

**REFUGEE  
OLYMPIC  
TEAM**





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## 1. The Refugee Olympic Team – a message of hope

For over 25 years the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has, through its partnership with UNHCR (the United Nations Refugee Agency), provided access to sport for young people affected by displacement.

At the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in October 2015, confronted with the global refugee crisis that has seen millions of people in the world displaced, IOC President Thomas Bach announced the creation of the Refugee Olympic Team – the first of its kind – to take part in the Olympic Games Rio 2016.

Working with the National Olympic Committees (NOCs), the IOC identified refugee athletes around the world and through Olympic Solidarity provided them with the necessary support and funding to assist them in their qualification efforts.

Ten months on from the announcement, 10 athletes, who originally hailed from Ethiopia, South Sudan, Syria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, were competing alongside 11,000 fellow athletes in Rio, sending a message of hope and inclusion to millions of refugees, and inspiring the world with the strength of their human spirit.

In October 2018, the IOC Session decided that there would be a Refugee Olympic Team for Tokyo 2020. Olympic Solidarity was tasked with establishing the conditions of participation and defining the selection process for the team, in close collaboration with UNHCR, NOCs, International Sports Federations (IFs) and the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee.

Through this programme, Olympic Solidarity helps refugee athletes not only to train with the aim of qualifying for the Olympic Games, but also to continue their sporting career and build their future.

*“This will be a symbol of hope for all refugees in the world and will make the world better aware of the magnitude of this crisis. It is also a signal to the international community that refugees are our fellow human beings and are an enrichment to society.”* **IOC President Thomas Bach – 2016**

As a result of Recommendation 11 of Olympic Agenda 2020+5, the new strategic roadmap of the IOC and the Olympic Movement through to 2025 approved in March 2021, the IOC decided that there will be a Refugee Olympic Team for the Olympic Games Paris 2024 and for the Youth Olympic Games in Dakar 2026.

This unique project demonstrates the IOC’s commitment to stand with refugees and support them through sport. The Refugee Olympic Team is part of a comprehensive approach which is aimed at increasing access to sport for young people affected by displacement, and which will be implemented at grassroots level through the Olympic Refugee Foundation.

### 1.1. The Refugee Olympic Team Tokyo 2020

In an endeavour to raise awareness of the magnitude of the refugee crisis, the IOC created the first Refugee Olympic Team for the Olympic Games Rio 2016. The team inspired the world with the strength of their human spirit. The Refugee Olympic Team Tokyo 2020 will continue to send a message of hope to the 79.5 million forcibly displaced people in the world.



The composition of the Refugee Olympic Team Tokyo 2020 has been based on a number of criteria, including first and foremost each athlete's sporting performance and their refugee status as confirmed by UNHCR. Personal background, as well as balanced representativity in terms of sport, gender and regions, will also be considered. The members of the team will be invited by the IOC to compete at the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020.

The Refugee Olympic Team Tokyo 2020 is composed of:

- Abdullah Sediqi, taekwondo (-68kg)
- Ahmad Badreddin Wais, cycling (time trial)
- Aker Al Obaidi, wrestling (Greco-Roman -67kg)
- Alaa Maso, swimming (freestyle 50m)
- Angelina Nadai Lohalith OLY, athletics (1500m)
- Aram Mahmoud, badminton (singles)
- Cyrille Fagat Tchatchet II, weightlifting (-96kg)
- Dina Pouryounes Langeroudi, taekwondo (-49kg)
- Dorian Kalatela, athletics (100m)
- Eldric Sella Rodriguez, boxing (-75kg)
- Hamoon Derafshipoour, Karate (-67kg)
- Jamal Abdelmaji Eisa, athletics (5000m)
- James Nyak Chiengjiek OLY, athletics (400m)
- Kimia Alizadeh OLY, taekwondo (-57kg)
- Luna Solomon, sport of shooting (air rifle 10m)
- Masomah Ali Zada, cycling (time trial)
- Paulo Amotun Lokoro OLY, athletics (1500m)
- Popole Misenga OLY, judo (-90kg and mixed team)
- Rose Lokonyen Nathike OLY, athletics (800m)
- Saeid Fazoula, canoeing (500m)
- Sanda Aldass, judo (-57kg)
- Tachlowini Gabriyesos, athletics (marathon)
- Wael Shueb, karate (kata)
- Wessam Salamana OLY, boxing (-57kg)
- Yusra Mardini, OLY swimming (100m butterfly and freestyle)

Four additional team members from the International Judo Federation Refugee project will also take part in the first-ever Olympic Judo Mixed Team event. The athletes who will complete alongside Sanda Aldass and Popole Misenga are:

- Ahmad Alikaj, judo (mixed team)
- Javad Majoub, judo (mixed team)
- Muna Dahouk, judo (mixed team)
- Nigara Shaenn, judo (mixed team)

The Refugee Olympic Team members come from 11 countries – Afghanistan, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, the Republic of Congo and Venezuela – and are now training and living in the territories of 13 host NOCs



– Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Israel, Kenya, Portugal, the Netherlands, Trinidad and Tobago, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

In Tokyo, they will compete in 12 sports: athletics, badminton, boxing, canoeing, cycling, judo, karate taekwondo, shooting sport, swimming, weightlifting and wrestling.

- The Refugee Olympic Team official acronym is EOR, based on the French name: Equipe Olympique des Réfugiés.
- During the Opening Ceremony, the team will march with the Olympic flag in second position, immediately after Greece.
- For all official representations of the team (including any medal ceremonies), the Olympic flag will be raised and the Olympic anthem will be played.
- Like all the other 206 NOCs taking part in the Olympic Games, the team will stay at the Olympic Village and get its own welcome ceremony at the Olympic Village.

Olympian and former marathon world record-holder Tegla Loroupe (Kenya) will be the team's Chef de Mission, while Olivier Niamkey from the IOC and Stephen Pattison from UNHCR will both act as the Deputy Chefs de Mission.

The IOC will continue to help the refugee athletes who will not go to Tokyo, and to support the members of the team after the Olympic Games. The Olympic Refugee Foundation is the next chapter in the IOC's commitment to providing assistance to refugees, ensuring support 365 days a year across the globe to young people affected by displacement.

## **1.2. A team powered by solidarity**

The success of the Refugee Olympic Team Rio 2016 led to the creation of a dedicated Olympic Solidarity programme for refugee athletes.

Through Olympic Solidarity, the IOC aims to organise assistance for all the NOCs, particularly those with the greatest needs. Overall, some 1,600 athletes from 185 NOCs are currently benefiting from Olympic Scholarships.

Olympic Scholarships for Refugee Athletes is one of the multi-faceted programmes prioritising athlete development.

They offer NOCs the opportunity to identify athletes living in their countries and support them throughout their training, preparation and participation in high-level competitions. Twenty host NOCs are currently assisting Olympic Solidarity in this project.

To benefit from the programme, candidates must fulfil a number of conditions:

1. hold refugee status confirmed by UNHCR; and
2. demonstrate their potential at national and international level so that their NOCs can select them and send their candidatures to Olympic Solidarity. The NOCs have an important job to do at national level in terms of selecting the best candidates. The candidatures are then analysed by Olympic Solidarity in close cooperation with the IFs. The final allocation decision lies with Olympic Solidarity, which then informs the NOCs concerned.



Ahead of the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020, 56 promising refugee athletes from 13 countries – Afghanistan, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Morocco, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, the Republic of Congo and Venezuela – benefited from the scholarships provided by the IOC.

The 56 Refugee Athlete Scholarship-holders come from 21 host countries – Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Croatia, Egypt, France, Germany, Israel, Jordan, Kenya, Luxembourg, Portugal, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Turkey, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States – and represent 12 sports: athletics, badminton, boxing, canoeing, cycling, judo, karate taekwondo, shooting sport, swimming, weightlifting, and wrestling.

The list of these 56 Refugee Athlete Scholarship-holders includes:

- Nine athletes who were part of the first-ever Refugee Olympic Team that competed in Rio 2016, plus 32 new athletes identified and assisted by the NOCs of their host countries; and
- a group of athletes training at the Tegla Loroupe Refugee Training Centre in Ngong, Kenya. All were selected in different refugee camps in the region.

Further to the postponement of the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020, all Olympic Scholarships for athletes, including the refugee programme, have been extended to 2021.

### **1.3. The Refugee Olympic Team Rio 2016**

In order to form the Refugee Olympic Team Rio 2016, NOCs around the world were asked by the IOC to identify refugee athletes with the potential to qualify for the Olympic Games. Such candidates could then receive funding from Olympic Solidarity to assist with their preparations and qualification efforts.

Forty-three promising candidates were initially identified, and ten refugee athletes competing in athletics, judo, and swimming were ultimately selected to make up the first-ever Refugee Olympic Team.

Acting as a symbol of hope for refugees worldwide and bringing global attention to the refugee crisis, the athletes took part in the Olympic Games Rio 2016, marching and competing under the Olympic flag.

The Rio 2016 Refugee Olympic Team was composed of:

- Angelina Nada Lohalith, athletics (1500m)
- James Nyak Chiengjiek, athletics (400m)
- Paulo Amotun Lokoro, athletics (1500m)
- Popole Misenga, judo (-90kg)
- Rami Anis, swimming (100m butterfly)
- Rose Nathike Lokonyen, athletics (800m)
- Yiech Pur Biel, athletics (800M)
- Yolande Bukasa Mabika, judo (-70kg)



- Yonas Kinde, athletics (marathon)
- Yusra Mardini, swimming (100m butterfly and freestyle)

The members of team, who came from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Syria, were based and training in Belgium, Brazil, Germany, Kenya and Luxembourg.

Olympian and former marathon world record-holder Tegla Loroupe (Kenya) was the team's Chef de Mission, while Isabela Mazão (Brazil) from UNHCR Brazil, acted as the Deputy Chef de Mission.

After Rio 2016, the IOC and the UNHCR continued to support the 10 athletes to help them continue to train, but also to build their future. Six of them will be competing in Tokyo.

## 2. The Olympic Refuge Foundation

Further to the success of the Refugee Olympic Team, in September 2017 the IOC launched the Olympic Refuge Foundation as the next chapter in its long-term commitment to supporting the protection, development and empowerment of displaced young people through sport 365 days a year across the globe.

Working in cooperation with the Olympic Movement, the UN, international organisations, the private sector, non-governmental organisations and other foundations, the Foundation has since 2017 supported 12 programmes in eight countries (Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Jordan, Kenya, Mexico, Rwanda, Turkey and Uganda), with new programmes to be launched shortly in Colombia and France. As a result, 200,000 young people are currently benefiting from sports programmes designed to improve their well-being and social inclusion.

The Foundation's Programmes include:

- In Turkey (2019-2022), the programme led by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, in partnership with NGO ASAM, UNHCR and the Turkish Olympic Committee in the cities of Ankara, Sanliurfa, Bursa, Mersin and Samsun is aimed at strengthening social cohesion and inclusion through sport, directly involving 43,940 participants.
- In Uganda (2020-2023), the nationwide **Game Connect** programme delivered by a consortium including NGOs AVSI, Right to Play and Youth Sport Uganda, the Uganda Olympic Committee and UNHCR is designed to support the mental health of over 10,000 young refugees and their host communities in Adjumani, Palabek, Rwamwanja and Kampala.
- And in Colombia (2021-2024), the objective of the soon-to-be-launched programme is to improve social cohesion among young refugees and migrants from Venezuela, internally displaced and returning Colombians, and their host communities. A total of 5,772 young people are expected to participate in the programme.



Some displaced young people enrolled in the Olympic Refuge Foundation programmes will choose to pursue sport further through the network of clubs and coaches, and some may be awarded an IOC athlete scholarship. For the very top athletes, this could even lead to achieving the ultimate sporting goal, competing at the Olympic Games as part of the Refugee Olympic Team.

However, for most young people affected by displacement, the Foundation's work is about the benefits they can experience through sport that create a strong foundation for life, living out the Olympic values.

The Olympic Refuge Foundation also plays a key role in coordinating the **Sport for Refugees Coalition** launched at the first-ever Global Refugee Forum in 2021, in close cooperation with the IOC and UNHCR. The Coalition brings together over 80 partners – ranging from governments to NOCs, IFs, clubs, associations and civil society organisations – around three pledges to provide sporting opportunities to refugees.

The Foundation aims to provide access to safe sport to one million young people affected by displacement by 2024.

[www.olympicrefugefoundation.org](http://www.olympicrefugefoundation.org)

### 3. IOC-UNHCR collaboration

The partnership between the IOC and the UN Refugee Agency dates back to 1994. The mutual commitment to supporting refugees based on the fundamental belief in the power of sport to make the world a better place resulted in the implementation of sports projects in more than 45 countries, and a number of joint awareness campaigns.

Prior to the creation of the Olympic Refuge Foundation, the IOC and UNHCR started focussing on participation in sport as a way to protect forcibly displaced children and young people from risks such as abuse, exploitation, neglect and violence. Together with an NGO partner, Terres des hommes, they developed [a toolkit to help deliver high-quality 'Sport for Protection' programmes](#) and initiated a number of programmes:

- in Rwanda (2017-2019) through a programme aimed at protecting refugee adolescent and young adults from abuse, exploitation, neglect and violence through sport;
- in Mexico, focusing on young people transiting through the country as they flee violence in their countries (2018-2020); and
- in the Democratic Republic of Congo (2018-2021), seeking to support refugee adolescents and young people in refugee camps/camp sites and improve their physical and mental health.

### 4. Social media

[Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/RefugeeOlympicTeam/) – <https://www.facebook.com/RefugeeOlympicTeam/>  
[Instagram page](https://www.instagram.com/refugeeolympicteam/) – <https://www.instagram.com/refugeeolympicteam/>  
[Twitter account](https://twitter.com/refugeesolympic) – <https://twitter.com/refugeesolympic>

Hashtags: #RefugeeOlympicTeam #Hope #Tokyo2020 #StrongerTogether #OlympicRefuge





## 5. Media

For all enquiries, including interview requests, please contact the IOC Press Office: [pressoffice@olympic.org](mailto:pressoffice@olympic.org).

## 6. Photo gallery

Pictures of the Refugee Olympic Team Rio 2016 are available here: <https://flic.kr/s/aHsmUCZCFj>

Please note our editorial conditions:

The IOC consents to use of the photos mentioned subject to the following conditions:

- The photos may be used only for editorial purposes and to promote the Olympic Movement.
- For publications there can be no specific focus on Olympic images, i.e. for print publication (e.g. books and magazines), images may be used only inside the publication and not on the cover; and for digital publications, they cannot be featured on the home page of a website.
- The photos may not be used for any commercial and/or promotional purposes, including promotion of a third party or the products or services of a third party.
- You are responsible for obtaining all other consents (i.e. the copyright owner and the people who appear in the photo).

For any other enquiries, please contact [images@olympic.org](mailto:images@olympic.org).

## 7. Video News Releases

All video news releases are available here: [www.iocnewsroom.com](http://www.iocnewsroom.com).

## 8. Reference documents and stories

<https://www.olympic.org/refugee-olympic-team>

June 2019: [The legacy of the Refugee Olympic Team Rio 2016 lives on through the Olympic Refugee Foundation.](#)

June 2019: [IOC announces list of Refugee Athlete Scholarship-holders aiming to be part of IOC Refugee Olympic Team Tokyo 2020](#)

December 2019: [IOC and sports movement pledge support for refugees ahead of first-ever global refugee forum](#)

April 2020: [Farid Walizadeh: "with every darkness there's a light."](#)

May 2020: [Wrestling the light at the end of the tunnel for Refugee Olympic Team hopeful.](#)



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June 2020:

- [Judo central to mental health for Refugee Olympic Team hopeful](#)
- [From newcomer to elite athlete in a year: all part of the journey for Refugee Olympic Team hopeful](#)
- [Refugee Athlete Biel proves “anything is possible” through sport](#)
- [The pressure will be big, but my motivation will be bigger,” says Refugee Olympic Team hopeful.](#)

July 2020:

- [Teenage refugee Yien going for glory and campaigning for peace](#)
- [Get inspired and learn to meditate with IOC Refugee Olympic Team hopeful Asif Sultani](#)

August 2020: [New UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador Pur to help refugees “thrive” not just “survive”](#)

December 2020: [Refugee athletes give back to their communities](#)

February 2021: [IOC Executive Board receives an update on the Refugee Olympic Team for Tokyo 2020 and the support Olympic Solidarity continues to offer to refugee athletes](#)

April 2021: [Ali Noghandoust: “Use your talent to help others”](#)

Olympic Refuge Foundation stories:

[Olympic Refuge Foundation: Sport can offer hope to displaced communities during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

[World Refugee Day is a timely reminder of the impact that COVID-19 has had on displaced persons, and how the Olympic Refuge Foundation is helping them through sport](#)

[Improving the mental health of young refugees in Uganda through sport](#)

## **9. Contact**

Press Office – [pressoffice@olympic.org](mailto:pressoffice@olympic.org)