

Dear President and Members of the International Olympic (IOC) and Paralympic Committee (IPC),

In light of recent publications and public outrage regarding athletes' participation in the Olympics and Paralympics, we would like to draw your attention on the need to forge a world centred around respect to survivors of any crime, committing on forging a safe sporting environment – one that is fair, equitable and free from all forms of harassment and abuse.

Victim Support Europe (VSE) is the leading European umbrella organisation advocating on behalf of all victims of all crimes; no matter what the crime, no matter who the victim is. Since 1990, we have been working in Europe and beyond to ensure that victims of crime are respected, have access to their rights and are able to make their voice heard throughout the criminal justice process. Today, VSE has more than 80 member organisations across 36 countries, and a broad network of hundreds of partner organisations and institutions worldwide, who support millions of victims every year.

At VSE, we know that the impact of crime on victims can be felt for many years after the event and can often result in a life-long suffering. Victims are often not victimised only once, but continuously – through the denial of their suffering, self-blaming for what was done to them, and through the lack of respect and recognition of their experiences by the perpetrators, and the society as a whole.

Unfortunately, few environments are safe for victims; even those that pride themselves of values of excellence, respect and friendship – such as the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Being convicted or serving one's time in prison does not absolve anyone – not even the most liminal sports figures, to negate the suffering of their victims or allow them to dismiss or justify their behaviour that can often leave life-long consequences on their victims. The Olympics, as the most prestigious sporting event in the world, should set standards that respect and uphold human dignity. This standard should be recognised not only within the confines of the Olympic village but in daily life. The Olympic values should be exercised in all interactions, and in particular towards those that they might have harmed.

To this end, Victim Support Europe, invites the IOC and IPC to insist that athletes, but also anyone else priding themselves to be an Olympian (incl. athletes, coaches, press and media officers, volunteers, accredited staff, countries' delegates etc.) is not only showing excellence on their sport of choice, but also in taking responsibility for their actions and exerting empathy with those that they might have harmed. To this effect, Victim Support Europe suggests the IOC and the IPC reflecting on possible measures to be introduced to ensure that the Olympic environment becomes a safe environment for all victims of crimes – regardless of who the victim or the perpetrator might be.

This may require a range of measures such as: launching of public awareness campaigns to sensitise athletes, coaches and their peers on the importance of empathising with and supporting victims; introducing compulsory consent trainings for sporting figures; setting up tools to establish safe spaces and encourage reporting of crimes; launching mandatory courses on values and skills such as empathy and human rights for all participants in the Olympics and the Paralympics to blend sport with education and respect for fundamental ethical principles. We would further urge the IOC and the IPC to ensure the safety of all participants and attendees and consider implementing stronger eligibility criteria should a person convicted of a crime, in particular serious crimes such as child sexual abuse and exploitation, be a part of a national team.

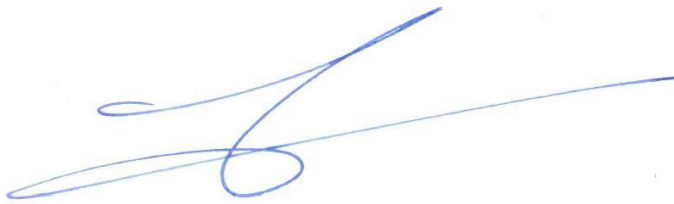
The safety and wellbeing of individuals are paramount to the Olympic and Paralympic Movement. As major sport agencies, you have a cultural power and an opportunity to demonstrate leadership by taking transformative action. With this letter we warmly invite you to both prevent non-accidental violence and nurture a safe,

Victim Support Europe AISBL – Association internationale sans but lucratif

Victim Support Europe is a network of non-governmental victim support organisations which provide assistance and information to victims of crime.
Victim Support Europe promotes the establishment and development of victims' rights and victim services throughout Europe.

welcoming and respectful sport environment for all and we remain at your disposal to discuss how we could embark on this important mission together.

Sincerely,



Rosa Jansen

President of the Board of Directors, Victim Support Europe