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The International Olympic Committee (IOC) OFFERS THE FOLLOWING VIDEO NEWS RELEASE TO ALL NEWS AGENCIES, BROADCASTERS AND ALL ONLINE PLATFORMS FREE OF CHARGE.

Story Headline: Ethiopian refugee Yonas Kinde selected for Refugee Olympic Team for Olympic Games Rio 2016

Date: 3 June 2016

Place: Luxembourg

STORY SCRIPT

Ethiopian refugee Yonas Kinde has been selected together with nine fellow refugees to be part of the Refugee Olympic Team (ROT) at the Olympic Games Rio 2016. The composition of the team was officially announced by the IOC today.

Kinde has been selected for the Refugee Olympic Team for the Olympic Games Rio 2016 after fleeing his home country for Luxembourg in 2012.

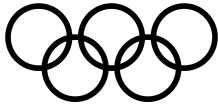
The marathon runner, who arrived in Luxembourg in 2012, will now represent the ROT - which will join the other teams of the 206 National Olympic Committees (NOCs) competing in Rio. The team was created by the IOC Executive Board in March as a symbol of hope for refugees worldwide.

The 36 year-old began running in Ethiopia as a teenager mainly in cross-country and 10,000m before converting to marathon running.

Upon his arrival in Luxembourg Kinde pursued his love for running and quickly became the best long distance runner in the country having joined a local running club.

Now residing in Luxembourg, Kinde is reflective on the direction his life has taken.

“But I am here and I am alive, so I’m happy and lucky also.”



Having now been chosen as part of the ROT, Kinde is thankful for the opportunity provided by the IOC and the Olympic Solidarity programme.

He said: “There are many refugees in the world, they can do good sports, they can do everything. But this chance is special for me, I can say that, it’s special for me.

“It’s a very good chance because before I had good results and can win here in Luxembourg; I’ve won many races but I don’t have a nationality to participate at the Olympic Games or European Championships so I do my best training but now it’s very important and very good news for the Refugee Team and refugee athletes for Olympic Solidarity to give this chance.”

Olympic Solidarity aims to ensure that athletes with talent have an equal chance of reaching the Games and succeeding in the Olympic arena.

Refugee athletes had to reach specific sporting standards and have official refugee status verified by the United Nations (UN) to be in contention to be part of the ROT – the first of its kind. They will march with the Olympic flag immediately before host nation Brazil at the Opening ceremony and will have their own welcoming ceremony in the Olympic Village.

Kinde reached the qualifying standards for Rio 2016 during the Frankfurt Marathon in October 2015.