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STORY HEADLINE: INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE ANNOUNCES REFUGEE OLYMPIC TEAM WILL COMPETE AT OLYMPIC GAMES TOKYO 2020

DATE: 9 October, 2018
LOCATION: Buenos Aires, Argentina
LANGUAGE: English, Portuguese, Arabic

Broadcast quality footage available at the IOC Newsroom: http://iocnewsroom.com

STORY SCRIPT:

There will be a Refugee Olympic Team at the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020. This decision was taken today by the membership of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) at the 133rd IOC Session in Buenos Aires. The initiative is a continuation of the IOC's commitment to play its part in addressing the global refugee crisis and another opportunity to continue to convey the message of solidarity and hope to millions of refugees and internally displaced athletes around the world.

The IOC Session has mandated Olympic Solidarity to establish the conditions for participation and define the identification and selection process of the team. These elements will be carried out in close collaboration with the National Olympic Committees, the International Sport Federations, the Organising Committee Tokyo 2020 and the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR.

The announcement of the Refugee Olympic Team Tokyo 2020 members will be made in 2020. IOC President Thomas Bach said: "The IOC Session has once again endorsed this initiative. In an ideal world, we would not need to have a Refugee Team at the Olympic Games. But, unfortunately, the reasons why we first created a Refugee Olympic Team before the Olympic Games Rio 2016 continue to persist. We will do our utmost to welcome refugee athletes and give them a home and a flag in the Olympic Village in Tokyo with all the Olympic athletes from 206 National Olympic Committees. This is the continuation of an exciting, human and Olympic journey, and a reminder to refugees that they are not forgotten."

UNHCR High Commissioner Filippo Grandi commended the decision: "In 2016, the Rio refugee team captured the imagination of people around the world and showed the human side of the global refugee crisis through sport. I‘m delighted that this tradition is to continue in Tokyo. Giving these exceptional young people the opportunity to compete at the very highest levels is admirable."
Back in 2015, the first-ever Refugee Olympic Team was formed by the IOC. Ten athletes were chosen to represent people who are too often forgotten. It was a historic moment in Brazil when a team consisting of refugees participated for the first time ever in the Olympic Games at Rio 2016.

As they marched in the Opening Ceremony, two swimmers, two judokas, a marathon runner and five middle-distance runners who originally hailed from Ethiopia, South Sudan, Syria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo became instant role models for the 68.5 million or so refugees and internally displaced people, and true global ambassadors for the values of Olympism.

Since the Olympic Games, the IOC has continued to support these 10 Refugee Olympians, as well as a number of other refugee athletes across five continents via Olympic Solidarity’s Refugee Athlete Support Programme. Through scholarships, which come in the form of monthly training grants and fixed competition subsidies, Olympic Solidarity and their host National Olympic Committees help these refugee athletes to prepare for and participate in national and international competitions. UNHCR, through its long term collaboration with the IOC, plays a crucial role in all stages of selection, approval and follow up of the athletes.

Furthermore, in September 2017, the IOC launched the Olympic Refugee Foundation to support more broadly the protection and empowerment of vulnerable displaced people through sport and through the creation of safe spaces; again, partnering with UNHCR and local implementation partners in the field.

For the last 20 years, and with the collaboration of UNHCR, the IOC has been providing relief to refugees and internally displaced people by using the power of sport to promote youth development, education, social integration and health. These actions have brought the joy of sport and the related psychological healing to refugee populations in many camps and settlements around the world.

SHOTLIST:

00:02 SOUNDbite: Thomas Bach, IOC President (English Language)
“The IOC Session, here in Buenos Aires has created the Refugee Olympic Team Tokyo 2020.”

00:12 Yiech Pur Biel, member of the Rio 2016 Refugee Olympic team, celebrates the news
00:18 The Refugee Olympic Team enter the Rio 2016 Opening Ceremony
00:24 Thomas Bach and Ban Ki-moon applaud the Refugee Olympic Team
00:26 Wide shot of the Rio 2016 Opening Ceremony

00:28 SOUNDbite: Thomas Bach, IOC President (English Language)
“You are sending a message of hope to all the many millions of refugees around the globe. You had to flee from your homes because of violence, hunger or just because you were different.”

00:48 Sequence of images of the Refugee Olympic Team being photographed in 2016
00:56 SOUNDBITE: Yiech Pur Biel, member of the Refugee Olympic Team Rio 2016 (English Language)
“By approving the creation of the very first Olympic Refugee Team back in 2016, the IOC President and you, the IOC Members, have not only contributed to changing the life of the 10 members of the team who had the chance to compete in the Olympic Games, but you have also given hope to all the other millions of refugees by highlighting the problem and bringing attention of the ever-growing global refugee crisis.”

01:30 Shots of Yusra Mardini, of the 2016 Refugee Olympic Team, on stage

01:41 SOUNDBITE: Yusra Mardini, member of the Refugee Olympic Team Rio 2016 (English Language)
“The idea of the team was to inspire refugees and to inspire the young generation and I think we did that. We got a lot of really positive message and I got a lot of fan posts. People are looking up to the team, so I think we achieved that and I think a lot of refugees think they can now dream again like ‘they were refugees and now they’re Olympians, they’re swimming, they’re training and doing everything again’ so it’s important to get this message to them.”

02:40 SOUNDBITE: Popole Misenga, member of the Refugee Olympic Team Rio 2016 (Portuguese Language)
"Jogo Olímpico é uma oportunidade, um caminho pra mim. Conseguir correr até um sonho -- que isto é correr até um sonho -- até a próxima, do Japão. Eu quero ganhar uma medalha por todos os refugiados do mundo. Meu sonho que, todo dia antes de dormir, eu penso isso: 'Eu quero ganhar uma medalha.' Essa medalha -- presente para os refugiados todos do mundo. De toda uma coisa que recebe refugiado."
The Olympic Games are an opportunity, a way for me to pursue a dream - because this is pursuing a dream - until the next in Japan. I want to win a medal for all the refugees in the world. That's my dream: every night before I sleep, I think, 'I want to win a medal.' A medal - a gift for all refugees in the world. From something that takes refugees in.

03:15 The 2016 Refugee Olympic Team line up for a photo
03:21 Cameras filming
03:24 The 2016 Refugee Olympic Team posing and laughing

03:28 SOUNDBITE: Yolande Bukasa Mabika, member of the Refugee Olympic Team Rio 2016 (Portuguese Language)
"Esporte me deu um coração bom, forte. Tô aqui. Eu tenho que dividir tudo no mundo inteiro, até o meu dia do final, que Deus vai falar que ‘hoje é o teu final do dia.’"
"Sports have given me a good, strong heart. I'm here. I must share everything with the world until my last day when God says it’s the end for me."

03:42 Close up of the 2016 Refugee Olympic Team lining up for a photo
03:48 Shot of the media filming
03:51 SOUNDBITE: Yolande Bukasa Mabika, member of the Refugee Olympic Team Rio 2016 (Portuguese Language)
"Sou esportiva, tô com força. A força acaba; a história fica. Tem que contar isso pra todo mundo, no mundo inteiro."
"I'm a sportswoman, I'm strong now. Strength ends; history remains. We must tell that to everyone in the world."

04:03 Members of the 2016 Refugee Olympic Team playing table tennis

04:11 SOUNDBITE: Yonas Kinde, member of the Refugee Olympic Team Rio 2016 (English Language)
"I visited some refugees after the Rio Olympics and I promised myself I would do some activities and every Sunday I try to visit the refugee camp to help some athletes have fun and do some training together. It's quite important for me, but it's still difficult for me to integrate with the people. To be a refugee is not so easy."

04:44 Panning shot of the Olympism in Forum event in Buenos Aires
04:50 Shot of Yiech Pur Biel speaking on stage

04:55 SOUNDBITE: Yiech Pur Biel, member of the Refugee Olympic Team Rio 2016 (English Language)
"The Olympics means togetherness, not difference. You come from a different background but you come together to achieve a common goal which is competing against your fellow human being to achieve what we need in life. That is the reason why I say these are the important values to abide by and a refugee needs to be involved like at the Olympics in 2016, to include other refugees to participate, that is what we are looking for."

05:26 Shot of Yusra Mardini on stage

05:28 SOUNDBITE: Yiech Pur Biel, member of the Refugee Olympic Team Rio 2016 (English Language)
"There are some others saying we are failing as a refugee, but it will not stop us to spread the message and we will continue to leave our difficulties, to be better people in life because to achieve great things in life, requires a lot of time. What we know and swear by, is "let's use the Olympic movement' spirit."

05:58 SOUNDBITE: Yusra Mardini, member of the Refugee Olympic Team Rio 2016 (Arabic Language)
"لقد كتبت كثيراً من الأدب في هذا الفريق "الأوليمبيي للاجئين" لأنه هذا الفريق مثل رسالة أمثل لكثير عالم عايشين في بلاد جديدة وما عادنا "باتسورت" لنتي نحن وما فيهم يشاركونا في жизньنا، مشاهد يهك هذا الفريق كثير مملاً

I think it is super important to have a Refugee Olympic Team because it is spreading a message of hope around the world and it is also, you know, there are a lot of people who cannot compete for any country because they are refugees and don’t have a status in the country where they are living right now and they cannot compete for their countries so they
can do sport but there is no goal or nothing that they can even compete for, so I think it’s super important to have a Refugee Olympic Team.

-- ENDS --

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