STORY HEADLINE: German-based Syrian refugee swimmer Yusra Mardini to compete in her second Games for IOC Refugee Olympic Team

DATE: 8 June 2021
LOCATION: Germany
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: Syria
LANGUAGE: English
Broadcast quality footage available at the IOC Newsroom: http://iocnewsroom.com

STORY SCRIPT:
Syrian refugee Yusra Mardini will continue her inspirational Olympic story having been selected to compete again for the IOC Refugee Olympic Team Tokyo 2020.

Yusra brought worldwide attention to the plight of refugees when she competed for the IOC Refugee Olympic Team in the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. She had fled the war in Syria with her sister, swimming for hours in open water to reach Greece and help save other lives:
“Sport saved my life,” she says. “We almost drowned and If I wasn’t a swimmer it would have been really terrorizing me.”

She was eventually able to resume her swimming training in Berlin, and her extraordinary story of courage and hope is told during her work as a United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) ambassador - the youngest ever.

Yusra is one of 56 refugee athletes currently supported by the IOC through the Olympic Solidarity Scholarship for Refugee Athletes programme, and says of Olympic participation for the Refugee Olympic Team:

“I think it’s a great opportunity to represent millions around the world. Those people are normal and have dreams, they are like you. It’s saying no matter who you are, what colour you are, you are an athlete there and that’s what matters.”

The 29-member IOC Refugee Olympic team (EOR)* initiative at the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 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 Refugee Olympic Team will compete in Tokyo under the French acronym EOR which stands for Equipe Olympique des Réfugiés.

SHOTLIST:
00:02 Overhead camera view of Yusra Mardini pushing off holding a flotation device
00:10 Camera tracking as Yusra swims backstroke

00:16 SOUNDbite: Yusra Mardini, IOC Refugee Olympic Team (EOR), Swimming 100m Freestyle (English Language)
Q. Why is it important to have a refugee team competing at the Olympic Games?
"I think it’s a great opportunity to represent millions around the world, you know. To represent that those people are normal and they have dreams, and they are like you know, it’s just simply saying no matter who you are, what colour you are, you are an athlete there and that’s what matters."

00:37 Yusra does a tumble turn at the end of the pool
00:42 Yusra swimming front crawl tracked by camera
00:48 Yusra does a tumble turn at the other end of the pool

00:53 SOUNDbite: Yusra Mardini, IOC Refugee Olympic Team (EOR), Swimming 100m Freestyle (English Language)
Q. Did you ever think when you were little that you would make it to the Olympic Games?
"When I was young I always dreamt about the Olympics and I knew somehow that I am going to go, I didn’t know why or how or when but it was my goal since I was young and I was working so hard for it. So I was like I’m going to qualify for it, so after I left Syria and everything happened I really wasn’t expecting that I am going to go ever to the Olympics, and I went after one year."

01:19 Underwater shot of Yusra swimming towards camera and taking a break

01:34 SOUNDbite: Yusra Mardini, IOC Refugee Olympic Team (EOR), Swimming 100m Freestyle (English Language)
Q. How has sport made a difference to your life as a refugee?
"Sport saved my life, especially swimming, that I am a swimmer. Umm the trip from Syria to Germany was really tough and the boat story, that we almost drowned, you know if I wasn’t swimmer it would have been like really terrorizing me, and you know, but like we were calmer than the others, we knew what to do and we were in the water and even if like the boat got broken I would have, I could have swam."

02:11 Yusra pushing off from the wall of the pool
02:17 Wide shot of Yusra swimming front crawl
02:24 Underwater view of Yusra doing a tumble turn

02:33 SOUNDbite: Yusra Mardini, IOC Refugee Olympic Team (EOR), Swimming 100m Freestyle (English Language)
Q. How can sport help refugees?
"They can focus their, you know sometimes they are frustrated, or you know sometimes they are traumatized, especially kids, and I feel they can redirect all of this anger, you know, on sport. And I think it’s a really good way to get them involved in community and to also make them dream again."

02:57 Yusra putting her snorkel on the edge of the pool
03:01 Underwater view of Yusra pushing off in the pool
03:10 Yusra doing standing lunges in the gym
03:17 Yusra lying on the gym floor exercising her arm

03:23 SOUNDbite: Yusra Mardini, IOC Refugee Olympic Team (EOR), Swimming 100m Freestyle (English Language)
Q. What are your goals after the Olympic Games?
“I don’t know if I’m going to continue swimming or not after Tokyo, but I’m 100% sure I will still do something with swimming, umm and my goals are you know to get involved more with refugees, I am involved already but I want to focus more, I want to do a project or maybe a foundation umm and help them more. I want to maybe study, and I want to know what I want to be in the future.”

03:52 Yusra lifting weights in the gym

-- ENDS --

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