

DECISION OF THE IPC JUDICIAL TRIBUNAL

Complaint concerning alleged breaches of the IPC Code of Ethics and the Supplementary Regulations (Paralympic Games Paris 2024 Demonstrations)

International Paralympic Committee

Complainant

And

Mr Ahmed Mohamed Fadl

Respondent

IPC Judicial Tribunal:

Mark Copeland, Chairman of the IPC Judicial Tribunal

Robert Cassius de Linval, Judicial Tribunal Member

Jitske Visser, Judicial Tribunal Member

Assistants:

Louis Muncey, Clerk

Hannah Birchall, Clerk

Leen Coudenys, Judicial Tribunal Assistant

Complainant:

International Paralympic Committee ('IPC'), represented by Liz Riley, Global Counsel

Respondent:

Ahmed Mohamed Fadl

National Paralympic Committee:

Egyptian Paralympic Committee

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This is the reasoned decision of the IPC Judicial Tribunal (**'Judicial Tribunal'**) in relation to a complaint brought by the Complainant against the Respondent (**'Complaint'**) in respect of alleged breaches of the IPC Code of Ethics (**'Code'**), Appendix A of the Code (IPC regulations governing the procedures for dealing with complaints regarding alleged breaches of the IPC Code of Ethics) (**'Ethics Regulations'**), and the Supplementary Regulations (Paralympic Games Paris 2024 Demonstrations) (**'Demonstration Regulations'**).

- 1.2 The Complainant is the IPC. The Respondent is Mr. Ahmed Mohamed Fadl, an Egyptian athlete who competed at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games in Sitting Volleyball.

2. Jurisdiction and Proceedings

- 2.1 The Demonstration Regulations are adopted as the supplementary regulations referred to in Article 2.2.2 of the Paralympic Games Regulations.
- 2.2 The Demonstrations Regulations took effect on 26 June 2024 and applied only during the '**Games Period**', meaning the period which commenced on 18 August 2024 (which was ten days before the opening ceremony of the Paralympic Games Paris 2024) and ended at midnight on 10 September 2024 (the day of the closing of the Paralympic Village).
- 2.3 Pursuant to Article 2.1 of the Paralympic Games Regulations, each "Participant", meaning a "*person participating in the Paralympic Games in any capacity, including (without limitation) each athlete...*", is bound by and required to comply with the Demonstration Regulations as a condition of participation with the Paralympic Games. As a result, each Participant completes a condition of participation form prior to the Games Period to agree to the Demonstration Regulations.
- 2.4 The Respondent competed at the Paralympic Games, within the "Games Period", as an athlete, and therefore is a "Participant" for the purposes of the Demonstration Regulations and is accordingly bound by and required to comply with the Demonstration Regulations.
- 2.5 The Respondent is also subject to the Code which states in the "Scope" section that it shall apply to the Paralympic Games and to any member of the Paralympic Family, which includes athletes.
- 2.6 Clause 1.1 of the Ethics Regulations grants exclusive authority to deal with complaints brought under the Ethics Regulations to the IPC Legal and Ethics Committee. Clause 1.2 of the Ethics Regulations permits any person or body that falls within the scope of the Code to bring a complaint to the IPC Legal and Ethics Committee that some other person (also falling within the Code) has breached the Code.
- 2.7 Article 3.1 of the Demonstration Regulations grants exclusive authority to deal with any assertions that a breach of the Demonstration Regulations has occurred to the ad hoc Judicial Tribunal.
- 2.8 It is noted that the IPC Constitution and the Demonstration Regulations refer to a Judicial Tribunal rather than the IPC Legal and Ethics Committee (as referred to in the Ethics Regulations and the Code). Notwithstanding the reference to both the IPC Legal and Ethics Committee and the Judicial Tribunal, this reasoned decision is rendered by the Judicial Tribunal which has authority as the appropriate body to determine the Complaint for the following reasons:
- (a) As per Article 68.5.5 of the IPC Constitution, which came into effect on 28 June 2024 and prior to the Complaint once all pending cases are resolved, the existing IPC Legal and Ethics Committee and Appeals Panel are then disbanded and lose their authority;
- (b) The Demonstration Regulations amend the Code (as per Article 1.2 of the Demonstration Regulations) such that the provisions relating to the Judicial Tribunal

prevail over the Legal and Ethics Committee (in respect of references to the Legal and Ethics Committee in the Code);

- (c) Article 3.1 of the Demonstration Regulations confirms the Ethics Regulations are amended as stated in the Demonstration Regulations which confirm explicitly that the Judicial Tribunal will determine allegations of demonstration violations (such that the references to the Legal and Ethics Committee in the Ethics Regulations are overridden by the Demonstration Regulations).

- 2.9 Article 3.1(c) of the Demonstration Regulations requires the Judicial Tribunal to form a hearing panel to include at least one Paralympian who has competed in at least one of the previous three editions of the summer or winter Paralympic Games at the time of appointment ('**Hearing Panel**'). The appointment of Jitske Visser satisfies this requirement.
- 2.10 The Hearing Panel of the Judicial Tribunal was formed in accordance with Article 3.1(c) of the Demonstration Regulations and Clause 8.1 of the Ethics Regulations, the Athlete is bound by the applicable rules and the Judicial Tribunal (and the Hearing Panel) has jurisdiction to hear the Complaint.
- 2.11 The Complainant and the Respondent (via the Egyptian Paralympic Committee) confirmed they were content for the Complaint to be dealt with on the papers. In light of those confirmations and in accordance with Clause 7.5 of the Ethics Regulations, the Hearing Panel determined that it was appropriate to deal with the Complaint on the papers without an oral hearing.

3. Background to the Complaint

- 3.1 The Respondent is an athlete from Egypt who competed at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games.
- 3.2 On 6 September 2024, the Respondent competed in the Sitting Volleyball men's bronze medal match, in which the Respondent and his team won a bronze medal.
- 3.3 During the following medal ceremony on 6 September 2024:
 - (a) immediately prior to receiving the bronze medal, the Respondent unzipped the jacket he was wearing (and removed the jacket slightly off of his shoulders) to reveal a t-shirt bearing a picture of a man and a written inscription;
 - (b) as the bronze medal is draped on the Respondent's neck, he faces the camera.
 - (c) Whilst the bronze medal is around the Respondent's neck, he turns to the camera and stands still. He ignores the presenter who has his hand out to shake hands with him.
 - (d) The Respondent remains focused on the camera and moves the medal hanging around his neck to his right side so that the medal is not covering the picture on his T-Shirt. This gives the camera a clear view of the picture and T-shirt.
 - (e) the Respondent then proceeds to shake the hand of the presenter who provided the Respondent with the bronze medal and subsequently zips up his jacket to conceal the t-shirt.
- 3.4 The above actions described at paragraph 3.3 shall be referred to in this reasoned decision as the '**Demonstration**'.

4. Alleged Breach of the Demonstration Regulations and the Code

4.1 The Complainant asserted that the Demonstration breached Article 2.2 of the Demonstration Regulations, Article 2.2.2 of the Paralympic Games Regulations and (as a result) Article 1.12 of the Code

4.2 Article 2.2 of the Demonstration Regulations states:

During the Games Period, Participants may not demonstrate, protest, and/or make political statements at any Paralympic venue or other area related to the Paralympic Games (including, without limitation, during Official Ceremonies, on the Field of Play, and/or in the Paralympic Village), save as set out in Article 2.3.

4.3 Article 2.3 of the Demonstration Regulations states:

As the sole exception to Article 2.2, during the Games Period, Participants may demonstrate, protest, and/or make political statements as follows, provided always that no Impermissible Elements are involved:

(a) in the mixed zones, the International Broadcasting Centre and the Main Media Centre, including when speaking to the media; and/or

(b) during press conferences and media interviews; and/or

(c) during team meetings; and/or

(d) using traditional media and/or digital media and/or social media channels. Such channels may be used at the above times and places and at any other time and place (except only that the Participant may not use these channels to demonstrate, protest, or make any political statement when on the Field of Play or when participating in any Official Ceremonies).

4.4 Article 2.2.2 of the Paralympic Games Regulations:

No kind of demonstration, protest, or political statement is permitted in any Paralympic venues or other areas related to the Paralympic Games, except to the extent permitted in any supplementary regulations issued by the IPC in relation to this Article 2.2.2.

4.5 Article 1 of the Code states:

Members of the Paralympic Family shall abide by and respect the IPC Code of Ethics at all times and, in particular, adhere to the following ethical standards:

[...]

1.12 Respect the principle of neutrality in sport, including by (without limitation) complying with Article 2.2.2 of the Paralympic Games Principles and any related supplementary regulations issued by the IPC" [i.e. including the Demonstration Regulations].

5. Burden and Standard of Proof

- 5.1 As set out in Clause 4.1 of the Ethics Regulations, the Complainant *"must prove its case on the balance of probabilities"*.

6. Written Submissions

- 6.1 On 12 September 2024, the Complainant wrote to the Egyptian Paralympic Committee detailing the Complaint, explaining that they were investigating whether the actions of the Athlete breached the Demonstration Regulations and requesting:

- (a) confirmation of the identity of the Respondent;
- (b) that the Egyptian Paralympic Committee notify the Respondent of the contents of the Complainant's letter and ask that the Respondent provide the Complainant with an explanation of the incident;
- (c) that the Complainant provides any further relevant information about the incident; and
- (d) confirmation that the Egyptian Paralympic Committee shared the Demonstration Regulations with the Respondent.

- 6.2 On 31 October 2024, the Egyptian Paralympic Committee responded to the Complainant's letter, explaining that the t-shirt was in reference to the Respondent's national coach who passed away ten days before the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games and that the Respondent did not know that his actions could lead to sanctions. The Egyptian Paralympic Committee confirmed that *"all players were informed about the regulations"*.

- 6.3 On 23 February 2025, the Complainant provided written submissions in a statement of case to the Hearing Panel in relation to the Complaint. In its statement of case, the Complainant considered that the Respondent had breached the Demonstration Regulations (and the Paralympic Games Regulations, and the Code) in carrying out the Demonstration:

(a) he was a "Participant", as an athlete competing in the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games;

(b) his conduct occurred on 6 September 2024, i.e. within the "Games Period";

(c) his conduct:

(i) occurred during a podium/victory ceremony i.e. an "Official Ceremony" and

(ii) in any event took place at a Paralympic venue; and

(d) his conduct was a demonstration in support of his coach who had recently passed away.

- 6.4 In the Complainant's statement of case, when considering the breach, the Complainant stated that *"it is entirely sympathetic to the Athlete's desire to remember his coach, and there is no suggestion that the content of the Athlete's demonstration was not in support of a laudable cause"*. However, the Complainant also stated that the relevant regulations are *"not concerned with the substance of a prohibited demonstration, but with the location/timing of such demonstration"*. The Complainant confirmed that there had been a number of requests from athletes to make gestures of remembrance which had been denied (and in which the Complainant worked with athletes to find an alternative location to make such a remembrance).

- 6.5 The Complainant further noted that the Demonstration Regulations had been widely circulated within the Paralympic Movement (including during a presentation by the IPC at the morning Chef de Mission meeting in the Paralympic Village on 27 August 2024) and had been introduced following a lengthy, global consultation in which athletes were able to express their views.
- 6.6 In response to the Complainant's statement of case, on 18 March 2025, the Egyptian Paralympic Committee sent a letter to the Hearing Panel providing a response from the Respondent in respect of the Demonstration. The response:
- (a) explained that the Demonstration was due to the team's coach who passed away days before the start of the tournament and that the Respondent wanted to dedicate the bronze medal for the spirit of his coach, who contributed to his achievement;
 - (b) cited "*a similar case from the Tokyo Olympics where a weightlifter dedicated his victory to the spirit of his wife, who passed away before the start of the tournament*"; and
 - (c) noted that the Respondent confirmed that "*the image of his coach, who is a former Paralympian, held no religious, political, or any Cooperative affiliation with any sponsorship and was displayed in accordance with regulations*".

7. Decisions and Reasons

The Hearing Panel finds that the Complaint has been proven on the balance of probabilities.

- 7.1 The Hearing Panel is satisfied that the Respondent's conduct constitutes a breach of Article 2.2 of the Demonstration Regulations as:
- (a) pursuant to Article 1.4 of the Demonstration Regulations, the Respondent is bound and required to comply with the Demonstration Regulations as a "Participant" in the Paralympic Games;
 - (b) the Code applies to the Respondent as an athlete participating in the Paralympic Games and as a member of the Paralympic Family;
 - (c) the conduct occurred on 6 September 2024 within the "Games Period" and took place during a medal ceremony (forming part of the "Official Ceremonies" for the purposes of the Demonstration Regulations);
 - (d) the conduct took place on the "Field of Play" (which includes, pursuant to Article 7(k) of the Demonstration Regulations "*areas designated for podium, medal presentation, and victory ceremonies*") at a Paralympic venue;
 - (e) the Respondent's conduct was a demonstration for the purposes of the Demonstration Regulations:
 - (i) the use of a picture and wording as a form of visual remembrance by the Respondent was a statement which constitutes a demonstration or protest; and
 - (ii) the conduct was not covered by any exemptions in the Demonstration Regulations.

- 7.2 The Hearing Panel agreed with the Complainant that the substance or meaning behind the display of the t-shirt was immaterial for the purposes of determining whether a violation of Article 2.2 of the Demonstration Regulations had taken place. It is enough that a demonstration (or in this case commemoration) was made in the field of play and was not captured by any applicable exemptions.

8. Sanctions

- 8.1 As the Hearing Panel has found that a breach of the Code has occurred, the matter of sanctions arises. The Complainant noted in its statement of case that, while indicating sanctions were a matter for the Hearing Panel, a public written warning would be proportionate.

- 8.2 The possible sanctions for breaches of the Demonstration Regulations are set out in Article 4.1 of the Demonstration Regulations. Article 4.1 of the Demonstrations Regulations states:

The Hearing Panel may impose any one or more of the following sanctions for a Demonstration Violation, based on what it considers to be proportionate in all of the circumstances of the case:

[...]

(b) a warning, which may be either private or public;

(c) a requirement to undergo an education or training programme.

- 8.3 Pursuant to Article 4.3 of the Demonstration Regulations, the Hearing Panel must assess proportionality to determine the appropriate sanction keeping in mind the express considerations at Article 4.3(a) to (j). Specifically, the Hearing Panel acknowledged that:

- (a) there was pre-meditation by the Respondent in respect of the Demonstration as he had worn the t-shirt in question to the medal ceremony (Article 4.3(a));
- (b) the Demonstration did not cause harm to others (Article 4.3(d));
- (c) the Demonstration took place during an Official Ceremony, but caused limited disruption (Article 4.3(f)); and
- (d) this would constitute a first offence by the Respondent (Article 4.3(i)).

- 8.4 Considering all the circumstances, the Hearing Panel finds that the appropriate sanction is the issuance of a public written warning in accordance with Article 4.1(b) of the Demonstration Regulations.

- 8.5 The Decision of the Hearing Panel will be made publicly available on the website of the Complainant pursuant to Clause 2.1 of the Ethics Regulations.

14 July 2025



Mark J Copeland
Chairman of the Judicial Tribunal