

## **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 Sadegh Beit Sayah**

**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

Ife Danso, Clerk

Leen Coudenys, Judicial Tribunal Assistant

Complainant:

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

Respondent:

**Mr. Sadegh Beit Sayah**

National Paralympic Committee:

The National Paralympic Committee Islamic Republic of Iran (**'NPC Iran'**)

## 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. Sadegh Beit Sayah, an Iranian athlete who competed at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games in the World Para Athletics Men's F41 javelin event.

## 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 Demonstration 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 in 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 (such Paralympian may be a member of the Committee or co-opted ad hoc to sit on the hearing panel) (**'Hearing Panel'**). The appointment of Jitske Visser satisfies this requirement.
- 2.10 The Hearing Panel of the Judicial Tribunal was therefore 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 NPC Iran) 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 Iranian para-athlete who competed at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games in Paris. Specifically, on 7 September 2024, the Respondent competed in the Men's F41 javelin event.
- 3.2 After finishing the F41 javelin event, the Respondent made a throat slitting gesture on the field of play. The Respondent then looked through his bag to retrieve a black flag with red writing on it. The flag was not the flag of Iran. The Respondent then displayed the black flag whilst on the field of play. The Respondent adjusted the orientation of the flag and then displayed the flag in full view of the camera for approximately six seconds. The flag was understood to have contained a religious message and NPC Iran subsequently confirmed that the wording on the flag translated into the phrases "*O Mother of the Sons*" and "*Peace be upon her*".
- 3.3 The Respondent was disqualified from the event in accordance with the rules of World Para Athletics, after he was issued with a yellow card in respect of the throat slitting gesture and a red card for the use of the flag.
- 3.4 World Para Athletics and NPC Iran exchanged views on the actions of the Athlete following the Paralympic Games.
- 3.5 In respect of the throat slitting gesture:
- (a) the Respondent explained that the gesture was directed towards the Respondent's coach and was in reference to his breaking of a World and Paralympic record; and
  - (b) NPC Iran explained "*that the athlete's "throat-slitting" gesture has merely been an exuberant gesture connoting his extravagant joy for breaking a record.*"

3.6 In respect of the use of the flag:

- (a) the Respondent explained that the flag was used to commemorate his mother and as a symbol of good luck;
- (b) NPC Iran explained that the Respondent's use of a flag was intended as a mark of respect by the Respondent.

3.7 On 19 November 2024, NPC Iran published a written apology from the Respondent on its website for the "*non-compliance of Para Athletics rules and regulations in Paris 2024*". World Para Athletics subsequently confirmed that it would not be taking any further steps in respect of the Respondent's actions but confirmed that the Complainant may initiate separate action in accordance with its own regulations.

3.8 On 25 February 2025, the Complainant issued the Complaint. The Complainant confirmed that the Complaint was submitted in respect of the Respondent's use of the flag only.

3.9 In its statement of case, the Complainant confirmed that it was not asserting that the Respondent's throat slitting gesture constituted a breach of the Demonstration Regulations. This was on the basis that, on the evidence available, "*it is not clear to the IPC that such conduct was a demonstration, protest and/or political statement (as opposed to some sort of inappropriate celebration)*."

#### **4. Alleged Breach of the Demonstration Regulations and the Code**

4.1 The Complainant asserted that the Respondent, in displaying the flag on the field of play, 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 In its statement of case, the Complainant considered that the Respondent had breached the Demonstration Regulations (and the Paralympic Games Regulations, and the Code) through his use of a flag as:

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

*(b) his conduct occurred on 7 September 2024, i.e. within the "Games Period";*

*(c) his conduct: (i) occurred on the "Field of Play" and (ii) in any event took place at a Paralympic venue; and*

*(d) his conduct was a demonstration, protest and/or political statement.*

6.2 The Complainant further submitted that none of the exemptions in Article 2.3 of the Demonstration Regulations applied.

6.3 The Complainant noted that the meaning of the flag by the Respondent was unclear but the relevant regulations are *"not concerned with the substance of a prohibited demonstration, but with the location/timing of such demonstration."*

6.4 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 similar regulations had been in force for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic games. The Complainant highlighted that NPC Iran was sent direct communications regarding the application of regulations in respect of demonstrations in Tokyo 2020 following a breach of those regulations by an Iranian athlete.

6.5 The Respondent did not file extensive written submissions in response to the Complaint. On 16 March 2025, NPC Iran responded to the Complainant's statement of case by e-mail setting out information they had received from the Respondent which included:

(a) A short note from the Respondent which stated;

*I am deeply sad for the occurrence of infringement during the Games and again declare my regret if any inconvenience happened in para athletics.*

*I also respect any judgement made by Judicial Tribunal. Additionally; as planning for the future,*

*I extend my request to have utmost forgiveness and tolerance from the IPC.*

*In conclusion, I am committed to fully comply the World Para Athletics rules & regulations in my sport career.*

- (b) A certified English translation of the text displayed on the prohibited flag indicating that the flag contained two phrases, being "O Mother of the Sons" and "Peace be upon her".

6.5.2 The Respondent and NPC Iran had previously provided explanations in respect of the Respondent's use of the flag to World Para Athletics:

- (a) NPC Iran noted:

*Regarding the use of the flag, the athlete intended to respect to a religious flag based on his personal beliefs. It is worth mentioning that the athlete folds the flag as soon as he notices the referee's warning, apologizes, and puts it back to his backpack; consequently, he did not raise the flag over head or put it on his chest, as athletes usually do.*

- (b) The Respondent noted:

*I am physically distinct from others in society, yet through diligent effort and overnight training, I was able to set a new world and Paralympic record. In that moment, I was overwhelmed with joy and, without any prior intention, I took out the flag from my bag to commemorate my mother and as a symbol of good luck. However, upon the referee's warning, I instantly put the flag back in the bag and apologized to the referee.*

6.6 The Hearing Panel was also provided with video footage of the incident.

## **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 7 September 2024 within the "Games Period";
- (d) the conduct occurred on the "Field of Play" (defined in the Demonstration Regulations as "any areas where competitions take place") as shown in the video footage of the incident which clearly demonstrates the Respondent showing the flag in an arena where competition had clearly taken place;

- (e) the Respondent's conduct was a demonstration for the purposes of the Demonstration Regulations:
  - (i) the Respondent confirmed that the display of a flag was an act of "*commemoration*" and consequently was a deliberate act intended to convey a message or a meaning;
  - (ii) the flag was not the national flag of the Respondent; and
  - (iii) the display of the flag did not fall within any of the exemptions detailed in Article 2.3 of the Demonstration Regulations.

7.2 The Hearing Panel agreed with the Complainant that the substance or meaning behind the display of the flag 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.

7.3 For completeness, the Hearing Panel also noted that the Respondent appeared to accept, and express regret for, "*occurrence of infringement during the Games*" in his response to the Complainant's statement of case. The Respondent had also previously apologised for "*non-compliance of para athletics rules & regulations in Paris 2024 Paralympic Games*" in the published apology on NPC Iran's website.

## **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 Demonstration 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) this would constitute a first offence by the Respondent (Article 4.3(i));
- (b) the Respondent has expressed regret for breaching the Demonstration Regulations, and published a public apology on NPC Iran's website in both the official language of the IPC (English) and Farsi (Article 4.3(j));
- (c) there was premeditation on behalf of the Respondent as he had packed the flag in a kit bag which he had access to whilst competing (Article 4.3(a)); and
- (d) the Demonstration did not cause harm to others (Article 4.3(d)).

- 8.4 The Hearing Panel noted that the factors set out at Article 4.3 of the Demonstration Regulations are not exhaustive and therefore also took into account the fact that the Respondent had been disqualified from the Men's F41 javelin event by World Para Athletics.
- 8.5 Considering all the circumstances, the Hearing Panel finds that the appropriate outcome is the issuance of a public written warning in accordance with Article 4.1(b) of the Demonstration Regulations, and for the Respondent to undergo an education or training programme in sport ethics in accordance with Article 4.1(c) of the Demonstration Regulations.
- 8.6 Pursuant to the discretion at Article 4.1(q) and in light of the fact that an athlete competing under the auspices of NPC Iran has previously been sanctioned under similar regulations governing the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, the Hearing Panel finds that this educational or training programme should be provided for and paid for by NPC Iran in conjunction with the IPC's directions. The Panel wishes to highlight and reiterate the responsibilities that all NPCs have to ensure that the rules relating to conduct are fully understood and respected by the athletes of their respective countries. Furthermore, the Panel wishes to commend the efforts of the IPC in sharing the Demonstration Regulations and educating the NPC and athletes on them.
- 8.7 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.

30 July 2025



Mark J Copeland  
Chairman of the Judicial Tribunal