



## World Para Taekwondo Newsletter

February 2022 | Issue #20

### Africa Wins at First All-African Championships



### Host Niger Wins 5 Medals

All nine African nations that travelled to Niger for the 5<sup>th</sup> African championships managed to medal in the largest All-African Para Taekwondo tournament ever. Ghana topped the medal table with two golds and a bronze, while host Niger won the most medals with five of its 10 athletes managing to reach the podium.

There were medallists from all nine participating nations: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Egypt, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal.

### Paralympic Silver Medalist Leads Egypt to 2<sup>nd</sup> Place

Egypt's **Mohammed El-Sayed** proved he's still the one to beat in Africa by edging Niger's **Ide Oumarou Djabirou** 35-29 in the -58 kg final, while teammate **Ahmed Badawy Shabaan Mahmoud** claimed his first African title in the -80 kg category to help Egypt to a second-place finish.

Host Niger won five medals, led by **Mounkaila Karimou**'s dominant run to the -63 kg title. Karimou outscored his opponents 54-19 on the way to becoming Niger's first-ever African champion.

## Ghana, Cameroon Also Crowned African Champions

Ghana is host of next year's first-ever African Para Games and if this year's African championships are an indicator – they look to be tough to beat.

All three Ghanaian competitors managed to medal in Niger, including first-time titles for **Emmanuel Kofi Turkson** in -70 kg and for **Patricia Kyeremaa** in +65 kg. Teammate **Adizatu Shaban** added a bronze to lead Ghana to its first-place finish.

Cameroon also crowned its first-ever African champion after **Marie-Antoinette Dassi** stormed to the -65 kg title with a convincing 32-9 win over Kenya's **Lena Muthoni Gitonga**. Gitonga's silver was the best of four medals from the 7-person strong Kenyan team.

Held in Niamey, Niger, the 2022 African Open Championships are the first time the tournament has featured a field of African-only fighters, meaning every fighter earned world ranking points at the G4 level.

For event videos and highlights, check out the event page [HERE](#).



## Paralympic Stars Back in Action



## Paralympic Stars Return at President's Cup - Europe

Paralympic superstars showed that they are still at the top of their game by winning six of 10 events at February's President's Cup – Europe in Albania.

Turkey flexed its Para Taekwondo muscles by winning nine medals, including six of the 10 golds. Paralympians fueled Turkey's success, with **Mahmut Bozteke**, **Meryem Cavdar**, **Fatih Celik**, and **Gamze Gurdal** all picking up gold medals. **Ali Can Ozcan** and **Mehmet Sari Sarac** won the other gold medals for Turkey.

### Paralympians Return in Style

Several Paralympians made successful returns in their first international action since Tokyo 2020.

Denmark's **Lisa Gjessing** showed she's still the one to beat in the new -65 kg category with a convincing win over Turkey's reigning world champion **Secil Er** to win gold.

Afghan refugee **Zakia Khodadadi**, who made international headlines with her dramatic escape just to compete at Tokyo 2020, impressed by winning two matches en route to a silver medal in the -47 kg category.

In another battle of Paralympic stars, Kazakhstan's **Nurlan Dombayev** got past Great Britain's **Joe Lane** 4-3 in a spectacular -80 kg final.

### Newcomers Stake Their Ground

The tournament also allowed fighters the opportunity to prove that they belonged at the top of the new weight categories.

Spain's **Dalia Santiago** and Russia's **Maria Fisenko** capitalised by winning their first international titles.

Santiago edged Great Britain's former world champion and Paralympic bronze medalist **Amy Truesdale** in a dramatic +65 kg final, while Fisenko announced her arrival as one to watch in the -47 kg category with a dominant run to gold, outscoring her opponents 51-6.

## Para Taekwondo's Growth on Display

There was a time when seeing countries like India, Israel, and Poland on Para Taekwondo podiums was unexpected.

Not anymore.

Para Taekwondo's success was on full display in Albania, with several countries seeing rare podiums. Israel's **Asaf Yasur** made it back to the podium in his first tournament since winning his country's first world championship, claiming bronze after losing a nail-biting semi-final match 29-27 to eventual champion Ozcan.

Both Poland and Georgia won three medals at an international event for the first time, while India also picked up two bronzes. Poland's **Maciej Kesicki** won two matches to make his first international final, falling to Turkey's Paralympic star Celik 30-21 in the -70 kg final.

For full results, please click [HERE](#).



## Asia's Turn to Take Centre Stage



## President's Cup - Asia Last Chance to Gain Ranking Points to Directly Qualify for the Asian Para Games

*After tournaments to start the year in Africa and Europe, it's Asia's turn to take centre stage. The President's Cup – Asia takes place in March – the last chance for Asian athletes to gain ranking points to automatically qualify for Para Taekwondo's debut at the Asian Para Games.*

### President's Cup - Asia

Over 80 athletes from 12 nations will gather in Iran on 14 March to compete in the President's Cup – Asia tournament. A G2 event, the tournament will be the last chance for Asian athletes to gain ranking points to automatically qualify for this summer's Asian Para Games in Hangzhou, China.

The 82 athletes registered for a G2 event showcases Para Taekwondo's remarkable growth. It's more athletes than each of Para Taekwondo's first four world championships and marks a significant increase from the 66 registrations at last month's President's Cup – Europe event in Albania.

### Paralympians to Take Centre Stage

Iran promises to boast a powerful team at the home event, led by Paralympic champion **Asghar Azizi Aqdam** and reigning world champion **Mehdi Pourrahnama**.

It will be the first event back for Azizi Aqdam, who took a well-deserved break after his thrilling Paralympic victory at Tokyo 2020. It also marks Pourrahnama's return after winning a nail-biting world championship over Mexico's Paralympic champion **Juan Diego Garcia Lopez** in December.

Uzbekistan's reigning Paralympic and world champion **Guljonoy Naimova** – the only athlete in the world who can make that claim – also plans to participate in her return to international action after her first world championship win.

Be sure to watch out for Nepal's **Palesha Goverdhan**, who will see action for the first time since winning gold at last year's Asian Youth Para Games, becoming the first athlete from Nepal to win gold at the event. Goverdhan nearly became Nepal's first athlete to ever win an Olympic or Paralympic medal at Tokyo 2020, losing bronze to China's 2019 world champion Yujie Li by just three points.

For more event information, please click [HERE](#).

## Qualifying for Asian Games

The President's Cup – Asia will be the last opportunity for Asian athletes to earn ranking points to qualify for this summer's Asia Para Games in Hangzhou, China. The top four ranked Asian athletes in each weight category – although only one per country – will gain automatic qualification to Hangzhou 2022, where Para Taekwondo will make its Asian Para Games debut.

In addition to the top four ranked athletes that earn automatic qualification, host China earns an automatic qualification spot in each weight category.

All other Asian fighters will have to qualify at a special Asian Para Games qualification tournament set to be held in May. Countries may send up to two fighters in each weight category, so long as their teammate has not already qualified in the same weight category. The top two fighters in each weight category - from different countries - qualify for Hangzhou 2022.

## Asian Para Games Qualification – Quick Reference

1. Host China receives automatic qualification for one athlete in each category
2. Top 4-ranked Asian athletes in each weight category of the world rankings earn automatic qualification
  - a. A country can qualify only one athlete per weight category
3. The finalists in each weight category at the Asian Para Games Qualification tournament set for May
  - a. Only one fighter per country can qualify for the Asian Para Games
  - b. A country may send up to two athletes per weight category unless a teammate has already qualified through the world rankings in that weight category
4. Receive a bipartite invitation

For more information on the 2022 Asian Para Games in Hangzhou, China, please click [HERE](#).



# Hangzhou 2022

## Asian Para Games



**Ghana to Host African Para Games**



## First African Para Games to Be Held in 2023

Ghana has been selected to host the inaugural African Para Games in 2023.

The first African Para Games slated for Morocco in 2020 were canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Para Taekwondo was set to be part of that event due to it being one of the world's seven-most practiced Para sports.

Para Taekwondo is not yet confirmed for the 2023 African Para Games as the host country was only confirmed in January.

"I'm here for the development of Paralympic sports in Ghana and Africa", IPC President Andrew Parsons said on a visit to Ghana in January.

"We do believe that Ghana can be the driver for growth of Paralympic sport on the continent, especially with Ghana having the opportunity to host the Africa Games."

### New Stadium Being Built for Event

Ghana will host the able-bodied African Games in three cities – Accra, Cape Coast, and Kumasi – at some point in 2023. The country is constructing a \$145 million multipurpose sports venue for the event. There is no word yet on whether all three cities would host the African Para Games.

It is expected that more than 50 countries will compete at the African Para Games.

At last month's African Para Taekwondo Championships, Ghana won three medals: **Emmanuel Kofi Turkson** and **Patricia Kyeremaa** won gold in -70 kg and +65 kg, while teammate **Adizatu Shaban** secured bronze in the +65 kg category after falling to Kyeremaa in the semi-final.



National Paralympic Committee of

**GHANA**

## Calendar



- 2022 WT President's Cup Asia (G2) - March 14 - Iran  
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)
- Puerto Rico Open (G2) - April 1 - San Juan, Puerto Rico  
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)

- Pan American Para Taekwondo Open Championships (G4/G2) - April 15 - Rio de Janeiro, Brazil  
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)
- Dominican Open (G2) - May 6 - Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic  
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)
- 2022 Asian Para Games Qualification (G1) - TBC - TBC  
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level I required for all coaches)
- European Open Para Taekwondo Championships (G4/G2) - May 19-22 - Manchester, Great Britain  
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)
- Pan Am Series (G2) - May 27-30 - Fort Worth, USA  
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)
- Asian Para Taekwondo Open Championships (G4/G2) - August 14 - Ulaanbaator, Mongolia  
(International Para Taekwondo Coach Certification Level II required for all coaches)

## Around the World



### Africa:

#### Ghanaian Gold Medalists Become Media Darlings

**Emmanuel Kofi Turkson** and **Patricia Kyeremaa** have become media sensations in Ghana after winning the country's first two gold medals at the African championships last month. Ranked No. 2 in the -70 kg division, Turkson edged Senegal's **Demba Ndao** 19-18 in an edge-of-your-seat semi-final before outpointing the Central Africa

Republic's **Chick-Norris Kongo** 28-22 to become African champion. Kyeremaa had an easier time, outscoring her opponents 48-14 on the way to her first African title. The two gold medals led Ghana to first place overall at the all-Africa event.

For more, check out the article on Graphic Online [HERE](#).

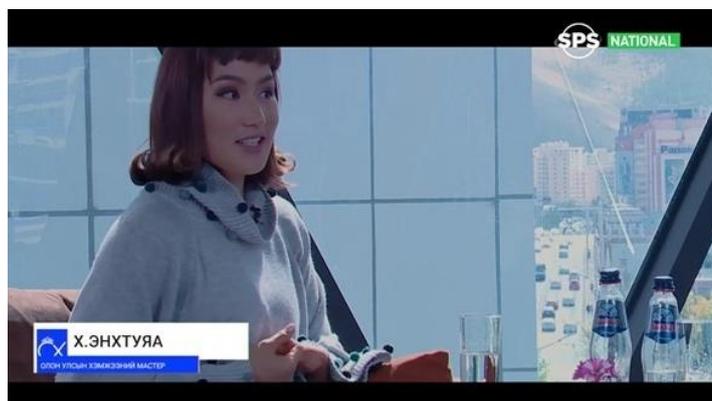
## Niger Leads the Way at Home African Championships

Host Niger led all nations at the first all-African African Championships, with no team sending more athletes or winning more medals. Taekwondo is popular in the country with two of its three all-time Olympic medals coming in the sport. Held in Niamey, Taekwondo in **Mounkaila Karimou Daouda** had the home fans roaring after becoming the country's first-ever African champion by beating teammate **Oumar Babey Aska Gaoh** in an all-Niger -63 kg final. The home fans also delighted with the team's other podium finishes, including silver medals for Ide **Oumarou Djabirou** (-58 kg) and **Ousmane Soumaila** (-80 kg), and bronze for **Saidou Namata Oumarou** (-58 kg). Niger sent a team of 10 athletes to the event; Kenya (7) was the only other nation to send more than three.



"The African Para Taekwondo Championships, beyond its sporting nature, must be seen as the unequivocal affirmation of our firm will to fight ... discrimination against people with disabilities", said African Taekwondo Federation President Issaka Ide. "This is the expression of a strong and intrinsic commitment to sport, which is itself based on values of humanism and the social realisation of every person."

For more, please read the article on [aniamey.com](http://aniamey.com) [HERE](#).



### Asia:

#### Former World Champ Khurelbaatar Profiled on Mongolian National TV

Former world champion **Enkhtuya Khurelbaatar** was featured on Mongolian state broadcaster SPS national last month in a rebroadcast of the third episode of their series "Sports Queens". The 30-minute episode sees Khurelbaatar sit down for a one-on-one interview with the host where she

talks about her life and career. The episode also follows her training and provides highlights from her career, in which the former No. 1-ranked fighter has medaled at the last three world championships, including winning gold in 2017 and bronze in 2021. It's not the first time the Mongolian star has been featured on TV. The IPC profiled Khurelbaatar ahead of Tokyo 2020 in a clip that can be viewed [here](#).

"On fire!", Khurelbaatar said on social media after the episode's premiere. "Now [the show] has a twist!"

To watch the view Khurelbaatar in the 'Sports Queens' episode, please click [HERE](#).

## Nepalese Coach Interviewed by National Newspaper

Nepalese national Para Taekwondo coach **Kabiraj Negi Lama** was profiled in Nepal's national newspaper the Rising Nepal last month, where he spoke about the successes and challenges facing Nepal's Para Taekwondo team. Negi Lama learned taekwondo to join Nepal's army, but his diminutive stature prevented him from doing so. After a career that saw him an international Poomsae medal in 2009, he moved to coaching and was convinced to coach Para athletes by Nepal's most successful Taekwondo athlete **Deepak Bista** and the founder of Para Taekwondo in Nepal, **Kalyan Kunwar**. The sport has taken off in the country after the success of athlete **Palesha Goverdhan** at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, where she was a kick away from winning Nepal's first-ever Olympic or Paralympic medal. Later in the year, Goverdhan won Nepal's first gold medal at the Asian Youth Para Games, while teammates **Shrijana Ghising** and **Bishal Garbuja**, won silver and bronze. The success has driven a surge in popularity for the sport, with athletes from the remote regions of the Himalayan nation looking to join the team. Negi Lama said the sport needs more government support to house and train the athletes in the hopes of one day having enough athletes to have a national Para Taekwondo championship.



"After recent international achievements, many disabled players from remote areas are eager to join Para Taekwondo", he told the newspaper. "But the taekwondo association cannot afford to keep them in Kathmandu and train them."

For the full article and interview, please click [HERE](#).



## Europe:

### Mikulic Named Croatia's Top Para Athlete of 2021; Coach Also Wins

2021 was a big year for Croatia's **Ivan Mikulic**. The 2015 world champion showed he's still at the top of his game by reaching the finals at both the Paralympics and world championships. Heartbreaking losses to two different Iranian athletes mean the 27-year-old still has plenty to prove – and plenty of time to do it. Mikulic was named Croatia's Top Para Athlete of 2021 for his achievements at Para Taekwondo's toughest events. It was the second time Mikulic has won the award, after being named Croatia's Top Para Athlete of 2017 based on his No. 1 ranking. Mikulic's coach, **Mladen Tomic**, was also named Croatia's most successful professional employee. The pair received their awards at a gala event last month.

"I want to thank my coaches Mladen and Goran – and my family and friends", Mikulic said afterwards.

"Everyone was with me and they all have their share in those silver medals".

For more information, please click [HERE](#).

## Denmark's Gjessing Wins Gold After Committing to Paris 2024

In an interview published by Danish newspaper DR and aired by national broadcaster DR1 ahead of Paralympic champion **Lisa Gjessing's** return to action, the four-time world champion announced she is committed to competing at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games. She then went to the President's Cup – Europe to show that, at least right now, she is still the favourite to win. Gjessing crushed Turkey's reigning world champion **Secil Er** 19-1 to win her first international title since Tokyo 2020 and her first in the new -65 kg category. In the interview with DR, she answered several questions, including "How did you celebrate in Tokyo after you won?", "How long have you been practicing your sport before you started dreaming of gold?", and "Do you have plans to go to Paris 2024?"

Answering the third question, Gjessing said:

"I'm going to Paris in 2024", concretely stating her plans publically for the first time. "Tokyo was great but experiencing a Paralympics without COVID restrictions will be great."

To read the full DR interview, please click [HERE](#).



## Para Taekwondo Stars Recognised by Russian Government

Former world champion **Zainutdin Ataev** and IWAS Games champion **Daniil Sidorov** were both awarded the prestigious Honoured Master of Sports for their continued achievements on the international stage. Ataev has been a force in the +80 kg division for over a decade, racking up six medals at the world championships, including gold in 2013. Sidorov has been near the top of the -63 kg division since winning the 2017 IWAS Games title. Both

athletes won bronze medals at Tokyo 2020, but failed to medal at the 2021 world championships, falling in the quarterfinal round. The Honoured Master of Sports in Russia is awarded to athletes that have won international championships.

Ataev and Sidorov, along with teammate **Anna Poddubskaja** – who also won bronze at Tokyo 2020 – were previously awarded the Order of Merit for the Fatherland, 2<sup>nd</sup> degree for their Paralympic achievements.

For more, please click [HERE](#).

## Er, Cavdar Up for Turkey's Para Athlete of the Year

Turkey has long been a Para Taekwondo powerhouse, and the home of the 2021 European championships and World championships continues to show love for its stars. World champion **Secil Er** and Paralympic silver medalist **Meryem Cavdar** are in the running for the Gillette Milliyet Sports Award for Top Para Athlete or Team. The awards have been handed out annually since 1954 by the national newspaper Milliyet and are voted on by the public. Congratulations goes to the two athletes on exceptional seasons and on the Turkish Para Taekwondo programme for representing one-third of all top Para athletes in Turkey.



For more information, or to vote, please click [HERE](#).



## Ukrainian Athletes Hiding from Bombing, Miss President's Cup

Ukrainian Para Taekwondo athletes registered for the President's Cup – Europe in Albania were unable to compete due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. So far, all Ukrainian athletes are safe, although situations differ in different areas of the country. Paralympian **Anton Shvets** is with family in an undisclosed location

outside of any major urban areas, while Paralympians **Vika Marchuk** and **Yuliya Lypetska**, from Zaporizhia, are dealing with regular air raid sirens and, at times, have been forced into bomb shelters.

"We aren't able to leave", Marchuk told World Taekwondo. "We sit in a shelter. We were fired upon yesterday."

## Oceania:

### Paralympic Medalist Watson Transitions to Sports Leadership

Australia's **Janine Watson** – the first athlete from Oceania to win a Paralympic medal in Para Taekwondo – was elected Chair of the Athletes Committee of the Oceania Taekwondo Council. As Chair, Watson is tasked with "upholding the rights and obligations of athletes" and "conducting educational training" on behalf of Oceania athletes. Watson famously became the only Poomsae world champion to win a Paralympic medal when she defeated Ukraine's **Yuliya Lypetska** in the bronze medal final at Tokyo 2020. Also elected to the committee was the Solomon Island's **Solomon Jagiri**, who was set to compete in Tokyo before a COVID-related travel ban prevented him from travelling to Japan.



For more, please visit the World Taekwondo Oceania website [HERE](#).



**Pan Am:**

### **Argentina Looks to Build from Historic Paralympic Bronze**

The Argentine Para Taekwondo team is getting ready for next month's Pan American championships in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil at a training camp at the CeNARD national training centre. Looking to build from the historic bronze medal that **Juan Samorano** won at Tokyo 2020 last

summer, the team will send a record four athletes to Brazil. Samorano will lead the team that consists of veteran **Facundo Novik** and newcomers **Leandro Fernandez** and **Miguel Galeano**. Samorano memorably won bronze in Tokyo with a thrilling last second win over Kazakhtan's **Nurlan Dombayev**.

"We start the year with great enthusiasm and optimism", said coach **Carlos Guerrini** on social media. "The medal that Juan Samorano got in Tokyo revitalised [our program] and serves as an example for us."

For more, please click [HERE](#).

### **Paralympic Champ Torquato Named Brazil's Top Athlete**

After leading Brazil to a top place finish at Tokyo 2020 by winning gold, **Nathan Torquato** was named Brazil's Best Taekwondo Athlete by the Brazilian Paralympic Committee. Teen Torquato won all four of his fights at Tokyo 2020 to capture gold, including an exceptional display in the semi-final to get past Italy's **Antonino Bossolo** 37-34. Brazil is one of Para Taekwondo's up-and-coming nations, going from zero medals at the 2017 world championships to top of the Tokyo 2020 medal table in less than five years. The popularity of the sport has led to the nation holding a national tryout just to make the national team and the country will hold the Pan American championships later this year.



"I always say that it closed a cycle with a golden key. This cycle was wonderful and had several historic achievements – not only for me but for all of Brazilian Taekwondo", said Torquato after collecting his award. "This brings even more motivation to continue training hard to continue representing Brazil well and to win more awards like this."

For more, check out the article on the Brazilian Taekwondo Federation website [HERE](#).



## Garcia Lopez Gets Cheque from Mexican President

Mexican superstar and Paralympic champion **Juan Diego Garcia Lopez** received a cheque worth 480,000 pesos (\$24,000 USD) from Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador for his performance at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games. Garcia Lopez became the only world champion to win Paralympic gold at Tokyo 2020 when he edged rival **Mehdi Pourrahnama** (IRI) in an entertaining -75 kg final. Garcia Lopez lost his world title to

Pourrahnama in a tense 2021 world championship final – just his second loss since 2018.

“It is a small acknowledgement for all the effort that you, your families, your coaches, carry out”, said Lopez Obrador after handing out the awards. “For everything you do.”

For more, please click [HERE](#).

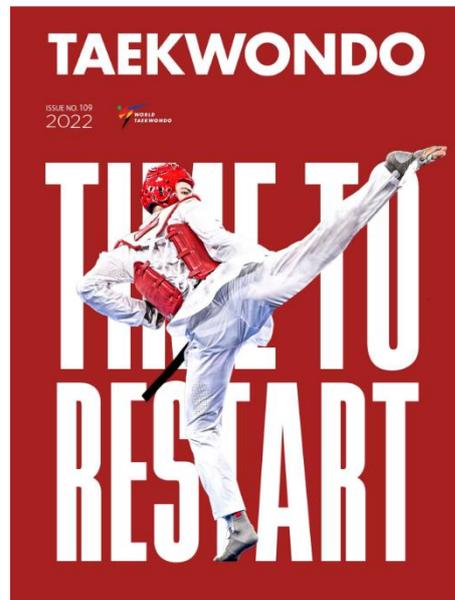
### Other:

#### World Taekwondo Releases 2021 Year in Review Issue

World Taekwondo took a look back at the biggest events in the world of Taekwondo in 2021 – and Para Taekwondo featured prominently in the issue. Under the theme “Time to Restart”, the issue looks at how Taekwondo got going again after the pandemic-necessitated break in 2020. Of course, Para Taekwondo’s Paralympic debut at Tokyo 2020 takes up much of the coverage, but readers will find photos and articles of other Para Taekwondo events, issues, and athletes throughout the colourful issue.

“2021 witnessed the long-awaited debut of Taekwondo in the Paralympic Games in Tokyo”, said World Taekwondo President **Chungwon Choue** in his introductory remarks. “As testament to our success, Para Taekwondo will expand to 10 medal events in Paris 2024 – four more than the six we had in Tokyo 2020.”

To download your copy of the issue, please click [HERE](#).





**PEACE IS MORE PRECIOUS  
THAN TRIUMPH**

## World Taekwondo "Strongly Condemns" Russia Attack on Ukraine

World Taekwondo released a statement about Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the actions the organisation plans to take.

"World Taekwondo strongly condemns the brutal attacks on innocent lives in Ukraine, which go against the World Taekwondo vision of 'Peace is More Precious Than Triumph' and the World Taekwondo values of respect and tolerance", the statement reads.

World Taekwondo has withdrawn the honorary 9th dan black belt given to Russian President Vladimir Putin and has banned Russian flags and anthems from all World Taekwondo events. Athletes from Russia will now compete under the Russian Taekwondo Union flag.

"World Taekwondo's thoughts are with the people of Ukraine and we hope for a peaceful and immediate end to this war".

To read the full statement, please click [HERE](#).

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