



REFUGEE OLYMPIC TEAM

In October 2015, the President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) announced the creation of a **Refugee Olympic Team** - the first of its kind.

It was decided that the team would take part in the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil.

The athletes did not represent a particular country, as is the norm with the Olympics. Instead they represent the Refugee Olympic Team. They hold the Olympic Flag at the opening ceremony and the Olympic anthem is played for them instead of a national anthem.

What is the Olympic national anthem?

It was composed by Greek composer Spýros Samáaras to words written by Greek poet Kostís Palamás. It was composed for the start of the 1896 Games in Athens, the first modern Olympic Games, as we know it today. At the opening ceremony on April 6th, the composer, Spýros Samáaras, conducted a HUGE group of musicians to perform his newly composed anthem. There were in fact 9 philharmonic orchestras (that's at least 500 musicians!) and 250 singers in the performance!

LISTEN TO THE OLYMPIC ANTHEM: <https://olympics.com/en/video/olympic-anthem>

Such was the happiness of the world to support the Refugee Olympic Team in Rio 2016, the International Olympic Committee went on to found the Olympic Refugee Foundation. The Foundation supports sports programmes in different countries throughout the world. By 2024 aims to provide access to safe sport for one million young people who have been forced to leave home. It also gives scholarships to very promising athletes and many of the following athletes have been or are currently benefiting from the scholarships.

Watch [this beautiful video](#) about the Olympic Refugee Foundation:

**MEET THE ATHLETES WHO COMPETED IN THE FIRST EVER REFUGEE
OLYMPIC TEAM IN RIO DE JANEIRO IN 2016**



Rami Anis

Syria

Lives in Belgium

Sport – swimming

Yiech Pur Biel

South Sudan

Lives in Kenya

Sport – athletics, 800m



Yolande Bukasa Mabika

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Lives in Brazil

Sport- judo



Yonas Kinde

Ethiopia

Lives in Luxembourg

Sport – athletics, marathon





James Nyang Chiengjiek

South Sudan

Lives in Kenya

Sport – athletics, 400m

Anjelina Nada Lohalith

South Sudan

Lives in Kenya

Sport – athletics, 1500m



Rose Nathike Lokonyen

South Sudan

Lives in Kenya

Sport – athletics, 800m





Paulo Amotun Lokoro

South Sudan

Lives in Kenya

Sport – athletics, 1500m

Yusra Mardini

Syria

Lives in Germany

Sport – swimming



Popole Misenga

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Lives in Brazil

Sport – judo



**For the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics,
29 refugee athletes represented the Refugee Olympic Team.**

| NAME | COUNTRY OF ORIGIN | HOST COUNTRY | SPORT |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Alaa Maso | Syria | Germany | Swimming |
| Dorian Keletela | Democratic Republic of the Congo | Portugal | Athletics (100m) |
| James Nyang Chiengjiek | South Sudan | Kenya | Athletics (400m) |
| Rose Nathike Lokonyen | South Sudan | Kenya | Athletics (800m) |
| Anjelina Nada Lohalith | South Sudan | Kenya | Athletics (1500m) |
| Paulo Amotun Lokoro | South Sudan | Kenya | Athletics (1500m) |
| Jamal Adbelmaji Eisa Mohammed | Sudan | Israel | Athletics (5000m) |
| Tachlowini Gabriyesos | Eritrea | Israel | Athletics (marathon) |
| Aram Mahmoud | Syria | Netherlands | Badminton |
| Wessam Salamana | Syria | Germany | Boxing |
| Eldric Sella Rodriguez | Venezuela | Trinidad & Tobago | Boxing |
| Saied Fazloul | Iran | Germany | Canoeing |
| Masomah Ali Zada | Afghanistan | France | Cycling |
| Ahmad Badreddin Wais | Syria | Switzerland | Cycling |
| Sanda Aldass | Syria | Netherlands | Judo |
| Ahmad Alikaj | Syri | Germany | Judo |
| Muna Dahouk | Syria | Netherlands | Judo |
| Javad Mahjoub | Iran | Canada | Judo |
| Popole Misenga | Democratic Republic of the Congo | Brazil | Judo |

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|-------------------------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|
| Nigara Shaheen | Afghanistan | Russia | Judo |
| Wael Shueb | Syria | Germany | Karate |
| Hamoon Derafshipour | Iran | Canada | Karate |
| Luna Solomon | Eritrea | Switzerland | Shooting |
| Yusra Mardini | Syria | Germany | Swimming |
| Dina Pouryounes Langeroudi | Iran | Netherlands | Taekwondo |
| Kimia Alizadeh | Iran | Germany | Taekwondo |
| Abdullah Sediqi | Afghanistan | Belgium | Taekwondo |
| Cyrille Fagat Tchatchet | Cameroon | United Kingdom | Weight lifting |
| Aker Al Obaidi | Iraq | Austria | Wrestling |

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

(tip: make sure you are not counting a country twice.....)

Q1: Between both the 2016 and the 2020 Olympics, what country *hosts* the biggest number of athletes from the Refugee Olympic Team?

Q2: Between 2016 and 2020 Olympics, how many athletes originally from Syria were represented on the Team?

Q3: Can you spot which athletes competed in BOTH of the Olympic games? How many athletes competed in both games and what are their names?

Q4: Can you name ALL of the African countries that are represented by the athletes? *(tip: one of them is a HOST country)*

Q5: Research the athletes that will be part of the Paris 2024 Refugee Olympic Team

Q6: They have not competed at the Olympics but Ireland is home to a number of refugees who compete or have competed in European and World Athletics. Can you find out more about **Hiko Tonosa** (originally from Ethiopia) and **Efrim Gidey** (originally from Eritrea)?

Anjelina Nadai Lohalith



Anjelina was born in South Sudan on January 1st 1993. She and her family slept in the brush to avoid being found during raids. In 2001 when Lohalith was eight years old she had to leave her home when her country was gripped by civil war and violence closed in on her village. She was separated from her parents as her parents sent her to Kenya for safety with her aunt. She arrived in northern Kenya in 2002, with her aunt, settling in the Kakuma refugee camp. The Kakuma refugee camp is one of the largest refugee camps in the world with over 179,000 people. While attending primary school in the camp she took up running.

When professional coaches came to Kakuma camp to hold selection trials for a special training camp, her talents were truly discovered. Anjelina was selected to train under Olympic champion marathon runner Tegla Loroupe at her sports foundation in Nairobi. She was picked to participate in the Refugee Olympic Team in Rio de Janeiro 2016 and again in Tokyo 2020. After Tokyo, she met her parents again after 18 years – a highly emotional moment for her and her family.

In February 2023, Anjelina won the European Champion Clubs Cup Cross Country race in Spain. This was not only Anjelina's first international win, but it also made her the first member of the Refugee Olympic Team to win an international race in athletics. Anjelina is an Olympic Refugee Foundation scholarship-holder and is training hard, hoping to make it onto the Refugee Olympic Team for Paris 2024.

Tachlowini Gabriyesos



Tachlowini fled insecurity in Eritrea when he was just 12 years old with his 13-year-old friend. From there, he spent time in Ethiopia and Sudan before eventually making the treacherous journey *across the Sinai desert* to Israel. He recalls his friend teaching him a trick he learnt from his father: when they would sleep, they would take off their shoes and leave them pointing in their direction of travel so that when they awoke the next morning, they would not lose their way.

Upon reaching Israel, he spent time in detention before being sent to a school in Hadera, where he met his running coach. Teachers in the school provided him with all the equipment he needed to pick up the pace. His running coach then is still his running coach now and Tachlowini says “he is like a father to me and a man who is part of my life.” Tachlowini is still waiting to see again the family that he left behind.

In 2020, he reached the World Athletics A limit in marathon running, completing the race in 2 hours 10 mins and 55 seconds. This time made him eligible to compete at Tokyo 2020. During the Olympic Games, he ran an amazing race, finishing 16th out of 106 athletes, completing the race in 2 hours 14 minutes and 2 seconds. In Tokyo, he was the Refugee Olympic Team flag bearer, alongside Yusra Mardini. Tachlowini is an Olympic Refugee Foundation scholarship-holder and is training hard, hoping to make it onto the Refugee Olympic Team for Paris 2024.