



Article 50-02 du CIO :  
"aucune sorte de démonstration  
ou de propagande politique,  
**religieuse** ou raciale n'est  
autorisée dans un lieu, site ou  
autre emplacement olympique"

## – Olympics Paris 2024, Day 2 – *Neutrality Urbi et Orbi*

The principle of neutrality in sport is enshrined in article 50 of the Olympic Charter: “No demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda shall be permitted in any Olympic venue, site or other location.” It is applied in the internal regulation of international and national sports bodies.

Inspired by the Olympic spirit, the most popular sport, football and the two international federations that regulate it, the International Federation of Football Association (FIFA) and the International Football Association Board (IFAB), have prohibited any “slogan, inscription or image of a political, religious or personal nature” on players’ equipment ( Law on Game No. 4). At a national level, the French Federation of Football, as a public service delegate, defends the fundamental values of the French Republic. The neutrality of football is stricter than international and Olympic standards by formally prohibiting “any sign or outfit that is a manifestation of political, philosophical, religious or trade union affiliation”.

The White Paper on sport adopted in July 2022 by the European Commission recalls the values conveyed by sport such as team spirit, solidarity, tolerance and loyalty, whose dissemination is essential to the existence of a fraternal society and to contribute to the formation of a young citizen. French law considers sport as an “integral part of education and culture” that “constitutes a necessary dimension of public policies”. The legislator has recalled the principle of secularism that must apply to sport as well as to education, of which it is an integral part.

As a personal matter, religion can take an important place for some athletes. The IOC wanted to enable them to practice their cult by setting up sport facilities and a multi-confessional center. For athletes who wish to be spiritually accompanied during the Olympic Games because religion is fundamental to them, at every Olympiad since the 1972 Munich Games (where the Israeli delegation was murdered by a Palestinian terrorist commando), a multi-faith Centre is planned within the Olympic Village.

Freedom of religion is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (article 18) and reaffirmed in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, signed by more than 160 states. This freedom includes, in addition to the freedom of worship, the freedom to claim a religion or belief, not to have one, change one or renounce it. The spirit of French secularism is to allow a serene and peaceful coexistence of all religions, and to every citizen the freedom not to believe, and the ability to criticize a religion. Critical thinking goes hand in hand with freedom of expression, which can be harsh as long as opinions are not subject to criminal law (hate speech).

For many athletes, religion can be a comfort. Its weaponization for ideological purposes is a way to attack democracy. Sports institutions have foreseen this pitfall - sporting neutrality protects all athletes regardless of their religion.

- (1) Signes religieux et pratique du sport, Sénat, Texte n° 638 (2021-2022) de M. Dany WATTEBLEDE, déposé au Sénat le 25 mai 2022- <https://www.senat.fr/leg/exposes-des-motifs/ppl21-638-expose.html>
- (2) Livre blanc sur le sport du 11/07/2022 -- Commission Européenne -- Disponible en ligne : <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/FR/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52007DC0391&from=GA>
- (3) Théo Leclerc- « JO – un centre multiconfessionnel mis en place », Ouest France, 24 juillet 2024- <https://www.ouest-france.fr/societe/religions/jo-2024-un-centre-multiconfessionnel-pour-preserver-le-culte-des-athletes-165174ec-3548-11ef-9c89-e0b91afbdf>
- (4) Manuel de Gestion de la diversité édité par l'iriv pour le projet Think Diverse (Erasmus +, 2021-2023) <https://www.iriv-publications.net/documents/manuel-think-diverse-de-la-creativte-a-la-diversite-/275>

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