

International Judo Federation

Disciplinary Commission

Shu-Tai CHENG (presiding)

Colin DRAYCOTT (member)

Otsuji HIROFUMI (member)

Case Number DIS2025-01

Decision

Background – The Charge and the Legal Basis

The Disciplinary Committee/Commission (“Commission”) was convened to conduct the disciplinary proceedings relating to the charge issued by the Secretary General of the International Judo Federation with respect to the National Judo Federation of Portugal (“NJFP”) regarding NJFP’s failure to pay amounts owed to the International Judo Federation (“IJF”) related to agreements between the parties for NJFP to host the 2023 World Championships Juniors (Coimbra) and the 2022 to 2025 Grand Prix (Odivelas).

The Commission notes that the Defendant has been charged as follows:

Assertion of IJF Statutes Article 22.3 and Disciplinary Code Article 3.5:

The NJFP has failed to fulfil its payment obligations as stipulated in the Event Hosting Agreements concluded on 18 November 2021, for the 2022-2025 Grand Prix (Odivelas), and signed on 23 June 2022, for the 2023 World Championships Junior (Coimbra), in respect of the following amounts:

2023 World Championships Junior 300,000 EUR

2023 Grand Prix 250,000 EUR

2024 Grand Prix 250,000 EUR

This amounts to a total of: 800,000 EUR plus accrued interest.

You are hereby informed that NJFP had committed a potential violation of the IJF Disciplinary Code pursuant to Article 3.5, which reads as follows:

“It shall be considered a disciplinary offence if the organiser of a Sport Event within the IJF Competition System - or, if the organiser does not fall within the scope of the Code, the person who commissioned the organiser to organise the event - fails to fulfil, or only partially fulfils, or unilaterally modifies, their contractual obligations in relation to the IJF or is delayed with the performance thereof.”

The IJF Disciplinary Committee has reviewed the case file and is satisfied that you have committed a violation of Article 3.5 of Disciplinary Code and charges you under Article 16.2 (b) of the IJF Disciplinary Code.

Additionally, we hereby inform you that the NJFP had committed a potential violation of IJF Statutes pursuant to Article 22.3, which reads as follows:

“A Member Federation whose membership fees or any other fees, royalties or debts to the IJF or Continental Union to which they belong have not been paid by the 31st of May of each year, will not be authorized to take part in the Olympic Games, World Championships or any other event held under the auspices of the IJF.”

The Commission notes the position of the IJF that:

The NJFP signed agreements with the IJF to host the following events:

2023 World Championships Juniors (Coimbra) – signed on 23 June 2022, with a licence fee of 300,000 EUR.

2022-2025 Grand Prix (Odivelas) – signed on 18 November 2021, with an annual licence fee of 250,000 EUR per year.

Despite multiple notices, reminders and invoices from the IJF, the NJFP has failed to pay the outstanding amounts on the agreed deadlines.

The NJFP's current outstanding debt is as follows:

2023 World Championships Junior 300,000 EUR

2023 Grand Prix 250,000 EUR

2024 Grand Prix 250,000 EUR

This amounts to a total of: 800,000 EUR plus accrued interest

On 12 February 2025, the IJF sent a final notice giving the NJFP 14 days to pay the outstanding amounts. If the debt was not settled, the IJF would terminate the agreements. Since the NJFP did not pay, the IJF officially terminated the agreements on 27 February 2025.

On 13 March 2025, the IJF's legal representative, the Giró-Szász Law Firm, sent a final warning letter to the NJFP, which was confirmed received on 18 March 2025.

As of 8 April 2025, the NJFP has still not paid the remaining licence fees and accrued interest.

IJF Statutes

22.3 Non-payment of membership fees, all other fees, royalties or debts

A Member Federation whose membership fees or any other fees, royalties or debts to the IJF or Continental Union to which they belong have not been paid by the 31st of May of each year, will not be authorized to take part in the Olympic Games, World Championships or any other event held under the auspices of the IJF.

28.1 Grounds

A National Federation may be suspended or expelled from the IJF on one of the following grounds:

- serious breach or gross negligence, pursuant to a final decision of one of the IJF Discipline Commissions,

- as a result of expulsion from its Continental Union, under the conditions provided for in Article 28.4.

28.2 Suspension or expulsion: submission of the case to the Discipline Commission

28.2.1 If a National Federation violates the Statutes of the IJF or acts against the legitimate interests, the principles or the objectives of the IJF, the EC may submit the case to the Disciplinary Commission of the first instance and propose to the Commission all measures it deems fit to put an end to the prejudice being caused to the IJF, including by way of restricting or suspending participation in activities or expelling the relevant National Federation. Suspension applies to all sports, administrative and social activities.

By vote ECV2025-20, the IJF Executive Committee agreed to submit the case file on NJFP to the IJF Disciplinary Committee asking them to decide on whether we can suspend the federation, based on the above articles from the IJF Statutes, for the debt of 800,000 EUR relating to the Grand Prix 2023, World Championships Junior 2023 and Grand Prix 2024.

Facts and Submissions

The Defendant was sent invoices for 2023 Grand Prix (on November 8, 2022), 2023 World Championships Juniors (on June 8, 2023) and 2024 Grand Prix (on January 15, 2024). The Defendant was further notified many times of the amounts owing by letters and e-mails from 2022 onward.

The Defendant does not dispute that it has debts owing to the IJF nor the amounts owing as stated in the invoices and correspondence between the parties, since the invoices were issued.

The Commission notes that the Defendant acknowledged receipt of the current charge and associated documents, and the Commission allowed the NJFP a period up to the May 1, 2025, to either admit the charge or enter a statement of defence.

Within that time limit, the Defendant responded including the following:

The Portuguese Judo Federation (PJF) and myself hereby presents its most respectful greetings and, at the same time, by this means justifies the situation of non-compliance regarding the amount owed to the International Judo Federation (IJF). The PJF has been in a critical situation after the former President has been expelled from is position. After this episode, the PJF members realized that during his almost 7 years as President, were a complete financial catastrophe and made this institution go deep in the dark in that area. When I took the function as President I started to realize that the debt of PJF was astronomical. Something that nobody, but the former President new about. The budget of the PJF depends exclusively on State support, and the yearly amount is no more than 1.2 million euros, which are all necessarily channeled into its activities, which makes it impossible for the PJF to pay off its debt with the IJF without extra support from state institutions. Since last October, when we had the elections for President and Board members we are trying intensively with the government to get support so that we can pay the debt with the IJF. The several meetings held to date with the government give us hope that we can reach an understanding that will allow us to make a concrete proposal to the IJF to settle the debt within a period of time to be agreed, but which can never be in the short term. This delay on presenting the concert proposal is exclusively related to the expectation that the financial support, long promised by national government institutions, would materialize quickly, which, unfortunately, has not happened until this date. This financial uncertainty is largely the result of the current political context in Portugal, where weeks of particular instability are being experienced, with legislative elections scheduled for next May 18th. This circumstance has strongly conditioned the decision-making processes and granting of support to sports federations, a situation that we believe will be resolved soon, right after the election, if not before. Notwithstanding the difficulties described, and following our latest communications, we would like to express our deep concern about the current situation and our full commitment to its regularization. To this end, the PJF intends to present a concrete proposal for the payment of the debt currently owed to the IJF. The proposal will consist of making an initial payment of a higher amount, followed by the payment of the remaining amount in installments over a period that cannot be too short, in order to ensure full compliance with our obligation. We are fully aware that this solution does not correspond to the ideal situation but, under the current

circumstances, it is the only viable one for PJF, guaranteeing in the medium/long term the full settlement of the amount due. Therefore, we would like to appeal to you and the distinguished Members of the Disciplinary Committee, as well as the other Committee Members, for your and their understanding and solidarity, certain that the current situation we are facing is the result of factors relating to the previous management, the consequences of which will haunt those who are in charge of the destinies of this Federation for a long time to come. We further inform you that the management of the previous President [redacted] which gave rise to the current situation [redacted] and he himself, are already being investigated, in a criminal proceeding opened by the Portuguese Public Prosecutor's Office, which has already led to police searches both at the PJF headquarters and at his residence, as well as at the accounting office that worked with the PJF during that period. We recognize that we are in major default with the IJF, but we want to emphasize once again our desire to regularize our situation and we appeal for the opportunity to be given to us to do so, despite knowing that, up until now, we have not been able to do so, also for the reasons that we have explained above. We therefore renew our full willingness to discuss and adjust this proposal in accordance with the possibilities and guidelines of the IJF, reiterating our deep respect and institutional consideration.

Although the Defendant requested that the Commission wait until after May 18, 2025, for an update from them after the elections in Portugal and the newly elected government have been established, the provisions of the IJF Disciplinary Code Articles 16.7 and 16.8 limit the time within which these proceedings must be completed. As such, the Commission allowed the NJFP up to May 13, 2025, to send further written submissions for the Commission's consideration.

Within that time limit, the Defendant responded:

Following our last communication, and taking in consideration your letter from May 5th 2025, we would like to submit to your consideration the following: Although we have not yet had any developments regarding state support, the current leaders of the PJF, making a huge effort to not compromise the sporting activity, aimed to make a payment of 50,000 euros to the IJF today, as a sign of the beginning of payment of the

existing debt - please find attached the transfer document. We know that it is not a value that is even remotely close to the total amount owed, and that it falls far short of what is desired (by both parties), but it is impossible for us, at this time, to pay a higher amount and we hope that this act, despite falling short, is received as a sign of good faith, and that we wish to regularize a situation that, despite not having been created by us, we assume as having to be resolved by us. We would like to appeal to your understanding and request a period of 45 days so that we can reinforce this action with a second payment and, at that time, with concrete data about the financial possibilities of the PJF, namely with knowledge of the support granted and to be granted, we can present a proposal for payment of the remaining amount owed.

As of the writing of this decision, the NJFP appears to have attempted to make payment of 50,000 euros to the IJF, however the IJF has not received any payment from the NJFP.

Moreover, the Commission's mandate and authority lies in the parameters established by the IJF Statutes and IJF Disciplinary Code. The Commission does not have the authority to negotiate on behalf of or make agreements between the NJFP and the IJF. In addition, the Commission must respect the IJF Disciplinary Code time limits within which the Commission must complete these proceedings.

Findings

The Defendant has acknowledged that they owe debts to the IJF in the amounts stated in the charge. The Defendant has asked and has been granted discussions, extensions, and payment plans, by the IJF, to April 2, 2025.

The Commission notes the evidence provided, including:

Grand Prix 2022-2025, Odivelas, Portugal, Event Hosting Agreement

World Championships Juniors 2023, Coimbra, Portugal, Event Hosting Agreement

Invoice for 2023 Grand Prix, dated November 8, 2022

Email chain between IJF and NJFP, June 28, 2023, to March 12, 2025 (Subject description: Right Transfer Fees & Prize Money for WCJ Coimbra - Portugal, 2023, including Invoice for World Championships Juniors 2023)

Email chain Grupo Hoti Hoteis and IJF, June 27, 2023, to July 5, 2023, (hotel fees)

Letter NJFP to IJF, dated July 1, 2023 (hotel fees), sent by email July 1, 2023

Invoice for 2024 Grand Prix, dated January 15, 2024 (Subject description: Grand Prix Portugal 2025)

Email chain between IJF and NJFP, January 15, 2024, to March 12, 2025 (Subject description: Right Transfer Fees & Prize Money for GP Odivelas - Portugal, 2024)

Letter NJFP to IJF, dated January 29, 2024 (update about fees from World Juniors 2023, GP 2023, and GP 2024)

Email IJF to NJFP, December 2, 2024 (summary of discussion)

Email NJFP to IJF, December 9, 2024 (Subject description: update Portugal situation)

Email NJFP to IJF, January 28, 2025 (Subject description: Grand Prix Portugal 2025)

Letter from IJF to NJFP, dated February 12, 2025 (final notice)

Email chain between IJF and NJFP, February 12, 2025, to February 19, 2025 (Subject description: Grand Prix Portugal 2025)

Letter from IJF external counsel, Giros Szasz and Partners Legal Partnership, dated March 13, 2025 (final notice from IJF's legal counsel)

The evidence shows that:

The National Judo Federation of Portugal (NJFP) concluded event hosting agreements with the International Judo Federation (IJF):

- on 23 June 2022, for organising the World Championships Juniors (Coimbra) for the calendar year 2023, and
- on 18 November 2021, for organising Grand Prix (Odivelas) for the calendar years 2022-2025.

Under the agreements, the NJFP is obligated to pay to the IJF a licence fee for these events to the IJF as set out in the agreements.

The NJFP remains in default for the following amounts:

- licence fee for 2023 World Championships Junior, in the amount of EUR 300 000.
- licence fee for 2023 Grand Prix, in the amount of EUR 250 000.
- licence fee for 2024 Grand Prix, in the amount of EUR 250 000.

In total: EUR 800 000 + accrued interest.

Despite notices, requests, reminders, and invoices for payment sent by the IJF (through its General Treasury and Financial Director), the NJFP has not paid its outstanding debt on the due dates or at any time.

On 12 February 2025, the IJF Secretary General sent a final notice before termination in which it set a 14-day deadline to address the breach (pay the remaining licence fees) and informed NJFP that if it fails to address the breaches of the agreements within 14 days of the Final Notice, the IJF will terminate the agreements. As the NJFP did not settle its debt, the IJF terminated the agreements on 27 February 2025.

On 13 March 2025, the Giró-Szász Law Firm sent a final warning letter before legal action in hard copy to the NJFP on behalf of the IJF. The NJFP received the letter on 18 March 2025, as confirmed by the electronic proof of delivery.

Based on the 8 April 2025 record of the IJF, the NJFP has not paid the remaining

The NJFP has not paid the amounts owing to the IJF to this day.

The Defendant (NJFP) explained, in early 2024, that it discovered the “very precarious” financial situation left by the previous president of NJFP and that it took nearly a year for them to understand the NJFP’s debts. Although the NJFP acknowledged its debt, and the IJF agreed to a repayment plan, the NJFP was unable to give effect to that plan. The IJF made a final demand on February 12, 2025, by letter, directly to the NJFP. It then referred the matter to its external counsel. The IJF’s lawyer issued a final demand by letter, dated March 13, 2025, and stated that it would seek enforcement through the courts and initiate disciplinary proceedings, among other things.

It is undisputed that the NJFP has failed to pay its debts to the IJF and, accordingly, has failed to fulfil its contractual obligations. As such, the NJFP has violated the provisions of the IJF Statutes Article 22.3 and the IJF Disciplinary Code Article 3.5.

Sanction

The Commission finds that the Defendant’s conduct in admitting to the charges and providing written explanations about its unfortunate financial circumstances has demonstrated sincerity in its intentions. However, the offenses of not fulfilling contractual obligations and not paying debts are no less violations of the IJF Statutes and IJF Disciplinary Code.

The IJF Disciplinary Code Article 8.1 sets out the sanctions that may be imposed on a member (National Federation). These include a ban from participating in sporting events for a maximum period of two (2) years, a suspension from the IJF for a maximum of one (1) year, and a fine of up to HUF 50 million.

The Commission decides to apply against the Defendant the sanction of suspension of the NJFP for a period of one (1) year. If the NJFP pays its debts to the IJF in full before the end of this period, then this suspension may be lifted before the full one-year period has passed.

The Commission decides not to impose a ban from participating in sporting events, because a ban would have consequences to POR judo athletes. Further, the Commission recommends that athletes of the NJFP (POR judo athletes) who wish to compete at IJF

events be provided by the IJF with the opportunity to participate in IJF events under the IJF flag.

The Commission also decides not to impose a fine, considering the financial circumstances of the NJFP.

The period of suspension commences on May 23, 2025, which is the date of the Commission's decision.

The Defendant is informed that this decision is subject to appeal to the IJF Disciplinary Appeal Commission.

The time limit for appeal shall be fifteen days from the receipt of the decision appealed against.



Shu-Tai Cheng

On behalf of the Disciplinary Commission

Today the 23 May 2025