

International Judo Federation

Disciplinary Appeals Commission

Mr David PAPAUX (Chair of the IJF Disciplinary Appeals Committee)

Mr Marco FRIGERIO (Vice-Chair of the IJF Disciplinary Appeals Committee)

Ms Frédérique JOSSINET (member of the IJF Disciplinary Appeals Committee)

Case Number DIS2025-01 (POR)

Interlocutory decision by the Appeals Commission on Suspension of proceedings

Background – The Decision of the Disciplinary Commission

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).

In the Disciplinary Decision, issued on May 23, 2025, the Commission held that:

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.

The Commission imposed the following 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.

Background – New Facts

An agreement between the IJF and the NJFP was signed on June 4, 2025.

The agreement states that if the NJFP proceeds with the payment of EUR 200,000 to the IJF, the suspension will be lifted.

The NJFP has made the said payment, and the IJF has confirmed receipt.

Furthermore, the IJF has formally confirmed that it is in favour of lifting the suspension.

On June 5, 2025, an appeal was filed by the NJFP against the decision of the Commission.

On June 7, 2025, the NJFP was granted a deadline until June 8, 2025, at 12:00 (CET) to complete the formalities of the request to appeal and to clarify its interlocutory motion pending appeal.

Also on June 7, 2025, the NJFP was granted a deadline until June 19, 2025, to complete the formalities of the request to appeal on the merits.

On the evening of June 7, 2025, the NJFP responded as follow:

Dear Chair of the IJF Disciplinary Appeals Committee

I- SUMMARY

■ *The National Judo Federation of Portugal (hereinafter referred to as NJFP) was Defendant in the above-mentioned case.*

■ *In the aforementioned case, the IJF Disciplinary Commission imposed a one-year suspension sanction on the NJFP.*

■ *The IJF Disciplinary Commission indicated 23 May 2025, as the starting date for the NJFP's suspension period.*

■ *With all due respect, the NJFP does not agree with these Decisions.*

■ *The NJFP respectfully submits a Petition for Appeal of this Decision of the Disciplinary Commission under Article 40 of the IJF Disciplinary Code, to the IJF Disciplinary Appeals Committee under the following terms and grounds:*

II- PRELIMINARY

■ *NJFP once again acknowledges that it has not timely complied with 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 World Championships Junior (Coimbra) for a total of EUR 800,000.*

■ *NJFP explained in detail in the response to the charge the reasons that led to this situation of non-compliance.*

■ *NJFP once again apologizes for this situation of non-compliance.*

Nevertheless,

III – DECISION DID NOT TRANSIT IN REM JUDICATAM

■ *As stated above, in the final part of the document entitled Decision, dated 23 May 2025, it is written: «The period of suspension commences on May 23, 2025, which is the date of the Commission's decision».*

■ *In the letter signed by the President of the Disciplinary Commission dated May 28, 2025, following a request for clarification from the NJFP, it is confirmed that «the NJFP is suspended from all judo activities effective 23 May 2025».*

■ *However, the decisions of the Disciplinary Commission may be appealed to the IJF Disciplinary Appeals Committee within fifteen (15) days of service. (Article 40.1 of the Disciplinary Code).*

■ *Only once this period has elapsed without an appeal being filed does the disciplinary decision become final.*

■ *And only after the decision has become final should the disciplinary decision take effect, unless there is a compelling reason to justify its immediate entry into force.*

■ *Which, in this specific case, and with all due respect, we do not believe to be the case.*

We will address this issue in the next chapter:

IV- ABOUT THE APPEALS EFFECT

■ Appeals against decisions of the Disciplinary Commission have, as a main rule, suspensory effect, in accordance with article 40.6. Part 1 of the Disciplinary Code.

■ For the appeal not to have suspensory effect, the Disciplinary Commission in the first instance must have declared that its decision is immediately enforceable. (Article 40.6. Part 2 of the Disciplinary Code).

■ However, the Disciplinary Code expressly defines in article 38.1 in which exceptional situations the decisions of the Disciplinary Commission must come into force immediately: «The proceeding sports disciplinary body shall declare the decision immediately enforceable if it is necessary to prevent, avert or mitigate the harmful consequences of a situation which threatens to cause serious harm or to significantly violate the rights relating to personality or which is prejudicial to the objectives of the IJF Statutes, or to protect a person subject to the IJF Rules and Regulations or to protect the public interest».

■ With all due respect, we do not believe that the grounds for applying this exception are met in this specific case.

■ The NJFP has acknowledged from the outset that it is in default in paying the amounts owed to the IJF.

■ The NJFP has given clear signs that it is doing everything it can to resolve this situation as quickly as possible.

■ The NJFP has already contacted the Portuguese Government seeking quick solutions to end or at least mitigate its situation of non-compliance, and believes that already found some.

■ The Disciplinary Commission is aware of this fact and acknowledges 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».

■ The NJFP has no doubt (and is grateful) that this fact was taken into consideration by the Disciplinary Commission in its decision.

■ But all these reasons make the decision to immediately enforce the applicable sanction completely inconsistent.

■ Furthermore, since this is an exceptional rule, its application cannot be decided arbitrarily by the Disciplinary Commission.

■ The Disciplinary Commission should have explained in detail why the main rule of suspension of the decision due to an appeal did not apply in this specific case.

■ Since the Disciplinary Commission did not act in this way, it is our understanding, with all due respect, that the Disciplinary Commission did not act in accordance with what is stipulated in the IJF Disciplinary Code.

V- ABOUT THE DECISION OF A ONE-YEAR SUSPENSION

■ The NJFP has admitted the charge against it and fully understands the applying of a disciplinary sanction.

■ The sanctions that could have been applied to the NJFP are listed in article 8.1 of the Disciplinary Code.

■ The Disciplinary Commission listed only three sanctions from this list:

- "a ban from participating in international sporting events for a maximum period of two years" - paragraph e);

- "suspension from the IJF for a maximum of one (1) year" - paragraph l);

- "a fine of up to HUF 50 million" - paragraph m).

■ The Disciplinary Commission decided not to apply the sanction set out in paragraph e), in order to avoid consequences for the Portuguese judokas, nor the sanction set out in paragraph m), considering the financial circumstances of the NJFP.

■ Obviously, the NJFP was particularly grateful that those sanctions were not imposed on it.

■ However, and on the other hand, the Disciplinary Commission applied to the NJFP the sanction set out in paragraph l) for the maximum period preview in the IJF Disciplinary Code - 1 year.

■ *With all due respect, the NJFP believes that this sanction, over such a long period of time, is too severe and disproportionate.*

■ *Firstly, Article 8.1 of the Disciplinary Code provides for other sanctions that were not considered by the Disciplinary Commission. Namely:*

- *a written warning - paragraph a);*
- *reduction (withdrawal) of benefits that may be granted by the IJF - paragraph b);*

■ *The Disciplinary Commission acknowledged that the NJFP, by admitting the charges and providing written explanations about its unfortunate financial circumstances, demonstrated sincerity in its intentions.*

■ *However, we believe that other mitigating circumstances should have been considered, namely:*

- *The NJFP believes that it is one of the oldest sports federations affiliated to the UEJ and the IJF;*
- *The NJFP believes that it has always actively collaborated with the IJF, with full commitment to the development of Judo;*
- *The NJFP believes that it has never been subject to any disciplinary sanction applied by the IJF Disciplinary Committee or any other IJF Committee;*
- *The NJFP is doing everything possible to settle the debt it owes to the IJF with the full involvement of the Portuguese Government, with a significant payment of the debt.*
- *The NJFP has already found solutions to end or at least mitigate its situation of non-compliance, namely*
- *The NJFP already made a payment to IJF of 50.000 euros on May 27th,*
- *and 200.000 euros on June 5th, this one as part of a Payment Plan Agreement settled between IJF and NJFP – DOCs. 1, 2 and 3, in attachment.*
- *The Portuguese Judo Family, namely its competing judokas, do not deserve to go through the embarrassment and sadness of not being able to represent their country, nor display its flag or hear its anthem.*

- The suspension of the PJF puts at risk the maintenance of the Sports Public Utility Status and, consequently, the continuity of regular financial support, crucial for the PJF to fulfil its regular obligations, not only in sporting terms, but also as an employer, namely with the payment of the salaries of its employees, on whom they and their families depend on a daily basis.

- It goes without saying that, even with the 250.000 euros payments already done, and with the bigger amount payment that it's planned to do during the the next year, the lack of public funding - the only one that the PJF has - will also result in the impossibility of the PJF paying the rest of the existing debt, and we believe that this payment, and the necessary conditions for it to take place, are the main gold in this process, from both parties.

■ With all due respect, the NJFP understands that the application of any of the sanctions provided for in paragraph a) or paragraph b) of article 8.1 of the Disciplinary

Code would be the most appropriate for the specific case, considering the degree of wrongdoing and guilt of the NJFP and the mitigating circumstances mentioned above.

VI- CONCLUSIONS

1st The NJFP believes that the decision of the Disciplinary Commission should not come into effect during the period granted to the NJFP to appeal - article

40.1 of the Disciplinary Code;

2nd The NJFP believes that this appeal should have a suspensive effect in relation to the decision of the Disciplinary Commission - article 40.6, 1st part of the IJF Disciplinary Code;

3rd The NJFP believes that there is no reason to apply in this specific case the exceptional regime of immediate entry into force of the decision - article 40.6 2nd part and article 38.1 of the IJF Disciplinary Code;

4th The NJFP understands that the exceptional application of this regime should necessarily be substantiated by the Disciplinary Commission in its decision;

5th The NJFP understands that a less severe sanction should have been applied, taking into account the NJFP's background and the extenuating circumstances that were invoked - article 8.1 paragraphs a) or b) of the IJF Disciplinary Code;

6th The NJFP understands that, even if the IJF suspension sanction were applied, it should not be for the maximum period of one year - article 8.1 paragraph l) of the IJF Disciplinary Code;

VII- REQUEST:

The NJFP respectfully requests the IJF Disciplinary Appeals Commission to:

- Grant immediate suspensive effect to this appeal, allowing the NJFP to continue its judo activities while this appeal is pending;*
- Accept this appeal, in order to apply a lesser sanction to the NJFP.*

In attachment: 3 Documents.

By decision dated 9 June 2025, the suspensive effect was reinstated for the duration of the appeal proceedings.

On July 3, 2025, the IJF asked to extend the proceeding of the IJF Disciplinary Appeals Committee for an additional period of fifteen (15) days, in compliance with the article 16.18 of the IJF Disciplinary Code , in order to submit the new facts and evidence related to the case (article 40.8).

A deadline was set for Monday, July 7, 2025, for the IJF to submit new evidence and in compliance with article 41.1 along with article 16.18 of the Disciplinary Code, the procedure was extended for an additional period of fifteen (15) days.

The IJF complied within the allotted timeframe by producing:

*AMICUS CURIAE BRIEF OF THE INTERNATIONAL JUDO FEDERATION (IJF) DIS2025-01 POR
– APPEAL BY THE PORTUGUESE JUDO FEDERATION (PJF).*

Introduction

This amicus curiae brief is submitted on behalf of the International Judo Federation (IJF) in the disciplinary case DIS2025-01 POR. The matter before the Disciplinary Appeals

Committee concerns the appeal by the Portuguese Judo Federation (PJF) against the disciplinary decision made by the IJF Disciplinary Committee.

IJF respectfully requests the suspension of proceedings for the duration of the agreed payment plan concluded by and between IJF and PJF on 4 June 2025 and seeks the Appeal Committee's consideration of several key issues that affect the ongoing disciplinary process. The reasons for the request are as follows:

Background

The IJF notes the request for an extension of the disciplinary process, which was made on 3 July 2025, in compliance with Article 16.18 of the IJF Disciplinary Code. The basis for this request was the IJF's intent to submit new facts and evidence concerning the settlement of the debt owed by the PJF. The IJF had received and agreed to a formal payment plan agreement for the outstanding debt, which is essential to resolving the financial issues at hand and securing the continuation of the PJF's status as an IJF member.

The IJF also acknowledges the concerns raised by the athletes regarding the possible suspension, which may impact their ability to compete under the Portuguese flag. These athletes had expressed their gratitude to the IJF for allowing them to participate in competitions despite the ongoing issues with the PJF, as noted in the letter from athlete A_____ dated 30 May 2025. The IJF recognised the potential consequences for the athletes if the suspension were to continue, including the loss of sponsorship opportunities and the potential withdrawal of access to state funding.

Legal Analysis

1. Competence of the IJF Executive Committee and Payment Plan

The IJF maintains that it is within the competence of the IJF Executive Committee to enter into licensing deals and agreements that include the setting of commercial terms and payment plans (IJF Statutes Article 11.1). This includes negotiating and approving payment schedules for outstanding debts. As part of its authority, the IJF Executive Committee is

empowered to adjust the deadlines for payment as necessary to accommodate the financial realities of the PJF.

While Article 22.3 of the IJF Statutes clearly outlined that non-payment of membership fees, royalties, or debts could lead to a Member Federation being disqualified from participation in IJF events, the IJF contended that it was also within its competence to establish a revised payment plan that redefined the due date for payment, as was the case here. The proposed settlement plan effectively restructured the debt and provided for payment in four instalments, with the final payment scheduled for June 2026.

2. Conditional Breach of Statutes

The IJF further argued that the breach of statutes identified in the first instance decision became conditional upon the payment of the outstanding amounts. The settlement plan effectively provided the PJF with the opportunity to rectify its financial obligations to the IJF and, in doing so, conditionally remove the breach of statutes.

In this context, the disciplinary proceedings shall be suspended pending the successful completion of the agreed payment plan. If the PJF defaults on any of the payments, the IJF reserved the right to initiate the reopening of the case. The IJF suggests that the Disciplinary Appeals Committee consider the conditional nature of the breach when making its determination.

3. Article 30: Suspension of Disciplinary Proceedings

The IJF argues that under Article 30.1 of the IJF Disciplinary Code, the Disciplinary Committee (or Appeals Committee) may suspend proceedings based on the recommendation of the Chairperson, particularly if the decision on the merits depends on a preliminary ruling by another body. In this case, the payment plan was still in its early stages, and the resolution of the matter depended on whether the PJF complied with the agreed schedule. Consequently, the decision on the merits depends on a preliminary ruling of the IJF Executive Committee.

Given the conditional nature of the breach, the IJF respectfully requests the suspension of proceedings until the payment plan has been completed or until further developments warranted the resumption of the case.

4. Equitable Treatment of the Case

The IJF recognised the need to protect the financial integrity of the Federation and to ensure timely payment of fees. However, the IJF submitted that this case presented several unique circumstances that may have warranted equitable treatment. Specifically:

The delay in setting the payment plan was not solely attributable to the PJF but also resulted from delays in negotiations on the IJF's side due to preparations for the IJF Ordinary Congress and World Championships. This delay should not have been held against the PJF.

The settlement agreement was finalised after the first-instance decision was made, and the facts of the settlement could not have been presented at that stage. This further justified the need for the Disciplinary Appeals Committee to consider the new facts in light of the agreement reached after the decision.

The interests of the athletes must also be taken into account. The suspension of the PJF had a direct impact on the athletes, whose participation in international competitions was contingent on the PJF's status. If the PJF were suspended, the athletes could suffer irreparable harm, including the withdrawal of personal sponsorships and loss of direct access of clubs and athletes to state subsidies. In this regard, IJF provides the letter from athlete A_____, which supported this argument.

Conclusion and Request for Relief

The IJF respectfully requests that the Disciplinary Appeals Committee:

- 1. Suspend the disciplinary proceedings for the duration of the payment plan, with the understanding that the IJF will inform the Committee of the completion or non-completion of the payment plan.*

2. Consider the conditional nature of the breach of statutes in light of the settlement agreement and the interests of the athletes whose participation is contingent on the PJF's membership status.

3. Take into account the unique circumstances surrounding the delay in the payment plan, the ongoing negotiations, and the potential harm to the athletes, as detailed in the letter received from judoka A_____.

The IJF remains committed to ensuring the proper resolution of this matter while safeguarding the interests of the judo community and ensuring that the athletes are able to compete under the flag of their respective federations.

By letter dated July 9, 2025, but sent July 10, 2025, the NJFP voluntarily responded:

As Portuguese Judo Federation President I would like to respectfully address the matter currently under review by the IJF Disciplinary Appeals Committee and, in particular, to formally express our agreement with the proposition submitted on 2025.07.07 by IJF Secretary General, Dr Lisa Allan, in connection with this case.

It is important to clarify the circumstances that unfortunately prevented the timely payment or establishment of a payment plan prior to the decision rendered at first instance. At that time, the Federation faced significant financial constraints and, despite repeated efforts to secure the necessary resources through various avenues, it was unable to gather the funds required to meet its obligations. These efforts, while earnest, proved unsuccessful within the necessary timeframe.

The decision rendered at first instance, which involved a suspension, marked a critical turning point in this matter. In the immediate aftermath of that decision, both the Sport Ministry and the National Olympic Committee recognised the serious implications it posed — particularly the risk of the Federation losing its Sport Utility Status. Such a loss would have directly jeopardised the livelihood of our staff as well as the careers and opportunities of our athletes. In light of this, urgent measures were taken by these national authorities to intervene and assist the Federation in gathering the necessary conditions to present a

payment plan to safeguard the integrity and operational continuity of the sport in our country.

Additionally, it is pertinent to note that the former President of the Federation, under whose leadership the situation arose, is currently the subject of an official investigation. This ongoing inquiry seeks to address and clarify the responsibilities and decisions that led to these financial difficulties.

In view of the above, we kindly ask the Committee to take these circumstances into account when considering the current proposition, which we fully support. We remain committed to upholding the values and responsibilities expected by the International Judo Federation and sincerely appreciate all the opportunities given to clarify our position.

Background – Legal basis

Pursuant to Article 30.1.a of the Disciplinary Code:

30.1. The proceeding IJF Disciplinary Committee may suspend the proceedings on the recommendation of the Chairperson thereof, if the decision on the merits of the case depends on a preliminary ruling on a question which falls within the competence of another body.

Pursuant to Article 40.8 of the Disciplinary Code:

New facts and evidence may be introduced in the appeal only if the appellant proves that he/she was unable to present them at first instance through no fault of his/her own.

Findings

All parties agree to request the suspension of the proceedings, which seems appropriate in order to allow the dispute to be adjudicated in its entirety.

Furthermore, compliance with—or breach of—the June 4, 2025, agreement may influence the final decision.

The NJFP specifically points out that its former president is under investigation. The possibility that this former president exceeded his authority while in office could also affect the outcome of the final ruling.

Accordingly, the Disciplinary Appeals Committee of the IJF makes the following decision:

The proceedings against the NFJP are suspended.

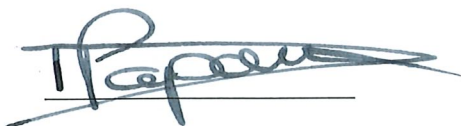
An order is issued to the IJF and the NFJP to immediately produce all proof of receipt for the payments referred to in the agreement signed by the parties on 4 June 2025.

An order is issued to the NFJP to produce the results of the investigation concerning its former president.

Pursuant to Article 42.2 of the Disciplinary Code, this interlocutory decision is final and enforceable.

The Defendant is informed that this decision is subject to appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

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



David PAPAUX

Chairperson of the IJF Disciplinary Appeals Committee

Today the 17th of July 2025