



A Russian gymnast named Ivan Kuliak stood on the podium at Apparatus World Cup in Doha, Qatar. He taped a 'Z' symbol on his shirt in the place of the Russian flag.

The 'Z' is a **pro-war** symbol of President Putin's invasion of Ukraine, and it's been spreading fast among supporters of the invasion, including politicians and protesters. Media first spotted the symbol on Russian tanks that were on their way to Ukraine, and since then, it's a way for Russia's military to identify its own forces. Kuliak wore the symbol on his shirt when he stood next to his Ukrainian **rival** Illia Kovtun; Illia won a gold medal at the World Cup.

Kuliak is now under investigation, and he's facing **discipline** by the International Gymnastics Federation, FIG. FIG announced in late February that the flags of both Russia and Belarus mustn't be displayed at any of its competition, and Russians and Belarusians were banned from taking part at any FIG competitions.

Difficult words: **pro-war** (supporting a war), **rival** (a person who's competing with another person), **discipline** (the punishment of people who break the rules).

**Discussion Questions****Topic Talk**

1. Define the following words: *pro-war*, *rival* and *discipline*
2. How did the Russian gymnast catch the attention of the people at the World Cup in Doha?
3. What does the letter Z symbolize?
4. When was the symbol first spotted?
5. How does the International Gymnastics Federation deal with Kuliak's behavior?
6. What was the announcement made by the International Gymnastics Federation in late February?

Express Your Thoughts

1. Did your country send representatives for the recent World Cup in gymnastics in Doha?
2. Do you think it was fear for the FIG to ban Russians and Belarusians from taking part at any FIG competitions?
3. Has your country been banned from taking part in any international sports competitions? Which one? Why?