

# [***A Paris exhibit shows how the Olympics mirror society, from Nazi propaganda to fighting inequalities***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BN6-S631-JC5B-G0VN-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

PARIS — More than a sporting competition, the Olympics are also a powerful political stage widely used in the past by totalitarian regimes as a propaganda tool but also by athletes as a driver of change in the fight against racial inequalities.

Before this summer's [*Paris Olympics*](https://apnews.com/hub/2024-paris-olympic-games), an exhibit in the French capital shows how the games have been a “mirror of society” since the beginning of the 20th century.

Historian Paul Dietschy, one of the curators, told The Associated Press on Wednesday that “this exhibit tries to show ... this relationship between ideology, power and the Olympic Games.”

The exhibit at the Shoah Memorial, in central Paris, features photos, documents and Olympic items as well as film archives from the past century. It opens to the public on Friday and is scheduled to last until mid-November, organizers said.

It notably highlights the [*1936 Berlin Olympics*](https://apnews.com/34e4600907eb89241952921ae36d1091), which was used by Nazi Germany for propaganda purposes; the [*1968 Mexico Olympics*](https://apnews.com/article/virus-outbreak-sports-mexico-sports-general-baton-rouge-77194dea5d0fd26c4eec354f8651a4fc), where Black sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised their fists to protest racial injustice in the U.S. and the 1972 Munich Olympics, which was the scene of a [*brutal attack on 11 Israeli team members*](https://apnews.com/article/germany-israel-munich-olympics-1972-attack-palestinian-c3c0b16b904662e6dbe55b82751a1c7a) who were killed by Palestinian militants.

Dietschy said the exhibit sought to show the historic and political significance of the Olympics “through the life of big stars or champions like Alfred Nakashe, who was a Jew from Algeria competing in swimming and who was deported to Auschwitz” concentration camp during World War II. Nakashe competed with the French team in Berlin in 1936 and in the first postwar Summer Olympics in London in 1948 after surviving the Holocaust.

The exhibit also tells the stories of athletes who embody Olympic values like Jesse Owens, the U.S. Black athlete who won four Olympic gold medals in Berlin.

Historian Caroline François, one of the curators, stressed that “the 1936 Games are emblematic with Jesse Owens’ story, because he is both an immense champion who left his mark on the history of sport ... but also because of his personality, his career, his close ties to German champion Luz Long.”

“Owens embodies this struggle to confront Hitler and the Nazi ideology ... But he himself was a victim of racism and segregation in the United States,” she said.

The exhibit also addresses the issue of how Olympic stadiums were turned into internment camps during World War II. Following the Nazi invasion of France in 1940, the country was ruled by a government commonly known as Vichy France, which collaborated with Nazi Germany.

The displays feature photos of the Vel d’Hiv stadium outside Paris, where French police herded about 13,000 people on July 16-17, 1942 before they were deported to Auschwitz. The stadium had been used for boxing, wrestling and weightlifting during the 1924 Paris Olympics.

International ***politics***, again, are expected to be on the agenda of the Paris Olympics this year.

The International Olympic Committee said earlier this month that [*Russian and Belarusian athletes*](https://apnews.com/article/paris-olympics-ioc-russia-e08f47312dc558eb885825ed0f8874ee) won't be allowed to take part in the traditional parade at the opening ceremony in the French capital.

Russia and Belarus are barred from team sports at the Olympics because of Moscow's [*war in Ukraine*](https://apnews.com/hub/russia-ukraine), and the IOC has laid out a two-step vetting procedure for individual athletes from those countries to be granted neutral status. Those athletes must first be approved by the governing body of their individual sport and then by an an IOC-appointed review panel.

Amid the [*Israel-Hamas war*](https://apnews.com/hub/israel-hamas-war), IOC President Thomas Bach recently said that Israel [*faces no threat to its Olympic status*](https://apnews.com/article/paris-olympics-ioc-bach-israel-russia-8b6005213cb0e680bf533c0454ece216) and added: “Since the heinous attack on the Israeli team (during the 1972 Munich Olympics), there were always special measures being taken with Israeli athletes."

In recent times, totalitarian and democratic powers have been competing, including through sports, Dietschy said.

“So the Olympic Games of Paris are a huge moment, because we will see if the peace values will be respected," he said. "We’ll see if sports can be also a way of spreading universal democratic values.”

“The context (now) is more tense as a war is spreading in the world. Maybe the (Paris) Games will be a moment of peace," Dietschy said hopefully.

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AP Olympics: [*https://apnews.com/hub/2024-paris-olympic-games*](https://apnews.com/hub/2024-paris-olympic-games)

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