

Gymnastics Ireland forced to apologize 18 months after racist treatment of Black girl

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Dublin, September 29 (RHC)-- Ireland's gymnastics federation has issued an apology 18 months after the racist treatment of a young Black girl who was skipped over by an official during a gymnastics medal awarding ceremony in the Republic of Ireland last year.

"We would like to unreservedly apologize to the gymnast and her family for the upset that has been caused by the incident," Gymnastics Ireland (GI) said in a statement posted on its website on Monday.

The development came after a viral video showed a young Black gymnast being skipped over by an official handing out medals to a row of girls, triggering a heated racism controversy and drawing widespread condemnations from across the world.

"What happened on the day should not have happened and for that, we are deeply sorry," said the statement. "We would like to make it absolutely clear that [GI] condemns any form of racism whatsoever," it added.

The footage, which surfaced earlier in the week, was originally shot in March last year and showed a lineup of young gymnasts waiting for their awards in a sports event in Dublin. As the video clip posted on social media showed, while all the gymnasts received their medals, the Black girl — the only Black athlete in the lineup — was visibly snubbed by the official.

Looking bewildered by the racist treatment of the official, the black gymnast was left speechless by seeing the person giving away the awards walk away with the remaining medal. The footage soon prompted widespread condemnations from many viewers, including from famous US gymnast Simone Biles, who said she sent the girl a private video message of support.

"When this video was circulating, her parents reached out. It broke my heart to see, so I sent her a little video," Biles, a seven-time Olympic medallist, said on X. "There is no room for racism in any sport or at all !!!!"

Biles's US teammate Jordan Chiles also described the incident as "beyond hurtful on so many levels."

Welcome to Ireland where people get away with racism! This little Black girl broke my heart. Don't skip this post without leaving a million hearts for her. Make her famous... pic.twitter.com/YYMIP1IALZ

— Mohamad Safa (@mhdksafa) September 22, 2023

Although the Irish sporting body Gymnastics Ireland (GI) claimed they had settled the issue last year, the girl's mother said on Saturday that was not true and the family had not received a genuine apology. The mother underlined that the family was "very upset" about the "horrendous" incident.

The Irish Independent also quoted the girl's mother as saying GI had failed to publicly apologize and that she would take the issue to the Gymnastics Ethics Foundation in Switzerland. The mother also called for the removal of the footage from social media.

"We are often the only Black family at gymnastics events and this has been very hurtful for us," the girl's mother told the outlet.

"Now eight million people have seen the video. From Pakistan to Ethiopia they can see this was wrong but Gymnastics Ireland still can't accept it and say sorry."

Sport Ireland, the federal agency that works with sports governing bodies, said in a statement that Gymnastics Ireland's handling of the incident "has fallen short" because it hasn't provided the family with

a "satisfactory outcome."

"Sport Ireland is disappointed with this outcome and has asked Gymnastics Ireland to provide a full review of how the complaint was handled, to ensure we learn from this process," the agency added.

"Sport must be welcoming and inclusive, offering appropriate opportunities for participation and improvement to all regardless of ethnicity, socio-economic background, gender, disability, or sexual orientation."

Moreover, a spokesperson for Ireland's Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media said in a statement that it takes a "zero-tolerance approach to racism in sport" and it was "unfortunate" the process of resolving this incident has taken so long.

"The child was badly let down, and it is right and proper that Gymnastics Ireland have issued an apology," the statement said.

<https://www.radiohc.cu/index.php/en/noticias/internacionales/335441-gymnastics-ireland-forced-to-apologize-18-months-after-racist-treatment-of-black-girl>



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