

To: Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique
Avenue de la Gare 12A, Case postale 630
1001 Lausanne, Switzerland

20th May 2017

Open Letter

Dear Morinari Watanbe,

We, the invited athletes of Apex INTL 2017 [inaccurately listed at FISE as 'Parcours Obstacles – Speed'], would like to make a statement concerning the actions and intentions of FIG and The Mouvement and the events preceding and following the cancelling of Apex INTL 2017.

As individuals central to the events that have been unfolding over the last month, and as representatives of our wider community of parkour/freerunning practitioners, we feel that it is important that our voices are heard on this matter.

It has now been fully substantiated that FIG's intentions were and are to appropriate parkour/freerunning as a gymnastic discipline under their governance. This was made clear in an [interview with the Secretary General of FIG](#), André Gueisbuhler, [original article has been removed] during which he said: *"There are many groups around the world who do parkour, so we will invite all of them, we will tell them what we want to do, and we will invite them to cooperate with the FIG in order to develop this discipline into a sport. At the moment they are not organised. Their basic spirit is to be free, not to be organised. Yet they want to have competitions. But if they want to do competitions, obviously they need minimum rules and environment to make attractive competitions. I'm sure the FIG is the international federation most qualified to further develop parkour."*

We stand firmly against the encroachment and appropriation of our sport by FIG for the following reasons:

1. FIG are taking an interest in parkour because they see its potential as a sport with great commercial appeal. Allowing FIG to encroach upon and misappropriate parkour as a discipline of gymnastics will place them in a position to sanction and create the rules and formats for official competitions, and place them in a position of power in delivering insurance to event-organisers, gym-owners, coaches and athletes. As such FIG could become the official source of information on parkour, and have the ability to control the public image of parkour, shape the culture around it and commodify our sport in any way they see fit. These powers would be in the hands of FIG (& others they choose to appoint) with none of the respect and emotional investment in parkour that is at the core of most parkour organisations owned and managed by members of our community.
2. FIG claim to be "working very closely with the founders of parkour". This appears to be a reference to FIG's collaboration with The Mouvement. However, it has been made evident in [public statements released by Malik Diouf](#) and [Chau Belle](#) (co-founders of parkour and board members on The Mouvement) that many of the founders who are board members on The Mouvement were not consulted about or even made aware of this collaboration, and certainly do not support it.

3. Parkour organizations globally have been becoming increasingly more organized as the sport grows, and while our sport is still young and developing, it is not fair, nor is it their place to conclude that we do not want to be organized. Any informed look at major parkour competitions and events over the past few years gives an entirely different impression. Saying "[our] spirit is to be free" is just a cheap and condescending way to dismiss the fact that we have a right to be leaders in our own interests.

Although we were excited as athletes for the opportunity to compete at what could have been an incredible event, and excited as members of a thriving community for parkour to have the opportunity to be presented to the wider world of action sports at FISE, we feel that by participating in a competition funded by FIG we would be by association agreeing with their actions, and our involvement may be viewed as implicit endorsement of FIG as the international federation / governing body for parkour – which it is not. Therefore, we feel entirely unable to compete at this FIG-funded competition in Montpellier - with or without the involvement of any other parkour/freerunning organisation.

We believe it is our duty as leading members of our community to safeguard and protect the rights and interests of all practitioners, ensuring our discipline is not misappropriated by or encroached upon by FIG and/or by any of FIG's National Federation members now or in the future. As participants in the event, we believe that we are owed transparency and integrity on the part of The Mouvement and FIG, and that has been called into question with this event.

We would also like to appeal to the integrity of any athletes invited by FIG or The Mouvement to compete in our place. We are not boycotting this event just to be replaced by a new group of athletes. We are putting the good of our sport and our community ahead of our individual aspirations. We hope that you also choose to act based on values rather than personal gain.

It is clear now that if we, the parkour community, don't create our own international federation / governing body, we all remain vulnerable to outside agendas and profit driven organisations. One factor in being recognized as an international federation is that the discipline must have a competitive element(s). While we agree that parkour is primarily non-competitive (as detailed in Parkour UK's [sporting definition of Parkour](#)) and is too wide-ranging a discipline to be competitive as a whole, we believe that there absolutely can be competitive element(s) within specific constituent aspects of the discipline (e.g. speed and/or style). Accordingly, we appeal to the event-organisers and competition-organisers of our community to be resolute in the naming of parkour competitions, and label them as what they are – parkour!

Again, as detailed in Parkour UK's open letter to FIG; "If any 'competition(s) and/or competitive format' for Parkour/Freerunning/Art Du Déplacement are to be developed, this should be in accordance with the freely expressed will and desire of the collective international Parkour/Freerunning/Art Du Déplacement community, via the established right of self-determination and by virtue of that right we, as a sovereign international community, and not FIG should freely determine our sporting, social and cultural development."

We fully support Parkour UK's stance as detailed in their open letter and would like to thank them for their unconditional support and guidance, and for leading the daily battle against FIG and all other organisations with the intention of exploiting our sport to the detriment of its community.

We hope that this letter sends a clear message to FIG and The Mouvement that their continued advances to appropriate our discipline are unwanted and unethical, and we encourage them to engage in a transparent and open dialogue that recognises the sovereignty of parkour, freerunning and l'art du déplacement as a sport in its own right.

#WeAreNotGymnastics #WeAreParkour