



TAS / CAS
TRIBUNAL ARBITRAL DU SPORT
COURT OF ARBITRATION FOR SPORT
TRIBUNAL ARBITRAL DEL DEPORTE

MEDIA RELEASE

ATHLETICS – ANTI-DOPING

THE COURT OF ARBITRATION FOR SPORT PARTIALLY UPHOLDS APPEAL BY WORLD ATHLETICS AGAINST DIRIBE WELTEJI KEJELCHA

Lausanne, 26 February 2026 – The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) has partially upheld an appeal by World Athletics against the Ethiopian National Anti-Doping Office (ETH-NADO) and middle-distance runner Diribe Welteji Kejelcha (Ethiopia). Ms Welteji is found to have committed an Anti-Doping Rule Violation (ADRV) and is sanctioned with a period of ineligibility of two years from 8 July 2025, with credit for provisional suspension served.

Ms Welteji was charged with an ADRV on 21 May 2025 by ETH-NADO for allegedly refusing to provide a sample for an out-of-competition doping control without any justification. A hearing took place on 12 August 2025 before the ETH-NADO Hearing Panel which subsequently found that the Athlete did not commit an ADRV.

World Athletics filed an appeal to CAS on 9 September 2025 against the ETH-NADO Hearing Panel's decision, with a request to set it aside and impose a four-year period of ineligibility on the Athlete. In the appeal, there was also a request for provisional measures to be rendered prior to the start of the 2025 World Championships in Tokyo. The request was upheld on 12 September 2025 and Ms Welteji was provisionally suspended for the World Championships and for the duration of the CAS arbitration procedure.

A Sole Arbitrator was appointed to rule on this matter. A hybrid CAS hearing took place on 16 January 2026. The written submissions and hearing confirmed that, on 25 February 2025, three Sample Collection Personnel (SCP) arrived at the Athlete's property to collect a sample. The SCP were met by Ms Welteji's husband who informed them that she was sleeping. The evidence of what occurred until the SCP departed the property without collecting a sample then consists of fundamentally contradictory witness accounts.

Whilst the Sole Arbitrator accepted that certain technical and best practice departures occurred, she found Ms Welteji failed to establish any compelling justification for her failure to submit to sample collection. The Sole Arbitrator accordingly found that the Athlete committed an ADRV under the ADR (Art. 2.3) on 25 February 2025.

The Sole Arbitrator also found that there were confirmed language barriers during the attempted sample collection and that Ms Welteji has a consistent history of compliance over eight prior tests outside her designated window to support the view that the failure was aberrational rather than deliberate. However, the Sole Arbitrator still determined that the Athlete was negligent, and an athlete of her calibre and experience should have known that she was required to comply regardless of the timing of the visit. The language barriers did not alter this conclusion.



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Consequently, the appeal was partially upheld, with the conclusion that the applicable period of ineligibility under the ADR is two years as the Athlete established that her failure was not intentional.

Considering that ETH-NADO issued a formal notice of charge no less than 66 days after having lifted the initial provisional suspension, the Sole Arbitrator considered appropriate to backdate the period of ineligibility by 66 days from the date of 12 September 2025, when CAS imposed the provisional suspension, considering that such delay was disproportionate in light of the circumstances of this case and was not attributable to the Athlete.

Credit is granted for the 7-day period of provisional suspension served in March 2025. Accordingly, the start date of the 2-year period of ineligibility is 8 July 2025 and should end on 30 June 2027, if served without disruption. All competitive results obtained by the Athlete during the period from and including 25 February 2025 through the date of the CAS award shall be disqualified.

This is an unofficial summary for media use. Unless Parties request confidentiality, the full Award will be made available on the CAS website.