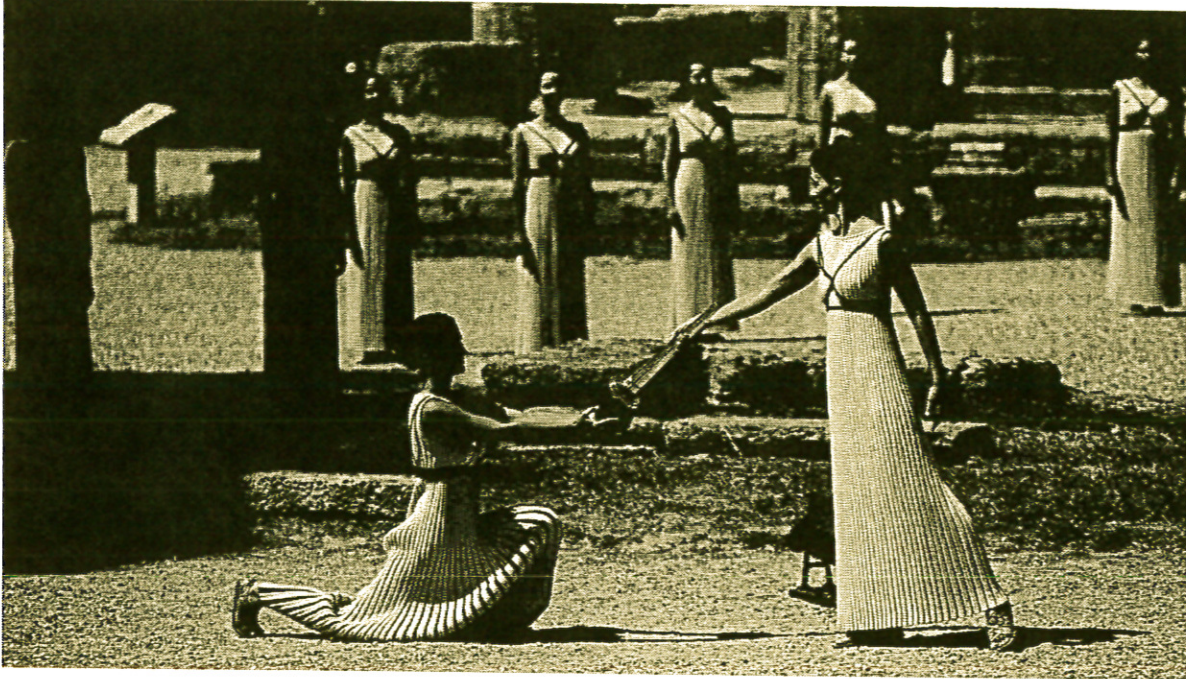


# Flame for Rio Olympics is lit at birthplace of ancient games

By Associated Press, adapted by Newsela staff on 04.27.16  
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Greek actress Katerina Lehou (right) lights a pot with a backup flame for the Rio Olympics in front of the ancient Temple of Hera during the dress rehearsal for the lighting of the Rio Olympics flame in Ancient Olympia, Greece, April 20, 2016. Photo: AP/Petros Giannakouris

ANCIENT OLYMPIA, Greece — South America's first Olympics has begun. The opening flame was kindled in Greece on Thursday, marking the beginning of a 15-week journey around the world that will end on Aug. 5 with the opening ceremony in Rio de Janeiro.

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil is the host of the Olympics this year, though their planning of the games has not been without issues. Due to a political crisis, Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff could not appear at the opening ceremony. Despite her absence, the Olympic and other Brazilian organizers who attended the flame-lighting ceremony said they were confident that the games will be successful in Brazil.

President Rousseff is possibly facing having to leave her office as president. She has been accused of mismanaging the country's money. Aside from political troubles, Brazil has also suffered from cities and businesses not growing as fast as expected, and the dangerous outbreak of the Zika virus. Other problems specific to the games include spending cuts, slow ticket sales and delays in some venues.



Brazilian Sports Minister Ricardo Leyser said the country's problems will have no influence on the games.

## **A Big Celebration Is Expected**

"It will be a big party, and people will forget the other problems and just focus on the games," he told reporters. "So I don't think it's really a problem for the games."

Carlos Nuzman is the head of the Rio organizing committee. Nuzman said the Olympics will bring Brazilians together, and pledged that the host city of Rio is ready for success.

Nuzman said the Brazilian organizers are proud to have come this far. They have overcome very hard challenges while putting together the games, but he said the Olympic flame will bring Brazilians together.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) also believes the games in Rio will be successful. They insist the preparations are going well.

IOC President Thomas Bach said Rio will provide "a spectacular stage" for the Olympics.

## **Olympics Bring Hope To A Country In Distress**

Bach said the Olympic Games bring hope to Brazil and the world during hard times. He continued, adding that although Brazil is facing hardships, the Olympic flame reminds us that we are part of the same human race.

Bach has said that 98 percent of the infrastructure is ready, and the test events are going well.

The flame was lit outside the Temple of Hera in Olympia. It was built around the seventh century B.C. This year, Greek actress Katerina Lehou lit the Olympic torch. She wore a long dress in the style of a non-Christian female priest. There was a ceremonial prayer to the ancient Greek gods. Then, the actress used a mirror that curved inward to focus the sun's rays on her torch, lighting it in the ancient stadium that was used at the 2004 Athens Games.

## **Flame-Lighting Ceremony Kicks Off Games**

The flame-lighting ceremony is a key part of the Olympic ceremony. It also reminds us of an awkward moment of the Olympics history. In 1936, Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party used the Berlin Olympic Games for political purposes.

During the ceremony this year in Greece, the first person to carry the torch was the Greek world gymnastics champion Eleftherios Petrounias. Then he handed it to Brazilian former volleyball great Giovane Gavio, who began a relay involving hundreds of people.

The relay will travel across Greece for six days until April 27. Then the torch will finally be handed over to Brazilian officials in Athens at the renovated ancient stadium where the first modern games were held in 1896.

"This is the beginning of the last stretch of the organization," Bach said. "We're really looking forward to the moment when this flame is finally burning in Rio de Janeiro."

The journey of the flame will take the global refugee crisis into account by stopping at a camp in Athens that is home to 1,500 refugees and migrants. One of the people there will participate in the relay. A young Syrian boy from another camp will accompany the torchbearer in a small town just north of Olympia.

### **Refugees To Be Included**

For the first time at the Rio Games, the Olympic Committee will allow a group of five to 10 refugee athletes to participate. They will march behind the Olympic flag at the opening ceremony. Committee officials say there are 42 possible participants. The final selection will be made in June.

The committee president said they have the responsibility of including refugees in the Olympics. These refugees have to run away from their home because of war and violence. The Olympic Committee wants to give them the Olympic flag and song.

The flame will quickly stop in Switzerland and start its travels through Brazil on May 3. It starts in the capital of Brasilia. Organizers say it will reach most of the vast country's 200 million population. The journey will cover 20,000 kilometers (12,000 miles) by road and 16,000 kilometers (10,000 miles) by air. It will reach hundreds of cities and towns in a giant effort involving 12,000 torchbearers.

Traditionally, there is one stadium for the Olympics. However, Rio is doing it differently this year with two stadiums. The Maracana stadium will be used for the opening and closing ceremonies and soccer. The Olympic Stadium across town will be used for track and field. After the first night in the Maracana, the flame will go to a not yet revealed downtown location for the rest of the games.

## Quiz

- 1 Which detail would be MOST important to include in a summary of the article?
- (A) Brazil is facing the dangerous outbreak of the Zika virus as they prepare for this year's Olympic games.
  - (B) President Rousseff might be forced to leave the presidency this year because of corruption.
  - (C) Carlos Nuzman is the head of the organizing committee in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
  - (D) The famous Olympic torch relay will travel across Greece for six days until April 27.
- 2 Read the first two paragraphs in the section "Refugees To Be Included." What is the BEST summary of these two paragraphs?
- (A) This year is different from other years of the Olympics because Rio will be using two different stadiums for the opening and closing ceremonies.
  - (B) For the first time, the Olympic Committee will allow a small group of refugees to participate to give them a sense of participation and pride.
  - (C) Refugees will march behind the Olympic flag at the opening ceremony of the games, but will not participate this year.
  - (D) The Olympic torch will stop through Switzerland before making its journey through Brazil starting May 3.
- 3 Which of the following words, if it replaced the word "ceremonial" in the sentence below, would CHANGE the meaning of the sentence?

*There was a ceremonial prayer to the ancient Greek gods.*

- (A) tiresome
- (B) celebratory
- (C) traditional
- (D) ritual



4 Read the selection from the first paragraph of the article.

*South America's first Olympics has begun. The opening flame was kindled in Greece on Thursday, marking the beginning of a 15-week journey around the world that will end on Aug. 5 with the opening ceremony in Rio de Janeiro.*

Which phrase from the article helps you understand the meaning of the word "kindled"?

- (A) Olympics history
- (B) opening ceremony
- (C) flame-lighting
- (D) political crisis

5. What event starts the Olympics each Olympic year?

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6. What country and city will host the 2016 Summer Olympics?

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7. How many torch bearers will carry to torch once it reaches it's host city?

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8. When do the Olympic games start for 2016? (Opening ceramonies)

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9. List 5 of your favorite Summer Olympic Events:

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