

FIFA Is Whitewashing and Sportswashing Israeli Genocide and Sporticide. Football Stadiums Into Concentration Camps

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Israel 'Defense' Forces, with unconditional support of the United States, have been waging a genocidal war on Gaza since October 2023, resulting in an unparalleled humanitarian catastrophe. They dropped over 85,000 tons of bombs, exceeding the amount of explosives used in World War II.

More than 44,000 Palestinian have been killed, including over 16,000 children, [190 journalists](#), 1,000 health workers, 230 United Nations [staff members](#) and many others. Over 104,000 are wounded – most of them children and women – while at least 11,000 are unaccounted for, presumed dead under the rubble of their homes.

As part of its genocide, Israel is also committing sporticide, killing more than 500 Palestinian athletes, including over 344 footballers. Two of them were on the Palestinian National Team, including Mohamed Barakat, the first Palestinian to score over 100 goals professionally. Israel also jailed footballers, referees, and club owners.

Israel's air strikes in Gaza have resulted in extensive destruction of stadiums and, sports facilities in Gaza and the West Bank. **They turned football stadiums into concentration camps where they detain and humiliate thousands of Palestinians who are paraded almost naked on television screens.**

Thus, the Al Yarmouk stadium was turned into a makeshift concentration camp for Palestinian detainees. Men, women and children were rounded up, stripped down to their underwear, and blindfolded, while armed soldiers and tanks encircled the field. Blindfolded men and women were forced to kneel in front of a goal with the Israeli flag attached to the net.

Israel allows football clubs based in illegal settlements in West Bank to compete in official Israeli leagues in violation of international law. In the occupied Jerusalem they mounted a violent attack on the headquarters of the Palestinian Football Association (PFA).

In Apartheid Israel sports is rampant with racism and dehumanization of Palestinians. At an Israeli match a banner is displayed saying the lives of Palestinian children are worth nothing. Israeli football fans' favorite anthem is "Death to the Arabs!" Such practices were noticed when Israeli team was playing in the Netherlands.

At the same time, Palestinian football teams, including the national team, are denied freedom of movement between the occupied West Bank and the besieged Gaza. They are

prevented from joining the national team in regional and international matches.

Detentions and restrictions on movement force the Palestine Football Association (PFA) to suspend football leagues in Palestine, while it hinders setting up camps for the national team abroad to participate in FIFA World Cup qualifiers.

While FIFA allows Israeli football clubs based in illegal settlements in the West Bank to compete in official Israeli leagues, the sports body has failed to take action against Israel for its inclusion of these illegal teams in its official leagues, and for its attacks on Palestinian football. It is sportswashing Israel's decades of forced displacement of Palestinians, its apartheid regime and its genocide against Palestinians. It is thus complicit in Israel's breach of international law, while continuing to shield Israel's decades-old regime of apartheid, and now genocide, from accountability.

Actually, FIFA is violating its own statute which states that discrimination of any kind against a country, a person or group on account of race, color, ethnicity, nationality, social origin, gender, disability, language, religion, political opinion, or any other reason is strictly prohibited and punishable by suspension or expulsion.

FIFA member associations and their clubs are not allowed to play on the territory of another member association without the latter's approval. Yet FIFA allows Israeli sports clubs based in illegal settlements built on stolen Palestinian land to play in its official leagues. This is despite the International Court of Justice ruling that the settlements are illegal and a war crime.

FIFA allows outright racism and dehumanization in Israeli sports. This happened when mobs of racist, genocide-inciting Israeli football fans went on a violent rampage in Amsterdam. They stole Palestinian flags from private buildings, burned them, while chanting racist slogans, and attacked people appearing to be Arab in the streets.

And so we see global calls on FIFA to ban Israel. Such calls came, for example, from the 47-member Asian Football Confederation, as well as a petition that gathered over one million signatures. Almost 60 rights groups accused FIFA of applying "a different yardstick to Israeli actions," undermining its credibility and exposing it "to allegations of political bias and hypocrisy."

The protestors included Human Rights Watch, UN Special Adviser on Sport, 66 members of European Parliament, 38 British MPs, 41 Danish MPs, and 30 Swiss MPs. They all called upon FIFA to exclude Israeli team from illegal settlements.

'The Democracy in Europe Movement 2025' ran a petition that gathered more than 112,000 signatures, calling for an immediate suspension of Israel from all international sports "until it fully complies with international law and sports regulations." In Palestine itself 174 sports clubs wrote a letter [calling on FIFA](#) to suspend the Israel Football Federation (IFF).

A report presented to FIFA by FairSquare, a human rights organization, said there were numerous grounds to expel the IFA, such as "the holding of matches in occupied Palestinian territory, systematic racial discrimination, Israel's killing of Palestinian players and the systematic destruction of PFA facilities." Most of these have been taking place well before 7 October 2023, the report asserted.

In March 2024, PFA submitted a draft resolution, supported by six member associations, calling for FIFA to hold Israel accountable for sports rights and human rights violations against Palestinians. The resolution was to be tabled before the FIFA Congress scheduled to take place in Thailand in May.

At the time PFA president, **Jibril Rajoub**, told the Congress:

“For 15 years we have consistently raised the same concerns with FIFA, only to see them repeatedly deferred from one Congress to another, from one committee to the next. Now, as our football faces the same existential threat as our Palestinian people, FIFA must make a choice either to passively stand by, or uphold its core values and human rights obligations, and stand firmly on the right side of history.”

Rajoub made a passionate plea to the delegates from 211 member associations to vote for suspension of Israel from FIFA, adding:

“The suffering of millions of Palestinians, including thousands of footballers, deserves as much. If not now, then when? The ball is in your court.”

In response to Rajoub’s submission, FIFA ordered an “urgent and independent” legal assessment, promising to table it for voting at an extraordinary meeting of its council in July. It didn’t happen. Instead, FIFA said the assessment would be presented to its next council meeting in August. The vote was again rescheduled to October.

But when FIFA met in Zurich on 3rd October it once again postponed the decision to ban Israel. This time it said its disciplinary committee will “review the allegations of discrimination” raised by the PFA. Thus FIFA has [repeatedly delayed](#) taking action, procrastinating the vote, and shielding Israel from accountability.

One wonders what “legal assessment” FIFA is seeking. Back in 2016 Wilfried Lemke, then UN special adviser on sport for development and peace, wrote to FIFA stating that the UN regards Israeli settlements, and by extension Israeli football teams that play in them, to be “illegal under international law”. He thus urged FIFA to suspend the IFA.

Actually, what was done clandestinely became evident when, on 5 May 2024, prior to the FIFA Congress in Bangkok, an Israeli news outlet YNet reported that,

“the Israeli military is working around the clock with the aim of arriving as prepared as possible and [torpedoing the initiative of the Palestinian Association](#), which has already succeeded twice – in 2015 and 2017 – in raising the Israeli issue for discussion.”

The report stated that legal advisors of the Israeli ministry of foreign affairs, and ministry of culture and sports plus the IFA Chairman, were among the members of a WhatsApp group formed, calling itself “remaining in FIFA”.

Under these circumstances, In May 2024, the Israeli Foreign Minister threatened to imprison Rajoub, and revoke his travel pass. The minister published a [statement](#) in social media, saying:

“Jibril Rajoub, a terrorist in a suit who openly supported Hamas’s crimes, is working around the clock to get Israel removed from the international soccer association. We will work to thwart his plans, and if he doesn’t stop—we will imprison him.”



Israel Katz [@Israel_katz](#) · May 2

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ג'יבריל רג'וב, מחבל בחליפה שתמך פומבית בפשעי החמאס, פועל ברחבי העולם לסלק את ישראל מהתאחדות הכדורגל העולמית [@FIFAcom](#). נפעל לסכל את מזימתו ואם לא יפסיק - נכלא אותו במוקטעה ונשאיר אותו לשחק לבד סטנגה בין הקירות.



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And so, in June 2024, Australian authorities [denied Rajoub a visa](#) to enter the country, when Palestine was set to play Australia in a World Cup qualifier. And while returning home from Paris 2024 Olympic Games in August, Israeli forces detained Rajoub as he was entering Palestine at the Karama crossing with Jordan. They confiscated his passport, searched him, and handed him a summons for interrogation.

FIFA's double standard becomes unambiguous when we consider that sanction was imposed on Russia immediately after its forces invaded Ukraine. FIFA took stern and strict measures against Russia without vacillating, suspending it from all competitions. On the other hand, FIFA turns a blind eye and refuses to hold Israel accountable for its decades long record of war crimes against Palestinians.

Thus, FIFA invents lame excuses, allowing Israel to participate freely in international competitions. Israel is not held accountable for its decades of military occupation, illegal settlements and grave crimes against Palestinians, including genocide. FIFA refrains from applying the same sanction on Israel that it has done in the case of Russia.

Rather than following its principles, FIFA kowtows to the West's blatant hypocrisy and double standards.

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