

Israelis Are Not Welcome in Qatar During the 2022 World Cup

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Global Research, November 30, 2022

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

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Israeli citizens and journalists are allowed in Qatar in a FIFA agreement during the 2022 World Cup now underway in Doha. Being allowed to enter a country to watch football, or to cover an event as a journalist or media crew, is far different than being welcome.

Israeli journalists have reported numerous interactions with football fans and locals in Qatar that let them know they are not welcome because they are from Israel.

[Moav Vardi](#), Israeli channel KAN 11, was told by a football fan on live TV from Doha,

"It is Palestine, there is no Israel. Go, please. You are not welcome here. This is Qatar, this is our country - you are not welcome here. [There is only Palestine. There is no Israel.](#)"

[Eli Ohana](#), also from KAN, got a ride in a golf cart with a Qatari policeman. During the conversation, Ohana revealed he was from Israel. The Qatari was shocked and thought he must be joking. Ohana quickly denied his citizenship and instead [passed himself off as Portuguese](#). The policeman replied, "If you were really from Israel, I would have dropped you here and turned back."

[Raz Shechnik](#), a Yedioth Ahronoth reporter, said

"We feel hated. We feel the hostility and we feel unwelcome," and he recalled a seemingly friendly Qatari who offered, "I would like to say welcome to you. But you are really not blessed. Fly away from here as fast as possible."

[Even an Egyptian fan badgered Shechnik](#) after recognizing him as Israeli after falsely claiming he was from Ecuador. Regardless of the three-decade peace treaty between the two countries, the Egyptian continued to insist, on "Free Palestine."

[Ohad Hamo](#), Israeli channel 12, was conducting live interviews of fans in Doha but was refused by all Arab fans. After being frustrated, he said, “I don’t know why?”

If an Israeli does not know why Arab fans would be hostile and unwelcoming of an Israeli in Qatar, then that demonstrates the lack of understanding and responsibility of keeping five million persons in an open-air prison.

President Trump successfully promoted the [Abraham Accords](#) in 2020 which saw normalization agreements between Israel and the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco. [Ohana said](#) recently in Doha,

“Israel has signed normalization agreements with 4 Arab countries in recent years, but it turned out that the majority of Arab peoples do not like the fact that we are here.”

[Egypt and Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel](#) three decades ago, and it has been a successful and enduring example of peace between Arabs and Muslims with the Jewish State of Israel.

Peace treaties and normalization agreements are performed by governments, and not the citizens. Egyptian and Jordanian citizens have gotten used to the shared embassies, business dealings, and tourism. However, most citizens hold the opinion that Israel is a brutal occupier in Palestine and that Palestinians are living under an [apartheid](#) regime without basic human rights.

[Palestinian flags](#) are flying all over Doha and fans are also holding the flags. This was sure to be a surprise to Israeli journalists because the flag is banned from being displayed in public anywhere in Israel or the occupied West Bank. The journalists also reported unwelcoming comments from restaurants and taxi drivers.

Israelis should not be surprised to find negative comments directed at them when in an Arab country, even in Jordan and Egypt. The Arab world is 22 nations that all speak Arabic and have some shared culture. The Arabs in general are highly informed on their history and the injustices surrounding the founding of Israel. The desperate plight of the Palestinian people is part of their culture and awareness.

Officially, Qatar does not have any normalization agreement with Israel and is a very strong supporter of Palestinian rights and the need for a Palestinian state, which is not on the agenda with the current Israeli government. The recent elections have seen Benjamin Netanyahu return to power with the help of an allied extremist party that is opposed to giving any human rights to Palestinians.

[Shireen Abu Akleh](#), a Palestinian American journalist for the Qatari-supported media Al Jazeera, was assassinated in May by an Israeli Army sniper in Jenin in the occupied West Bank. The Israeli government admits that she was killed by an Israeli soldier, but claims it was an accidental shooting. An independent investigation revealed she was not in the crossfire of any battle, but instead was solely targeted and murdered while wearing full identification that she was the “PRESS”. [The FBI had wanted to open an investigation into the killing, but the Israeli government refused the request](#), even though the Israeli government depends on the US to financially survive. Israel has received from the US taxpayers, as of May 2021, [\\$146 Billion](#), more than any other country.

On November 17, Al Jazeera aired a segment on its “The Stream” broadcast. Interviewed

were filmmaker Dena Takruri, a Palestinian American journalist with Al Jazeera, her cameraman, and an Israeli representative of the Israeli NGO [“Breaking the Silence”](#), a group of Israeli veterans who have served in the occupied territory and seeking to inform the Israeli public about the true situation there. He explained that Israeli citizens are indoctrinated all their lives to never question why there is no end to the occupation. Further, he said there is no incentive for Israel to end the occupation, therefore it may last forever. Takruri has made a new film called, [‘How Israeli Apartheid Destroyed my Hometown’](#) which documents how 30,000 Palestinians live there in almost concentration camp conditions. They are surrounded by illegal Israeli settlers who throw rocks, garbage, and even urine at the Palestinians, who are prohibited from walking out of their front door onto the main street, and instead must exit home from a secretive back exit.

The 2022 World Cup in Qatar has been the first of its kind and may be a breakthrough in calling out Israel and its [apartheid](#) regime. The Israeli journalists and fans in Doha will be uncomfortable after the unwelcoming reception there, but it will be food for thought and a chance for the Israeli public to finally question, “Why?”

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This article was originally published on [Mideast Discourse](#).

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Featured image: B'Tselem says Israeli forces arrested five Palestinian children in the West Bank on Wednesday (B'Tselem/Twitter)

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