

To suspend Israel from Paris Olympic Games How many more Palestinians must be killed?

By Timothy Hopper
Scholar

OPINION

Sports diplomacy is a multifaceted domain that captures the collective ambitions of a nation on the international stage. It manifests in two principal dimensions: Diplomacy in the service of sports, which encompasses diplomatic endeavors that enhance a nation's sporting success, and sports in the service of diplomacy, a concept generally resisted by the Olympic Committee to avert the politicization of sports, aligning with Article 3 of the Olympic Charter. This nuanced perspective on sports diplomacy not only promotes the competitive ethos but also upholds the sanctity of sports from political entanglement.

Article 3, paragraph 5 of the Olympic Charter explicitly prohibits any form of demonstration or political, religious, and racial propaganda within Olympic venues. Despite this, the history of the Games has been marked by political protests. Typically, these have manifested as sanctions or boycotts, serving as a powerful statement within the realm of international sports.

Throughout Olympic history, boycotts have been a significant form of political protest, reflecting the global tensions of their times. The 1908 London Olympics were marked by Ireland's boycott, a significant political statement of the era. In 1956, the Melbourne Olympics were overshadowed by China's absence, protesting Taiwan's participation, which ignited a series of boycotts that lasted for three decades. That same year, the Netherlands and Spain withdrew from the games, objecting to the Soviet military intervention in Hungary. Concurrently, the Suez Canal crisis led Egypt, Lebanon, and Iraq to abstain from participating in the 1956 Olympics. Fast forward to 1980, and over 50 countries from the Western bloc boycotted the Moscow Olympics in response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. This was followed by the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, which saw a retaliatory boycott by the Soviet Union and its allies, echoing the discord of the previous games. These events serve as poignant reminders of the intersection of sports and politics, where the Olympic platform has been repeatedly used to make geopolitical statements.

Olympic boycotts take various forms, not only with countries choosing not to participate but also with governments imposing bans on other nations. This phenomenon has recurred throughout history. For instance, South Africa was barred from the Olympics from 1964 in Tokyo to 1992 in Barcelona due to its apartheid policies. More recently, Russia faced sanctions following its military actions in Ukraine, leading to a ban by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) on Russian and Belarusian participation in all Olympic and related international events. Initially, this ban was absolute, but it was later revised to allow athletes from these countries to compete, albeit not under their national flags.

Such sanctions are not without precedent, and they serve as a reminder that the Olympic spirit is intertwined with global ethical standards. Today's calls for similar actions against nations violating human rights principles reflect the ongoing debate about the role of sports in upholding human values. Israel can rightly be considered a perfect example of relying on terrorism and war crimes. In the last 75 years, this regime has systematically employed a full spectrum of criminal tactics on the Palestinian people. However, the most egregious escalation of these offenses occurred in the aftermath of Operation Al-Aqsa Storm. Since the start of the war, Israel has perpetrated acts so heinous that even its staunchest Western allies cannot muster the audacity to endorse them publicly anymore.

Astonishingly, the intensity of the regime's bombardment in a mere week has surpassed the cumulative bombardment experienced in Afghanistan throughout the entire duration of the American presence. In the initial 25 days of the conflict, the Gaza Strip witnessed a death toll that surpassed the entire casualty count of the year-and-a-half-long war in Ukraine. The ferocity of the bombings on Gaza was of such magnitude that it equaled double the force of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

The regime's ruthless campaign against the city's inhabitants has culminated in charges of genocide at the International Court of Justice, with South Africa spearheading the case, backed by a coalition of nations, organizations, academics, and cultural figures.

The aforementioned instances represent merely a fraction of the Israeli regime's extensive list of transgressions within the Gaza Strip. Consequently, a pressing and significant debate arises: in light of such extensive criminal

activity, is it not imperative for the international community to call for Israel's exclusion from the Paris Olympic Games? Indeed, there is a compelling case for this to become a universal outcry, ensuring that a regime responsible for the deaths of countless Palestinian children is barred from participating in a global sporting event.

Today's egregious human rights abuses by the Israelis bear a chilling resemblance to the conditions of South Africa during the apartheid era, which led to its Olympic exclusion. Numerous African human rights activists and anti-apartheid advocates contend that Israel's pattern of offenses over time reveals a system of apartheid in Gaza that is markedly more brutal, blatant, and inhumane than its historical counterpart in Africa. Consequently, there is a justified expectation that Israel should face at least an equivalent censure concerning their Olympic participation.

Ultimately, it must be emphasized that the Olympic Charter is dedicated to leveraging sports as a conduit for the harmonious development of humanity, fostering a peaceful society, and upholding human dignity. Should the International Olympic Committee permit Israeli athletes to compete in the Paris Games, it would not only signify a disregard for the rights of the Palestinians, their families, and friends — who have all suffered immensely under the Israeli's savage assaults — but also indicate a departure from the Committee's foundational mission to preserve human dignity. Furthermore, the inclusion of Israel in the Olympic Games amidst its ongoing genocide against the Palestinians would convey a tacit endorsement of egregious war crimes by the international sporting community.

The full article first appeared on [EurasiaReview](#).

FIFA hypocrisy on display as it defers Palestinian motion to bar Israel



By Karim Zidan
Founder of Sports
Politika

OPINION

During FIFA's annual congress on May 17 in Bangkok, Thailand, Palestinian Football Association (PFA) president Jibril Rajoub gave an impassioned speech in which he revealed that "the Palestinian people, including the Palestinian football family, are enduring an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe."

Rajoub, who also heads Palestine's Olympic Committee, went on to explain that Israel had repeatedly and systematically violated FIFA's mandates, noting the "Israeli Football Association's inclusion in its national league of illegal settlement clubs located in the occupied Palestinian territories".

"The numerous committees to address these issues have either failed to provide effective resolutions or have not reported back to the congress that mandated them," he added during his speech.



Jibril Rajoub waives a symbolic red penalty card at Israel during the 65th FIFA Congress on May 29, 2015.
● FABRICE COFFRINI/AFP

Rajoub's speech came in the wake of a motion filed by the PFA to temporarily suspend Israel over its ongoing destruction of Gaza and the subsequent humanitarian crisis that resulted from Israel's indiscriminate bombardment of the besieged strip.

Yet despite the emotionally charged speech and the thunderous applause that followed, FIFA's president, Gianni Infantino, declined to call a vote.

Instead, Infantino claimed that FIFA planned to assemble experts to analyze whether Israel violated the governing body's sanctions before convening an extraordinary meeting of FIFA's top board in July to make a decision.

"FIFA will mandate, as of now, independent legal expertise to assess the three requests [from the Palestinian FA] and ensure the statutes of FIFA are applied in the right way," Infantino said.

"Due to the urgency of the situation, an extraordinary FIFA Council will be convened and will take place before July 20 to review the results of the legal assessment and to take the decisions that are appropriate."

The decision to defer the motion is unsurprising. Over the past few months, both the Israeli and Palestinian football associations have lobbied other national associations for support. While the Asian football governing body agreed to back the Palestinian motion, Israel managed to prevent the motion from reaching a vote, while also garnering substantial support from most of UEFA, Europe's football governing body.

On May 17, Israel's FA president Shino Moshe Zuares responded to Jibril's speech by reverting to his tried and tested statements calling for the depoliticization of sports.

"I believe football must be a key element of healing the fractures and the wounds, helping us to recover," Zuares said. "Yet once again we are facing a cynical, political, and hostile attempt by the Palestinian association to harm Israeli football." Zuares' statement exemplifies

how those with social and political privilege often advocate for the separation of sports and politics to suit their interests. In this instance, Israel — a country that has occupied Palestinian territories since 1967 — is insisting that sports be used to distract from or normalize its treatment of Palestinians, rather than highlight the injustices resulting from years of occupation and dispossession.

Meanwhile, FIFA, which acted at record speed to bar Russia from competitions after the country launched its assault on Ukraine, is more than happy to embolden Israel's actions by shielding it from consequences or condemnation.

FIFA's failure to take decisive action in response to the PFA's motion highlights a glaring double standard and deepens the credibility crisis already facing the organization. With pressing issues such as the unreleased report on the 2022 World Cup in Qatar and a noticeable decline in transparency under Infantino's leadership, FIFA's commitment to accountability and justice remains in serious doubt. Until FIFA addresses these systemic issues and applies its principles consistently, its integrity will continue to be called into question.

The article first appeared on [Sports Politika](#).



FIFA President Gianni Infantino (L) meets with Israel's President Isaac Herzog in 2021.
● SPORTS POLITIKA



An Israeli soldier holds up the flag of the Scottish Celtic football club in the Khan Yunis stadium in the Gaza Strip as Israeli tanks room around the turned field.

● X