



“Cynical act of deception” by Irish football bosses claiming Palestinian support for “Israel” match

Description

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Israel

In a devastating humiliation for the Football Association of Ireland (FAI), the Palestine Football Association (PFA) [has said it never issued any statement backing the FAI’s decision](#) to proceed with Ireland’s [match against](#) so-called “Israel”. This is despite the Irish football chiefs [putting out a statement last week](#) clearly intended to indicate the opposite. Sinn Féin TD Joanna Byrne described the FAI’s move as an “unforgivable cynical act of deception”.

[Byrne continued](#)

What this clarification lays bare is a contemptible sleight of hand by the FAI – a sleight of hand that will be met by resistance by the football community who do not want to see Ireland, playing under our tricolour, complicit in sportswashing a country carrying out a genocide.

Irish football chiefs mislead with statement

On Friday June 12, under increasing grass roots pressure to call off the October Nations League match against the terrorist pseudo-state, the FAI claimed it had:

“been in communication with the Palestinian Football Association regarding the fulfilment of the fixtures”

They followed this claim with a statement they said they’d been given by the PFA. It read:

The Palestinian Football Association expresses its appreciation for the principled positions taken by the Football Association of Ireland in support of the rights of the Palestinian people and Palestinian athletes.

The Palestinian Football Association also affirms its respect for the decision made by the Football Association of Ireland within the framework of its sporting and international obligations, in a manner that enables it to continue fulfilling its noble mission of serving football and promoting the values of justice, solidarity, and mutual respect.

[The media dutifully reported](#) this as the FAI having secured key Palestinian backing for a [Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions](#) (BDS)-breaking clash with the Zionist entity, an unlikely reality. The higher-ups of Palestinian football have now clarified their position, saying:

First and foremost, the PFA has not issued any statement endorsing, approving, or supporting the decision to proceed with the match. Any interpretation suggesting that the PFA has given its blessing to the fixture does not accurately reflect our position.

Palestinian Football Association firmly rejects sportwashing Israel

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They continued:

Our position regarding Israeli football remains unchanged and unequivocal. The PFA continues to pursue accountability through FIFA and other international sporting bodies for Israel's persistent violations of FIFA statutes, the systematic obstruction of Palestinian football, and the devastating impact of Israel's war on all aspects of Palestinian life, including athletes, clubs, facilities, and sporting life.

More than one thousand Palestinian athletes have been killed, and large parts of Palestine's sporting infrastructure have been destroyed. Palestinian football is enduring one of the darkest periods in its history.

For this reason, the PFA rejects any characterisation that could be interpreted as providing political or moral cover for Israel's continued participation in international football while these grave violations persist. The PFA would not, and will not, be party to any effort that normalises these realities or contributes to the sportswashing of crimes committed against the Palestinian people.

As the *Times* reported, whatever the FAI got from the PFA for the former's June 12 statement, it came in a "rather curious way". The paper claims it resulted from FAI president Paul Cooke meeting "Palestinian counterpart Jibril Rajoub in the VIP area" at the Azteca Stadium during the World Cup opening match.

The *Times* point out that the PFA didn't release the statement itself. It's clear the FAI were keen to clutch at any straw that lent some validity to their shameful decision to proceed with the Israel match. The FAI have further attempted to dodge accountability with their cowardly decision to [move the Dublin fixture to a neutral venue](#).

As Sinn Féin's Byrne points out regarding the latest debacle, the statement charade:

has backfired completely, and will only result in campaigners redoubling their efforts to Stop the Game.

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By [Robert Freeman](#)

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