



Ireland coach describes Israel match as a "war to be won"

## Description

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israel v republic of ireland

The Republic of Ireland's national football team coach, Icelandic Heimir Hallgrímsson has [described the upcoming matches](#) against Israel in the UEFA Nations League as a "war to be won," amidst mounting political and public pressure in Ireland to boycott the Israeli team due to the war in Gaza.

## Israel match a war to be won

*The Irish Times* reported that Hallgrímsson emphasized during a press conference [before the friendly match against Qatar](#) that "the best response is to win this match, to win this war against Israel on the pitch," arguing that the Irish players are facing unfair criticism for playing the two matches.

The newspaper added that the coach defended his players, saying, "We are not the villains here," stressing that the team wants to focus on football and avoid the escalating political controversy. He continued:

Other decisions are not made by us, but all the players would like to represent the country and do well for them, no matter who is the opponent.

## Double standards

*The Irish Independent* reported that Hallgrímsson had previously expressed his surprise at Israel's continued participation in international tournaments, stating that he "sees no difference" between the sporting sanctions imposed on Russia and Israel's current situation. These remarks reignited the debate within Irish sporting circles regarding double standards in European football.

Despite mounting pressure, the Football Association of Ireland confirmed its commitment to playing the two matches after the two national teams were drawn into the same group in the UEFA Nations League.

But, several government ministers will boycott the upcoming match against Israel in Dublin in protest against [the genocide in Gaza](#). The newspaper added that the Irish government is facing increasing pressure to take a firmer stance on holding the match, while popular and human rights calls for a sporting boycott of Israel, similar to the sanctions previously imposed on Russia, continue.

## Calls for wider boycott

Republic of Ireland captain Nathan Collins has made it clear that players won't be stopped from taking a stand against Israel:

They are entitled to their own opinions. If they are very strong about that, we can't stop them.

There are concerns that if players refuse to play, the team could be thrown out of the Nations League. However, that would be a small price to pay for resistance to [normalisation of relations](#) with genocidal Israel.

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