



Ireland fans interrupt game in protest of upcoming Israel match

Description

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Ireland

The friendly match between the Republic of Ireland national football team and the Qatar national team on Thursday evening turned into a platform for public protest against the anticipated match against Israel in the UEFA Nations League. Irish fans threw soft tennis balls bearing the [Palestinian flag](#) onto the pitch in the 10th and 20th minutes, prompting the referee to temporarily suspend the match amidst an atmosphere charged with political messages and solidarity with Gaza.

The fans also wrote the phrase ["Stop the match"](#) and raised Palestinian flags and banners demanding the cancellation of the Ireland-Israel match, reflecting a surge in popular anger within the country toward playing the anticipated fixture, coinciding with the ongoing war on the Gaza Strip.

The fan protests during the friendly against Qatar were an extension of the escalating controversy in Ireland regarding the upcoming match against Israel in the UEFA Nations League. Fans used the stands to deliver direct messages calling for a boycott of the match.

The tennis balls thrown onto the pitch caused a temporary suspension of play, while Palestinian flags and anti-match banners were raised by fans, making it one of the most tense nights in Irish football recently.

"War" statements fuel controversy in Ireland

This scene follows statements made hours earlier by the Irish national team coach, Icelander Heimur Hallgrímsson, who described the match against Israel as "a war that must be won on the field," [according to reports from the Irish Times and Irish Independent.](#)

[The coach's statements](#) sparked widespread controversy in sporting and political circles. He emphasized that the national team players should not bear the consequences of the political debate surrounding the match, at a time when calls for a sporting boycott of Israel are increasing in Ireland.

The fan protests also brought the "Stop The Game" campaign back into the spotlight, [as reported by "The Canary" newspaper](#) which is being led by [Irish players and sports figures](#) demanding the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) not to play the match against Israel. They consider that holding the fixture amid the war on Gaza represents an "unethical stance".

Tennis balls

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Irish fans use the method of protesting by throwing tennis balls onto the pitch. [This was seen in 2019 during Ireland's match against Georgia in the Euro qualifiers](#) when fans temporarily stopped play in protest against the management of the FAI and the financial and administrative crisis surrounding its then-CEO, John Delaney.

According to the British newspaper "The Guardian," the fans chose the 33rd minute to throw the tennis balls then, in a satirical reference to Delaney's previous demand to consider Ireland "Team No. 33" in the 2010 World Cup following the infamous Thierry Henry handball incident against Ireland.

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