



Israel arrests two players from Palestinian women's national team

Description

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Palestinian women's national team

Palestinian footballer Natalie Abu Dayeh wasn't preparing for a match or a training camp this time. She was sitting at her university homework in the town of Birzeit, north of Ramallah, before Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) stormed her home and took her into custody, leaving behind the lecture notes and pen she had been writing with just minutes before the raid.

A scene [documented by the Palestinian Football Association in an official statement](#) but it was not the only incident in recent hours. Shortly afterwards, the occupation authorities arrested Palestinian women's national team player Rand Halawani (20), after summoning her to what is known as the "Tel Beit" police station in occupied Jerusalem.

Palestinian athletes regularly abducted

These two consecutive incidents have brought back into the spotlight Israel's deliberate targeting of Palestinian athletes, a practice that is not limited to sporting competitions or international matches, but extends to the daily lives of male and female players off the pitch.

The Palestinian Football Association said that Abu Dayya, a player for the women's national team and a student in the Media Department at Birzeit University, was arrested after her home was raided, whilst Halawani's arrest came just hours later, indicating the ongoing persecution of Palestinian athletes across the Palestinian territories.

These incidents do not appear to be isolated from a broader context. Earlier, Musab Abu Salem, a player for the Palestine Stars team, was [prevented from travelling to Italy](#) to take part in a solidarity match against the Napoli Stars, after the occupation authorities stopped him at the Karama crossing and subjected him to questioning before issuing a decision barring him from leaving the Palestinian

territories.

Israel impunity

This follows the genocidal crimes in which Israel targeted all sectors of sport during the war on Gaza, [killing over 1,000 people](#) — including players, coaches and referees — and destroying all sports grounds and facilities.

Between arrests and travel bans, Palestinian complaints are mounting regarding the restrictions faced by athletes, whether in terms of movement and travel or participation in international events.

The Palestinian Football Association emphasises that these practices do not target specific individuals so much as they undermine the ability of Palestinian sport to continue and participate in international forums.

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1. News

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