

Maradona's activism remembered as millions pay tribute to soccer legend



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Buenos Aires, November 26 (RHC)-- As the world mourns the death of soccer's legendary player, Diego Maradona, many people are also paying tribute to his vocal support for revolutionary causes, including Palestinian independence.

The former Argentinian player and World Cup winner died on Wednesday from a heart attack at just 60 years old, following years of health problems. His death came two weeks after being released from a Buenos Aires hospital following brain surgery.

Maradona has been hailed as an anti-imperialist, left-wing socialist, who has supported progressive movements. He counted among his friends the late Venezuelan leader Hugo Chavez, Cuba's late President Fidel Castro, and Bolivia's Evo Morales.

He was seen on more than one occasion accompanying Chavez, wearing an anti-George Bush shirt. He unapologetically supported Palestine, even after hanging up his football/soccer boots.

Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri tweeted his condolences to Maradona's family and fans across the world. "We are so sad for the death of one of the greatest footballers, 'Maradona', who is known for his support of the #Palestine cause," he wrote.

In 2012, Maradona described himself as "the number one fan of the Palestinian people." "I respect them and sympathise with them," he said. "I support Palestine without any fear."

Two years later, during Israel's summer offensive on the besieged Gaza Strip that killed at least 3,000 Palestinians, Maradona expressed his outrage and criticised Israel. "What Israel is doing to the Palestinians is shameful," he said in a statement.

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