

Kuwaiti tennis player refuses to face Israeli player in UAE tournament



This file photo shows Kuwaiti tennis player Muhammad al-Awadi (via Social media)

Ramallah, January 24 (RHC)-- A Kuwaiti tennis player has withdrawn from a tournament in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to avoid facing an Israeli counterpart, in what has been seen as a new snub for the regime following similar measures taken by a host of Muslim players from across the Islamic world.

According to Palestine's official Wafa news agency, Kuwait's tennis player Muhammad al-Awadi withdrew from an international tennis tournament in the UAE after he was told he was going to face an Israeli player in the semifinals.

Al-Awadi's measure drew widespread praise on the social media. He had taken part in the international professional championship for competitors under the age of 14, which was held in Dubai.

Kuwaiti media reported that al-Awadi succeeded in winning his first matches and advanced to the semifinals. However, as soon as he was told that he was going to face the Israeli player, al-Awadi decided to withdraw and not to play against him.

Yusuf al-Sanad, a member of the Persian Gulf Scholars Union, wrote on Twitter that the Kuwaiti tennis player's decision was taken in solidarity with the people of Palestine and in rejection of Israeli apartheid regime.

Osama al-Shaheen, a member of Kuwait's parliament also tweeted, "Greetings and thanks to the Kuwaiti hero Muhammad al-Awadi for his refusal to normalize sports competition with the Zionists." The new development comes following a string of withdrawals and rejections by Muslim sportsmen from various Islamic countries who have refused to face Israeli counterparts in various sports events.

In July 2021, Algerian judoka Fethi Nourine withdrew from the 2020 Summer Olympics in the Japanese capital city of Tokyo, after the draw set him on course for a possible showdown against an Israeli opponent.

Nourine took the measure after he was drawn earlier in the day to face Israeli competitor Tohar Butbul in the second round of the under-73kg men's judo competition, if he were to advance past his first fight.

Nourine said his political support for the Palestinian cause made it impossible for him to compete against an Israeli opponent.

During the same month, Sudanese judoka Mohamed Abdalrasool also withdrew from the Summer Olympics in Tokyo, becoming the second athlete to pull out of the international multi-sport event to avoid facing an Israeli opponent.

The Sudanese athlete made the decision to drop out of the Tokyo Olympics following a similar measure by Nourine and after the draw set him on course for a possible showdown against Butbul in the second round of the under-73kg men's judo competition.

Lebanon's Abdullah Miniato also withdrew from the international mixed martial arts (MMA) competition in Sophia, Bulgaria to avoid a match against an Israeli opponent, following the lead of two African athletes who refused to fight their Israeli rivals at the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympic Games.

The young Lebanese fighter and his coach, Muhammad al-Gharbi, announced the withdrawal from the sports event after the draw placed Miniato against an Israeli athlete on Saturday.

Last Monday, an anti-Israel umbrella group said it will hold an international event in late January to honor athletes opposing normalization with Israel, as Tel Aviv continues to "sportswash" its flagrant human rights violations and its appalling crimes against Palestinians through using its presence in international sports and cultural events.

The Global Campaign to Return to Palestine (GCRP) said in an announcement posted on its official Facebook and Twitter accounts that it would hold the International Forum to Honor Anti-Normalization Athletes in the Lebanese capital, Beirut, from January 31 until February 2.

The Global Campaign to Return to Palestine (GCRP) will hold an international event to honor athletes opposing normalization with Israel. The GCRP, which is an umbrella organization for civil society associations that support the Palestinian cause, both in the Arab countries and the world, added that the three-day event would take place in “recognition of the heroic act of anti-normalization athletes, and with the participation of international personalities.”

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