

FIFA under fire: Calls grow for suspension of Israel from international football over Gaza war



Zurich, March 13 (RHC)-- Two non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have joined forces with 60 organizations from all over the world, calling on the world's football governing body, FIFA, to ban Israel

from all international competitions over the occupying regime's genocidal war in the Gaza Strip.

The Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) as well as Citizens International made the request in a letter on Tuesday. The NGOs called on FIFA to suspend Israel, criticizing both FIFA and UEFA (the Union of European Football Associations) for turning "a blind eye to Israel with the result that its teams continue to participate freely in international competitions."

"We are sure you will agree that applying a different yardstick to Israeli actions undermines your credibility and exposes you to allegations of political bias and hypocrisy," added the letter.

FIFA is the governing body for world football and seeks to develop the game worldwide. But the organization claims that it holds philanthropic responsibilities and uses football as a tool to encourage social integration amongst communities around the world.

A suspension is the first step towards an eventual expulsion from world football. The South African FA was suspended by FIFA in September 1965, and expelled from FIFA in 1976 for its operation of an apartheid political system.

The latest development comes as a number of countries have already called on FIFA to suspend Israel from football-related activities due to the regime's brutal war against Palestinians in Gaza. Back in February, the Iranian football federation called on world football's governing body, FIFA, to "completely suspend Israel.

Britain's Sky News television network also reported at the time that a group of football associations in West Asia, including Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates had also "asked world football chiefs to ban Israel over the war on Hamas in Gaza."

On Monday, the first day of the fasting month of Ramadan, iconic Palestinian footballer Mohammed Barakat was killed in an Israeli airstrike as he was preparing for the pre-dawn meal. "On the first day of the holy month of Ramadan, the occupation's bombing killed the star of our national soccer team, Muhammad Barakat," the Palestinian Football Association (PFA) said in a statement on Tuesday, mourning Barakat's tragic death.

According to the PFA, the number of Palestinian athletes killed by Israeli forces in the Gaza Strip and occupied West Bank since October 7 has risen to 157, with 90 of them football players.

Israel launched the war on Gaza on October 7 after the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas waged the surprise Operation Al-Aqsa Storm against the occupying entity in response to the Israeli regime's decades-long campaign of bloodletting and devastation against Palestinians.

Since the start of the offensive, the Tel Aviv regime has killed at least 31,000 Palestinians and injured more than 72,000 others. The Tel Aviv regime has also imposed a "complete siege" on the territory, cutting off fuel, electricity, food and water to the more than two million Palestinians living there.

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