

Questions & Answers

Palestine Football Association's Initiative

65th FIFA Congress (Zurich 28 – 29, 2015)

On May 28th, a resolution presented by the Palestine Football Association (PFA) will be discussed at the 65th FIFA Congress. It proposes to suspend the Israeli Football Association (IFA) for its failure to honor its obligations under FIFA Statutes. Unfortunately the Israeli Association, and its complicity with the policies of its government, left no alternative but to submit the above mentioned proposal.

This fact sheet explains main positions and goals regarding this move.

- **Is this the first time that PFA asks FIFA to take action regarding Israeli violations and restrictions imposed upon Palestinian football?**

No. After years of written complaints, PFA raised the issue at the 63rd FIFA Congress in Mauritius (2013) and at the 64th Congress of Sao Paulo, Brazil (2014). During both congresses PFA accepted a compromise to its position to suspend Israel in exchange of solutions presented by FIFA in order to facilitate the practice of football in Palestine.

- **What were the solutions presented by FIFA? Did it change the situation on the ground?**

In Mauritius it was agreed to have a bilateral mechanism between PFA and IFA, which did not produce any permanent or consistent results.

In Brazil PFA accepted a FIFA proposal to call upon the Israeli authorities to establish a mediation mechanism under FIFA's leadership. This also failed, resulting in the resignation of the FIFA mediator (head of the Cypriot Association) after only six months due to the intransigence of the Israeli officials.

- **What is PFA's position against IFA violations?**

- 1) The Israel Football Association continues to assume, defend and justify the position of the Israeli government and occupation forces in their daily violations against the rights of Palestinian football. This is a violation of

article 17-1 of FIFA statutes which clearly states that “each member shall manage its affairs independently and with no influence from third parties.”

- 2) The IFA continues to organize football official activities in areas under the jurisdiction of the Palestine Football Association. This is a violation of international law and of articles 10-1, 13-1/I and 17-1 of the FIFA statutes.
- 3) IFA has not tackled the issue of discrimination and racism. It has allowed Beitar Jerusalem to continue its racist stands and the presence of incitement and hate-speech against Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims. The team refuses to hire Arabs or Palestinians, despite constituting 20% of Israel’s population. Supporters of the team chant “Beitar forever pure.” Only last week, IFA refused to deduct two points from Beitar Jerusalem after its fan’s incitement against a Palestinian football player in the Israeli league.

- **Is the PFA proposal mixing politics with sports?**

No. PFA’s proposal is fully based in the rights and obligations that all member associations have under the FIFA statutes. Our proposal aims at taking concrete action, as stipulated by the FIFA statutes, against an Association (IFA) which is directly involved in violations of the FIFA statutes that directly affect the lives and development of football in Palestine. Acting on the same grounds FIFA suspended South Africa and Yugoslavia in 1962 and 1992 respectively.

- **Is the FIFA Congress the appropriate venue to discuss the suspension of a member?**

Yes. When a FIFA member is in violation of FIFA Statutes, particularly when it comes to accusations of being involved in racism, the Congress is the right place to discuss a suspension. In this case, the stipulated sanctions for an association involved in racism are either suspension or expulsion. The PFA is simply asking for IFA’s suspension due to its failure to meet its obligations under the FIFA Statutes.

- **The Israeli Football Association isn’t responsible for the activities of the Israeli Military in Occupied Palestine. Why is the PFA asking to suspend them?**

The IFA has been acting as a tool of the Israeli occupation. While it is true that they haven’t ordered the killing, injuries and/or arrests of PFA members, or the storming of PFA stadiums and football association, they have never condemned such actions. In fact, they have justified the military actions in Palestine.

Meanwhile, IFA has accepted five teams that play in the territory of Palestine, an area that is the sole responsibility of PFA. The presence of those teams is an attempt to legitimize the illegal Israeli colonization of Occupied Palestine, a war crime under international law. The decision to keep those teams in the Israeli league is the sole responsibility of the Israeli Association.

- **Are Israeli violations documented?**

Yes. PFA has a long list of ongoing Israeli violations, including limitations of movement within the West Bank, between the West Bank and Gaza, between East Jerusalem and the rest of Palestine as well as between Palestine and the rest of the world. It also includes issuance of permits for foreign delegations based on arbitrary decisions (teams that are allowed in but their coaches excluded, part of the team or even permits raised for referees), humiliating treatment at border crossings for PFA and international football officials, violent acts by Israeli Occupation Forces and racism in Israeli football matches. The presence of federated teams representing illegal Israeli settlements is also documented. FIFA has been informed of all Israeli violations.

- **What is the Palestine Football Association requesting?**

PFA wants to exercise its full rights and obligations under the FIFA Statutes. This includes:

- 1) IFA or Israeli authorities recognizing PFA as the sole governing body responsible for organizing and supervising football in all of the internationally recognized territory of Palestine (Article 10-1 of the FIFA Statutes).
- 2) To ban all football teams from illegal Israeli settlements from participating in competitions organized by IFA; and
- 3) For Israel to fully recognize that the Palestine Football Association enjoys the right of movement of football people and goods into, out of, and within Palestine including East Jerusalem; the right to develop football infrastructure in all the territory of Palestine including East Jerusalem; as well as the right to import and export sport goods in and out of Palestine.

At the same time, PFA calls upon FIFA to ensure that racism is unacceptable in the Israeli league, especially ongoing incitement and hate-speech against Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims, which so far has not been a zero tolerance issue for FIFA.