http://www.supportpalestine.org/soccerstatementMay.html

**On 4 June, Irish soccer supporters should show Israeli Apartheid the Red Card**

**Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign   
May 2005**

**Boycott the Ireland-Israel football matches**

On 4 June 2005, Ireland is due to play Israel in Dublin, as part of the 2006 World Cup Qualifiers. The [Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign](https://web.archive.org/web/20051211191515/http:/www.supportpalestine.org/) (IPSC), supported by the Movement against Israeli Apartheid, is calling on Irish supporters who attend this match to use this opportunity to protest against Israel's continued refusal to respect Palestinian rights and International law:

* Attend the demonstration and march before the match -- the demo starts outside the Central Bank on Dame Street at 3:00 PM on 4 June.
* Show your support for justice and human rights by waving a Palestinian flag at the match -- the IPSC will be distirbuting these flags on the day.

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| **Israeli Racism hides its face**  In South Africa, apartheid was immediately visible to the visitor -- there were signs everywhere stating that certain facilities were for whites only. This was called "petty apartheid", as opposed to "grand apartheid" which was the system that reserved 87% of South African land for whites only.   Israel has always been clever enough to avoid petty apartheid, even though its grand apartheid is actually worse than was the case in South Africa -- in Israel, even though non-Jews constitute more than 20% of the population, 93% of land is reserved for Jews only. (By constrast, South African whites reserved "only" 87% of the land for themselves.)    **Racism in Israeli Soccer**  As part of its policy of hiding grand apartheid behind an absence of petty apartheid, Israel allows non-Jews on its national soccer team. However, one does not have to scratch deeply beneath the surface to find the vicious racism in Israeli soccer, a racism that is derived from the racist ideology of the Israeli state itself.  **Abbas Suan**  Abbas Suan, the player who scored the equalizing goal against Ireland in Tel Aviv on 26 March, is from the Arab town of Sakhnin in northern Israel. He was treated to a hail of racist abuse at the next soccer match, after the Ireland game, which he played in Israel:   * See [this report in Ha'aretz](https://web.archive.org/web/20051211191515/http:/www.haaretzdaily.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=560997), an Israeli newspaper * See [this message](https://web.archive.org/web/20051211191515/http:/www.corkpsc.org/db.php?aid=16376) from Avraham Oz, an Israeli professor. He tells us that Israeli fans shouted the following taunts at Suan:   1. "Let the town of Sakhnin be burnt down"   2. "We hate all Arabs"   3. "We'd rather lose 0:10 to Ireland rather than have an Arab score a goal in our name! He doesn't represent us!"   **Walid Badir**  The grandfather of Walid Badir, another Israeli Arab on the national team, was among those massacred at Kafr Qassem on 29 October 1956 -- [click here](https://web.archive.org/web/20051211191515/http:/www.corkpsc.org/db.php?aid=15749) for an article by an Israeli journalist, Haim Baram, which mentions this fact about Badir's grandfather; [click here](https://web.archive.org/web/20051211191515/http:/www.corkpsc.org/db.php?eid=149) for more details about the Kafr Qassem massacre.   [This article](https://web.archive.org/web/20051211191515/http:/www.corkpsc.org/db.php?aid=11196) in Ha'aretz, an Israeli newspaper, states that, at a public meeting conference in December 2004, Badir was asked  "What's in your mind, and in your heart, when the [Israeli] national anthem is played before an international?"  The article then goes on to say that, initially, Badir was reluctant to reply to this question but that, eventually, pressed by Arab fans in the audience, he relented and said  "what I feel is that if, in, say, 50 years' time, another clause is added in to the anthem so that it comes also to represent me as an Arab Israeli, then I'll be able to sing it as well."  **Bnei Sakhnin soccer team**  Sakhnin is an Arab town in the Galilee, in northern Israel. As such, its people are subject to the usual repetoire of discriminatory tactics inflicted by Israel on its non-Jewish citizens. Over the years, most of the land that used to belong to the town's inhabitants has been confiscated for use by Jews only.   One result of this loss of land is that, as late as 2004, the local soccer team, Bnei Sakhnin, still did not have a proper stadium or training ground; despite this, Bnei Sakhnin won the State Cup, the Israeli national championship, in May 2004. Consequently, later that year, the team went abroad to participate in the UEFA Cup competition. As a result of this heightened visibility, Israeli authorities were forced to make it possible for Bnei Sakhnin to start the construction of a stadium in 2005. Thus, their reluctance to let apartheid become visible internationally forced the Israeli authorities to partially ameliorate the effects of their apartheid land-confiscation policies.   The incident illustrates how important it is that further international pressure should be brought to bear. A boycott of the Ireland-Israel soccer matches will help show the Israelis that "the game is up". (Read more about Sakhnin and Bnei Sakhnin, [here](https://web.archive.org/web/20051211191515/http:/www.corkpsc.org/db.php?plid=18).) |

**Impact of Israeli Apartheid on Palestinian football**

While Israeli sportsmen and women travel freely around the world, the Palestinian team has to surmount a labyrinth of checkpoints and border crossings just to play their "home" matches overseas. With no decent pitches on which to train and a suspended national league, their success in getting to the preliminary qualifiers cannot be overstated. Furthermore, Israeli authorities regularly prevent Palestinian players from attending international games. In September 2004, five players were prevented from travelling to the World Cup qualifier against Uzbekistan. Unable to play in Palestine, the team travels to Doha, Qatar, for "home" games and trains in Ismailia, Egypt, more than 100 miles from the local Gaza players' homes.

Israel's labyrinth of checkpoints makes just getting to and from training a journey fraught with danger. Players from the West Bank have to circumvent Israel's Apartheid Wall, take a bus to Amman (Jordan) and then fly to Cairo to meet up with their Gazan teammates. Travelling within the Gaza Strip can take hours because of the checkpoints. For instance, it took Palestinian players 40 hours to get to Rafah from the Egyptian border after last year's Uzbekistan match. Despite these hurdles, their recent success has inspired tens of thousands of Palestinian children to hope that there can be a future beyond the latest Israeli curfew.

Palestine's future generations and sporting talent is being wasted by illegal occupation, restrictions on movement and collective punishment. Since September 2000 Israeli forces have killed over 3,565 Palestinians - 22% of whom were children. In the past year alone Israeli soldiers have killed 176 Palestinian children. Many more have been left seriously injured by snipers and tank shells - unable to kick a football again. Although youth under 17 make up more than 50% of the population of Palestine, there are few resources available to them under the occupation. Youth centres have been destroyed by the Israeli army. For instance, prior to the April 2002 reinvasion of West Bank towns and cities, the Old City of Nablus had 13 youth institutions. Now only 5 of these are operating.

Despite the restrictions imposed on them, Palestinian children continue to defy Israeli curfews just to play soccer in the streets. Their steadfast resistance to occupation is mirrored in the determination of the Palestinian team to one day hear their national anthem played to tens of thousands of cheering supporters in a home ground in a Free Palestine.

**Impact of Israeli Apartheid on Palestinian lives**

Outside the sporting arena, life for the Palestinian people is getting daily more unbearable. Ghettoised and isolated from each other behind checkpoints, settlements, Jewish-only roads and the Apartheid Wall, the Palestinian people are deprived of their land and livelihood or uprooted as refugees.

**When governments fail to enforce International Law, the people must act**

Israel today stands in violation of over sixty UN resolutions as well as many international conventions on human rights. Through its continued military occupation of Palestinian territories, its policies of racial discrimination against its Palestinian citizens and its denial of Palestinian refugees' rights, Israel resembles a 21st century Apartheid South Africa. However, despite its refusal to abide by international law, Israel continues to enjoy preferential trading terms with the European Union and governments have been cowardly in their refusal to demand sanctions against Israel.

Palestinian and international civil society is calling for a boycott of all Israeli goods and services, for divestment and sanctions, until Israel respects Palestinian rights. During the 1970s and '80s Irish sporting fans showed their opposition to Apartheid policies by boycotting sporting events with South Africa. Like the Dunnes Stores' workers who refused to handle South African produce, the Irish people refused to give legitimacy to Apartheid, by boycotting the Springboks tour.

It's time for people to demand justice for Palestine.

We are calling upon the Irish soccer supporters to stand up for justice and human rights by supporting Palestine at the soccer match between Ireland and Israel on June 4 in Dublin. They can do this by waving Palestinian flags and by chanting "Free Palestine".

The Irish people should not allow Israel to use the football field to represent and assert itself, with its occupation and apartheid politics, in front of the international community. Irish football should not allow players and supporters to be manipulated as political pawns by a criminal Israeli regime which shows a total disregard for International Law by continuing to imprison the Palestinian people behind an 8-metre high Apartheid wall built on stolen Palestinian land, while at the same time pretending to engage in peace talks.

Irish soccer supporters should show the Israeli Government that there is no place for Apartheid in the 21st century.