

# [***Middle East Football Associations call for Israel ban over war in Gaza***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B95-RW11-DY7V-G000-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; Twelve Middle Eastern football associations have called for [*Israel*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/15/sport/sagiv-jehezkel-detained-israel-turkey-spt-intl/index.html)'s national team to be banned over the [*war on Hamas*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/09/middleeast/israel-rejects-deal-hostage-families-anger-intl-cmd/index.html) in Gaza, in a letter seen by CNN.

The letter was sent on January 31 to FIFA, all 211 national member associations and the six regional confederations, including European governing body UEFA.

"We, the West Asian Football Federations, encompassing all its members, call upon FIFA, the Football Confederations, and Member Associations to join us in taking a decisive stand against the atrocities committed in Palestine and the war crimes in Gaza," the letter read, "by condemning the killing of innocent civilians including players, coaches, referees, and officials, the destruction of the football infrastructure, and taking a united front in isolating the Israeli Football Association from all football-related activities until these acts of aggression cease."

The 12-member West Asian Football Federations (WAFF), which includes Jordan, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates is led by Jordan FA president Prince Ali bin Al Hussein.

Prince Ali is the half-brother of Jordan's King Abdullah II.

Qatar has played a leading role as a mediator between Israel and Hamas in negotiating the release of hostages as well as working towards a potential ceasefire; it remains to be seen if its participation here will impact the current peace talks.

In a statement to CNN, the president of the Israel Football Association (IFA) Moshe Zuares said that the organisation in "not surprised" by the "cynical and shameless move by a minority of associations."

He added: "We do not take it lightly, despite the fact that we have already struggled with such attempts in the past, and each time we achieved a moral and practical victory in the face of hypocrisy and hostility that no excuse will hide its true motives."

Hamas' October 7 attack on Israel left about [*1,200 dead*](https://www.cnn.com/middleeast/live-news/israel-hamas-war-gaza-news-11-10-23/h_884aeb5c297dd20264b5227c9d8b81fd) with over 100 people taken hostage, resulting in an Israeli offensive in Gaza.

The death toll in Gaza is approaching 28,000, the Health Ministry in Hamas-controlled Gaza reported on Thursday.

Citing the recent rulings from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) which ordered Israel to prevent genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, WAFF said: "The ICJ's recognition of Palestinians' rights to be protected from acts of genocide emphasizes the gravity of the situation and the imperative for swift and decisive action from the global football community."

Israel maintains it is not targeting civilians and that Hamas has been hiding within a tunnel structure in Gaza among the civilian population.

In responding to the ICJ ruling, Israeli President Isaac Herzog maintains Israel is acting within international law.

"We are fighting an exceptionally just campaign. A campaign for the return of the hostages, those who are held and tortured by Hamas murderers in an unparalleled crime against humanity," Herzog said.

CNN has reached out to FIFA and UEFA for comment.

IFA also told Sky News it is only concentrating on football matters.

"I am trusting FIFA not to involve ***politics*** in football," IFA CEO Niv Goldstein told Sky News.

"We are against involving politicians in football and being involved in political matters in the sport in general.

There is precedence for national federations to be banned due to a country's acts of aggression, as FIFA and UEFA both [*suspended*](https://www.fifa.com/tournaments/mens/worldcup/qatar2022/media-releases/fifa-uefa-suspend-russian-clubs-and-national-teams-from-all-competitions) the Russian Football Union for Russia's invasion of Ukraine. That ban has been partially lifted.

[*Sky News*](https://news.sky.com/story/israel-faces-calls-for-football-ban-from-nations-in-the-middle-east-but-urges-fifa-not-to-involve-politics-13066461) reported that when UEFA's general secretary Theodore Theodoridis was asked about the calls to ban Israel after the UEFA Congress in Paris on Thursday, he said "there was no such discussion or such intention from the UEFA administration."

"They are two completely different situations between the two countries. Don't forget the start of the war, you mentioned Ukraine, and the start of what is happening now, which is regrettable now, in the Middle East," he reportedly added.

By Caroline Faraj and Sammy Mncwabe, CNN

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