

# [***Iranian Weightlifter Banned From Sport For Life After Taking Photo With Israeli Competitor***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:692K-P241-JBCM-F00F-00000-00&context=1516831)

Forbes.com

August 30, 2023 Wednesday

Copyright 2023 Forbes LLC All Rights Reserved

**Length:** 545 words

**Byline:** William Skipworth, Forbes Staff

**Highlight:** Mostafa Rajai was forbidden from entering a sports facility in Iran for the rest of his life.

**Body**

**Topline**

Iranian weightlifter Mostafa Rajai was given a lifetime ban by the Iran Weightlifting Federation for speaking to and taking a photo with an Israeli competitor, according to multiplenews organizations, marking the latest instance of geopolitics interfering with sports.

<figure>

<figcaption>

A competitor prepares to lift during the Men's 62kg Weightlifting event at the Convention Centre in Darling Harbour on Day Two of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia. Credit: Clive Brunskill /Allsport

Getty Images

</figcaption></figure>

**Key Facts**

Rajai and Israeli counterpart Maksim Svirsky were photographed and seen chatting after their competition at the 2023 World Masters Weightlifting Championships Saturday.

The Iran Weightlifting Federationreportedlycalled this an unforgivable transgression and has forbidden Rajai from entering all sports facilities in the country for life.

Iran has laws that forbid athletes from competing against Israelis and to abide by this rule, many Iranian athletes will intentionally throw games or fake injuries to avoid a matchup with Israeli opponents.

Hamid Salehinia, head of the team, was also fired as a result of the incident.

The Iran Weightlifting Federation has not responded to**Forbes** request for comment.

**Chief Critic**

The Israeli Weightlifting Federation told**Forbes** in a statement: We support sports free from ***politics***! Athletes who compete on the same stage respect each other and appreciate the special sporting activity of weightlifting. Shaking hands with a competitor who won or lost is in our eyes minimal values to respect him.

**Key Background**

Iran does not recognize the legitimacy of Israel as a state, and multiple Iranian leaders have called for the state of Israel to be dismantled and have threatened military action against the country. Israel has pushed back against Iran s apparent nuclear ambitions, while Iran has criticized Israel over its treatment of the Palestinians whom Israel is locked into a decades-long bloody conflict with andprovides supportto insurgent group Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip and is deemed a terrorist organization by the United States.

**Surprising Fact**

This isn t the first conflict to erupt due to Iran s policy of forbidding competition with Israel: The International Judo Federationbanned Iranfrom the sport for four years in 2021 due to the policy. Athletes from other countries have also dealt with tensions due to geopolitical conflicts. In 2022, the Wimbledon Tennis Championship banned Russian and Belarussian players because of the invasion of Ukraine. In tennis tournaments where Russians and Belarussians have competed, Ukrainian players like Elina Svitolinahave refused to shaketheir hands after the match. At the 2024 Olympics in Paris, Russia and Belarus will not be allowed to form official Olympic teams, though individual athletes will be able to compete as neutral athletes.

**Tangent**

Rajai and Svirsky both competed well at the weightlifting championships, earning silver and bronze medals respectively, though they were competing in a non-professional competition for "legends" of the sport.

**Further Reading**

Iran: Weightlifter Mostafa Rajai banned for photo with Israeli(BBC)

Iran bans weightlifter for life after he shakes Israeli s hand on podium(Al Jazeera)

**Load-Date:** September 1, 2023

**End of Document**