

# Argentinian Footballers Cancel Match with Israel, Infuriating Netanyahu

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

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*Responding to campaigning by BDS activists, Palestinian human rights supporters, its footballers and others, highlighting Israeli high crimes against peaceful Gazan demonstrators, Argentina's national football team cancelled what was billed as a friendly match with Israel.*

Originally scheduled in Haifa, it was moved to Jerusalem to help Israel celebrate its 70th birthday, along with wanting to sanitize its viciousness against Palestinians, notably beleaguered Gazans.

The match was to take place in a stadium built on ethnically cleansed Palestinian al-Maliha village land.

Palestinian footballer Mohammad Khalil urged Argentina to cancel the match. Protesting peacefully in Gaza, he was willfully targeted. Israeli snipers severely wounded him in both legs, ending his playing days.

Thousands of Palestinians signed a petition, joining Khalil in urging the cancellation. Argentina's national team responded, infuriating Netanyahu.

Extremist culture minister Miri Regev disgracefully equated the cancellation to "the same terrorism that led to the murder of eleven slain (Israeli) athletes in Munich," adding:

"This is not BDS, but a terrorist incident that intimidates the athletes themselves" – bald-faced lies, typical of how Israel responds to a righteous slap-down.

The cancelled match is a big win for right over wrong, a triumph following others, the way pure evil is defeated, one victory at a time.

Last week, trade unionists and Madres de Plaza del Mayo took part in a rally outside the Argentina Football Association (AFA) in Buenos Aires.

Protests followed the team to Barcelona. On Tuesday, during its training session ahead of the World Cup, Palestinian human rights activists urged its footballers not to play in Israel.

Following the cancelled match, BDS co-founder Omar Barghouti issued a statement, saying:

"We welcome the decision by the Argentina team to cancel this 'friendly'

match. It would have been extremely unfriendly to human rights!"

"Playing with an apartheid state is a form of complicity, magnified by Israel's recent horrific massacre in Gaza against unarmed protesters demanding their basic freedom, dignity and UN-stipulated refugee right of return."

"This was all part of the Israeli apartheid regime's sports-washing policy to use international sporting events to cover up its war crimes and egregious human rights violations against Palestinians."

"The fact that Argentina fans and human rights activists around the world succeeded in thwarting it gives us a lot of hope."

The Red Card Israel campaign called on FIFA to expel the Jewish state for attacking, imprisoning, and killing Palestinian footballers, preventing them from playing, ending the careers of victims like Mohammad Khalil.

"Palestinian players are routinely attacked, imprisoned and killed," the campaign explained, adding:

"Players are denied freedom of movement to attend their own matches. Palestinian stadiums have been bombed and destroyed."

"Israel even prevents football equipment from being imported and football facilities from being developed."

"Racism against Palestinians is institutionalized in Israeli football. (S)egregated youth football leagues (and) anti-Palestinian hate from fan clubs...goes routinely unpunished."

"Seven Israeli clubs based in illegal settlements are allowed to play in the official league of the Israel Football Association (IFA) making FIFA – the football governing body – complicit with violations of international law."

The campaign wants Israel barred from international sports competition until attacks against Palestinians end.

By video message, West Bank Nabi Saleh Palestinian footballers (the village home to Ahed Tamimi and her family members) thanked Argentina's national team and Lionel Messi for cancelling the match with Israel.

In the video, Ahed's relatives said

"(y)ou scored a goal for freedom, justice and equality."

Israeli propaganda tried putting a brave face on a major embarrassing slap down – falsely claiming the cancelled match was over threats to Argentinian footballers.

With attribution to astronaut Neil Armstrong, the cancellation was one small step toward ending Israeli apartheid viciousness, perhaps a giant liberating leap to come.

A Final Comment

American/Palestinian lawyer Noura Erakat called the cancelled match unprecedented, "major," adding:

"If I'm right, this is the first sports boycott of its kind. (It's an) indication of mainstream support for Palestine...a bold rejection of US/Israeli violence (and) exclusionary futures."

"Thank you" Argentina – its footballers, not its hardline regime.

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