

# Will FIFA, World Football's Governing Body Suspend Israel

Arrests by US as FIFA Mulls Giving Israel Boot

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*FIFA, world football's governing body, is due to meet this Friday in Zurich to decide whether to back a Palestinian motion to suspend Israel for its systematic violations of Palestinian footballers' rights in the occupied territories, including preventing practice sessions and games, arresting players, denying entry to other teams, and bombing grounds, as well as for endemic racism towards non-Jewish players in Israeli football itself. I have written about this in the past: [here](#) and [here](#).*

Although a 75% majority is needed for the Palestinian motion to carry, there has been a growing sense that the mood at FIFA is shifting the Palestinians' way. Israel and the US are, of course, deeply worried. Such a move would have strong overtones of the sports boycott against South Africa and further reinforce the idea that the description of Israel as an apartheid state holds. It would also disrupt FIFA tournaments Israel is due to host in the coming months, causing great embarrassment to Israel and FIFA's president, Sepp Blatter.

Meanwhile, almost everyone quietly acknowledges that FIFA is corrupt from head to toe, and has been for as long as the game has been another branch of the big-business entertainments industry. Just think how impossible it would have been for a body not profoundly infected with corrupt practices to have backed desert emirate Qatar's bid to host the 2022 tournament – in the middle of its stifling summer.

Today, however, the US decided it was time to call a halt to FIFA's corruption. It ordered the high-profile arrest and extradition of six senior FIFA officials on corruption charges dating back to the early 1990s. The operation at the FIFA officials' Zurich hotel, as they waited for Friday's vote, was covered in detail by leading US media organisations after they were tipped off beforehand. Apparently it has taken the US the best part of 20 years to get round to doing the paperwork to make the arrests.

Doubtless, none of this was designed to have – or will have – the slightest effect on FIFA officials as they contemplate whether to infuriate Israel and the US by booting Israel out of world soccer.

In the meantime, you can try to shore up FIFA's resolve by signing a petition [here](#).

See also [www.haaretz.com/news/world/1.658271](http://www.haaretz.com/news/world/1.658271)

## UPDATE:

Anyone who doubts how seriously Israel is taking the threat of being ousted from FIFA and how actively its supporters are working behind the scenes at the world body should read the comments of Avi Luzon, Israel's representative to UEFA, European football's governing body. Ominously, he says UEFA's support for Israel is sown up and suggests that UEFA will prevent Israel's suspension whatever the outcome of the vote.

I've said it before and I'll say it again: UEFA will not let Israel be harmed, especially as there is no reason for it. An agreement has been reached on a four-point draft that is acceptable to [Israeli PM Benjamin] Netanyahu, [UEFA president Michel] Platini, [FIFA president Sepp] Blatter and now [Palestinian soccer chief] Jibril Rajoub.

In the worst case scenario, if the Palestinians do not agree to pull the proposal and the congress is held as planned, UEFA will prevent the suspension of Israel in a very clear way. From the conversations with important people, face to face here in Warsaw, I can say without a doubt that concern over Israel's suspension through a vote will not happen.

[www.haaretz.com/life/sports/1.658317](http://www.haaretz.com/life/sports/1.658317)

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