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The Evolution and Impact of the Sports Boycott of Israel**

قراءة في تحولات المقاطعة الرياضية لإسرائيل وتأثيراتها

Abstract: This study examines the origins and evolution of the sports boycott of Israel at major international athletic events in the last decade (2010s) and the impact of boycott on the Israeli apartheid system. It traces how the outbreak of the Arab Spring in late 2010 further incentivized Arab youth to call for boycotting Israel, specifically in sports. These calls coincided with their demands for an end to authoritarianism and autocracy in the Arab region, providing opportunities for Arab athletes to transform major international athletic events into a space for political action. The study further explores the role of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement in inspiring several sports boycotts against Israel. It demonstrates how the sports boycott of Israel has become an international policy tool for athletes to counteract Israel's international image and standing, its athletic brand, and its diplomatic efforts at marketing its emerging sports' entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Sports Boycott; Israeli Apartheid; Arab Spring; Boycott, Divestment and Sanction (BDS) Movement.

الملخص: تبحث هذه الدراسة في جذور المقاطعة الرياضية لإسرائيل منذ عام 2010، والتحويلات التي مرت بها، وتأثيرها في نظام الاستعمار والأبارتهايد الإسرائيلي. وتناقش الأسباب التي أدت إلى تطور هذه المقاطعة في البطولات الرياضية الدولية الكبرى في العقد الأخير، وتوضح أن اندلاع الثورات العربية في أواخر عام 2010، أعطى زخمًا إضافيًا للشباب العربي للاهتمام بمقاطعة إسرائيل عمومًا، ومقاطعتها رياضيًا على وجه الخصوص. وجرى ذلك جنبًا إلى جنب مع مطالبتهم بإنهاء الاستبداد والحكم الفردي، ما منح الرياضيين العرب فرصة لتحويل البطولات الرياضية الدولية الكبرى إلى فضاء للعمل السياسي. وتبين الدراسة دور حركة المقاطعة وسحب الاستثمارات وفرض العقوبات المقاطعة الرياضية لإسرائيل، وتبرز أن هذه المقاطعة باتت إحدى أدوات السياسة الدولية التي يمتلكها الرياضيون؛ فاستخدامها في البطولات الرياضية الدولية يؤثر في صورة «إسرائيل»، ومكانتها الدولية، وعلامتها التجارية الرياضية، وجهودها الدبلوماسية المتعلقة بتسويق شركاتها الرياضية الناشئة.

كلمات مفتاحية: المقاطعة الرياضية؛ الأبارتهايد الإسرائيلي؛ حركة المقاطعة وسحب الاستثمارات وفرض العقوبات.

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Introduction

There is a plethora of scholarship on government utilization of sports to build a national identity, rally public sentiment behind national causes,¹ and strengthen the authority of the state and its political system.² Sports have also served to mobilize the public politically during and after times of war,³ control and directly intervene in the social affairs and roles of citizens,⁴ and promote economic and social development.⁵ Other studies have analysed how some countries have used sports in foreign policy as a propaganda tool to enhance the prestige of a ruling regime and project a sense of economic and social superiority. Sports can also preserve good relations with allies or express an adversarial relationship,⁶ promote – or refute – shared interests with other states or international corporations,⁷ and rally international recognition and acceptance for a particular country or, conversely, isolate a rival country internationally.⁸

However, to focus exclusively on state actors' investment in sports as a domestic and foreign policy tool for advancing state interests limits the scope of inquiry into sports as a political tool. National liberation movements, local and transnational socio-political movements, individual athletes, and other non-state actors have also used sports to promote themselves and their values, demand social justice and democracy, and oppose racism, apartheid, and colonialism. Instances of this abounded in Africa and Asia in the late twentieth century. The state centric approach has tended to view the exercise of boycotts in international sporting events as the most salient example of sports as a vehicle to advance government interests. Thus, sports boycott was defined as a punitive measure pursued by one or more international actors to pressure a political regime into revising or abandoning a particular policy.⁹ Case studies have reinforced these assumptions by primarily focusing on the use of sports boycotts in the context of the superpower rivalry during the Cold War.¹⁰ Ideological and political hostilities were expressed and adversaries were isolated from the international community by barring its athletes from international sports competitions and depriving nations of the right to attend or host major sporting events.¹¹

This study seeks to broaden this field of inquiry by moving beyond the confines of the states' investment in sports. It aims, instead, to understand why non-state actors invest in the political potentials of sports and, accordingly, analyse why many athletes from the Arab region and beyond have chosen to boycott Israel in sports.

This study directly contributes to the growing body of literature on the rise of sports as an international political instrument. Its analysis of the role of non-state actors in the use of sports as a political instrument lays the groundwork for shifting the academic focus away from state actors' use of sports as a foreign policy tool, thereby shedding more light on diverse uses of sports for political means.

¹ Mojca Doupona Topic & Jay Coakley, "Complicating the Relationship between Sport and National Identity: The Case of Post-Socialist Slovenia," *Sociology of Sport Journal*, vol. 27, no. 4 (December 2010), pp. 371-376.

² Chien-Yu Lin, Ping-Chao Lee & Hui-Fang Nai, "Theorizing the Role of Sport in State-Politics," *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Science*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2009), p. 23.

³ Martin Hurcombe & Philip Dine, "Introduction: War, Peace and Sport," *Journal of War & Culture Studies*, vol. 13, no. 4 (2020), pp. 337-341.

⁴ Muhammad Abdul Jabar et al., "Relationship between Social Control and Sports," *The Spark*, vol. 3, no. 1 (2018), pp. 103-111.

⁵ Emmanuel Acquah-Sam, "Developing Sports for Economic Growth and Development in Developing Countries," *European Scientific Journal*, vol. 17, no. 15 (2021), pp. 173-177.

⁶ Lin, Lee & Nai, pp. 25-26.

⁷ John Nauright, "Global Games: Culture, Political Economy and Sport in the Globalised World of the 21st Century," *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 25, no. 7 (2004), pp. 1325-1331.

⁸ Noof Al-Dosari, "Sport and International Relations: Qatari Soft Power and Foreign Policy Making," *Tajseer*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2021), p. 145.

⁹ Malcolm MacLean, "Revisiting (and Revising?) Sports Boycotts: From Rugby against South Africa to Soccer in Israel," *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 31, no. 15 (2014), pp. 1832-1835.

¹⁰ Matt Bersell, "Sports, Race, and Politics: The Olympic Boycott of Apartheid Sport," *Western Illinois Historical Review*, vol. 8 (Spring 2017), p. 7.

¹¹ Lin, Lee & Nai, pp. 25-26.

Sports Boycott at International Athletic Events

Although the term “boycott” first appeared in Ireland in 1880,¹² it was not until 1920 that a sports boycott was practiced in a modern international context. That year, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), backed by the victorious powers in World War I, boycotted athletes from Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, Turkey, and Poland, barring them from participating in the Antwerp Olympics, on the grounds that their governments had started the war.¹³ Up to this point, world powers had relied exclusively on economic sanctions, which they saw as the chief non-military weapon they could wield against their adversaries, for instance, the economic boycott that the victors in World War I imposed on Germany in the Treaty of Versailles in 1919.¹⁴ Generally, this entailed withholding aid and financial assistance and severing relations.¹⁵

International interest in sports boycott associated with disputes between states began to grow after 1920, against the backdrop of the post-WWI political upheaval and crises among the victorious and defeated powers.¹⁶ Especially when applied in the Olympic games, it was considered an innovative means to pressure adversaries and settle political scores. It had a rapid impact on rival states and their people, in comparison to economic boycott which could take years to have the desired impact.¹⁷

The next major landmark after the boycott of the defeated Central Powers in the Antwerp Olympics was the US boycott of the Berlin Olympics in Germany in 1936, which reaffirmed the value of sports boycott as a foreign policy instrument in the framework of the international disputes in the interwar era. On this occasion, the victors of WWI led by the US used the boycott to protest the German regime’s racist treatment of Jews and other minorities whose athletes had been barred from national athletic activities and from participating in the German national team.¹⁸

After World War II, sports boycott would be clearly associated with the symbolism of political recognition and international legitimacy as embodied in the founding of the United Nations in October 1945. In the London Olympics of 1948, the IOC, backed by the victorious Allied Powers, boycotted the former Axis Powers, Germany and Japan, as part of an international campaign to isolate those countries by preventing them from taking part in international athletic competitions.¹⁹ The phenomenon occurred again in the Helsinki Olympics in 1952 in which the IOC boycotted China and banned its athletes from the games, marking the beginning of an isolation of Beijing that would last 28 years.²⁰ Sports boycott then appeared in the Melbourne Olympics in 1956. On this occasion, Egypt, Iraq, and Lebanon boycotted the international games to protest the British, French, and Israeli tripartite aggression against Port Said, Egypt in 1956. Also, the Netherlands and Switzerland boycotted the Olympics to protest the Soviet Union’s invasion of Hungary that same year, setting into motion an international campaign to isolate the Soviet Union and

¹² J. James Miller, “Legal and Economic History of the Secondary Boycott,” *Labor Law Journal*, vol. 12, no. 8 (August 1961), p. 751.

¹³ Nikolettta Onyestyák, “Boycott, Exclusion or Non-participation? Hungary in the Years of the 1920 and 1984 Olympic Games,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 27, no. 11 (2010), p. 1930.

¹⁴ Zara Steiner, “The Treaty of Versailles Revisited,” in: Michael Dockrill & John Fisher (eds.), *The Paris Peace Conference, 1919: Peace without Victory?* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), p. 13.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Michał Marcin Kobierecki, “Sport in International Relations Expectations, Possibilities and Effects,” *International Studies: Interdisciplinary Political and Cultural Journal*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2013), p. 63.

¹⁷ Victor D. Cha, “A Theory of Sport and Politics,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 26, no. 11 (2009), pp. 1582-1584.

¹⁸ Mario Kessler, “Only Nazi Games? Berlin 1936: The Olympic Games between Sports and Politics,” *Socialism and Democracy*, vol. 25, no. 2 (2011), pp. 125-130.

¹⁹ Peter J. Beck, “The British Government and the Olympic movement: The 1948 London Olympics,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 25, no. 5 (2008), pp. 615-647.

²⁰ Kang An, “To Play or Not to Play: A Historic Overview of the Olympic Movement in China From 1894 to 1984,” Master Dissertation, Faculty of the Graduate School, University of Texas, Austin, May 2020, p. 18 (Unpublished).

ban its athletes from international athletic events.²¹ More countries began to practice sports boycotts in international athletic events in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, when it would expand to become a mode of the international struggle against colonialism and apartheid.²²

The Cold War era saw the second stage in the evolution of sports boycott in international political affairs. In the first stage, sports boycott had been associated with political conflicts between states, and it translated into mobilizing worldwide drives in international organizations to delegitimize the boycotted states. By contrast, in the Cold War period, sports boycott in international politics evolved into one of the most sophisticated and influential political tools of the twentieth century due to its rapid and wide-scale impact in promoting such causes as human rights, social justice, democracy, the anti-colonial struggle, and the fight against racism.²³ This development was manifested at the Tokyo Olympics in 1964, in which the IOC, with the support of much of the international community, boycotted the apartheid regime of South Africa and banned its athletes from competing in the games because South Africa had violated the Olympic Charter by discriminating against Black people.²⁴

In the following decade, when groups of African and Asian countries threatened to boycott the Munich Olympics in 1972 and the Montreal Olympics in 1976 if the IOC did not ban the apartheid regime of Rhodesia from the games,²⁵ sports boycott became a global policy tool for less influential countries. The success of recurrent sports boycotts encouraged more than two dozen African and Asian nations to boycott the Montreal Olympics because New Zealand had not been expelled from the games after having participated in a rugby tournament in apartheid South Africa whose regime violated the Olympic Charter.²⁶

Although the IOC, together with a growing portion of the international community had broadened the focus of sports boycotts to the fights against colonialism, apartheid, and racial discrimination, that focus remained exclusively on South Africa and Rhodesia. It had yet to extend in a significant way to other colonial and racist regimes. Israel, which had displaced the Palestinian population from their land, had managed to avoid boycotts in Olympics-related events since it first took part in Helsinki. The sole exception was the Tokyo Olympics when Indonesia declared a boycott to protest Israel's participation.²⁷ Israel also avoided being boycotted at the FIFA World Cup in Mexico in 1970, the only year in which it qualified.²⁸ Due to the difficulty of boycotting Israel in international tournaments, Arab and Muslim countries boycotted it in regional athletic events. Thus, in 1972, they succeeded in having the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Cup, which Israel had planned to host, transferred from Palestine to Thailand and then in expelling Israel from the AFC in 1974.²⁹

During the Cold War era, sports boycott was still widely understood as a political weapon wielded by state actors in their attempts to project power and express political and ideological antagonism.³⁰ Against

²¹ Sam Thomas Schelfhout, "It is 'Force Majeure': The Abrupt Boycott Movements of the 1956 Melbourne Summer Olympic Games," Master Dissertation, Faculty of the Graduate School, University of Texas, Austin, May 2017, pp. 57-67, 75-106 (Unpublished).

²² Douglas Booth, "Hitting Apartheid for Six? The Politics of the South African Sports Boycott," *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 38, no. 3 (July 2003), p. 477.

²³ Scarlett Cornelissen, "'Resolving 'the South Africa problem'': Transnational Activism, Ideology and Race in the Olympic Movement, 1960-91," *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 28, no. 1 (2011), p. 153.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 154-155.

²⁵ Andrew Novak, "Rhodesia's 'Rebel and Racist' Olympic Team: Athletic Glory, National Legitimacy and the Clash of Politics and Sport," *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 23, no. 8 (December 2006), pp. 1378-1383.

²⁶ Stephen Wright, "Are the Olympics games? The Relationship of Politics and Sport," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1 (March 1977), pp. 30-31.

²⁷ David Webster, "Sports as Third World Nationalism the Games of the New Emerging Forces and Indonesia's Systemic Challenge under Sukarno," *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, vol. 23, no. 4 (2016), p. 401.

²⁸ "Israel Celebrate Mexico 70 Milestone," *FIFA*, 1/6/2020, accessed on 22/3/2022, at: <https://fifa.fans/36oZBDO>

²⁹ "Najahat al-Kuwayt bi-tard al-Itihād al-Āsyawī li-Kurat al-Qadam," *Al-Qabas*, 15/9/1974.

³⁰ Allen Guttmann, "The Cold War and the Olympic," *International Journal*, vol. 43, no. 4 (Autumn 1988), p. 558.

the backdrop of the Cold War superpower rivalry, US President Jimmy Carter (1977-1981) launched an international campaign to boycott the Summer Olympics in Moscow 1980, protesting the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, and 65 of the 145 nations invited to attend did not participate. Subsequently, the Soviet Union and 14 other countries boycotted the Summer Olympics in Los Angeles in 1984.³¹ These boycotts underscored the importance of the Olympics as a venue for political and ideological mobilization and disseminating nationalist spirit.³²

The end of the Cold War ushered in the third phase of boycotts in sports. The Olympics that followed Seoul 1988 coincided with the IOC's emphasis on keeping politics out of sports in accordance to the principles of the IOC and the Olympic Charter.³³ Following the Seoul Olympics, the IOC agreed to let South Africa take part in the Summer Olympics in Barcelona in 1992, ending the country's almost 24-year exclusion from the games.³⁴ However, if the IOC and state parties refrained from boycotts in sports until the mid-2010s, that did not signify that this political instrument had become obsolete. It remained clear that politics could not be kept out of sports. Indeed, the IOC, backed by the US, barred Afghanistan from the Sydney Olympics in 2000 because of the Taliban's refusal to include women in its Olympic team.³⁵

While it is true that the type of sports boycotts associated with apartheid and racism has been largely missing from the international arena during this period, there were some – albeit limited – cases involving Israel. For example, Iranian athletes have not entered athletic competitions against Israelis since 1979.³⁶ Also, despite the growing tendency toward normalization in sports after Egypt signed the Camp David accords in 1979,³⁷ there remain some isolated instances where Arab athletes have refused to play against Israeli ones in international competitions, as was the case with the matches sponsored by the Seeds of Peace initiative.³⁸ Nevertheless, this form of boycott has had little impact on Israel at the international level. More importantly, it has managed to prevent the boycott of Israel in sports from being contextualized in the framework of the fight against apartheid and racial discrimination.

Boycotting Israel since the Rise of the BDS Movement

Sports boycott of Israel has developed remarkably since the turn of the millennium. This evolution differs in nature to the phase in which sports boycott was associated with the fight against colonialism, apartheid, and racism when the focus was almost exclusively on South Africa and Rhodesia. To understand this evolution, the study examines the role of the BDS movement as a main driver of boycott activism against Israel.

Following the outbreak of the second Palestinian intifada (28 September 2000 - 8 February 2005), calls for a boycott of the Israeli colonial apartheid regime began to resound from Palestinian, Arab, and international quarters with encouragement from the Higher Intifada Coordinating Committee and from Palestinian trade and labour unions, agricultural and industrial associations, and other civil society organizations³⁹. This gave rise to campaigns in Palestine, the Arab region, and elsewhere focused primarily on boycotting

³¹ Ibid., pp. 559-563, 567.

³² Marlene Goldsmith, "Sporting Boycotts as a Political Tool," *The Australian Quarterly*, vol. 67, no. 1 (1995), pp. 13-14.

³³ *Olympic Charter* (Switzerland: International Olympic Committee, 2021), p. 94.

³⁴ Cornelissen, pp. 160-162.

³⁵ Gertrud Pfister, "Outsiders: Muslim Women and Olympic Games – Barriers and Opportunities," *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 27, no. 16-18 (2010), pp. 2952-2953.

³⁶ "Iran Wrestling Officials Resign over Israel Competition Ban," *BBC*, 28/2/2018, accessed on 11/4/2022, at: <https://bbc.in/3xmAwnN>

³⁷ "Peace Treaty between the State of Israel and the Arab Republic of Egypt," *United Nations Peacemaker*, 26/3/1979, accessed on 22/4/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3EFcWnZ>

³⁸ Paula Rackoff, "Lessons from 'Seeds of Peace'," *The Brown Journal of Foreign Affairs*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Winter 1993-1994), p. 199.

³⁹ For more about the BDS movement, its values, impact, and methods, see: Amro Sadd al-Din, *Harakat Muqāta'at Isrā'īl BDS: Baḥth fī al-Ṭuruq wa-l-Qiyam wa-l-Ta'īr* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2020).

products from Israeli settlements.⁴⁰ In response to calls from academics, researchers, intellectuals, and civil society organizations in Palestine and elsewhere during the second intifada,⁴¹ more than 170 Palestinian civil society organizations signed a worldwide appeal, dated 9 July 2005, urging support for a campaign to boycott, divest from, and sanction Israel to pressure the occupying power to comply with international law and the universal principles of human rights. The action was reminiscent of campaigns against the apartheid regime in South Africa.⁴²

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Authority, which was established in 1994 in accordance with the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements (the Oslo Accords) that the PLO had signed with Israel in 1993, did not promote the boycott of Israel. On the contrary, after the second intifada, it strengthened security cooperation with Israel.⁴³ Nor did Arab governments support the boycott. Instead, they adopted a normalization proposal known as the Arab Peace Initiative in March 2002.⁴⁴ Likewise, there was no international impetus behind the call to boycott Israel. Moreover, the EU-Israel Association Agreement entered into force in 2000, five years after it was signed, the eighth article of which provides for customs duties exemptions for Israeli goods entering the EU and vice versa.⁴⁵

In this political map, the BDS movement sounded a call for global grassroots solidarity with Palestinians expressed through boycott of the Israeli colonial apartheid regime. Grassroots boycott was far from new in the Palestinian struggle against Israel. Palestinian religious associations, labour organizations, political parties, and national figures have been aware of its usefulness in opposing the Zionist settler project since 1908.⁴⁶ However, the steps that Palestinian civil society organizations took in 2005 suggested that the boycott had entered a new phase. They had successfully presented the action they launched as a collective resistance project that not only transcended the colonial borders separating Palestinians from each other but also bypassed conventional and official Palestinian, Arab, and international policy. Moreover, at the international level, they were also able to present the boycott as a just and comprehensive solution inspired by international law and the universal principles of freedom, justice, and equality.

The Israeli invasion of Gaza in the winter of 2008-2009 increased international solidarity with the Palestinians and the BDS movement began to spread more widely among civil society in the Arab region, Europe, East Asia, North and South America, and South Africa. Within days of the invasion, a BDS movement was launched for the first time in France, joined by several unions and federations, including the French Workers' Union.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the Sussex University Student Council voted to boycott Israeli goods and products.⁴⁸ In Canada, the UK, the Netherlands, the US and Ireland, grassroots campaigns were launched to boycott Ahava products manufactured in illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank constructed in flagrant violation of international law.⁴⁹ That same year, the EU introduced, for the first time, an official policy requiring that all goods manufactured in Israeli settlements in the West Bank and destined for EU

⁴⁰ Amro Sadd al-Din, "Niqāsh bi-Sha'n al-Nushū' al-Filasṭīnī li-Ḥarakat Muqāṭa'at Isrā'īl (BDS)," *Institute for Palestine Studies*, 23/10/2016, accessed on 27/2/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3hox1E8>

⁴¹ Omar al-Barghouthi, "Ḥarakat Muqāṭa'at Isrā'īl (BDS)," *Majallat al-Dirasat al-Filasṭiniyya*, vol. 25, no. 99 (Summer 2014), p. 24.

⁴² "Mu'assasāt al-Mujtama' al-Madanī al-Filasṭīnī Tunādī bi-Muqāṭa'at Isrā'īl wa-Sahb al-Istithmārāt Minhā wa-Farḍ al-Uqūbāt 'Alayha," *BDS Movement*, 9/7/2005, accessed on 27/2/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3JZSaAL>

⁴³ Keith Dayton, "Peace through Security: America's Role in the Development of the Palestinian Authority Security Services," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, 7/5/2009, accessed on 27/2/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/33ZVVqI>

⁴⁴ "Naṣ Mubādarat al-Salām al-'Arabiyya al-Latī Uṭliqat fī Qimmat Bayrūt al-'Arabiyya 'Am 2002," *Wafa*, 29/3/2007, accessed on 27/2/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3pnrUsb>

⁴⁵ Tariq Hammoud, "al-Muqāṭa'a fī al-Ijrā'āt al-Ūrubīyya: Niṣf Muqāṭa'a lil-Mustawtanāt wa-Da'm Mutlaq li-'Isrā'īl," in: *Istrāṭījiyyat al-Muqāṭa'a Did al-Iḥtilāl al-'Isrā'īlī wa-Nizām al-Abarthāyd: al-Wāqī wa-l-Ṭumūḥ* (Doha/ Beirut: ACRPS, 2018), p. 302.

⁴⁶ Suzanne Morrison, "The Emergence of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement," in: Fawaz Gerges (eds.), *Contentious Politics in the Middle East Popular Resistance and Marginalized Activism beyond the Arab Uprisings* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 229-230.

⁴⁷ José Luis Moragués, "Short History of BDS in France," *BDS Movement*, 1/2/2012, accessed on 1/3/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/36EOSvd>

⁴⁸ "Sussex University Students Vote to Boycott Israeli Goods," *The Electronic Intifada*, 6/11/2009, accessed on 18/4/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3uOEa8o>

⁴⁹ "Boycott of Ahava Dead Sea Products Makes an Impact," *BDS Movement*, 3/12/2009, accessed on 1/3/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3sv7Beb>

markets must have their provenance clearly stated on their labels. British trade unions also backed a boycott of some Israeli goods produced in Israeli settlements and to prohibit arms trade with Israel.⁵⁰

The tangible economic, cultural, and academic impacts of the BDS movement during the Israeli war on Gaza carried over into sports. During that war, the boycott campaigns expanded into the realm of international championships supervised by international sports federations for the first time. Moreover, the boycotts were joined by athletes and organizations from outside the Arab region. For example, in 2009, the municipal council of Malmö, Sweden voted to cancel the Sweden-Israel tennis match in the Davis Cup, the premier international event in men's tennis which is run by the International Tennis Federation. After intense pressure from Israel, the Swedish Tennis Federation decided not to cancel the match and, instead, to close the stadium to the public.⁵¹ In December of the same year, Moroccan footballer Marouane Chamakh refused to accompany his team, Bordeaux, to Israel for the match against Maccabi Haifa in the UEFA Champions League playoffs, citing his opposition to the Israeli aggression against Palestinians.⁵² In January 2009, the Israeli tennis player Shahar Peer was barred from the international ASB tennis tournament in New Zealand after demonstrators in Auckland demanded she quit the tournament in protest against the Israeli offensive against Gaza.⁵³ Therefore, boycott action against Israel made great strides at the official and grassroots levels, especially in the West, with the launch of the international BDS movement.

The Post-Arab Spring Boycott of Israel

The grassroots boycott of Israel was undiminished by the normalization of relations with Israel on the part of some Arab regimes and remained active in political parties and other civil society organizations as well as among university students, intellectual elites, and activists in the Arab region. Moreover, the wave of Arab protests that began in Tunisia on 17 December 2010 prompted Arab youth to pay more attention to the boycott of Israel, in sports in particular, alongside their demands for an end to autocratic dictatorships.

During the Tunisian uprising that erupted in late 2010, protestors called for an end to autocratic dictatorship, widespread corruption, social injustice, and marginalization. On the sixty-third anniversary of the Palestinian Nakba on 15 May 2011, the protestors added the following chants: "The people want to liberate Palestine", "The Arab revolution is our path to the liberation of Palestine", and "The people want Arab unity".⁵⁴ Israel openly expressed its concern about the Tunisian revolution, its impact on Israeli-Tunisian relations, and its potential threat to Israeli national security, despite Tunisia's geographic remoteness, its minor status in regional politics, and minimal influence on the Arab-Israeli conflict or on Israeli national security.⁵⁵ In August 2011, Tunisian demonstrators staged the first march since the start of their revolution to voice their opposition to normalization with Israel. Addressing the Knesset, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (2009-2021) said that Israel feared that the revolution would bring an end to its informal ties with Tunis and that the Tunisian parliament might pass a law to boycott Israel.⁵⁶ Tunisia had begun to draw closer to Israel in the 1990s, after Ben Ali came to power, with the support and

⁵⁰ "al-Naqābāt al-Bariṭāniyya Tuqir Muqāṭa'at al-Baḍā'i' al-Isrā'īliyya," *BBC Arabic*, 17/9/2009, accessed on 1/3/2022, at: <https://bbc.in/36SPLtB>

⁵¹ "Anti-Israel Protest Staged at Sweden Tennis Match," *Reuters*, 7/3/2009, accessed on 1/3/2022, at: <https://reut.rs/3tChKWf>

⁵² "Maghāribā Yuraḥībūn bi-Rafḍ al-Shmakh al-La'ib fī Isrā'īl," *Hespress*, 12/12/2009, accessed on 1/3/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3tcm1iM>

⁵³ "'Dubay' Tuwaḍiḥ Mushkilat al-Isrā'īliyya 'Bīr' wa-l-Amr Qad Yatakarrar ma' al-Rijāl," *CNN Arabic*, 19/3/2009, accessed on 11/4/2022, at: <https://cnn.it/3rbFKyX>

⁵⁴ Samuel Ghiles-Meilhac, "Tunisia's Relations with Israel in a Comparative Approach: The Case of the Debate on Normalization During the Arab Awakening," *Bulletin du Centre de recherche français à Jérusalem*, no. 25 (2014).

⁵⁵ Yousri Khayzaran, "Ru'ya Isrā'īliyya lil-Thawrat al-'Arabiyya," in: Imtānus Shehada & Nadim Rouhana (eds.), *Isrā'īl wa-l-Taḥawwulāt fī al-Muḥīṭ al-'Arabī*, Mada Al-Carmel Documents, no. 4 (Ramallah: Mada Al-Carmel, 2014), p. 3.

⁵⁶ "PM Netanyahu Addresses Opening of Knesset Winter Session," Israel Ministry Affairs, 31/10/2011, accessed on 14/3/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3tbHv0A>

encouragement of the US. Apart from a temporary hiatus due to the second intifada in 2000, Israeli-Tunisian relations continued to develop in many sectors, especially tourism.⁵⁷

Tunisian enthusiasm for boycotting Israel grew after the first free elections in the country's history on 23 October 2011. The voters elected a National Constituent Assembly that was tasked with drafting a new constitution, which would include a provision unprecedented in Tunisian constitutional history. The first post-revolutionary constitution, promulgated in 2014, includes a paragraph in its preamble affirming the Tunisian people's support for the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and their opposition to all forms of foreign occupation and racism.⁵⁸ In October 2014, Tunisians elected a new legislature that moved closer to legislation mandating the boycott of Israel. In 2015, MPs affiliated with the Popular Front proposed a six-article bill prohibiting normalization with Israel and penalizing individuals attempting to normalize relations with two to five years in prison and a fine of between 10,000 and 100,000 Tunisian dinars (\$4,000 to \$40,000).⁵⁹

On the seventh anniversary of the Tunisian revolution in 2018, around a hundred Tunisian university students, artists, and journalists called for an academic and cultural boycott of Israel. The action was in open defiance of the growing trend among some Arab regimes to establish relations with Israel. The Tunisian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (TACBI) viewed the failure of the Tunisian parliament to criminalize normalization with Israel as an invitation to Tunisian civil society organizations to respond to appeal from Palestinian civil society to join the BDS movement, which was inspired by the experience of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa.⁶⁰

As the revolutionary wave spread from Tunisia to other Arab countries, which had suffered similar mixtures of political tyranny and widespread corruption, demonstrators saw no reason not to follow the Tunisian cue and add the call to boycott Israel to their demands for an end to dictatorship and social injustice. On the anniversary of the Nakba in May 2011, Egyptian demonstrators staged a "March to Palestine" in which they chanted slogans such as "Palestine from the river to the sea", "Freedom for Palestine", and "Yes to the return of refugees". They also called for a boycott of Israel and the suspension of Egyptian natural gas exports to Israel. The marchers turned back to Cairo when they found that the Egyptian army and police had blocked all accessways to the Sinai.⁶¹ Then, in August and September 2011, in response to the killing of Egyptian soldiers in the vicinity of the Egyptian border with occupied Palestine, Egyptian protestors stormed the Egyptian embassy and called for the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador and boycott of Israel. One brave protestor scaled the building to the thirteenth floor, removed the Israeli flag from the embassy's balcony, and planted the Egyptian flag instead.⁶²

Unlike Tunisia, Egypt occupies a central position in the Arab regional order. In addition to its major political and diplomatic status, it possesses the largest Arab army and is linked to Israel by a peace treaty, an approximately 80-kilometre-long border, as well as an agreement to supply Israel with natural gas. So, if the Egyptian revolution aroused Israeli anxiety from the moment it started, the storming of the Israeli embassy triggered alarm bells as protestors chanted for severing relations with Israel, liberating the Sinai from Israeli restrictions, and even abrogating the Camp David accords.

⁵⁷ Adnan Abu Amer, *Manzūmat al-Amn al-Isrā'īlī wa-l-Thawrāt al-'Arabiyya* (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, 2016), p. 86.

⁵⁸ "Dustūr al-Jumhūriyya al-Tūnisiyya al-Šādīr fī 27 Jānifī 2014," *DCAF*, 27/1/2014, accessed on 14/3/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3w540WB>

⁵⁹ Khamees bin Braik, "Tajrīm al-Taṭbī' bi-Tūnis.. al-Ma'raka al-Akhīra," *Al Jazeera Net*, 31/12/2017, accessed on 15/3/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3q5nbM2>

⁶⁰ "Nidā' Tūnisī lil-Muqāṭa'a al-Akādīmiyya wa-l-Thaqāfiyya li-Isrā'īl," *TACBI*, 14/1/2018, accessed on 15/3/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3I71QYR>

⁶¹ Bisan Udwan, "al-Filastīniyūn wa-l-Thawra al-Miṣriyya: Muttahamūn, Mustathnūn, Muhammashūn," *Majallat al-Dirasat al-Filastiniyya*, no. 119 (Summer 2019), p. 218.

⁶² "Shuhūd.. Shāb Tasallaq 22 Ṭābiqan wa-Anzal 'Alam Isrā'īl min Maqar Safāratihā bi-Miṣr," *Reuters*, 21/8/2011, accessed on 15/3/2022, at: <https://reut.rs/3tfY3Vc>

Under President Mohamed Morsi (2012-2013), the official Egyptian position was to continue to honour its commitments under international treaties and agreements. This included the Camp David treaty. Nevertheless, Israel expressed its concern more than once that Egypt had violated the terms of the treaty's security annex regarding the deployment of Egyptian forces in the Sinai without coordinating with Israel. Israel also took exception at President Morsi's repeated references to the need to link Egypt's commitment to the terms of the Camp David accord to Israel's commitment to the terms of the agreements it had signed with the Palestinians. Despite such Israeli concerns, Egypt continued to uphold the Camp David Accords.⁶³

In contrast, since coming to power in 2014, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi (2014-present) manoeuvred toward closer political and security cooperation with Israel. In May that year, he stated that he had no objection to amending the Camp David Accords on the condition that this strengthened Egypt's national security.⁶⁴ These negotiations would bear fruit in November 2021, when Egypt and Israel announced that they had agreed to strengthen Egypt's military presence in the Rafah border area. This development reflected the closer understanding and shared political and security interests between them.⁶⁵ In April 2015, as Egyptian-Israeli political and security cooperation deepened, a group of political parties, student movements, trade unions, and activists, responding to appeals from Palestinian civil society groups, launched an Egyptian chapter of the BDS movement.⁶⁶

Demands for democracy and social justice converged with demands to support the Palestinian cause and to boycott Israel and expanded abroad. In Jordan, activists took to the streets in March 2011 to demand political reform.⁶⁷ This period marked an increasing popular frustration and anger at the "peace process" with Israel and Israeli policies toward Palestinians, and by growing fears of an Israeli bid to turn Jordan into an alternative Palestinian state.⁶⁸ Notably, in demonstrations in March, August, and September 2011, alongside the chant, "The people want to reform the regime", Jordanians called for the closure of the Israeli embassy in Amman and the abrogation of the Jordanian-Israeli peace agreement of 1994.⁶⁹ Even in the October 2012 protests, the demands of which were more radical than the reform movement of the previous year, demonstrators included pro-Palestinian chants. They called on the government to sever relations with Israel, expel the Israeli ambassador, and rescind all agreements it had signed with the Israeli government. Such demands had been voiced on other occasions, such as the "March of Return" demonstration in March 2012.⁷⁰

Following the Israeli assault on Gaza in late 2014, 60 Jordanian civil society organizations, frustrated with the Jordanian government's continued disregard for the people's demands for reform and a shift in their country's relationship with Israel, signed a statement announcing the establishment of a BDS chapter in Jordan. Beneath the title, "Jordan boycotts", they wrote that in response to the appeals from Palestinian civil society to boycott, divest from, and sanction Israel, they backed the boycott, opposed normalization, and urged the Jordanian business community to pressure multinational firms to cease dealing with Israeli

⁶³ Salih al-Naami, *al-'Ilāqāt al-Miṣriyya-al-Isrā'īliyya Ba'd Thawrat 25 Yanāyir* (Doha: Al Jazeera Studies Center; Beirut: Arab Scientific Publishers, 2017), pp. 78-81.

⁶⁴ "Bi-Ṣarāḥa.. Ma' Abdel-Fattah al-Sīsī al-Juz' al-Thānī," YouTube, 12/5/2014, accessed on 15/3/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3qa22At>

⁶⁵ Ahmad Shousha, "al-'Ilāqāt al-Miṣriyya al-Isrā'īliyya: Mā Dalālāt I' lān Miṣr wa-Isrā'īl li-Ittifāq 'Alā Ziyādāt al-Quwwāt al-Miṣriyya fī Rafah?," *BBC Arabic*, 10/11/2021, accessed on 15/3/2022, at: <https://bbc.in/3we9o9Y>

⁶⁶ "BDS Egypt," Facebook, accessed on 15/3/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3KNAHw4>

⁶⁷ Curtis R. Ryan, "Political Opposition and Reform Coalitions in Jordan," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 38, no. 3 (December 2011), pp. 367-369.

⁶⁸ Curtis R. Ryan, "Identity Politics, Reform, and Protest in Jordan," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, vol. 11, no. 3 (December 2011), p. 569.

⁶⁹ "Iḥtijājāt al-Urdun: 'Intifādāt al-As'ār' Tubriz Iḥtiqānān Siyāsiyyan," *Situation Assessment*, ACRPS, 28/11/2012, accessed on 17/3/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3ih5SSDw>

⁷⁰ Martin Beck & Simone Hüser, "Jordan and the 'Arab Spring': No Challenge, No Change?," *Middle East Critique*, vol. 24, no. 1 (February 2015), pp. 83-85.

firms.⁷¹ They also called on Jordanian Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour (2012-2016) to reject a pending deal to purchase gas from Israel.⁷²

In Morocco, demands to boycott and criminalize normalization with Israel continued to resound in pro-reform demonstrations in 2011. For example, the February 20 Movement, calling for political, economic and social reform, staged a protest against a concert given by the Moroccan singer Hindi Zahra, at the 2011 Mawazine cultural festival, sponsored by Moroccan monarch, because she had performed in Tel Aviv.⁷³ The movement also organized demonstrations demanding a halt to the Moroccan government's normalization with Israel. A salient example was the March 2012 demonstration in front of the Moroccan parliament building to protest the participation of the Israeli diplomat David Saranga in the eighth parliamentary assembly of the Union of the Mediterranean. Saranga was forced to leave through the back door.⁷⁴

In November 2012, the Moroccan Association for Human Rights urged lawmakers to introduce a law criminalizing normalization with Israel. Moroccan civil society organizations followed through, drafting a bill to boycott and criminalize normalization with Israel. In August 2013, four parties agreed to sponsor what would officially become the first official anti-normalization bill in Morocco: The Justice and Development Party, the Party of Progress and Socialism, the Socialist Union of Popular Forces, and the Istiqlal Party.⁷⁵ They were later joined by the Authenticity and Modernity Party. When President Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital, the Moroccan parties resubmitted the anti-normalization bill, but it failed to pass. As a result, a large group of Moroccan artists, academics, athletes, journalists, civil society organizations, and political parties founded the Moroccan Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (MACBI) on 10 September 2018.⁷⁶

The wave of Arab revolutions and protest movements that began in Tunisia in December 2010 and spread across the Arab region demonstrated that the pressing political, economic, and social demands that drove millions to the streets neither overlooked the Palestinian cause nor disregarded the demand to boycott Israel.

The Rise and Diversity of the Arab Boycott of Israel in Sports

For Arab athletes, sports became an avenue to voice opposition to Israel and, specifically, to normalization with Israel, and international athletic forums became spaces for athletes to take political action. Often the action was two-pronged: firstly, to voice opposition to Israeli policies and practices and, secondly, to take a stance against agreements or policies of normalization with Israel pursued by a given athlete's government. Lending weight to this form of protest was the fact that athletes' opinions that usually attract widespread attention in the Arab region and beyond given the huge popularity of sports. Although it has been argued that the boycott of Israel in sports during the past decade had limited success because it has failed to disbar Israel and its athletes from international athletics federations,⁷⁷ it is hard to deny that this form of protest

⁷¹ "Awwal 60 Mu'assasat Mujatama' Madani Yuwaqi'un 'Alā al-Urdun Tuqāṭi'." *Jordan BDS*, 27/10/2014, accessed on 17/3/2022, at: <https://tinyurl.com/54cnfae6>

⁷² "Mu'assasat Mujatama' Madani Tarfoḍ Shirā' al-Ghāz min Isrā'īl," *al-Ghad*, 28/9/2014, accessed on 17/3/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3Jrq14M>

⁷³ "Ḥarakat 20 Fibrāyir Tahtaj 'Alā Ḥafl Hindī Zahra," *Hespress*, 15/11/2011, accessed on 19/3/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3wppZYv>

⁷⁴ "al-Ihtijājāt Tujbir Diblomāsiyyan Isrā'īliyyan 'Alā Mughādarat al-Maghrib," *Hespress*, 26/3/2012, accessed on 19/3/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/37KZjqX>

⁷⁵ "Arba' at Ahzāb Maghribiyya bil-Barlamān Tatabaṣh Mashrū' Qānūn Yaqḍi bi-Tajrīm al-Taṭbi' Ma' al-Kayān al-Shuyūnī," *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 11/8/2013, accessed on 19/3/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3u42Tny>

⁷⁶ "al-Ḥamla al-Maghribiyya min Ajl al-Muqāta'a al-Akādīmiyya wa-l-Thaqāfiyya li-Isrā'īl' (MACBI)," *MACBI*, 10/9/2018, accessed on 19/3/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3q1DMvj>

⁷⁷ Tamir Sorek, "Sports and Boycott: Attitudes among Jewish Israelis," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* (2021), p. 4.

has acquired a leading role in combatting normalization with Israel in sports. The following describes the main forms of the sports boycott of Israel:

1. Boycotting Israel and its Athletes in International Championships

2011 marked an increase in individual initiatives on the part of Arab athletes. Athletes from Kuwait, Algeria, Tunisia, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Libya, and Iraq boycotted Israel in major events sponsored by international athletics federations. A compelling factor behind such actions is that many of the athletes who took such initiatives came from countries whose governments had signed normalization agreements with Israel, notably Egypt and Jordan.⁷⁸ A salient feature of such actions until 2011 was that Arab athletes would plead a sports injury in order to withdraw from a competition against Israeli athletes thereby avoiding sanctions by an international sports federation. But since 2011 a new phenomenon has prevailed: Arab athletes explicitly declaring their refusal to engage with Israeli athletes.⁷⁹

2. Refusing to Shake Hands with Israeli Players

Some athletes have adopted the tactic of refusing to shake hands with Israeli athletes before or after a match. Those athletes opposed Israel and normalization but wanted to avoid being sanctioned under Rule 50 of the Olympic Charter, which prohibits any kind of demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda in any Olympics site, venue or other area.⁸⁰ These athletes include those who were pressured by their sports federation to play in matches against Israeli athletes because of peace agreements their government had signed with Israel.⁸¹

3. Boycotting International Sports Companies that Support Israel

In the last decade, Arab boycotts of Israel in sports have begun to influence financial sponsors of Israeli sports federations and leagues. In August 2018, Adidas ended its sponsorship of the Israeli Football Association in response to an appeal by BDS activists, human rights activists and more than 130 Palestinian and Arab football clubs.⁸² When the sportswear manufacturer, Puma, replaced Adidas, BDS and over 200 Palestinian

⁷⁸ The following are most of the instances in which Arab athletes and sports teams refrained from competing against Israeli players: Zakaria Chennouf, Algeria (World Taekwondo Championship 2011), Mariam Moussa, Algeria (Women's Judo World Cup 2011), Abdelmalek Rahho, Algeria (World Boxing Championship 2011), Azza Besbas, Tunisia (Catania Fencing World Cup 2011), Egypt national hockey team (World Hockey Championship 2012), Rawan Ali, Egypt (Croatia Open Taekwondo Championship 2011), Ali Al-Marshad, Kuwait (World Taekwondo Championship 2012), Karine Shammass, Lebanon (2012 Summer Olympics), Awad Al-Harbi, Kuwait (2012 World Table Tennis Championships), Ali Khasrouf, Yemen (2012 Judo World Cup), Malek Jaziri, Tunisia (Tashkent Tennis Championship 2013), Abdullah Al-Farhoud, Kuwait (Sweden International Taekwondo Championship 2013), Hamad Al-Bather and Mohammed Ahmed, Kuwait (Eighth World Junior and Youth Karate Championship 2013), Abdullah Al-Khayyat, Kuwait (2013 World Fencing Championship), Abdul Rahim Al Bastaki, Kuwait (2015 Paralympic Fencing World Cup), Mohammed Al Kuwaiseh, Libya (2015 World Judo Championships), Alaa El Din Ghosoun, Syria (2016 World Boxing Championships), Joud Fahmy, Saudi Arabia (2016 Summer Olympics), Sufyan Nazim and Mohammed Ismail, Iraq (2017 World Jiu-Jitsu Championship), Ahmed Al Ghamdi, Saudi Arabia (2017 World Junior Karate Championship), Yousef Abboud, Lebanon (2018 Muay Buran World Championship), Abdullah Al Anjari, Kuwait (Los Angeles International Jiu-Jitsu Championship). Open 2019), Nassif Elias, Lebanon (Paris Judo Championship 2019), Ezzedine Faraj, Lebanon (European Junior Championship 2019), Maysa Abbasi, Tunisia (International Boxing Championship 2019), Bassam Safadiyeh, Lebanon (Mediterranean Table Tennis Championship 2019), Habib Al-Sabti, Kuwait (Rome International Judo Championship 2019), Dominique Abu Nader, Lebanon (World Wrestling Championships 2019), Mohammed Eid, Jordan (International Kickboxing Championship 2019), Bakr Jamil Al-Zidanine, Jordan (Grand Prix Judo Championship 2019), Fadi Eid, Lebanon (World Chess Olympiad 2019), Osama Abu Jameh, Jordan (2021 World Table Tennis Championships), Fathi Nourine, Algeria (2021 Summer Olympics), Abdallah Minyatou, Lebanon (2021 World Martial Arts Championships), Mohammed Abdul Rasoul, Sudan (2021 Summer Olympics), Mohammed Al-Fadhli, Kuwait (2022 World Fencing Championships), and Mohammed Al-Awadhi, Kuwait (2022 U-14 International Professional Tennis Championships).

⁷⁹ Yoav Dubinsky, "Israel's Use of Sports for Nation Branding and Public Diplomacy," PhD Dissertation, University of Tennessee, Tennessee, 2018, pp. 34-35.

⁸⁰ *Olympic Charter*, p. 95.

⁸¹ For examples, see: "Ba'd al-Hujūm al-'Unsurī 'Alayh min al-Mawāqī' al-Isrā'īliyya Ramadan Darwīsh: Lam Ata'ammad Ihānat Aḥad," *Al Ahrām*, 3/6/2011, accessed on 14/4/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3ulGzL4>; Mahmoud Zaquout, "Lā 'ib Miṣrī Yuthīr Ghaḍab al-Shuḥuf al-Isrā'īliyya," *Al Arabiyya Net*, 31/7/2013, accessed on 14/4/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3vlayhJ>; "Full of Praise, Netanyahu Meets Israel's Olympic Judokas," *The Times of Israel*, 17/8/2016, accessed on 14/4/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3M5WvUg>; "Lā 'ibū Muntakhab Miṣr li-Kurat al-Salla Yarfūḍūn Muṣāfaḥat Lā 'ibī Isrā'īl Ba'd al-Fawz 'Alayhim (vīdyu)," *Al Jazeera Mubasher*, 25/8/2021, accessed on 14/4/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3OmITpE>

⁸² "Team Justice Scores. Adidas No Longer Sponsoring Israel Football Association," *BDS*, 31/7/2018, accessed on 14/4/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3vfdHjq>

and Arab sporting clubs launched a series of international campaigns calling on Puma to end its sponsorship of the Israeli Football Association and its tournaments. They also urged football clubs around the world to cancel their contracts with Puma because of its support for tournaments held in Israeli settlements which are illegal under international law.⁸³ The Qatar Sports Club decision not to renew its contract with Puma, in June 2021, followed pressure from the activist group, Qatar Youth Against Normalization.⁸⁴ Similarly, Jordan's Al-Wehdat Sports Club's decision to terminate its contract with Nestlé was in response to pressure from the Jordanian BDS campaign.⁸⁵

4. Refusing to Grant Visas to Israeli Athletes, Raise the Israeli Flag, or Play the Israeli Anthem

There are instances in which Arab and Muslim governments have refused to grant visas to Israeli athletes or to raise the Israeli flag and play the Israeli national anthem in the athletic events they host. In January 2014, the Dutch football club Vitesse Arnhem complained that the UAE had refused to grant an entry visa to an Israeli player after the team had travelled to the UAE to take part in a mid-season training camp in Abu Dhabi.⁸⁶ In December 2017, the International Chess Federation reported that seven Israelis had been denied visas to participate in a chess championship hosted by Saudi Arabia.⁸⁷ In January 2020, Qatar denied visas to the Israeli epee fencing team to compete in the fencing tournament in Doha.⁸⁸ In a similar spirit, Oman refrained from raising the Israeli flag and playing the Israeli national anthem when the Israeli athlete Gal Zuckerman won a gold medal in the kiteboarding championship in December 2021.⁸⁹

Israel's Growing Awareness of the Sports Boycott and its Impact

Since 2010, Israel became increasingly aware of the growing impacts of the boycotts and began to take action to stop them or mitigate their effects. Beginning in the mid-1990s, Israel has pursued a multi-pronged policy that brought to bear various forms of public diplomacy, soft power, and nation branding⁹⁰ in a bid to dissociate the image of Israel from war, aggression, and racist apartheid policies in occupied Palestine. Part of this effort focused on expanding economic, agricultural, and military/security cooperation with Arab countries. It then turned to other sectors, especially sports which are an ideal way to burnish a country's official and popular image.⁹¹ Its multiple strategies in this regard can be divided into two main categories. The first involved increasing its participation in and hosting of international sports tournaments to strengthen its soft power and public diplomacy. The main purpose was to cast itself as a normal state, as opposed to a racist occupying power, and as a society with a culture in tune with global cultures.⁹² The second group of strategies involved applying its advanced technology to sporting goods manufacturing as a means to

⁸³ "Akhat min 200 Markaz wa-Nādī Riyāḍī Filasṭīnī Yuḥālib Sharikat 'būmā' bi-Inhā' Riūāyatihā lil-Ittiḥād al-Isrā'īlī li-Kurat al-Qadam," *BDS*, 24/9/2018, accessed on 14/4/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3uaHfvm2>

⁸⁴ "Limāthā Nuqāṭī' Sharikat Būmā?," Twitter, 20/5/2020, accessed on 14/4/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/36iS71C>; "Andiya Qatariyya Tastajīb li-Ḥamlat 'Muqāṭa'at Dā'imī Isrā'īl', wa-Tarfuḍ Tajdīd 'Uqūdahā ma' Sharikat 'Būmā'," *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 3/6/2021, accessed on 14/4/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/36gAMK0>

⁸⁵ Mahmoud al-Sharaan, "Istijāba li-Ḥamla lil-Muqāṭa'a.. 'al-Wiḥdāt' al-Urdunī Yafsakh 'Aqadhū ma' 'Nistla'," *Al Jazeera Net*, 13/11/2019, accessed on 14/4/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/37jQO6n>

⁸⁶ "al-Imārāt Tarfuḍ Manh Ta' shīrat Dukhūl Li-Lā'ib min al-Kayān al-Ṣuhyūnī ma' Farīq Fitis al-Hūlandī," *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 6/1/2014, accessed on 16/4/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3jMsVa0>

⁸⁷ "al-Su'ūdiyya Tamna' Isrā'īliyyīn min Dukhūl Arāḍihā lil-Mushāraka fī Buṭūla lil-Shītranj," *France24*, 25/12/2017, accessed on 16/4/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3vjX1Y1>

⁸⁸ "Qatar Tarfuḍ Manh Ta' shīrat li-Muntakhab al-Silāh al-Isrā'īlī," *Anadolu Agency*, 13/1/2020, accessed on 15/4/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3xxOWS0>

⁸⁹ "Dawla Khalījiyya Tamna' 'Azf al-Nashīd wa-Raf' al-'Alam al-Isrā'īlī fī Munāfasa Dawliyya," *al-Hurra*, 25/12/2021, accessed on 15/4/2022, at: <https://arbne.ws/3xtHnfl>

⁹⁰ Dubinsky, "Israel's Use of Sports for Nation Branding and Public Diplomacy," pp. 66-78.

⁹¹ Yair Galily & Tal Samuel-Azran, "Sport, Diplomacy, Conflict and Peace: The Case of Israel," in: Danyel Reiche & Paul Michael Brannagan (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Sport in the Middle East* (London: Routledge: 2022), p. 97.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 99.

develop and market the national brand through the sales of Israeli products to sporting federations and clubs.⁹³ Israel has more than 650 start-ups in the sports sector, including 220 companies specialized in manufacturing high-tech sporting equipment,⁹⁴ which have yielded more than \$800 million in profits.⁹⁵

Nevertheless, the indicators show that the boycotts of Israel in sports in the last decade have contributed to eroding Israel's international image and standing. Even though they have not affected Israel's membership in international athletic federations, the proliferation of sports boycotts of Israel demonstrates the actual reach of the BDS movement. Dubinsky shows how the boycott of Israel in sports has turned international sporting gatherings from venues that Israel could use in its global public relations campaigns to a burden on its international image and prestige.⁹⁶ He explains that repeated boycotts exert three kinds of pressure on Israel: on the political and diplomatic returns from the sporting events it hosts or participates in, on the financial returns from its sports start-ups, and on its international media image.⁹⁷ Galily and Samuel-Azran observe that "The activists' intention is to bring pressure to bear upon Israel until it complies with international law and supports the rights of Palestinian people under the universal principles of human rights." In response to expressions of pro-Palestinian solidarity, the Israeli state and its supporters have labelled such activity as a "new" manifestation of "old" anti-Semitism. This evidence the impact of the sports boycott of Israel in international forums on Israel's soft power and international prestige.⁹⁸

The impact on the Israeli efforts to market its sports start-ups and the Israeli brand is another sign of the growing efficacy of the sports boycott. The promotion of these start-ups had been a form of messaging to broadcast the image of Israel as an "economic miracle" and dismantle its image as an occupying colonising power.⁹⁹ However, Israel's use of sports to build its soft power and brand has backfired. It has been exposed for "sportswashing" its violence, human rights abuses, and illegal policies.¹⁰⁰ In June 2021, Spanish Olympic swimmer Clara Basiana drew attention to this when serving as a television commentator for a tournament in Spain: "I'd like to draw attention to the fact that Israel's international presence [in this tournament] is another strategy to whitewash the genocide and violations of human rights that they're committing against the Palestinian people".¹⁰¹ A report published by the Institute for National Security Studies at Tel Aviv University underscores the growing efficacy that sports boycotts of Israel have had since 2010. It observes how, notwithstanding Israel's full membership in an array of international sporting associations, the BDS movement has successfully used the sports arena to discredit and delegitimize Israel and to undermine its international standing.¹⁰²

Risks and Challenges in Sports Boycotts of Israel

Palestinian and Arab athletes and their supporters around the world face several challenges in sustaining and further developing boycott action. The first is the risk of sanctions by international athletic federations which warn against mixing politics with sports and whose bylaws stipulate penalties for violating the

⁹³ Yoav Dubinsky, "Sport-tech Diplomacy: Exploring the Intersections between The Sport-tech Ecosystem, Innovation, and Diplomacy in Israel," *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, vol. 18 (2020), p. 8.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

⁹⁵ Steven Impey, "Israel's Sports Technology Startups Have Raised more than US\$800 Million to Date. SportsPro Selects Some of the Leaders in the Field," *Sports Media*, 5/3/2020, accessed on 6/4/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3DJcKnf>

⁹⁶ Dubinsky, "Israel's Use of Sports for Nation Branding and Public Diplomacy," pp. v-vi; pp. 35-37.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 58-66.

⁹⁸ Galily & Samuel-Azran, p. 99.

⁹⁹ Dubinsky, "Sport-tech Diplomacy," p. 1.

¹⁰⁰ Jon Whiteaker, "What is Sportswashing and Does It Really Work?," *Investment Monitor*, 9/11/2021, accessed on 20/4/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3xEcS6h>

¹⁰¹ "Muthī'a Katalūniyya Tudīn al-Tabyīd al-Riyādi al-Isrā'īlī 'Alā al-Hawā'," *Quds SN*, 21/6/2021, accessed on 6/4/2022, at: <https://bit.ly/35Ms9Xf>

¹⁰² Michal Hatuel-Radoshitzky, Tomer Fadlon & Luke Whartnaby, "More Than a Game: Israel and Delegitimization in the Sporting Domain," *Insight*, INSS, no. 1204, 20/8/2019, pp. 1-4.

prohibition. In the last decade, international sports federations have begun to consider sanctioning athletes for boycotting Israel. The most recent incident in this regard was the International Judo Federation's ruling, in September 2021, to suspend Algerian judoka Fethi Nourine and his coach Ammar Benikhlef from competing or participating in any of the activities organized by the federation and its affiliates for a period of ten years, for having violated the rules of the Olympic Charter when he withdrew before a bout against Israeli judoka Tohar Butbul in the Tokyo Olympics that year. Nourine retired from judo permanently after his appeal was rejected.

But Arab athletes also risk sanctions by their local sports federations for boycotting Israel. Arab sports federations in countries that have peace agreements or are moving toward normalization with Israel have echoed the warnings of international federations. In August 2016, the Egyptian Olympic Committee officially apologized to Israel for its athletes' repeated boycott actions against Israel and rebuked the Egyptian judoka Islam el-Shehaby for refusing to shake hands with his Israeli rival.

A third challenge also relates to the growing list of countries that have moved to normalize relations with Israel and that now includes Egypt, Jordan, the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco. Any of these countries wishing to host international sports tournaments must abide by relevant regulations of international federations. Refusing to let qualifying Israeli athletes compete in their tournaments could cost them their hosting rights. For example, Malaysia was stripped of its right to host the World Para Swimming Championships in 2019 and the World Men's Team Squash Championship in 2021 after refusing visas to Israeli athletes, and Indonesia was removed as the host of the FIFA U-20 World Cup 2023 for a similar reason.

Conclusion

Three conclusions can be drawn from this study. First, the history of sports boycott as an international political instrument has undergone several shifts dating back to the first major international athletics tournament in the modern era. While it began as a weapon used by world powers in the framework of their international political rivalries, it would eventually become an instrument available to less powerful countries in their struggles against colonialism and apartheid, and then to transnational activist networks fighting for an end to Israeli colonialism and apartheid. But while non-state actors' use of sports boycott emerged from the legacy of state actors' use of this instrument, the nature of the use differed. For the latter, it was a means to project power and influence against rival state actors, but for non-state actors it served as an instrument to press for principles such as freedom, democracy, decolonization, and the end of racial discrimination.

Second, the evidence cited in this study testifies to the dynamism of Palestinian activism against Israeli colonialism and apartheid. This has manifested, above all, in Palestinian civil society's establishment of the BDS movement and its success in rallying wider support for the boycott of Israel and its companies. The study highlighted how the tangible positive impacts of the boycott of Israel in the economic, cultural, and academic realms spurred an unprecedented rise in the boycott of Israel on the sports field.

Third, the Arab Spring opened a new window into understanding the sports boycott of Israel as it embarked on a new trajectory. The study has demonstrated how the wave of protests boosted the boycott of Israel, contributed to its development, and created unprecedented opportunities that, in turn, enhanced the dynamism and reach of the BDS movement. The expansion from the boycott of Israeli sporting goods manufacturers to the boycott of international brands that support Israeli athletic clubs and federations exemplifies this dynamism. The literature demonstrates that while sports boycott was not a new instrument available to the Arabs and Palestinians in their struggle against Israel, as many Arab regimes had used it during the Cold War, the Arab Spring sparked a quantum leap in its use in international politics. Above all, it

showed how, as the sports boycott of Israel proliferated against the backdrop of the Arab Spring revolutions, Arab and other athletes, regardless of whether or not they represented countries that had relations with Israel, saw international tournaments as a space to express their opposition to Israel and, specifically, to normalization with Israel in every domain.

Nevertheless, Arab or otherwise, athletes who wish to express solidarity with Palestine face various challenges that could hamper the continued development of the sports boycott of Israel. One is the risk of sanctions by international athletic federations or by local athletic federations against athletes who take boycott actions against Israel. Another is the growing numbers of international sporting events hosted by Arab countries in which Israeli athletes participate.

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