

Israeli Transgressions against Palestinian Sports:

Introduction:

Upon approaching the subject of Palestinian sports in general, and football in particular, it is almost universally acknowledged that this blossoming sport movement is faced by a number of deterrents and obstructions, amongst which the Israeli occupation stands out as the main restraining force.

Football, as one of the world's foremost sports, is all about bringing people together, promoting ethics, and building bridges of friendship between nations, based upon the values of peace and fair competition; yet the circumstances the Israeli occupation is creating for Palestinian football are hurting the morale of young football players who can only interpret these restrictions as racist measures meant to undermine their future as athletes.

Whether this occupation intends to hinder, destroy, impede, or control Palestinian sports is not the issue of this paper; the author would rather leave the answer to this controversial question to serious researchers who are invited to explore, and then decide.

What this brief study observes are the methods relentlessly employed by the Israeli Occupation authorities that restrain the growth of football in particular, and sports in general, through a series of procedures, restrictions, and actions that the 1st chapter tries to cover and give examples on.

The 2nd Chapter is an addition to this booklet, and has been added by the author in an attempt to "turn a new page", so to speak, and explore whether the good will of the international sport family would be enough to ease the suffering of Palestinian athletes.

CHAPTER I: Categories and Examples

ISRAELI OBSTRUCTIONS TO PALESTINIAN FOOTBALL FALLS WITHIN MAIN CATEGORIES:

1. **Human rights' violations:** Constant human rights infringements against athletes, many of whom were arrested, or even kidnapped, without reason.
 2. **Movement:** Restricting the movement of local or visiting players, officials, Board members, and Journalists in and out of Palestinian territories.
 3. **Infrastructure:** Banning the building -or hindering the completion of-stadiums and other infrastructure, and sometimes destroying existing ones.
 4. **Hindering sport shipments:** By employing complicated procedures that delay or prevent receipt of course equipment sent by FIFA and the AFC, or donated by other Confederations and Sport governing bodies.
 5. **Political intervention:** Interfering in the organization of friendly matches between Palestine and other Associations.
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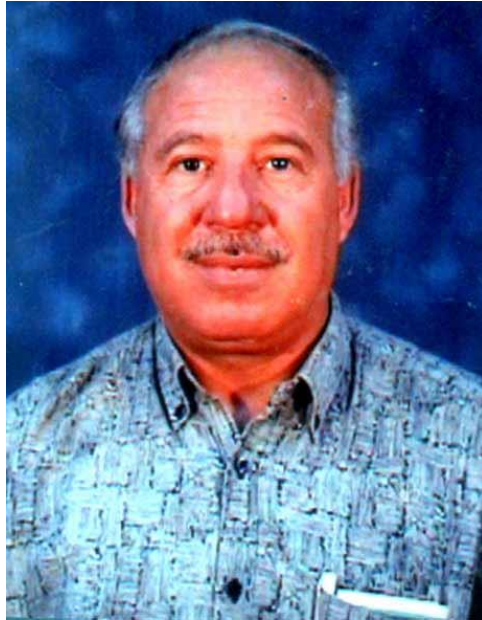
1. Human rights' infringements:

The list of human rights' infringements, committed by the Israeli occupation, is endless. Sadly enough, these actions also come in total disregard of the basic rights stipulated in the FIFA statutes and the Olympic Charter, below are but a few examples.

EXAMPLES:

- 1.1) Palestinian Sports lost the following athletes during the Israeli Bombardment of Gaza:

- **Khaled Al Abid Jaber:** President of the Pentathlon Union. He got killed during Israeli



bombardment as can be seen in the photo below



- **Ayman Al-Kurd:** Former National Team player.

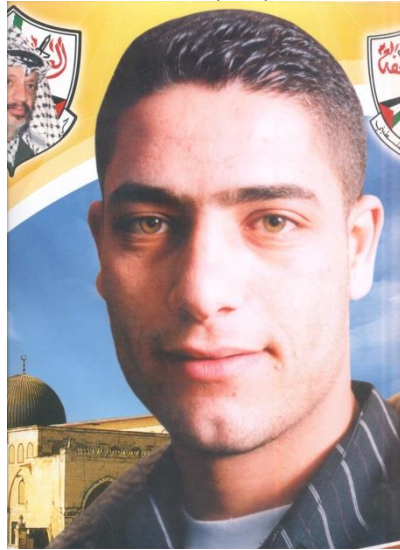


- **Wajeeh Mushtaha:** Al-Shijayah Union Club player



- **Ali Al-Hubbi:** Basketball player/ Khadamat Rafah Club.
- **Shadi Al-Sbakhi:** Al-Nusseirat Club player.

- **Emad Al-Najjar:** Billiards Federation/player



- 1.2) Player **Mahmoud Kamel Mohammad Sarsak:** imprisoned by Israeli authorities for more than 3 years without trial ever since the 22nd of July 2009. He was arrested by the Israeli forces as he was on his way from Gaza to the West bank to play with his new club, Markaz Balata. He was released in 2012 after 90 days of being on a hunger strike, and was only released after the much appreciated intervention from the President of FIFA and other sport governing bodies.



- 1.3) On 24/3/2010, and in one of the holiest of the holy places for Muslims –Al-Aqsa Mousque, Israeli Police and Border Guard forces arrested **Jamil Abbasi**, the Islami Silwan Club's head Coach, and threatened him to not partake in any sport activities. He was re-arrested again in 21/2/2012 for the same reasons.
- 1.4) On 4/2/2011, Israeli Police forces arrested the Chairman of Silwan Club, Mr. **Ma'moun Abbasi**, and threatened him of permanent arrest if he partakes in any sport activities in Silwan/Jerusalem. He was re-arrested in 10/2/2013, and led to an interrogation camp

south of Jerusalem, where he was banned from partaking in any sport activities. It's worth mentioning that Mr. Abbassi is now subject to house arrest, and is banned from carrying out his duties as chairman of his club.

- 1.5) On 23/10/2011, Israeli special forces, accompanied by Israeli police arrested Mr. **Kifah Sarhan**, Board Member of the Islami Silwan Club, right from where he works in Beit Hanina/ Jerusalem. The arrest was followed by Israeli forces storming into Mr. Sarhan's house, kicking out its residents and messing with the contents of the house.
- 1.6) **Omar Khaled Abu Rweis**, the 24 years old Goal Keeper of the Palestine Olympic team, was abducted by an under-cover Israeli military force from his work, in the Palestinian Red Crescent, without charges. He is still in detention since the beginning on February 2012.



- 1.7) Player **Mohammad Saadi Ibrahim Nimer**, 23 years old, who plays for Al-Amaari professional club was arrested by Israeli occupation forces in the end of February 2012 and is still detained without charges or trial.
- 1.8) On 29/9/2012, a player in Jabal Al-Mukabber club, **Ibrahim Wadi**, was arrested on his way to Bethlehem where he was headed with his team for a professional league match . He was deported to Gaza from there.

- 1.9) On 23/10/2012, Israeli Intelligence Forces, accompanied by Israeli Border Guard Forces, besieged the **Islami Silwan club** in east Jerusalem and gave them an order to close the club, under threat that any members who participate in sport activities will be arrested. The club had to withdraw from the 3rd class league after this order. It's worth mentioning that, in March, 2013, the ban was renewed for another year.
- 1.10) On 26/10/2012, player **Imad Abbassi**, who plays for Nadi Al-Muwathafin Club, was arrested by Israeli police and placed under house arrest, after being subjected to 6 successive arrests. It's worth mentioning that the abovementioned player used to play for Nadi Silwan, and had transferred to Al-Muwathafin club after the Israeli Occupation forces shut his former club.
- 1.11) On 16/12/2012, and in the old city of Jerusalem, an employee of Al-Muwathafin Club, Mr. **Nehad Sugayyar**, was attacked by a group of Orthodox Israelis, under the eyes of Israeli police who –needless to say- refrained from intervening. He suffered several burns and bruises from said attack.
- 1.12) Ms. **Mona Barbar**, an employee in the Palestinian Higher Council of Youth & Sport, was arrested by the Israeli Authorities in 1/3/2013 with other people. Her charge was “organizing sport activities in east Jerusalem”.



- 1.13) On the morning of the 3rd of January, 2013, an Israeli armed force broke into **Faisal Al-Husseini Stadium**, wrought havoc in the place and then savagely beat up a maintenance employee before taking him by force to an unknown location. The military armed force was preceded by another force in civilian clothing, also armed, who took photos of the location before the other force arrived.

- 1.14) In February 2013, Israeli troops arrested 16 children who were playing football in the pitch of their school located in the village of "Tel", near the city of Nablus. The boys learned that the Israeli occupation forces had kidnapped two of their group near the pitch, and had gone outside to see what happened when the whole group was kidnapped and taken to a military detention camp in Huwwarah. They were only released late at night, after lengthy talks between the Palestinian civil office and the Israeli military.
- 1.15) PFA Board Member **Mohammad Abu Swaiy**, was detained by Israeli Police on 29/8/2013 for 6 hours. He was warned not to partake in any sport activities in the occupied city of Jerusalem.

2. Restrictions on movement:

- *Israeli checkpoints prevent players from moving freely between Palestinian cities*



- *Difficulty in the national training up training Palestine.*
- *Players living abroad are refused permits to enter the Palestinian territories.*
- *Players from Gaza Strip are denied access to the West Bank.*
- *The occupation authorities delay players for long periods at the borders leading to Jordan. This is exhausting and negatively affects their performance.*

bringing together all team players for obliges PFA to set camps outside

- *It's well worth noting that, between the years 2002 and 2004, Israeli Authorities had banned every Palestinian under 35 years of age from travelling out of Palestine.*

2.1) Movement between Gaza and the West Bank:

It is not permitted for Palestinians to freely move between Gaza and the West Bank. A permit from the District Coordination Office (DCO), is needed for that. To obtain the permit, a Palestinian is obliged to state the reasons for the visit, and present an invitation, and then wait for God-knows-how-much; It can be 3 days, a month, or an eternity. Once the permit is obtained, there's an expiry date to observe, and a new procedure to go through for renewal.

One thing to be noted about the permit that a Gazan gets to visit the west bank, is that the permit is city-specific, so if you were a Gazan who got a permit valid for Ramallah, you would risk being deported back to Gaza if an Israeli check point caught you in the wrong city.

EXAMPLES:

- 2.1)1. Players **Asem Hussein Attallah Abu Assi**, **Ihab Mahmoud Hamad Abujazar**, **Ahmad Nasr Khalid Keshkesh** and Goal Keeper **Mohammad Shbair**, all residents of Gaza, have been denied entry to the west bank to join the national team in an international match in 2010. **Shbair** and **Keshkesh** had to stay in Jordan for more than 3 months -since the national team's match in Sudan, in June 2011- before they were allowed to return to Palestine.

The PFA has lists of tens of players who were treated likewise by the Israeli authorities.



- 2.1)2. On the 29th of September 2013 **PFA Board members from Gaza** were denied entry to the West Bank. It's worth mentioning that, until this moment, no Board meeting (that includes all board members from the west bank and Gaza) has been held in full in Palestine since 2008 due to these Israeli restrictions. The only full meeting of the PFA Board was held abroad in Lebanon in 8/2/2012.
- 2.1)3. On the 21st of February 2013, the Israeli authorities, despite attempts of intervention by countries such as Denmark, prevented 23 runners from participating in the International Palestine Marathon in Bethlehem without giving any reasons for the ban.
- 2.1)4. On 18/8/2013, the PFA applied for a permit for Goal keeper **Mohammad Shbair** (ID. 800636938) to visit his family in Gaza. It took years for him to finally get the permit.



2.1)5. 3 PFA Board members and the deputy General Secretary were denied entry from Gaza to the West Bank to attend the Board meeting headed by FIFA President, **Mr. Joseph Blatter**, during his visit on the 7th of July. These people were:

- **Yousuf Sarsour** (PFA Board Member)
- **Amro Al-Eimawi.** (PFA Board Member)
- **Mohammad Dalou.**(PFA Board Member)
- **Mohammad Amassi.** (PFA Deputy General Secretary)

2.1)6.

2.2) Travelling to and from Palestine (West Bank and Gaza)

An athlete is faced with one or many of these scenarios:

- If from Gaza, he or she may not get a permit from the Israeli side to get out from Gaza, and join the team in the west bank, so Gazan players have to travel separately and join their teams abroad.
- checkpoints may prevent players from travelling by restricting movement between cities, not to mention that security checks at Israeli checkpoints can be humiliating.



- Facing obstruction and delay at the borders may result in players missing their flights.

EXAMPLES:

2.2)1. On 12/4/2013, the PFA applied for entry permits for **Captain Jamal Mahmoud**, head coach of the Palestine national team, and **Makram Daboub**, the Goal Keepers' coach of the Palestine National team. Both were denied entry for months, and still face difficulties whenever they move in and out of Palestine.



2.2)2. On 18/8/2013, the PFA applied for a permit for player **Abdelatif Bahdari** (ID. 800210361) to return to Palestine. Bahdari has been waiting in Jordan for two weeks, and, up until

the moment this report was updated, we heard no word from the Israeli Authorities regarding his application.



2.2)3.

2.3) Foreign officials, and team coaches:

- Foreign members of the coaching and training teams need permission from the Israeli authorities to enter Palestine, which might take 1-5 months.

EXAMPLES :

- 2.3)1. In September 2009, FIFA instructor, **Mr. Nihad Souqar** has been denied a permit to enter Palestine and conduct a C Coaching course. The course was delayed as a result.
- 2.3)2. In May **2012**, **Mr. David Borja**, a high-ranking FIFA official was denied boarding to his EL AL flight in Zurich by the Israeli security. They said they did not have enough time to check his security background, and he had to book another flight.
- 2.3)3. On the 2nd of December **2012**, Israeli authorities denied entry permits to 6 players and 2 officials from the Iraqi Air Force team who were supposed to play an official match against Al-Thahriyeh Club on the 4th of December.
- 2.3)4. In February 2013, AFC Instructor **Mr. Windsor John**, an executive director at AFC, who was supposed to conduct an MO course in Ramallah, was denied an entry permit by the Israeli authorities without reason.
- 2.3)5. In May 2013, The PFA Women department had to cancel one friendly match, and postpone the training camp (in preparation for the Women Asian Cup Qualifiers) on

15/4/2013 because **Mr. Hani Majdoubeh**, the Head Coach, was still waiting for his permit in Amman/Jordan. The PFA applied for the permit on 30/3/2013, and got it only on 12/5/2013.

- 2.3)6. On 12/6/2013 the PFA applied for an entry permit to AFC instructor **Mohammad Thiabat** (Jordan). Who was supposed to give a fitness course from 17-21/8/2013. When no word was heard from the Israeli Authorities, the PFA re-applied on 16/7/2013. Yet, until the moment this report was being written, no word was heard from the Israeli Authorities.
- 2.3)7. On 16/6/2013, the PFA applied for permits for 95 sport journalists, who wanted to cover the FIFA President's visit of 7-8 July 2013. Only 64 received approval, while 31 were rejected.
- 2.3)8. In August 2013, the Israeli Authorities denied a whole delegation (from Iraq) entry permits to Palestine, under the pretext that Iraq was a "hostile country to Israel". That, with high ranking officials from Jordan, UAE, and the WAFF (West Asia Confederation) staff. It may be worth mentioning that the Iraqi delegation, and the other officials denied, was travelling to Palestinian territories –not Israel- to participate in the 4th WAFF Grassroots Championship (that was supposed to start on the 15th of August). It was after the intervention of UEFA, who prevailed upon their member association of Israel to intervene, that the main body of the Iraqi delegation was allowed to enter, on Friday the 16th, though, 3 Jordanian officials were still denied entry.
- 2.3)9. In the same above mentioned WAFF competition, Israeli Authorities initially denied entry to **Mr. Fadi Zreiqat**, the WAFF General Secretary, though he had entered Palestine before. It was after the intervention of UEFA that he was allowed to enter.
- 2.3)10. In the same above mentioned WAFF competition, Israeli Authorities held the buses of kids, under 16 years of age, on the border for 6 hours without food or water, which was traumatic for these kids.
- 2.3)11. On the 31st of January 2014, Mr. **Ahmed Rifaie**, a professional French boxer, came for a 3-day visit to Palestine to assess Palestinian boxers. At the Jordanian-Israeli borders (Al Karamah), he was hindered and handcuffed by the Israelis for nine hours. After a rough treatment, he was handed over to Jordanian Authorities.

After A phone call to the French Embassy, he was advised to try again on the 2nd of February, which he did, though not without being detained for a few hours by the Israelis.

3. Obstructions to infrastructure:

3.1) Overview: The building of sport facilities in Palestine has been subject to severe and complete restriction policy by the Israeli occupation forces and the Israeli Civil Administration or the Government of Israel including.

- The limitations of “zoning” divisions imposed on the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) as defined in the Oslo Agreement: (Area “A” with full civil and security control by the PNA, Area “B” with Palestinian civil and security control but with overriding Israeli security authority and Area “C” with full Israeli civil and security control).
- The PNA has full authority on only 17.9% of the West Bank. In 2010, plans to build football artificial fields, financed by FIFA in places such as Burin, Beit Ummar and Beit Foreeq, were stopped by the Israeli administration for alleged “security reasons”. The Israeli civil administration -got away with the decision because these fields were located in Areas “B” or “C”.

	Initial Oslo Agreement (% of the West Bank)	Adjustment (% of the West Bank)	due to Wye River Memo. (% of the West Bank)	Current situation (% of the West Bank)
Area “A”	2.7%	+1% transferred from Area “C” +14.2% transferred from Area “B”		17.9%
Area “B”	25.1%	-14.2% transferred to Area “A” +12% transferred from Area “C”		22.9% Incl. 3% as non-build-able “Green areas/nature reserves
Area “C”	72.2%	-12 % transferred to Area “B” -1% transferred to Area “A”		59.2%
Total	100%			100%

- In Area “C”, construction is constrained by a very restrictive planning regime implemented by the Israeli Civil Administration and even sometimes by using references to a restrictive interpretation of the British “Mandatory Regulations Plans” dating back to the 40’s.
- Finally, the nature of the land broken down between the three Areas completely or nearly completely hinders the construction of sport facilities.
- Area “A” includes all Palestinian cities and their immediate surrounding areas, meaning that there is a very limited amount of land available for building including a football field.

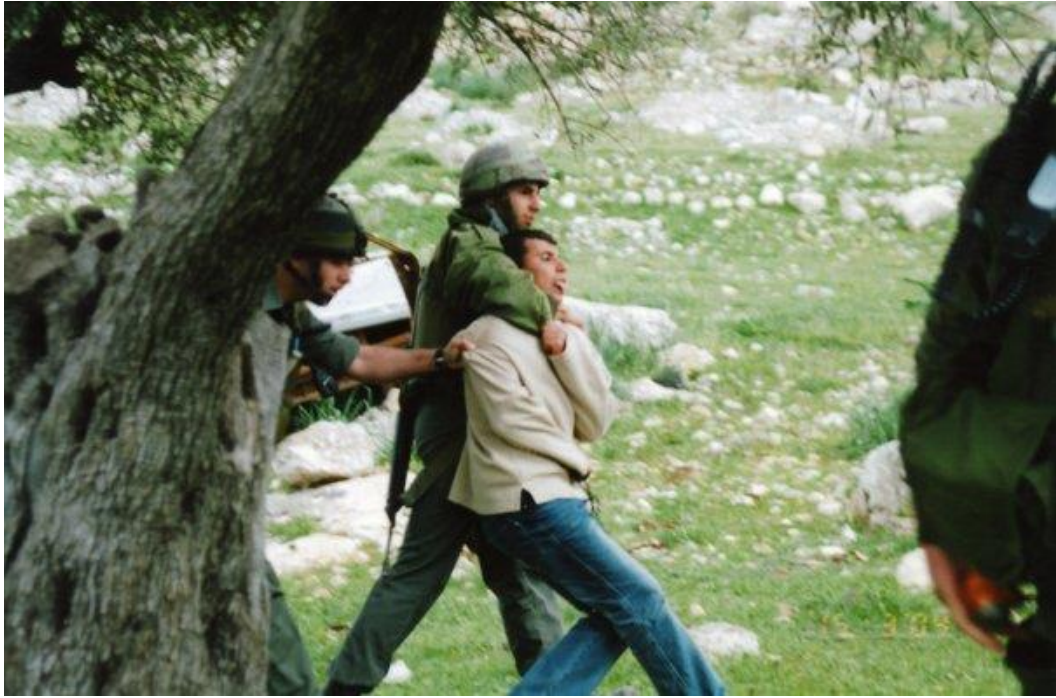
- Area “B” includes other housing zones such as smaller size cities, villages and some limited surrounding land, and potentially available land for sport facilities, but projects are blocked for “security reasons”.
- Area “C” includes an abundance of land suitable for building sports facilities, however building any infrastructure by the PNA is not possible..
- The documents requested by the Israeli authorities, to allow the building of sport facilities, include land ownership titles and deeds, detailed drawings of land levels, detailed drawings of the building, however the process is arbitrary without clear parameters nor deadlines.

EXAMPLES:

- 3.1)1. The village of **Beit Liqya**, close to Ramallah, received from FIFA a new natural grass football field in an already-existing football field, but while the village without any available land is fully in Area “A”, the field itself is partly located in Area “C”. As a consequence, the so-called issue of “coordination”, in fact the process to obtain a permit, was submitted to “security” considerations, and the project was forfeited.









3.1)2. **Sa'ad Sayel Stadium** was A FIFA GP project to be built in Nablus. It was approved in 2009, and initiated in April 2012 in the presence of FIFA & PFA representatives. During the 1st phase of construction, an Israeli armed force, backed by the Israeli Civil Administration Office, and without any warrants, stormed the construction site and ordered the halt to all construction work, under threat of arresting the workers and confiscating the machinery. It is to be noted that several meetings had been held between the Palestinian Ministry of Civil Affairs and the Israeli DCO in Nablus to coordinate the implementation of the project prior to the attack.

3.1)3. **Beit Ummar Stadium/Hebron:** The Israeli side argued that the proposed stadium poses a threat on Israeli security, since it borders road #60, and in the event that 10.000 spectators were present, there was a chance they might decide to throw stones on the passing Israeli cars. They also said that such a number of spectators would cause a traffic jam in the junction and the main road. The Palestinian side proposed solutions to said security concerns, saying that the PNA will take responsibility whenever a game is staged, and will provide security forces in numbers enough to prevent any problems before they occur, that *if* they do. And, as a further precaution, a street will be paved by the Municipality from the northwestern side, which will be the main entrance to the stadium. No entrance will be made on the side of road #60, and no cars will be allowed to park on that side. Furthermore, the Palestinian side said it is possible to build a fenced wall on the side of road #60. The Israeli side stuck to their statements and asked that the Palestinian side choose another piece of land. Consequently, the PFA decided to move the GP from Beit Ummar to Burin, which is located in zone "A".

3.1)4. **Burin:** Following the problem in Beit Ummar, the PFA selected the site of Burin (near the city of Nablus) which is within an area allotted to a school clearly located in zone "A", all the documents requested by the Israeli side were given to them. After a few days, an Israeli force stormed the location and blocked the preparatory works.

3.2) On more than one occasion, Israeli armed forces either destroyed or broke into stadiums and sport facilities:

3.2)1. During the Israeli war on Gaza, in November 2012, Israeli F16 fighters repeatedly bombarded the "Palestine Stadium" in Gaza, which resulted in severe damage to the Stadium's infra-structure. But this wasn't the only instance. The list of Israeli targets included:

➤ ***The Palestine Olympic, and Paralympic Committee Building:***





➤ **Ittihad Al-Shja'iyah Club:**



➤ **Football Union Club:**



➤ **Al-Shams Club:
(Before & After)**





➤ **Ahali Al-Nuseirat Club:**



➤ **Khadamat Deir Al-Balah Club:**



➤ **Shabab Jabalia Club:**
(Before and after)



➤ *Shabab Rafah Club, and the Sports city:*



➤ **Gaza Al-Riyadi Club:**



➤ **Al-Hilal Al-Riyadi Club:**



➤ **Palestine Stadium:**



- 3.2)2. On the 23rd of August 2010, the security officer and maintenance staff of **Faisal Al-Husseini Stadium** were surprised by a sudden visit from an Israeli armed force, following one of the matches. The force included 3 officers and 15 soldiers. They directed several questions to the stadium's security officer about the Stadium, the teams, and the security officers that were there during the match. The force left after their questions were answered only to return after midnight at 12:30 with a larger force that conducted a search of the players' change rooms. They departed and returned again at 3:00 am to take photos of the pitch and the scalars from several angles.
- 3.2)3. On the 4th of March, 2013, a joint force of Israeli special troops and intelligence officers broke into **Jabal Al-Zaitun** pitch, located in **Al-Tur** village, near Jerusalem, during an official U14 league match between **Jabal Al-Zaitun** and **Nadi ai-Moathafin** clubs. The fully-armed force



threatened the two children teams, their parents, the staff and spectators that they will revert to the use of force and arrest them if they did not clear the premises at once. The Israeli force then closed the pitch and issued a warning that prohibits anyone from returning to the place in the future.







3.2)4. On the 17th of August 2013, the head of Security in **Al-Khadr stadium** reported that Israeli Army Patrols have been intensifying their presence in the vicinity of the stadium for the last four months; placing checkpoints on the road leading to the stadium, and interrogating employees, and spectators, about training and match schedules.

The provocative presence of these forces caused an incident on the 6th of August 2013, during the final match of Yasser Arafat's Cup, when a clash ensued with some boys,

and Israeli forces started tear-gassing the vicinity of the stadium. Same forces assaulted spectators and Palestinian Security forces.

3.2)5. On the 16th of August, 2013, Israeli Security forces informed **Al-Khadr stadium security** that they will storm the stadium if they were provoked in anyway.

4. Hindering Sports Shipment: Red tape customs procedures:

- Shipments enter supposedly through either Jordan or Israel via Israeli ports or Ben Gurion Airport.
- To obtain the release of this donated equipment, the Palestinian customs authority must provide the Israeli customs authority with the following documents so the latter can decide whether the equipment is released:
 - A letter from the donating sport institution stating the use of the shipment
 - A document indicating the name, the telephone number and the full address of the donor
 - A document indicating the name, the telephone number and the full address of the recipient
 - A letter from the Palestinian customs authority to the Israeli customs authority requesting the clearance and the release of the equipment
 - A detailed list of the shipment items with numbers of pieces for each item, size, brand, etc.
 - A document indicating the name, the telephone number and the full address of the person or the company in charge of processing the clearance on behalf of the Palestinian recipient
- In the past years, on several opportunities, donated equipment sent by FIFA and UEFA has not been received or was released only after the payment of exorbitant fees.

5. Interventions in the organization of friendly matches:

(Full record of the under said available upon request)

5.1) An agreement was reached in 2009 between the Palestine FA and two top Brazilian clubs to play a match of peace in Palestine on the 15th of September of the same year. The match was, however, cancelled under pressure from the "Israeli Confederacy" headed by Fernando Lutenberg.

5.2) An attempt to organize a friendly match with Zambia in September-October 2011: The Israeli authorities interfered politically with the government of Zambia to discourage the playing of the match. (Full record of correspondence is in the safekeeping of the PFA), though an agreement was reached between the associations of Palestine & Zambia.

- 5.3) A 2nd attempt with Central Africa Republic in October 2011 was also thwarted through intervention on the highest political levels.
- 5.4) A 3rd attempt with Zambia on 17 November 2011 was cancelled upon instructions of some "State House".
- 5.5) A football team from South Africa, which was supposed to participate in the Youth Week, organized by the Palestinian HCYS, cancelled its flights after being informed by the Israelis, via the Embassy of South Africa in Tel-Aviv, that Palestinian territories are "not safe".

CHAPTER II:

Israeli Transgressions against Palestinian Sports (Particularly Football) after the launch of the FIFA Task Force Mechanism

Introduction:

"I will go to defend not only the Palestine Football Association but I will defend the basic principles of FIFA (which are) to connect people and not to separate people....," said FIFA President Blatter, just over a month after the mandate given him by the 2013 FIFA Congress in Mauritius, to try to improve the situation of football in Palestine. *"I'm on a mission..."* the FIFA's President told an audience at Al-Najah University in the Palestinian city of Nablus *"to transmit to the political authority in Israel the problems that you are facing here"* he concluded, just as he embarked on that mission that some would describe as a *"mission impossible"*.

On 4th of October 2013, the FIFA EXCom endorsed Mr. Blatter's task and the creation of the FIFA Task Force Israel-Palestine, which resulted in the creation of a mechanism, under the umbrella of FIFA, to facilitate the movement of persons and goods in and out of and within Palestine.

And though the mechanism overlooked the issues of sport facilities, and other areas where Palestinian sports are hindered, the Palestinian side agreed on the FIFA parameters in good will, and the mechanism went into effect in October, 2013.

It was tested for the first time during the AFC U19 Men's qualifiers, held in Palestine from 8-16 October. Both the Palestine and Israeli FA appointed liaison officers who would be in direct contact with each other, and with the relevant authorities each in their territory, and it looked like things were looking up; communication was smooth, and good will present, yet some were still denied entry to Palestine, and movement within Palestine was still restricted, especially to and from Gaza to the Northern Governorates.

Rather than listing the occasions on which everything went well, or commending the good will and spirit of cooperation which exists between all parties; this document endeavors to records the incidents which said mechanism was launched to prevent, and leaves it to the reader to decide whether it succeeded in its task or not .

1. Chronological log of events:

- FIFA Circular 1385, on 14/10/2013 sets the parameter of the mechanism to facilitate the movement of players, coaches, referees and officials into, out of, and within Palestine.

- The mechanism is tested for the 1st time during the AFC U19 Men's qualifiers, held in Palestine from 8-16 October, for which, the following PFA applications were rejected:
 - Mohamed Amasee : PFA Vice President and POC Vice President as well.
 - ABDEL SALAM HANEYE: PFA Board Member, POC Board Member
 - OMAR ALAMAWE: PFA Board Member
 - YOUSEF SARSOUR: PFA Board Member
 - MOHAMED DALO: PFA Board Member.
- On 4/10/2013 Israeli Authorities called upon PFA Vice General Secretary **Mohammad Amassi** for interrogation at the Erez checkpoint. Amassi is one of the 5 whose permits were rejected.
- On 13/11/2013 a list of 6 PFA officials is denied entry from Gaza to the West Bank because 3 were journalists, the rest were not POC officials, and that only players and coaches were permitted to move between Gaza and the west bank, unless "Security reasons" prevented this.

Mohammad Ismail Ahmad Amassi	<i>(PFA/POC Official)</i>	Participation in the official POC Youth Week
Ismail Ahmad Ismail Matar	<i>(PFA Official)</i>	Participation in the official POC Youth Week
Fathi Yousef Ahmad Abu el Ola	<i>(PFA Official)</i>	Participation in the official POC Youth Week
Ashraf Husni Mohammad Matar	<i>(Media)</i>	Participation in the official POC Youth Week
Ibrahim Mohammad Ahmad Abu AISheikh	<i>(Media)</i>	Participation in the official POC Youth Week
Osama Mohammad Hafez Felfel	<i>(Media)</i>	Participation in the official POC Youth Week

- The IFA liaison Officer (Hence IFALO) explains this by saying that :

"In general what is permitted (upon approval) are players and coaches for any official activity going from Gaza to the Judea and Samaria, as well members of the Palestinian Olympic committee, So first regarding the journalist it was not approved, for the PFA members, The Israeli approached the civic department if someone from the applicant is acting or have a function within the IOC to allow them to enter. This why it talk time for receiving the answer, since none of them have a role the request has been decline,"

- On 13/11/2013, the Israeli DCO confirms the IFALO's statement, and informs the Palestinian Ministry of Civil Affairs, by phone, that all permit applications for PFA members (whether players, board members, or Journalists) to move between the northern and southern governorates (Gaza and the West Bank) will be thence rejected. As for Olympic Committee members, there applications will have to pass a security check, and then be approved or rejected.
- 15/11/2013 FIFA intervenes (letter # DSG/tre/jaj) to remind parties that circular 1385 is applicable to all elements of the game (referees, players, coaches, and officials), yet, nothing happens, and the 6 persons never make it to the Youth week.
- In his 1st entry e-mail, dated 30/9/2013, the IFALO uses the term "local Authorities" to describe the Israeli DCO (District Coordination Office-or, as it translates from its Hebrew name- **Ha-Minhal ha-Ezrahi** -The Civil Administration). This use of the term is offensive, since the DCO is the Israeli Occupation governing body that operates in the Palestinian territories, and is not a "local Authority".
- The IFALO (as can be seen in the quote above) still referred to the Palestinian territory of West Bank as "**Yehuda V Shomron**" (Judaea and Samaria), the biblical name normally used by illegal Israeli colonists in Palestinian territories, which is quite offensive.
- The PFA applied for one Jordanian expert **Walid Abuhussein** who was supposed to come on a FIFA Goal Project assessment visit on 20/11/2013, and the Palestine FA Liaison Officer (Hence PFALO) is informed by the IFALO on 5/11/2013 that Abuhussein's permit was approved on 7/10 and handed to the Palestinian Civil Ministry on 8/10. Yet, the permit was never found, and the mission had to be postponed.
- On 24/11/2013, an Israeli Special Police Force arrested and physically assaulted **Mr. Basel Mahmud**, the Coach of Al- Isawiyah Club's Women's team. Mr. Mahmud was



departing the club after concluding a training of his team, headed for his sister's house, when he was assaulted and beat up.

- In a reply e-mail regarding the issue of Mr. Basel, dated 26/12/2013, the IFALO says :

"The area of Isawiya is under the jurisdiction of greater Jerusalem and not part of the Northern territories".

- Regardless of the political nature of the comment, and therefore the remark to follow; it may be worth mentioning that the International Community does not recognize "Greater Jerusalem". It is a term recognized only by Israel and it includes the occupied area of East Jerusalem (in which Isawiya is located) as per relevant UN resolutions. The IFALO then adds: *"therefore the police are competent in this case"* by which it can be assumed he means Israeli Police have jurisdiction there not COGAT. For, the unit that attacked Basel was indeed an Israeli Police special unit.
- After inquiring on the matter, the IFALO writes: *"Mr. Basel did not have a valid permit to be in Israel on the date the incident might have taken place"*. (24th November). [note the use of the word "might" which implies the belief of the writer that the incident may have never happened] *"Mr. Basel's permit was valid for the period of 17-23/11/2013 and according of the application that he has made, the purpose for his visit was for family reasons."*
- This fact above proved to be incorrect, for there is a document (available upon request) which includes a decision by the Chairman of the Israeli Committee for foreigner's exceptions – Jerusalem, effective since 26/11/2012 stating that: ***"No deportation action from Israel shall be taken against applicant number 2 Mr. Basel Mahmud, ID 411704182 until this committee decides otherwise."*** There has been no following decision, and Mr. Basel was unjustly and savagely attacked by a unit of the same police the IFALO advised, on 9/12/2013, that Mr. Basel Mahmud complain to. The PFALO submitted this document to the IFALO on 7/1/2014, but never got a reply, or were informed of any action.
- The PFALO called Mr. Basel Mahmud's daughter, **Remah**, on 12/1/2014 and asked her what happened exactly. She presented documents (available upon request) that prove her father was indeed within his rights to be in Isawiya when he was attacked; that he has been in his training session before the incident, a session she attended as a player. They both departed afterwards to her aunt's house. At the time they arrived, an Israeli Special Force called "**Yassam**" had set up an ambush for a group of youth who were protesting in the vicinity, and Basel was caught in between. They fired a sound projectile that hit him in his side from close range, and then they beat him up and dragged him away.

- Up until this document was being written, there's been no court decree to take away Basel's residence rights. His daughter told the PFALO her father has been tried 3 times so far, and is now under house arrest in Beit Hanina (East Jerusalem).
- On 26/11/2013 the PFA applied for 7 players in the Palestine National Team to come from the Southern Governorates (Gaza) to the Northern Governorates (Ramallah) to participate in the training camp, in preparation for the 8th WAFF Men's Championship, starting on 1/12/2013. Just before the PFALO could inform the IFALO of the application, the Israeli DCO called back on the 27th informing the Palestinian Civil Ministry that there isn't enough time to do the security check on the 7 names and they cannot have an answer before 5/12/2013. The application was forfeited since the National Team's coach saw it was useless to have these 7 players this late.
- On 5/12/2013 The Israeli DCO informed Palestinian Civil Ministry that no one can pass from the Southern Governorates (GAZA) to the Northern Governorates unless the PFA & POC present the DCO with lists of all National teams' players in Gaza that are "updatable" (Meaning PFA and POC can update these lists when necessary). So, if you're in one of the National PFA or POC teams you may _subject to the security evaluation_ get the chance to travel from Gaza to Ramallah, and if you're an amateur or a substitute...? It is questionable whether this demand conforms to FIFA statutes, The rights of players, or Human rights.
- On 2/1/2014, National Team player, **Abdallatif Albahrari**, attempted to return to Palestine with the national team after participating in the WAFF 8th Championship, yet as he tried, on 2/1/2014 to cross via the Allenby bridge, he was detained for 10 hours, and then asked to head back to Jordan .
- After contacting the DCO about him, The IFA LO, on 6/1/2014, informed the PFALO that *"The DCO was not aware for such request, as well they do not know that Mr. Abdallatif is a national football player, and there is not any application that has been submitted for that."* So, how did the player leave Palestine? And then, was it really hard for the "efficient" Israeli security to verify that Abdallatif was a player, right on the sport? The IFA LO then adds:

"indeed he did not got a permission to enter through Allenby bridge since there was not have been made the necessary procedures that are binding for such request: approval by the DCO and security opinion. And on the top of that there was not any such request that have been submitted by the Palestinian Authorities, or any other source."
- The PFALO then checks with the Palestinian Civil Ministry who confirms the Ministry got a "verbal approval" from the DCO for the player, or else he would not have been asked to come back to Palestine via Allenby Bridge.

- The IFA LO never wrote back about **Abdallatif Bahdari**. The PFALO was informed that the Palestinian Civil Ministry got into an issue with the Israeli DCO regarding their "verbal promise". Abdallatif had to be sent back to Jordan 3 times, up until the 12th of January, when he was finally allowed in.
- On Thursday 31/1/2013, **Abu Dis** club player **Johar Nasser Aldeen Halabiyeh**, born



14/9/1994, and his cousin **Adam (18-years old)**, were brutally attacked and shot by Israeli Army soldiers at around 11:15 p.m. They were shot by live bullets mainly in the knees and lower body. And as if shooting was not enough, they were both savagely beaten by the soldiers, while their assault dogs participated in the attack and nearly took a chunk of Johar's arm.



- After the assault, they were arrested. The Israeli soldiers refused to let Palestinian medical teams treat them, and took them instead to Hadas Ein Karem Israeli hospital.









Needless to say, these two boys will never be able to play football ever again...

- On 31/1/2014, Israeli forces shot tear gas grenades around Faisal al-Husseini stadium, just as a Pro league match was being played. The referee had to cancel the match,



since both players and spectators could not breathe, not to mention the referees.

2. FIFA Task Force: Palestine-Israel: Causes for concern:

- ❖ The Israeli authorities that function in occupied Palestine have their rigid set of rules on who gets in and out of Palestine and who moves within, and what shipment material is eligible to be delivered to its Palestinian recipients; these authorities are adamant in imposing these rules regardless of the mechanism parameters. We think that this weakens and may even undermine the mechanism if the IFA can't prevail upon said authorities to reconsider this mindset to better suit the realities of the modern world.

- ❖ In some cases, the IFALO takes the word of the Israeli Military Authorities for granted, despite the existing proof otherwise from Judicial, or other relevant, parties both in Israel and Palestine; like in the case of Coach Basel Mahmud. This does not help the trust-building between PFA and IFA.

- ❖ The "Security Reason" is often used, and very freely, by the Israeli authorities to reject the applications of people moving from the Southern Governorates (Gaza) to the northern ones. We fear that the Israeli policy, which has been communicated verbally to the Palestinian authorities on several occasions, is to lock up Gazans in Gaza, as a rule, and let some in and out as an exception, when more understanding and shorter processing time is needed, since it concerns the basic rights of football players and officials to move **within** Palestine for reasons of sport.

- ❖ Last, but not the least, we should be clear on one thing: What is the term of reference for this mechanism? The FIFA parameters letter? Or the COGAT *holy* parameters?

