

FIFA delays decision on Palestinian request to ban Israel amid Gaza war

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Online Desk :

Football's world governing body FIFA has said it will seek legal advice before convening in July to decide on a Palestinian proposal to suspend Israel from international matches. On Friday, FIFA President Gianni Infantino announced the plan at the organisation's annual congress in Bangkok, Thailand, after the Palestine Football Association (PFA) presented arguments accusing the Israel Football Association (IFA) of violating FIFA statutes with its war on Gaza and its inclusion of teams located in Palestinian territory in its domestic league.

"I ask you to stand on the right side of history ... If not now, when?" said PFA President Jibril Rajoub, speaking before delegates from 211 member associations. "FIFA cannot afford to remain indifferent to these violations or the ongoing genocide in Palestine." Infantino said FIFA "will mandate as of now, independent legal expertise to analyse the three requests [from the PFA] and ensure the statutes of FIFA are applied in the right way", with an extraordinary council meeting scheduled to be held by July 25.

Israel called the ban call "cynical".

The PFA is calling for "appropriate sanctions, with immediate effect, against Israeli teams," according to FIFA documents released a month before the congress and council meetings in Bangkok. The motion noted "international law violations committed by the Israeli occupation in Palestine, particularly in Gaza" and cited FIFA's statutory commitments on human rights and against discrimination.

The PFA wrote that "all the football infrastructure in Gaza has been either destroyed, or seriously damaged, including the historic stadium of al-Yarmouk" and said it had support for the motion from the federations of Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Syria and Yemen. Rajoub said "the Palestinian people, including the Palestinian football family, are enduring an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe". He said he had been threatened because of his sanctions proposal.

"The Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs has made serious threats to imprison me if I do not withdraw this proposal, but no power in the world can stand in the way of truth," he said. His Israeli counterpart, Shino Moshe Zuares, said no rules had been broken and the proposal had nothing to do with football. "Once again, we are facing a cynical political and hostile attempt by the PFA to harm Israel," he said.

"I am holding myself back ... in the hope things can be better for the game for those who play in Israel, the Palestinian Authority and or those who play all over the world." Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa, president of the Asian Football Confederation, voiced support for Palestine's motion ahead of the congress.