

# Why Israel Must Be Banned from the Paris Olympics

Friday 2 August 2024, by [VARADARAJAN Siddharth](#) (Date first published: 25 July 2024).

**There are two precedents: the International Olympics Committee's treatment of Russia for the ongoing Ukraine war, and its 1970 expulsion of Apartheid South Africa.**

The Olympics get underway in Paris shortly and there is growing consternation in France and around the world at the impending participation of Israel in the games. The country comes to the Olympics with three accomplishments under its belt, as certified by the International Court of Justice: It is waging a war that involves some actions that may amount to genocide, it is in illegal occupation of another nation, Palestine, and it is subjecting the people of that occupied nation to systemic discrimination based on race, religion and ethnic origin.

Even one of these certificates renders Israel unfit to be at the Olympics. All three together add up to grounds for expulsion. Let us consider the International Olympics Committee's own precedents.

## IOC's reasons for banning Russia

In February 2023, the IOC banned Russia and Belarus because of its invasion of, and ongoing war in, Ukraine. [This is what it said at the time](#):

"The IOC condemned the senseless war in the strongest terms on the day of the invasion. With no end in sight to the fighting after one year of bloodshed, the IOC reiterates its condemnation of the war in Ukraine, **which is a blatant violation of the Olympic Truce that was in effect at the time, and of the Olympic Charter**. For this reason, the IOC sanctioned the Russian and Belarusian states and governments, who are solely responsible for this war, in an unprecedented way: no international sports events organised in Russia and Belarus; no flag, anthems or other national symbols whatsoever displayed; and no government or state officials accredited for any international sports events." (emphasis added)

In essence, the IOC said that Russia, by invading Ukraine and prolonging the war, had violated the Olympic Truce that was in force for the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics.

Now let us fast-forward to November 22, 2023, when [the UNGA adopted the Olympic Truce for the Paris Olympics](#).

The UN resolution "calls for the Olympic Truce to be respected from seven days before the Olympic Games in July 2024 until seven days after the Paralympic Games." The text "Urges Member States to observe the Olympic Truce" in order "to ensure the safe passage, access and participation of athletes, officials and all other accredited persons taking part in the Games".

The resolution recalls that "the core concept of *ekecheiria*, historically, has been the cessation of hostilities from seven days before ... the Olympic Games". Obviously, athletes and others can only get safe passage to participate in the Olympics if there is cessation of hostilities, i.e. a ceasefire.

Russia is plainly still in violation of the Olympic Truce and remains barred from the Games. But since individual athletes should not be punished for decisions of their government, the IOC Executive Board on 19/3/2024 [issued guidelines for participation of Russian athletes as 'Individual Neutral Athletes' \(AIN\)](#).

This means no Russian flag or anthem and no participation as a team. "The AINs will not participate in the parade of delegations (teams) during the Opening Ceremony, since they are individual athletes", the guidelines say, and "medals won by the AINs will not be displayed in the NOC medal table".

Apart from ensuring that there is no direct or indirect participation by "Russia", the guidelines also prescribe "strict eligibility conditions" for these individual athletes. And one of the conditions is this:

"Athletes who actively support the war will not be eligible to be entered or to compete. Support personnel who actively support the war will not be entered."

But what does the IOC mean by "athletes who actively support the war"? This is what the [IOC's Q&As on Russian participation in the Olympics](#) says:

"Contracted members of the Russian and Belarusian military or national security agencies are considered to support the war." "With regard to other active supporting measures, all relevant circumstances, in particular public statements, **including those made on social media**; participation in pro-war demonstrations or events; and the displaying of any symbol supporting the war in Ukraine, for example, the "Z" symbol, have to be taken into consideration." (emphasis added)

### **What applies to Russia must apply to Israel**

Based on this background and precedent, let us now consider what these IOC guidelines mean for Israel and the Paris Olympics.

Three facts are incontestable.

First, Israel—like Russia—is in [unlawful occupation](#) of Palestinian territory. Every day it is bombing the people of Palestine in Gaza, killing innocent civilians.

Second, [as Reuters has reported](#), "since the start of the conflict in October 2023 more than 300 athletes, referees and sports officials have been killed and all sports facilities in Gaza demolished." [A small contingent of Palestinian athletes will still make it to Paris](#) but "the complete stoppage of every single activity in the country" has wrecked Palestine's chance to properly compete. At least one Palestinian athlete in Gaza, [Mohammed Hamada](#), a weightlifter who carried the Palestinian flag at the Tokyo Olympics, lost 20 kgs and injured his knee during Israel's bombing and failed to qualify for the Paris games.

Third, regardless of the arguments and justifications provided by Tel Aviv such as 'rescuing Israeli hostages', 'self defence' etc, the [International Court of Justice ruled earlier this year that](#) "at least some of the acts and omissions alleged ... to have been committed by Israel in Gaza appear to be capable of falling within the provisions of the [Genocide] Convention."

It should be obvious that the ICJ's finding makes Israel's blatant violation of the Olympic Truce that much more shocking.

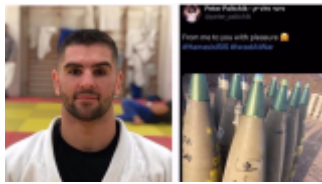
Clearly, the IOC needs to apply to the Israeli war on Palestine the same standards it has subjected

Russia to for the Ukraine war. This means there can be no Israeli flag, anthem or team at the Paris Olympics. Period.

### Supporters of war in Israeli team

Individual Israeli athletes—subject to the same “strict eligibility conditions”—may still be able to participate, just as some 15 Russian individual neutral athletes are going to. However, [to cite just one example](#), this will certainly rule out the Israeli judoka Peter Paltchik, who has made it clear through his social media posts that he “actively supports war”.

On October 22, 2023, Paltchik tweeted a photo of Israeli bombs with the message, “From me to you with pleasure #HamasisISIS #IsraelAtWar”. The bombs bear what appears to be his signature, as well as the word ‘*ippon*’ – a term from judo whose significance is explained below.



Israeli athlete Peter Palchik and his now deleted tweet. Photo : Radio Habana Cuba

Paltchik has deleted the tweet quite recently—obviously because it renders him ineligible for the Paris Olympics—but a Google search still throws it up. Here is a screenshot of [Google's retrieval](#) of the text of the now deleted tweet:



The Palestinian National Olympic Committee has cited Paltchik’s pro-war tweet in its representation to the IOC calling for Israel to be banned. It is not clear why the burden of making this demand is falling entirely on the Palestinians when all IOC members are already party to a set of guidelines and rules that have been used to ban another warmaking state, Russia, from the Paris Olympics.

For the record, [DW asked the Israeli Judo Federation about Paltchik's tweet](#). “Peter didn’t sign anything himself,” they claimed, accusing the Palestinians of lying. “However, in an email to DW, the federation said they could not say who signed the missiles or why they featured the term “*ippon*,” which is the highest score in judo and signifies an immediate victory.”

If the IOC does not act immediately to stop Israel – and such Israeli athletes – from participating in the Paris Olympics, it will bring disgrace to the great Olympic movement and render the noble idea of the Olympic Truce totally meaningless. Worse, it will demonstrate to the world that its noble principles and requirements will only be insisted on if they are politically convenient.

The IOC says it does not want to mix politics and sport but when you ban one country – Russia – for waging war on Europeans (Ukrainians) but refuse to ban a de facto European state – Israel – for waging war on Arabs (Palestinians), is this not the worst kind of politics?

### The racist South Africa precedent from 1970

Leaving aside Israel’s ongoing war and violation of the Olympic Truce, there is another precedent that the IOC needs to invoke.

In 1970, it formally expelled racist South Africa. It did this not because there was a mandatory UN resolution (as the IOC website claims) – in fact some ‘White’ countries continued to maintain sporting ties with the apartheid state – but because South Africa’s policy of systemic racial discrimination were repugnant to the Olympic spirit.

Earlier this month, the International Court of Justice declared Israel’s occupation of Palestine to be illegal [and that Israel’s treatment of Palestinians “constitutes systemic discrimination based on, inter alia, race, religion or ethnic origin”](#).

Given this legal clarity from the world court, the IOC should not only prohibit Israel from taking part in the Paris Olympics but should also expel it from membership of the Olympic movement. And not reverse this decision so long as it remains in illegal occupation of Palestine.

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