Beat: Sports

Palestine reveals the international sports mask

Sport

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USPA NEWS - Sports have never been exclusively a space for exchanging trophies and medals. Rather, they are considered as cultural tool and way of expressing people's identities and humanitarian messages. However, what is happening to our brothers in Gaza, amongst the cries of children and the groans of the wounded in the camps, makes us speak out of the pain and suffering of Palestinian athletes. Palestinian stadiums no longer hear the sounds of cheering and the chants of the crowds .

Instead, they have been replaced by the sound of bombing, the smell of destruction, and the policies of starvation and siege imposed by the occupying Zionist enemy. Palestinian athletes no longer dream of raising trophies or scoring goals. Their greatest dreams have become surviving an airstrike or successfully rescuing a teammate from under the scrap. Here again, sports transcend their competitive meaning to become a mirror of human dignity and a true measure of global conscience.

History has proven that international sports organizations are able of making assertive decisions when there is a strong will, as was the case with Germany and Japan after World War II, or with South Africa, whose membership was suspended for more than three decades due to the apartheid regime at that era. President Nelson Mandela fought great battles for South African independence and new freedoms , whose words remain immortal:
"Sport has the power to change the world and inspire people in a way that nothing else can."

So why is the position totally absent from Palestine?

And finally, with Russia and Belarus after the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, their participation in most international sporting competitions was suspended. These precedents demonstrate that the Olympic Charter is not a symbolic text, but a binding legal document that grants the right to punish countries that violate human values.

But the paradox is utterly clear when it comes to Palestine. Since October 2023, the Palestinian sports sector has suffered tragedic losses exceeding those of any other sporting arena in recent decades. The Palestinian sports tragedy today is not just numbers; it involves blood, lives, and stadiums reduced to rubble. According to the Palestinian Olympic Committee, the number of martyrs from the sports movement has reached more than 800, including 418 members of the Football Association, including 97 children, in addition to 243 Olympic Committee members and 117 scouts.

In addition, 286 sports facilities have been destroyed or even demolished , including stadiums, halls, headquarters, and clubs. These numbers alone are sufficient to open urgent cases before the International Olympic Committee and international federations, but the official Arab position still lacks serious action commensurate with the magnitude of the disaster.

Amid this Arab silence, Kuwait's honorable stance stands out, maintaining its steadfastness and sincere support for the Palestinian cause in various forums. Under the leadership of our Emir, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah - may God protect him and grant him long life - Kuwait has always embodied its moral and political commitment to Palestine, affirming that principled positions are not measured by temporary interests, nor are they calculated in terms of seats and gains. This stance has been translated through continuous political support, humanitarian aid, and advocacy for Palestinian rights in regional and international forums.

We are certain that the Kuwaiti voice will remain a beacon of light at a time when a clear Arab stance is in short supply. While Arab and Islamic silence prevails, numerous international voices have been raised calling for a halt to Israeli sporting activity. In July 2024, humanitarian law experts issued a petition calling on FIFA to suspend Israel's membership, which collected more than 380,000 signatures. The Asian Football Confederation supported these calls, while international newspapers such as the British Guardian and the French Le Monde expressed concern about double standards.

The Palestinian Olympic Committee even called for the Israeli delegation to be barred from participating in the Paris Olympics, citing the violation of the Olympic truce. Despite all this, the institutional absence of Arab and Islamic action remained glaring, as we

witnessed no emergency meetings or clear plans to address this situation. What is happening cannot be described as mere negligence; rather, it is a moral and historical failure. When Arab sports leaders choose silence to preserve their positions and seats within international committees, they are squandering their civilized role and losing the trust of their people. History will bear witness to the killing of Palestinian athletes and the destruction of stadiums, while Arabs have settled for symbolic stances or general statements that are of no consequence.

Ultimately, what is required today is not emotional words or occasional tweets, but rather a practical plan that begins with the formation of a unified Arab-Islamic committee, the preparation of a comprehensive legal and human rights file documenting the violations, and the filing of official complaints with the International Olympic Committee and international federations. This is in addition to organizing media and sports campaigns that bring the issue back to the forefront. Only then can Arab sports move from the position of spectator to actor, proving that sports are not neutral in the face of injustice, but rather a civilized weapon for defending human rights. As the poet Mahmoud Darwish said: "On this earth there is that which is worth living for."

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