

Press release

Subject : World Cup qualifying game Switzerland–Israel, 14 October 2009

Media Contact: Laurent Vonwiller 078-877 01 79

“I’ve been very deeply distressed in my visit to the Holy Land; it reminded me so much of what happened to us black people in South Africa”. Desmond Tutu, The Guardian 29.4.2002

Red Card against Israel

Israel violates the article against discrimination in the statutes of World Football organizing body, FIFA

Bern, Basel, October 7, 2009 – FIFA’s declared mission to use football to bring about “a better world” requires that clear signals be given to the apartheid state, Israel. The undersigned organizations call on FIFA to tell Israel it is off-side and to show it a red card for the World Cup.

Three Palestinian football players from the national team were killed during the Israeli military operations in the Gaza strip earlier this year. Because of the Israeli blockade and travel restrictions, the Palestinian national team there cannot practice with their team mates in the West Bank in their native land. They can only rarely take part in international competitions.

Palestinian athletes suffer constant discrimination and violent assaults. This is part of Israel’s decades-long refusal to guarantee the Palestinians their rights, freedom, dignity and their physical and spiritual integrity. This policy should be called apartheid. It is not only a violation of international law, but also of FIFA’s regulationsⁱ against discrimination, and of the Olympic Charter.

South Africa’s exclusion from the world sports community until 1991 helped to bring about the end of racial separation in that country. Now, almost 20 years later, the World Cup will be hosted by South Africa in 2010. Decency, dignity and sporting fair play towards the hosts and the participating teams demand that Israel be subjected to the same sanctions. Numerous organizations and personalities in Israel and world-wideⁱⁱ hope that increased pressure on Israel will induce it to respect the rights of the Palestinians. This is a prerequisite for peace.

We challenge FIFA to live up to the letter and the spirit of its statutes and to seize this opportunity to prove to the world that it stands for a more just world by sending Israel an unmistakable threat of exclusion. This would be an important victory for human rights – not only for the Palestinian people, but also for the international football community.

No to apartheid!

Signing organisations: *Aide Sanitaire Suisse aux Palestiniens, Amis de Gaza, Association of the Palestinian Community in Switzerland, Basler Frauenvereinigung für Frieden und Fortschritt (BFFF), Bewegung für den Sozialismus (BFS/MPS), Collectif Judéo Arabe et Citoyen pour la Paix de Strasbourg, Collectif Urgence Palestine Vaud, Collectif Urgence Palestine Neuchâtel, Collectif Urgence Palestine Genève, Frauen für den Frieden Region Basel, Frauen für den Frieden Region Biel, Gerechtigkeit und Frieden in Palästina (GFP) Bern, Gesellschaft Schweiz-Palästina (GSP/ASP), International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network (IJAN) France, Jüdische Stimme für gerechten Frieden in Nahost (EJJP Deutschland), Jüdisch-Palästinensische Dialoggruppe München, Kampagne Olivenöl, Neue PdA Basel, Mahnwache Bern, Palästina/Nahost-Initiative Heidelberg, Palästina-Solidarität Basel, Palästina-Solidarität Zürich, Rights for all/Droits pour tous, Sozialistische Alternative (SoAL) Basel, Union Juive Française pour la Paix (UJFP)*

ⁱ “Discrimination of any kind against a country [...] or group of people on account of ethnic origin, gender, language, religion, politics or any other reason is strictly prohibited and punishable by suspension or expulsion.” Art. 3 of the Statutes, entered into force August 2009.

ⁱⁱ For further information on boycott-divestment-sanctions, BDS, go to <http://www.bdsmovement.net/> and www.bds-info.ch