

Oman Withdraws From 2024 Beach Club World Cup Over Israel's Participation

MUSCAT (Dispatches) – Oman has officially withdrawn from the 2024 Beach Club World Cup in Italy, which commenced on Tuesday, in protest against the Zionist regime's participation in the tournament.

The move is seen as a demonstration of Oman's continued support for the Palestinian cause and its refusal to engage with the Zionist regime in any international platform.

The decision has been met with wide approval in Oman, including praise from the country's Grand Mufti, Sheikh Ahmed Bin Hamad Al-Khalili, who described the withdrawal as a principled and moral stance in solidarity with the Palestinian people. The Grand Mufti, in a statement, commended the nation's leadership for taking a stand against what he termed as "normalization with the Occupied



Omanis gather in the capital, Muscat, to show support for people in the Gaza Strip, 20 October 2023.

ers". He further emphasized that this decision aligns with Oman's long-standing position on Palestine and the Israeli Occupation.

The Omani Football Association released a brief statement outlin-

ing the reasons for the withdrawal, noting that the country remains firm in its commitment to supporting Palestinian rights and opposing Israeli aggression in the Occupied Territories.

This move comes at a time when the participation of Israel in international events continues to spark debate, particularly in West Asia, where many nations have refused to normalize relations with the regime. Oman's decision reflects its continued refusal to engage with the Zionist regime diplomatically or on the sports field, despite growing regional trends of normalization by a few countries, following the so-called Abraham Accords signed by several Arab states.

Oman's withdrawal highlights the ongoing tension between nations that support the Palestinian cause and those willing to engage with the regime, further showcasing how sports can often intersect with geopolitics. The decision by Oman sends a clear signal of solidarity with Palestine to the global community.

Hezbollah...

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"We regard what happened as yet another act of hybrid warfare against Lebanon, which has harmed thousands of innocent people. It appears that the organizers of this high-tech attack deliberately sought to foment a large-scale armed confrontation in order to provoke a major war in the Middle East," said Maria Zakharova, spokeswoman for Russia's Foreign Ministry.

Hezbollah — Lebanon's strongest armed force — and Israel's military have exchanged fire almost daily since Oct. 8, the day after a deadly Hamas-led operation in southern occupied territories left Israel shell-shocked. Since then, hundreds have been martyred in Israeli strikes in Lebanon. Hezbollah said its strikes are in support of Palestinians.

Zionist leaders have issued a series of warnings in recent weeks that they might increase their aggression against Lebanon, saying they must put a stop to the exchanges to allow settlers to return to occupied territories near the Lebanese border. Israel began moving more troops to the Lebanese border on Wednesday, reports said.

In his comments, Gallant said that after months of the Israeli invasion of Gaza, "the center of gravity is shifting to the north by diverting resources and forces."

As extremist prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu huddled with top security officials at military headquarters in Tel Aviv, Israel's army chief, Lt. Gen. Herzl Halevi, said plans have been drawn up for additional attack on Lebanon.

New details on the pager bombings began to emerge. An American official said Israel briefed the United States after the attack, in which small amounts of explosive had been hidden in the devices. The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the information publicly.

The AR-924 pagers used in Tuesday's attack were manufactured by BAC Consulting KFT, which is based in the Hungarian capital of Budapest, according to a statement released by Gold Apollo, a Taiwanese firm that authorized the use of its brand on the pagers.

Gold Apollo's chair, Hsu Chingkuang, told journalists Wednesday the firm has had a licensing agreement with BAC for the past three years. "But the design and manufacturing of the products are solely the responsibility of BAC," Gold Apollo said in a statement.

At the headquarters of a building in a residential neighborhood of Budapest, the names of multiple companies, including BAC Consulting, are posted on pieces of paper on a window.

A woman who emerged from the building and declined to give her name said the site provides headquarters to various companies.

BAC's parent company is registered to Cristiana Rosaria Bársony-Arcidicono, whose describes herself on her LinkedIn page as a strategic advisor and business developer.

The attack in Lebanon started Tuesday afternoon, when pagers in their owners' hands or pockets started heating up and then exploding — leaving blood-splattered scenes and panicking bystanders.

The Health Ministry said health care workers and two children were among those martyred. In the village of Nadi Sheet in the Bekaa Valley, dozens gathered to mourn the martyrdom of one of the children, 9-year-old Fatima Abdullah.

Her mother, wearing black and donning a yellow Hezbollah scarf,

wept alongside other women and children as they gathered around the little girl's coffin before her burial.

Hezbollah said in a statement Wednesday morning that it would continue its normal strikes against Israel as part of the support front for Palestinians in Gaza.

"This path is continuous and separate from the difficult reckoning that the criminal enemy must await for its massacre on Tuesday," it said. "This is another reckoning that will come, God willing."

"We are absolutely certain of victory," said the movement.

Iran's...

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On Tuesday, thousands of wireless communications devices used by Hezbollah members and others exploded simultaneously across Lebanon, an attack that both Hezbollah and Lebanese officials said was caused by a remote Israeli cyber attack.

At least 12 people, including members of the Hezbollah resistance movement, were martyred in the blasts and around 3,000 others wounded.

Iran...

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regarding corridors and transportation routes.

Shoigu arrived in Tehran on Putin's order to follow up on the agreements made during the visit of Ahmadian to St. Petersburg.

An Iranian lawmaker said Wednesday a long-awaited strategic cooperation agreement between Moscow and Tehran will be signed during President Pezeshkian's upcoming visit to Russia.

MP Abolfazl Zohrevand, a member of parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, said Iran and Russia are moving on the path of strategic cooperation.

The lawmaker rejected reports that Iran had sold Russia ballistic missiles for the Ukraine war, saying European governments seek to influence the public opinion in Iran about strategic cooperation between Tehran and Moscow.

FM...

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Praising the resolve of the Yemeni people and government in supporting the oppressed and defenseless people of Palestine, Araghchi said Iran supports any ceasefire approved by the Palestinian resistance and Hamas.

He also emphasized that the continued support of the United States and some European countries for the Zionist regime, along with their aggressions against Yemen, exacerbates tensions and complicates the situation and the political solution in Yemen.

Araghchi further emphasized that efforts, especially the UN's humanitarian aid initiatives for the people of Yemen, must not be influenced by other issues.

For his part, the UN envoy expressed his readiness to continue cooperation and consultations with Iran regarding issues related to the Yemeni crisis, particularly by taking advantage of the opportunity presented by the UN General Assembly in New York.

Grundberg also appreciated Iran's stances on regional stability and security, especially in Yemen, and presented a report on the UN's efforts at establishing lasting peace and stability in Yemen, reducing tensions in the Red Sea region, and advancing the prisoner exchange file in Yemen.

Palestinian President in Madrid to Thank Spain for Support

MADRID (Dispatches) – Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas is scheduled to meet Thursday in Madrid with Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, in his first visit to the country since it formally recognized a Palestinian state in May.

Abbas is stopping in Madrid at Spain's invitation before heading to New York for the United Nations General Assembly, according to an official in his office.

Sanchez will meet with Abbas on Thursday, the Spanish premier's office said Wednesday, but the details of the program for the rest of the Palestinian president's visit is not yet known.

Abbas is also due to be received by Spain's King Felipe VI according to the official in his office, but the royal palace, contacted by AFP, has not confirmed this meeting.

His visit comes after Spain, along with Ireland and Norway, on May 28 formally recognized a Palestinian state comprising the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

The Zionist regime was angered by their decision.

Spain's leftist government then announced that a first bilateral summit between Spain and Palestine would be held before the end of the year, and the first Palestinian ambassador to Spain presented his cre-

dentials on Monday to Spanish King Felipe VI.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez has said the recognition of a Palestinian state is "not against anyone, least of all Israel," but the move led to a further deterioration in ties between the two sides.

He has been one of the most outspoken critics in Europe of the Zionist regime's Gaza onslaught since the start of the conflict.

The Zionist regime's aggression has so far killed at least 41,226 people in Gaza, according to the health ministry in the territory.

Sanchez vowed this month to continue to "pressure" Zion-

ist prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu on the global stage over the war in Gaza, especially at the International Criminal Court, which in May requested an arrest warrant for Netanyahu and his war minister.

Spain, along with other nations, has joined South Africa's case at the International Court of Justice in which Pretoria has accused the Zionist regime of "genocide" in the Gaza Strip.

"We are going to strengthen our ties with the Palestinian state," Sanchez said, adding that Madrid hoped "to sign several collaboration agreements" with the Palestinian state at the bilateral summit later this year.

Hundreds Call on London Theater to Cut Ties With Barclays Over Links to Israel Arms

LONDON (Dispatches) – Over 1,100 arts professionals have called on London's premier theater Sadler's Wells to end its funding relationship with Barclays due to the bank's significant investments in companies involved in the Zionist regime's arms trade.

In an open letter, which was delivered to the theater, the artists demand "Sadler's Wells cut ties with Barclays, remove Nigel Higgins from the board, and engage in discussions on ethical funding."

Higgins sits as chair on Sadler's

Wells' board of trustees. He is also Barclays Bank's Group chairman and chairman of Barclays Bank PLC.

Highlighting that the theater hosted a fundraiser for the Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal, the artists say they "cannot ignore its role in providing cover for Barclays' egregious complicity in Israel's genocide in Palestine."

"As in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, we strongly believe that artists and cultural institutions have an ethical duty to end complicity in oppression.

We call on Sadler's Wells to join us in recognizing its own place in history."

A report released in May found that Barclays now holds over £2 billion (\$2.5 billion) in shares of companies whose weapons, components and military technology have been used in violence against Palestinians by the Zionist regime. Barclays also provides over £6.1 billion (\$7.6 billion) in loans and underwriting to these arms and military technology companies. This includes holding £2.7 million (\$3.36 million)

in Elbit Systems, which supplies the Israeli military with armored drones, munitions and artillery weapons used in its attacks in Gaza.

In response to MEMO's request for comment, Barclays pointed to a Q&A on its website which says "Barclays has been the subject of criticism in relation to Gaza based on two arguments: that Barclays is an investor in these businesses, and that we provide a range of financial services to clients which produce equipment used by the Israeli force."

Afghan Embassy Reopens in Oman as Taliban Strengthen Regional Ties

KABUL (Dispatches) – Afghanistan's embassy in Muscat, Oman, has reopened under Taliban control, according to an official in Kabul.

The move marks another step in the Taliban's growing diplomatic presence in the Persian Gulf region, following the UAE's acceptance of a Taliban ambassador last month. Zia Ahmad Takal, deputy spokesman for the Foreign Ministry, confirmed the embassy resumed operations, though Omani authorities have yet to comment.

"The work of the embassy is carried out regularly by diplomats of the Foreign Affairs Ministry of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan," said Takal.

"The resumption of embassy activities in

cooperation with the host country will play a constructive role in strengthening the political, economic, social and religious relations between Kabul and Muscat," he added.

The move comes as the Taliban continue to take control of Afghan embassies worldwide, despite not being officially recognized by most states. The Taliban have assumed control of 39 diplomatic missions globally, though embassies in London and Oslo recently closed.

Afghan outlet TOLONews quoted political analyst Salim Paigir as saying: "Oman is one of the countries close to the West. This country can play a major and fundamental role in improving relations between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and Western coun-

tries, especially the United States."

While major regional powers like China, Iran and Russia, have not yet acknowledged the Taliban as Afghanistan's legitimate government, they have been steadily courting the de-facto government. Last month, Uzbekistan's prime minister visited Kabul in the highest-level foreign delegation to meet with the Taliban since they took power in 2021.

International recognition remains a key issue and the lack of official status has strained Afghanistan's economy, with many countries and global organizations citing human rights concerns and the Taliban's governance as barriers to formal diplomatic relations.