

May 17th, 2015

To:

Joseph "Sepp" Blatter,
FIFA president

Dear Sir,

I am writing to you regarding the statement of Mr. Jibril Rajoub, manager of the Palestinian Football Association, requesting you suspend Israeli teams and players from all FIFA activities, which was hugely disappointing.

Under my leadership and that of my predecessors, the New Israel Fund has been active for decades supporting human rights, peace and equality in Israel as well as promoted ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the two-state solution. More importantly, we oppose any kind of boycott, and believe they are counter-productive to the peace process.

I urge you not to suspend Israel from FIFA. We believe this would be as disservice to our goals of achieving a peaceful resolution to the conflict, as well as a more equal and tolerant Israel.

Against the backdrop of a troubled Israeli reality, including ongoing injustice and racist incidents, Israeli Football stands out as a beacon of light for coexistence between Jewish and Arab citizens. All of the Israeli Football Association leagues offer full equality between Jews, Arabs and the other sectors of Israeli society. You will find many Arab-Israelis working and playing there as respected colleagues, enjoying full equality of opportunity and serving as role models for their communities and all of Israel. Arab-Israeli players have always played on the Israeli National Team alongside Jews, Druze and Circassians.

New Israel Fund

הקרן החדשה לישראל

For many years, the New Israel Fund has run a comprehensive program to fight racism in Israeli football, in cooperation with the Israeli Football Association. As part of this program, we distribute prizes to teams and fans that show exceptional tolerance over the course of the season. At the same time, we fiercely condemn clubs and crowds that behave in a racist way or express racism, and unreservedly support the punishment of these clubs. [This video clip](#), which we produced recently in a joint effort with the Israeli Football Association and players from our national teams, perfectly illustrates the intent of this program.

Such a radical step as suspending Israel from FIFA not only fails to acknowledge our progress in reducing racism in football, but also could actually damage our future efforts; extremist elements on both sides of the conflict will surely use this to polarize Israelis and Palestinians on a racial and ethnic basis, even further. It would be a tragedy for FIFA to discover that such a move sparked new clashes of racism and hate, in the name of cultivating peace and combatting racism.

I hope that you will seriously consider this letter and that at the end of your deliberations, FIFA will decide not to suspend Israel from its activities.

Thank you,



Rachel Liel

Director of the New Israel Fund