

South African Rugby Union: Halt Apartheid Racist Rugby Tour!

By SA Boycott Divest and Sanctions Coalition

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The South African BDS Coalition is outraged that the South African Rugby Union (SARU) has invited an apartheid Israeli rugby team, Tel Aviv Heat, to participate in the Currie Cup new Mzansi Challenge competition.

It is incredulous that a post-apartheid South African rugby organisation chooses to invite a team from a settler colonial state that continues to occupy Palestinian land and uphold a brutal system of apartheid against Palestinians.

Palestinian and Israeli rights organisations, Al-Haq, and B'Tselem, in addition to Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have published detailed reports concluding that Israel practises the crime against humanity of apartheid. Eminent South Africans such as Archbishop Tutu and Reverend Frank Chikane have stated that the Israeli regime is worse than the apartheid regime was in South Africa.

SARU claims it has transformed the rugby sporting code from the brutal and repressive days of the racist apartheid regime in South Africa. It has exposed itself as having done no such thing by inviting a team from a racist apartheid state.

In January 2023 alone, Israeli occupation forces killed thirty-five Palestinians. Over a thousand residents of Masafer Yatta in the South Hebron Hills are fighting against displacement from their villages and farms, facing attacks from illegal settlers, protected by the occupation forces, in order to establish a firing zone for the Israeli army of occupation.

The extremist Israeli government has escalated the demolition of Palestinian homes in occupied Jerusalem and the West Bank, amounting to collective punishment, illegal under international law and a “war crime” according to Human Rights Watch yesterday.

These crimes against humanity are openly celebrated by members of the apartheid Israeli government. Almog Cohen, a parliamentarian from the Jewish Power Party of National Minister of Security, Itmar Ben-Gvir, praised the murderous occupation forces for their massacre in Jenin on 26 January leaving 9 Palestinians dead and more than twenty injured, referring to it as “nice and professional work” and urging that they “keep killing them”.

As apartheid South Africa used sports - and rugby in particular - to ‘sportswash’ its crimes against humanity its sister-apartheid state, Israel, is using the same tactic. As the international community mobilised to boycott South African apartheid teams under the slogan ‘no normal sport in an abnormal society’ so too the international community is mobilising now to ‘halt apartheid racist rugby tours’.

Palestinians are calling on the international community to implement boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) to isolate the pariah state of Israel just as the international community did to apartheid South Africa. We, South Africans, have a political and moral duty to stand in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle against

apartheid and cut diplomatic, trade, academic, cultural and sporting ties with apartheid Israel.

Anger with SARUS's decision is building across the world. SARU is embarrassing post-apartheid South Africa through this overtly racist move and exposing its true colours – those of the old South African flag. If this apartheid Israeli team comes to play in South Africa SARU will have blood on its hands.

We call on SARU:

To stand for human rights, justice and anti-racism in South Africa and Palestine by immediately rescinding the invitation to Tel Aviv Heat.

We call on the Minister of Sports, Arts and Culture:

To call for a boycott of apartheid Israeli sports teams including sporting events organised in, or sponsored by, apartheid Israel with immediate effect.

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