

Israelis Suffer Shameful Discrimination at Sports Event

This week the Israeli judo team traveled to hostile territory in the United Arab Emirates. The UAE is considered to be more modern and moderate than other Arab nations, but make no mistake—there is rabid anti-Semitism.

No Flag

The Israeli team was told if it came to compete, they could not display the Israeli flag on their uniforms. No other nations were told this.

- Not Russia, who assists Syria in killing innocent women and children and is illegally in Ukraine.
- Not North Korea, who threatens the world with nuclear war.
- Not Syria who has killed over 500,000 of its citizens since 2011.
- Not Cuba, Saudi Arabia or Iran.

Instead, the Israelis would be forced to display the flag of the IJA, which I hoped was the Israeli Judo Association, but it is not. It stands for International Judo Association.

No Passage

Then the team had to wait seven hours at the airport over Turkey's refusal to allow the Israelis to get their UAE visas in Istanbul. By the time the issue was resolved, the flight had left. However, the Israelis were not about to give up. It is not who we are. The team made alternative arrangements to get into Jordan.

No Anthem

On Thursday, the world No. 1 in Judo's 66kg category, Tal Flicker, defeated Nijat Shikhalizada of Azerbaijan for the gold medal. In every other case, the national anthem of the winner's country is played. But Tal is Israeli. So instead, they played the anthem of the International Judo Association. The Israeli flag was also not raised, instead the flag of the International Judo Association rose behind the Jewish champion (and all other Israeli medalists this week).

Tal retaliated by singing the words of Hatikvah (The Hope), Israel's national anthem.

wrote:

"Flicker said later that he made up his mind to sing his own Hatikvah on the podium from, 'the moment that I won the gold. Israel is my country, and I'm proud to be Israeli. The anthem that they played of the world federation was just background noise, I was singing Hatikvah from my heart. I'm proud of my country. The whole world knows that we're from Israel, knows who we represent. The fact that they hid our flag, it's just a [badge] on our flag.'"

No Handshake

A day earlier, after Israeli Tohar Butbul defeated his Arab opponent from the host country, the UAE, he too was snubbed. It is traditional after a match to shake hands. But the defeated Rashad Almasjari refused to touch the Jewish hand that was extended towards him, and instead fled the scene. Butbul went on to take bronze by defeating the recent Olympic champion.

Against the Rules

It should be noted that the IJA has strict rules against such behavior.

IJF Code of Ethics (clause 2): 'There shall be no

discrimination between the participants on the basis of race, gender, ethnic origin, religion... or other grounds'

Of course, the Western world routinely backs down in the face of Arab temper tantrums. *The Times of Israel* reported that the IJA warned the Arab organizers not to discriminate against the Israelis.

A letter from the IJF to the president of the UAE Judo Federation said "all delegations, including the Israeli delegation, shall be treated absolutely equally in all aspects, without any exception."

We can only wait and see if there will be any discipline against the UAE. I am not holding my breath. Feel free to tweet the IJA, and express your concerns: @IntJudoFed. {eoa}

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