

Israelis shunned at Qatar World Cup



Doha, November 28 (RHC)-- Israelis attending the World Cup in Qatar say they are meeting an atmosphere of hostility and hatred, with fans refusing to speak to Israeli journalists, waving Palestinian flags in the background of their videos and yelling at them.

Moav Vardy, KAN's foreign affairs reporter, was yelled at by a Saudi fan, who told him that "You are not welcome here. This is Qatar. This is our country. There is only Palestine, no Israel."

Other videos from Qatar show people immediately walking away when they find out the person interviewing them is Israeli. In one particular video, N12's Ohad Hemo begins to interview a group of Lebanese men who walk away when Hemo tells them he's Israeli. One of them then turns back and asks Hemo what he's doing there and then tells him that Israel doesn't exist.

In other videos, people stand behind various Israeli reporters and raise Palestinian flags to protest against Israel.

Israeli soccer legend and KAN panel member at the World Cup, Eli Ohana, also faced anti-Israel sentiments when he was driven on a golf cart by a Qatari policeman. When Ohana mentioned that he is Israeli, the officer asked him if he was joking, and Ohana then said that he was Portuguese in order to avoid trouble. The officer told him that if Ohana was Israeli, he would turn the car around and refuse to drive him.

Raz Shechnick, Yedioth Ahronoth's reporter for the World Cup wrote on his Twitter account about his experiences in Qatar regarding the atmosphere for Israeli media and fans. In a series of tweets, Shechnick described an atmosphere of rejection and hostility from both locals and foreigners attending the games.

"We didn't want to write these words, we are not the story here. but after ten days in Doha, we cannot hide what we are going through. We are feeling hated, surrounded by hostility, not welcomed." He also described an incident in which he and his colleague had lied about their country of origin, saying they were Ecuadorian in order to prevent them from being harassed by fans.

Israeli journalist Dor Hoffman reported on Thursday that a Qatari taxi driver kicked him out of his cab after he discovered he was Israeli, refusing to take his money. He later continued to a restaurant on a Qatari beach, where he was escorted out of the restaurant by security, with the owner demanding that he delete every photo taken in his restaurant. Hoffman said that the owner took his phone and that he felt threatened.

On Saturday, Tunisian fans waved a banner saying "Free Palestine", despite Qatar and FIFA's policy of not allowing political protests at matches, a policy that led to the confiscation of rainbow-colored items in support of the LGBTQ+ community, and Iranian anti-regime signs.

Jerusalem resident Michael Janekowitz, a former spokesman for the Jewish Agency who is attending the World Cup, refuted the claims that Israelis were being targeted and said his experience has been without incident.

"Qatar is very welcoming to the Israeli visitors," he said. "These Israeli journalists are going with magnifying glasses to find haters of Israel. Most of these Israel bashers have come to the World Cup from outside of Qatar. They are like being provoked by headline-seeking Israeli journalists.

"Qatar has a population of about 3.3 million of whom only 300,000 are Qataris. The other 3 million are mostly workers from mainly India, Bangladesh, Kenya, Uganda, Philippines and Sudan," he added, saying that was where the antagonism against Israelis was emanating from.

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