

# *Celtic fans defy club to fly Palestine flags in Champions League match*

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**Celtic fans hold up Palestinian flags despite the club's directives against the display of flags and banners related to the Israel-Palestine conflict [Russell Cheyne/Reuters]**

Glasgow, October 26 (RHC)-- Fans of Scotland's Celtic Football Club have defied their club's directives and waved thousands of Palestine flags during their team's UEFA Champions League match against

Atletico Madrid.

The Scottish Premiership champions hosted the Spanish club for their group-stage match at Glasgow's Celtic Park on Wednesday. Hours ahead of the match, the club issued a statement saying both teams' players and coaching staff would wear black armbands "as a show of respect and support for all those affected by the conflict [between Israel and Palestine]," but told fans to refrain from displaying their support in the stands.

"We ask that banners, flags and symbols relating to the conflict and those countries involved in it are not displayed at Celtic Park at this time," the club said in its statement. However, fans paid no heed to the directives and held up thousands of Palestine flags ahead of kickoff and continued to wave them during the match.

Fans at the North Curve section of the stadium prepared a tifo – a choreographed display – of the Palestine flag and unfurled large flags behind the home team's goal during the first half of the match.

Several thousand fans in other parts of the stadium held up a sea of smaller flags as they sang along to the famous football anthem "You'll Never Walk Alone" and shouted slogans in support of Palestine before the match got under way.

The Green Brigade, an ultras group of hardcore Celtic fans, had encouraged supporters to defy the club's statement and continue their display of solidarity with the Palestinians.

Celtic have banned the group from attending their team's away matches until further notice after their "unsafe and unacceptable behaviour" at recent matches away to Motherwell and Feyenoord. The group said hundreds of fans were suspended from attending away matches "due to an association with the Green Brigade; despite receiving no correspondence, no allegations, nor any detail regarding any investigatory process".

"Despite disingenuous claims, we have absolutely no doubt that these sanctions are motivated by a desire to quash political expression within the Celtic support, specifically in relation to Palestine at this time," the group said in its statement on Tuesday.

"In spite of this, and any further obstruction, we once again encourage fans to courageously fly the flag for Palestine." Celtic were handed a fine by UEFA over their fans' use of flares during their match at Feyenoord last month and could face another fine over last night's display of solidarity with Palestine.

Earlier this month, Celtic's board distanced itself from the group after they displayed banners saying "Free Palestine" and "Victory to the resistance!!" during the Scottish Premiership match against Kilmarnock in Glasgow on October 7th.

Fans slammed the club and said the display of support on Wednesday came from "a large section" of the supporters and not the Green Brigade alone. Others criticised the club's actions, saying they were "out of touch with what matters" and continued to display their solidarity.

Paul Doherty – a politician from Northern Ireland – posted a photo of himself holding up the flag at Celtic Park on X, formerly Twitter. "Standing with 60,000 Celtic supporters tonight showing solidarity with the people of Palestine," he wrote in the post.

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