

Scottish football team Celtic in solidarity with Palestine

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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. (Photo by Reuters)

Glasgow, January 19 (RHC)-- The growing public backing for Palestine in Britain contrasts sharply with a British political class that continues to give their unconditional support to Israel's genocidal war. One such example is the increasingly voluble support for Palestine on the terraces of the Celtic football club.

These displays of solidarity have been frowned on by the club's directors and the Union of European Football Associations, UEFA, has even imposed fines.

Nevertheless, a group of Celtic fans known as the Green Brigade continue to display their solidarity with Palestine at Celtics matches.

Back in 2006, a seemingly unlikely bunch of football supporters got together to create 'The Green Brigade', styling themselves as Ultras that were an Anti-Fascist group, and from the beginning, championed the cause of Palestine.

The green in the title refers to the hoops on the shirts of their football team, Celtic, a team created in 1887, with the purpose of alleviating poverty in the immigrant Irish population in the east end of Glasgow, by an Irish priest, Brother Walfrid.

The cause of Ireland has always, therefore, been core to the politics of the green brigade. Their devotion to Irish Republicanism, and to the cause of Palestine, has attracted attention and attempts to constrain and abolish the group. But all attempts have so far failed.

In June 2012, a flurry of Palestinian flags flew proudly, and a banner appeared reading: "Dignity is more precious than food". This was a display of support for Palestinian hunger strikers in Israeli jails.

"We did this in solidarity", they said. "We want Palestinians to know we're thinking about them and encourage Scottish civil society to look at the injustice in Palestine".

In 2016, Celtic was fined £8,616 by UEFA for supporters flying Palestinian flags at an August 2016 UEFA match against an Israeli team, Hapoel Be'er Sheva, at Celtic Park.

The Green Brigade launched a crowdfunding to raise £10,000 to pay the fine but in the end, raised £188,000. They donated the balance to Palestinian charities.

After the launch of the Al Aqsa Storm on the seventh of October, the Green Brigade did not shrink from action. On that day during the game with Kilmarnock, surrounded by Palestinian flags, their banners read: "Free Palestine, victory to the resistance."

On the 25th of October 2023, thousands of Celtic fans, during the UEFA Champions League match against Atletico Madrid, flew the Palestinian flag and unfurled the same large banners that read: "Free Palestine" and "Victory to the Resistance".

Fans dedicated the song "You'll Never Walk Alone" in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza. In response Celtic suspended the season tickets of Green Brigade members, effectively banning them from the game. In November UEFA fined the club £15,200 for the Atletico Madrid action.

The Israel Football Association took credit for the complaint that led to the fine. However, the Green Brigade returned triumphantly to Celtic Park on the 23rd of December last year and amidst a sea of banned Palestinian flags, unveiled a banner quoting a section of a prisoner's Christmas song.

"Many homes, they are sad tonight. They whisper someone's name, by the candlelight."

Since the start of the offensive, the Tel Aviv regime has killed at least 24,620 Palestinians and injured more than 61,830 others.

The spirit of resistance is as strong in Celtic Park as it is in Gaza.



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