

*Majed Abu Maraheel, Palestine's  
first-ever Olympian, dies due to  
Israel's medical blockade on  
Gaza*

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Ramallah, June 21 (RHC)-- The first Palestinian athlete to ever participate in the Olympics died last week in Gaza's Nuseirat refugee camp after he was unable to receive medical care for kidney failure. Majed Abu Maraheel, a long-distance runner, represented Palestine in the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, Georgia, where he was the flag bearer.

Abu Maraheel was married and had eight children. An area near his house in Zeitoun was bombed by Israeli F-16 planes during the 2014 Gaza War, with one of his sons, Khaled, being seriously injured when a fragment of a missile was lodged in his head.

For his first international competition, Abu Maraheel competed at the 1995 Arab Athletics Championships in Cairo, Egypt, in August 1995. He ran in the men's 10,000-metre event alongside Yasser Ali-Dib, a Palestinian racewalker who was born in Cairo. Prior to the championships, he was detained by Egyptian border security for 10 hours, causing him to almost miss the event. He arrived shortly before the event, and without prior sleep, placed tenth in 36:22.0, with Alyan Sultan Al-Qahtani of Saudi Arabia winning the gold medal seven minutes ahead of him. The following year, Abu Maraheel was set to compete in the 1996 Paris Marathon but could not travel nor compete in the race due to the nation's closure imposed by the Israeli government.

Abu Maraheel suffered kidney failure in 2024 while at the Nuseirat camp. Prior to his death, he was hospitalized for treatment at Shuhada al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir al-Balah.

Due to power outages and medical shortages stemming from the Israel–Hamas war, medical treatment was limited, and he died on 11 June 2024, at the age of 61.

According to Middle East Eye and Maktoob Media, his brother stated that he alongside his family tried to evacuate him through the Rafah Border Crossing for treatment in Egypt, but could not due to the blockade of the Gaza Strip imposed by the Israeli government.

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