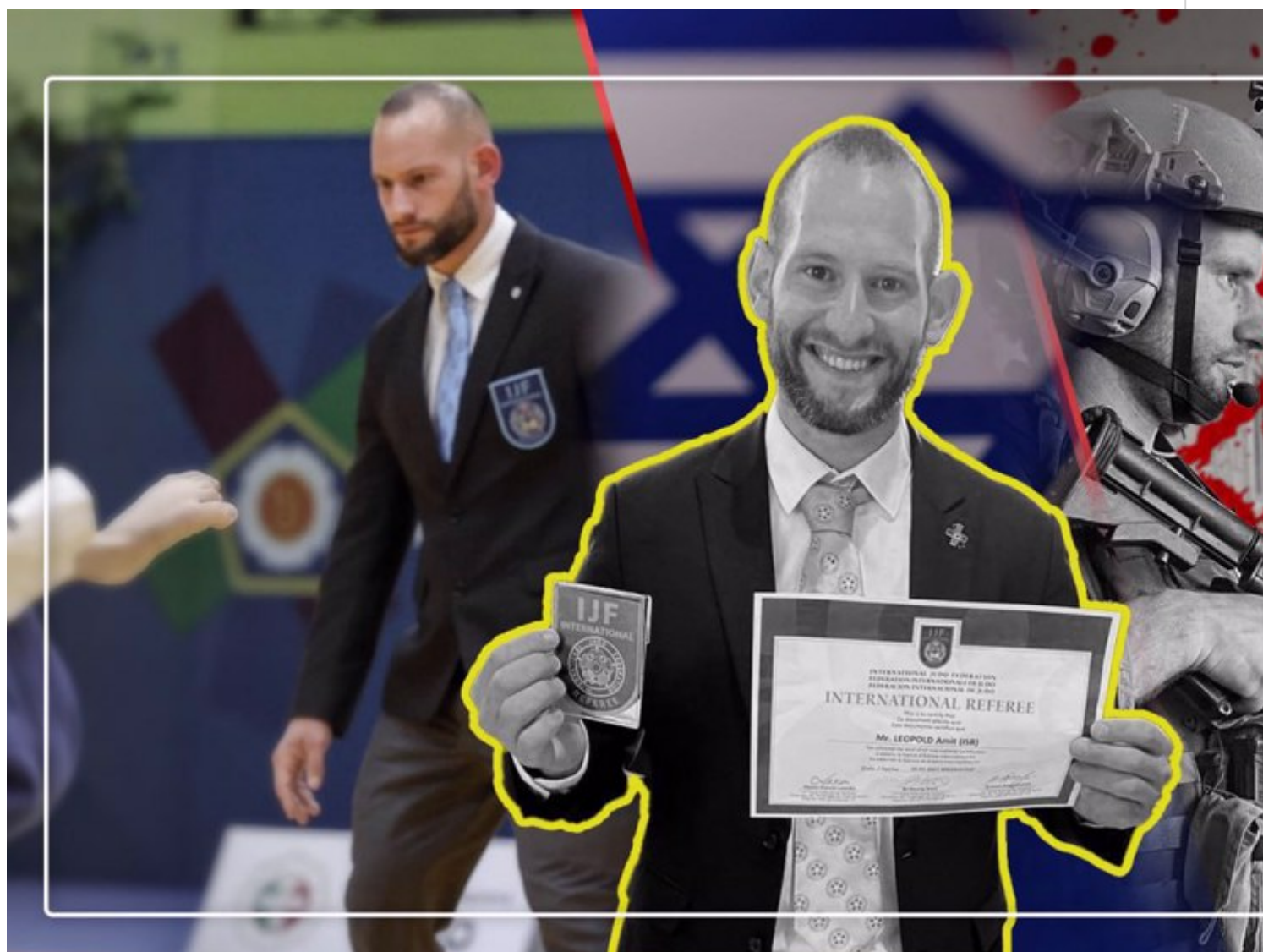


Exposed: International judo referee who slaughtered Palestinians in Gaza and bragged about it



By Alireza Akbari / PRESS TV

The International Judo Federation (IJF) referee Amit Leopold officiated for the first time at the IJF Junior World Tour held in Poland in early July 2017.

Among his major assignments was officiating at the European Judo Union (EJU) World Cup-Continental Open in February 2020 in the Austrian city of Oberwart.

The 31-year-old judo referee, who went on to pass his IFJ referee exam in June 2022, last officiated at the European Cadet Championships held in Portugal between June 24, 2023, and June 26, 2023.

The tournament was held less than four months before the Israeli regime launched its genocidal war against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip on October 7, 2024.

After October 2023, he took off his referee uniform and donned the Israeli military attire to join other Israeli military reservists in killing innocent Palestinians in Gaza, including children and women.

Leopold served as a field commander in the notorious Golani Brigade, which has gained notoriety for its diabolic crimes against humanity in Gaza and southern Lebanon in the past year.

His military brigade, which has existed since the 1948 Nakba and has been involved in some of the occupying regime's most horrific war crimes against Palestinians, has been a mainstay in the regime's genocidal war against Palestinians in Gaza since October 7, 2023.

Golani Brigade has been particularly active in northern Gaza, where the occupying forces have intensified their military assault against Palestinian civilians in recent weeks.

The Israeli regime's month-long onslaught has rendered this area uninhabitable, with shelters and hospitals repeatedly targeted in airstrikes, pushing the death toll higher.

The Israeli regime's latest offensive in northern Gaza, where approximately 400,000 people remain trapped, comes amid a ban on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). Alarms are rising over the worsening humanitarian crisis facing Palestinians in the area.

Senior United Nations officials have issued stark warnings about the worsening humanitarian crisis in northern Gaza even as the ground and air raids continue unabated.

Leopold has been involved in these crimes committed against Palestinians in northern Gaza, which is attested by pictures that have circulated on social media platforms in recent years.

Unapologetic and unrepentant, he has even posted the photos on his Instagram account, boasting about his participation in the Tel Aviv regime's genocidal crimes against women and children.

Since October last year, calls have grown louder for the suspension of Israel from international sports bodies, including judo, with sports activists and journalists making a strong case against the regime.

The calls have, however, failed to trigger any significant action due to the influential Zionist lobby's pressure on international sports governing bodies, including the International Judo Federation.

In response to a post by the 'Israel Genocide Tracker' page on X about Leopold, a social media user tagged the ICJ's official page saying; "your players participate in the genocide in Gaza." "Hold men and women who sniped kids (in Gaza) accountable," wrote one X user. "No one should allow their children to be in a sport that hires/employs Zionists," another added.

The call for action against the Israeli regime is not new. It dates back decades but the emergence of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement in 2005 gave it impetus.

This grassroots campaign, representing over 170 unions, political parties, and refugee networks, seeks to halt Israeli genocide in Palestine. Born from the realities of Israel's occupation and human rights abuses in Palestine, the BDS movement has galvanized international support.

Since October 2023, numerous sports associations, athletes, and fans have expressed solidarity with Palestinians through this movement, lending their voice to calls for the boycott of the Israeli regime.

However, the lack of action from international sporting bodies regarding these boycott calls has led to significant backlash from athletes and fans alike. Many athletes have opted not to participate in matches against Israeli athletes, while spectators have vocally expressed their dissent by booing Israeli representatives at international sporting events.

The case of Leopold can be examined in the same context, according to experts, which shows the impunity with which Israeli mass-murderers operate and the degree of immunity they enjoy. Despite the Israeli referee admitting to his crimes and publishing photos to substantiate his own guilt, the international judo governing body has yet to initiate an action against him.

For the record, Leopold completed his IJF A-Examination in mid-June 2022 in Madrid, Spain, alongside 13 other ICJ referees. In 2017, he officiated at the IJF Junior World Tour, the European Cup for Seniors, and the IJF Cadets World Tour, all held in Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia, respectively.

The following year, he presided over seven events across various countries, including Turkey, Switzerland, Russia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Portugal, the Czech Republic, and Belarus.

In 2019, his officiating roster expanded further, encompassing the World Cup - Continental Open in Austria, the European Cup for Seniors in Croatia, and IJF Junior World Tours in both Austria and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In 2020, Leopold officiated in the World Cup - Continental Open in Oberwart, Austria.

In 2022, he refereed five important events, including the World Cup - Continental Open in Poland, the IJF Junior World Tour in Italy, the IJF Junior World Tour in France, the European Junior Championships in the Czech Republic, and the European U23 Championships in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In 2023, just months before the outbreak of the Israeli genocidal war on Gaza, he continued his officiating duties, overseeing the World Cup - Continental Open in Poland, the IJF Junior World Tour in Portugal, the World Cup - Continental Open in Spain, and the European Cadet Championships in Portugal, leaving the calls for boycott unaddressed.

"Are these the values that Kano Shihan espoused when he established our sport? How can you make this sit with judo core values," one X user wrote, urging a ban on Leopold and other Israeli referees. Shihan (Jigaro) was a Japanese educator, and politician -- recognized as the founder of judo sport.

Notably, Algerian judoka Fethi Nourine and his coach were in 2021 suspended for 10 years by the ICJ after refusing to face an Israeli judoka and withdrawing from the Tokyo Olympics.

The IJF said the pair used the Olympic Games "as a platform for protest and promotion of political and religious propaganda" to justify the harsh penalty against the two Algerians.

Activists say the same yardstick is not applied to Israel at a time when many judokas have been directly or indirectly involved in war crimes against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

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