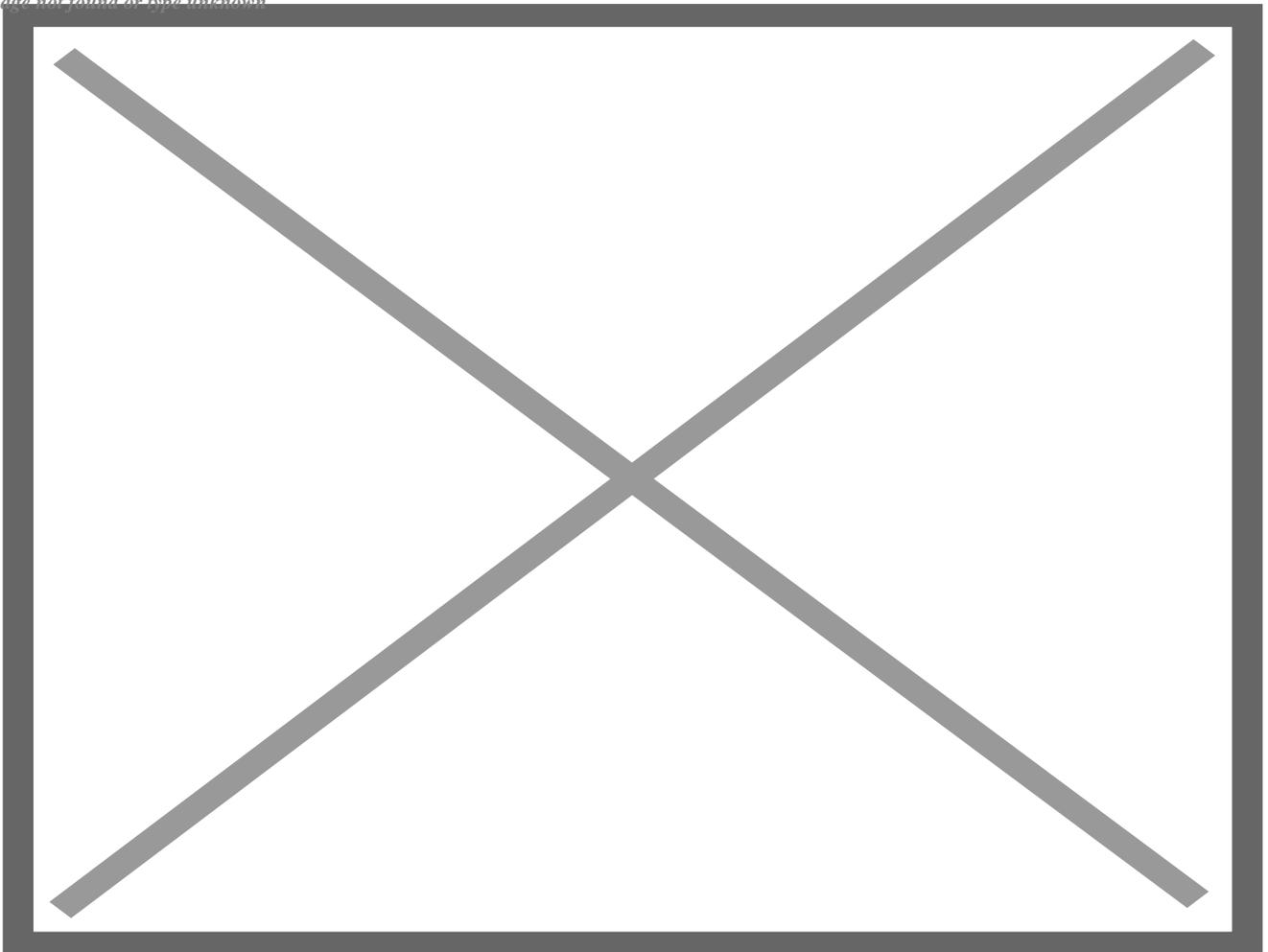


Palestine football criticizes planned Barcelona game in Jerusalem

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Rajoub said the accompanying events for the planned match include activities that 'constitute a violation of our rights' [File: Michael Buholzer/AFP]

Ramallah, July 9 (RHC)-- The Palestinian Football Association (PFA) has criticised a planned exhibition match in Jerusalem involving Spanish side Barcelona. In a letter to the world governing body FIFA, PFA

chairman Jibril Rajoub said Jerusalem has been declared a divided city in a United Nations resolution and that Barcelona's planned opponents Beitar Jerusalem are a racist club.

"Although we do not have the right to tell any club how to organise its friendly matches, we have the right to object to the choice of Jerusalem as the venue for the proposed match," Rajoub said in the letter, which was also addressed to football's European and Asian governing bodies, UEFA and AFC.

"According to international law, Jerusalem is a divided city and its eastern part is considered occupied Palestinian land, which gives the Palestinian Football Association jurisdiction over any football activities that take place in this part," he continued.

Rajoub went on to say that the accompanying events for the planned match include activities scheduled to take place within the Old City of occupied East Jerusalem, which "constitute a violation of our rights."

The match on August 4 is planned in the Malha district, the site of a Palestinian village that was ethnically cleansed by Zionist paramilitaries in the run-up to the establishment of Israel in 1948.

The club, which is former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's favorite, has gained notoriety for the racism of its fans and their "deaths to Arabs" chants. The club's ultras, known as La Familia, pride themselves on never having a Palestinian or Arab player on its roster.

Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Nahyan, a member of the Abu Dhabi ruling family, had acquired a 50 percent stake in Beitar but it was frozen due to questions over the sheikh's finances.

The team had previously said Sheikh Hamad has pledged to invest 300 million shekels (\$92m) in the club over the next 10 years. In the past, Rajoub had also opposed Argentina's national team playing in Jerusalem. That 2018 game was cancelled but FIFA banned Rajoub for 12 months for inciting hatred and violence after he called for shirts and posters of Lionel Messi to be burned should the game be held.

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