

# *Jordanians boycott sports event over hosting 13 Israelis*

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**A man walks past a graffiti with text in Arabic reading “no to normalization” and “normalization is betrayal”, along a street of al-Khalil in the occupied West Bank. (Photo by AFP)**

Amman, February 19 (RHC)-- In a vast social media campaign, Jordanians have vehemently rejected efforts aimed at what they described as “cultural normalization” with Israelis, boycotting a sports event that hosted a number of Israeli settlers. Several pro-Palestinian groups demanded the withdrawal of Jordanian and Arab participants from the Jordan Baja Rally over the participation of 13 Israeli settlers in the two-day sports event.

Jordanian activists on social media warned of their country’s attempts to normalize relations with Israelis. In a collective act of solidarity with the Palestinian cause, Jordanians took to social media to ask “How on

earth are we okay with welcoming [the Israelis] here?" and tell their government "enough with the selling of the blood of the martyrs of Jordan and Palestine."

Pro-Palestinian groups denounced the event and called on the sponsors to withdraw from it. They later announced and welcomed the withdrawal of a number of participants.

"After Roya TV and the Hamada chain of restaurants, Rababa Games, the sponsor and supporter of the Jordanian racer Saif Al-Abadi, announced the cancellation of its participation in the Baja Rally. All respect and appreciation," Ataharak, a group aimed at supporting the resistance and countering normalization, tweeted in Arabic.

Other pro-Palestinian groups also called for the boycott of the event and lauded those who withdrew. The Jordanian branch of the global Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement condemned the hosting of 13 Israeli participants in the rally, stressing the necessity of refusing to normalize and cooperate with the occupying regime in any form.

"We call on all sponsors of the race, from the sports committees, media institutions, hotels, and restaurants to reject normalization out of respect for the Palestinian cause and the stance of the Arab people," BDS Jordan said.

It hailed the withdrawals as a "victory for the popular will" and a "clear message" to the rest of the sponsors, saying there will be economic consequences for continuing to sponsor normalization activities.

The Boycott for Palestine movement said the hashtag #??????\_????\_????, which translates as "Stop the Baja Rally!" tops the trends lists on social media platforms in Jordan. "The rising popular discontent [is shown] in refusing to host 13 players from the occupation entity in the sports event, while the withdrawals of national institutions from sponsoring this normalization event continue amid calls to keep the pressure," Boycott for Palestine wrote in a tweet on Friday.

A user posted a photo of Hamada's restaurant and said he was having dinner there because of its "respectful stance" and "rejection of normalization." "Today's dinner from Hamada's restaurant because of its respectful stance and rejection of normalization, in the hope that the boycott movement against Zionists and Zionist goods will develop to form support funds for the boycott, to compensate every employer, athlete, or artist who incurs a financial loss because of his stance on normalization," he said.

Palestinian resistance movement Hamas reacted to the developments and thanked the Jordanian people and groups' support and their anti-normalization stance. "These positions of the Jordanian people, media, and business circles are in line with the faith and belief of the people of this country, who believe in the need to support the Palestinian people and al-Quds and al-Aqsa Mosque," Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem said.

Maher Salah, a senior Hamas official, said the Jordanians' anti-normalization activities in recent days showed the deep-rooted authenticity of "our brotherly Jordanian people."

Salah pointed out that the Zionist regime's efforts over many years to brainwash the rising Jordanian generations have been ignored by the Jordanian people, who, he said, emerged victorious despite the extent of temptations and pressures that they were subject to.

He further said Hamas salutes such supportive stances, adding that it confirmed that the brotherly Jordanian people are still faithful toward the Palestinian cause.



**Radio Habana Cuba**