

Ireland shuns handshake with Israel at basketball qualifier

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The Ireland women's basketball team refuses to shake hands with their Israeli opponents ahead of the EuroBasket qualifier on February 8, 2024.

Riga, February 9 (RHC)-- The Ireland women's basketball team have refused to shake hands with their Israeli opponents ahead of the EuroBasket qualifier, in response to accusations of anti-Semitism by an

Israeli player.

In an interview published by the Israeli basketball association, Israel's player Dor Saar had said of Ireland: "It's known that they are quite anti-Semitic and it's no secret, and maybe that's why a strong game is expected."

Basketball Ireland reported the "inflammatory and wholly inaccurate" accusation to governing body FIBA Europe, and decided to shun traditional pre-match courtesies with the Israeli team.

"Basketball Ireland informed FIBA Europe yesterday that as a direct result of recent comments made by Israeli players and coaching staff — including inflammatory and wholly inaccurate accusations of anti-Semitism, published on official Israeli federation channels — that our players will not be partaking in traditional pre-match arrangements with our upcoming opponents," a statement read on Thursday.

"This includes exchanging of gifts, formal handshakes before or after the game, while our players will line up for the national anthem by our bench, rather than center court. Basketball Ireland fully supports our players in their decision."

That came while Ireland was urged to boycott the match over Israel's war on Gaza, but Basketball Ireland said it was told by FIBA Europe that the Irish team would face sanctions if it failed to fulfill this fixture. Several Irish players, however, opted not to travel to Riga.

The EuroBasket 2025 qualifier was held on Thursday in Latvia. The game was originally due to take place in Israel late last year, but was postponed due to the ongoing war on Gaza and moved to a neutral venue in Riga.

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