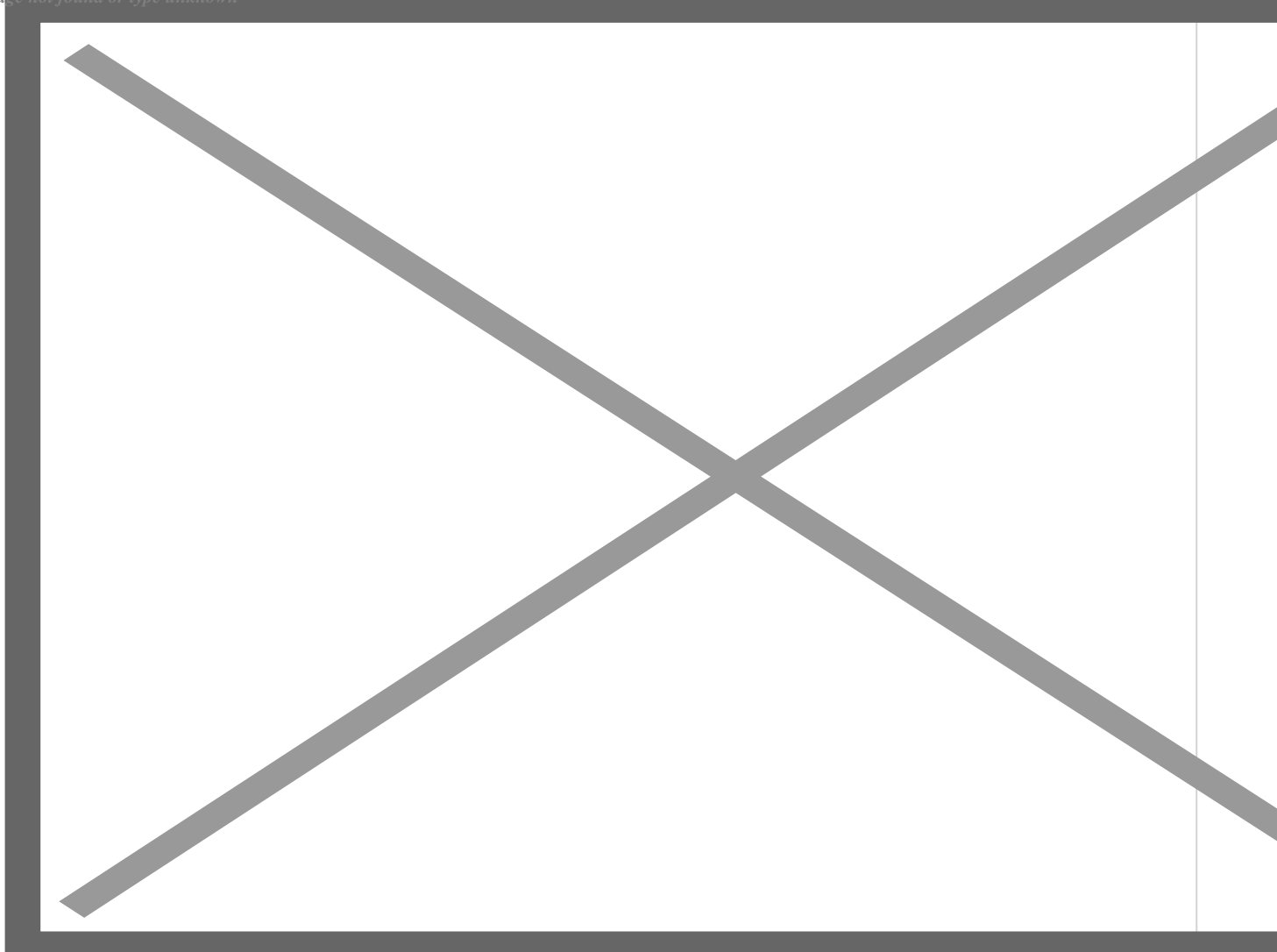


Iceland's football coach hesitates to face Israel in Euro playoff amid Gaza genocide

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Reikiavik, March 9 (RHC)-- The head coach of Iceland's national football team says he "hesitates" to play with Israel in the Euro 2024 playoff match due to the ongoing Israeli atrocities against the Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip.

Norwegian Åge Hareide said that he "hesitates" to play with Israel but the nation cannot reject the match over the fear of punishment by UEFA. "I would hesitate to play Israel, as it stands now. Because of what is going on in Gaza, and because of what they have done to women, children and other innocent citizens. It shouldn't be done, and we shouldn't be playing this game if you ask me."

"It's very, very difficult, and it's difficult for me to have to stop thinking about these images that we see every day," he added. "If we don't play we will be banned and risk further punishment by not playing another member nation," he said.

The Football Association of Iceland has also confirmed they will compete in the playoff match on March 21 in Budapest, Hungary.

The remarks come as there have been growing calls to ban the regime's football teams over the ongoing genocide in Gaza where more than 30,800 people have been killed by Israeli strikes since October 7th. A group of twelve football associations called on FIFA to ban Israel from global participation in the sport two months ago.

The efforts called on FIFA to take a "decisive stand" against Israel. However, Israel has not been banned from international football following by UEFA or FIFA. This is while the world football governing body banned Russia following the eruption war with Ukraine in early 2022.

Meanwhile, Puma announced that it would end its sponsorship of sports kits to the Israeli football team next year, a spokesperson for the German firm said in December. "Two newly signed national teams will be announced later this year and in 2024, the contracts of some federations such as Serbia and Israel will expire in 2024," Puma's spokesperson said in a statement emailed to media.

Due to the partnership between Puma and the Israeli team, according to the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC), the German company had lost millions of pounds worth of business deals in the UK alone.

<https://www.radiohc.cu/index.php/en/noticias/deportes/349290-icelands-football-coach-hesitates-to-face-israel-in-euro-playoff-amid-gaza-genocide>



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