

Algerian judoka withdraws from Paris Olympics to avoid facing Israeli opponent

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Paris, July 29 (RHC)-- Algerian judoka Messaoud Redouane Dris has withdrawn from his first match of the 2024 Paris Olympics after being selected to compete against Israeli judoka Tohar Butbul. The International Judo Federation issued a brief statement on Sunday, declaring Butbul the winner by walkover.

Dris was officially disqualified for missing weight on the day before he was scheduled to take on Butbul. The match was scheduled to be the first in the men's 73-kilogram division on Monday.

This is the second straight Olympics in which an Algerian judoka drops out of the games right before he is to face Butbul. In Tokyo Games in 2021, Algeria's Fethi Nourine withdrew to avoid a potential second-round matchup with Butbul.

Nourine explicitly cited his support for Palestine in announcing his decision after which he and his coach, Amar Benikhlef, were suspended for 10 years by the International Judo Federation in September 2021.

Algeria does not officially recognize Israel as a country.

Israel's presence at the Paris Games has stirred protests at various points over the regime's genocidal war on the besieged Gaza Strip. However, defying the global outcry against Israel's participation in the Paris Games, the International Olympic Committee and the French government have firmly backed the regime.

Before the games began, a U.S.-based rights advocacy group said Israel should be barred from the Olympic Games Paris 2024 over a recent ruling by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) about the occupying regime's barbaric crimes against Palestinians in Gaza.

Fadi Quran, the executive director at Avaaz nonprofit organization, made the statement in a social media post last Tuesday following an ICJ advisory opinion asserting that Israel is committing apartheid and systematic discrimination against Palestinians and has effectively annexed large portions of their territory through its occupation.

Iran has also condemned Israel's participation in the Olympic Games over its months-long genocidal war against Palestinians in Gaza. "Announcing the reception and protection of the Apartheid and terrorist Zionist regime's convoy only means giving legitimacy to the child killers. They do not deserve to be present at the Paris Olympics because of the war against the innocent people of Gaza," the Iranian Foreign Ministry said in a post on X.

Israeli Olympians arrived in Paris amid mounting international outrage over the high Palestinian civilian casualties and the unfolding humanitarian crisis in the besieged and bombarded Palestinian territory.

Israel's bloody onslaught on Gaza has claimed the lives of 39,324 Palestinians so far, most of them women and children, while leaving 90,830 others injured.

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