CANADIAN MUSLIM PUBLIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL

CMPAC Commentary: Canada Must Apply Its Restrictions on State Representation in International Sport Consistently Including to Israel

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The Canadian Muslim Public Affairs Council (CMPAC) notes the Government of Canada's November 3, 2026, reaffirmation of its position restricting Russian and Belarusian national representation in international sporting competitions. In its statement, Canada expressly recognized the role that international sport can play in conferring political legitimacy, prestige, and international standing upon states engaged in serious violations of international law.

CMPAC maintains that the principles articulated by the Government of Canada must be applied consistently, including in relation to Israel, whose conduct in the Occupied Palestinian Territory has been the subject of extensive findings by United Nations investigative bodies and international judicial proceedings, leading to conclusions of genocide.

I. Canada's Recent Position on State Representation in International Sport

In its November 3 statement, the Government of Canada reaffirmed its opposition to Russian and Belarusian athletes competing under their respective national symbols, citing Russia's continuing aggression against Ukraine and Belarus's complicity.

Canada further outlined measures restricting official national representation at international sporting events hosted on Canadian soil, including the exercise of immigration authorities and conditions attached to federal funding.

II. The Legal Basis for Applying Comparable Restrictions to Israel

The situation in Gaza and the Occupied Palestinian Territory presents reasonable grounds for Canada to apply the same policy considerations to Israeli national representation.

In September 2025, the United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel concluded that Israeli authorities and security forces had committed genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. In October 2026, the Commission reaffirmed its findings concerning the continuation of genocidal acts and genocidal intent.

These findings must also be considered within the broader framework of international law, including the obligations arising under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The International Court of Justice in its July 19, 2024 advisory opinion,determined that Israel's continued presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is unlawful and that states have

obligations not to recognize as lawful, or render aid or assistance in maintaining, the situation arising from that unlawful presence.

Moreover, the International Court of Justice's provisional measures in the proceedings instituted by South Africa against Israel underscore the seriousness of the rights at issue under the Genocide Convention and the obligation to prevent.

These findings establish a substantial basis for Canada to reassess policies and practices that may confer official recognition, prestige, or political legitimacy upon the Israeli state.

Canada's international legal obligations, including its duty to prevent genocide and its obligations concerning the unlawful situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, must inform its foreign policy decisions.

III. Israeli National Representation at Sporting Events in Canada

Despite these developments, Israeli national teams, delegations, and athletes competing under Israeli national designations have continued to participate in international sporting events hosted in Canada.

These include Israel's national tennis team at the September 2025 Davis Cup competition in Halifax; an Israeli national delegation at the 2025 Invictus Games in Vancouver–Whistler; and Israeli athletes competing under the ISR designation at the 2025 World Archery Youth Championships in Winnipeg.

These examples raise a fundamental question concerning the coherence and consistency of Canada's approach.

If Canada recognizes that official participation in international sport can function as a vehicle for state legitimacy, prestige, and political normalization, it must explain why equivalent policy considerations have not resulted in comparable restrictions on Israeli national representation.

The continued distinction between Canada's treatment of Russian and Belarusian representation and its treatment of Israeli representation risks undermining the credibility of its stated commitment to a principled, rules-based international order.

IV. Policy Recommendations and Proposed Measures

CMPAC calls upon the Government of Canada to extend the principles underlying its restrictions on Russian and Belarusian national representation to Israel, including by:

1. **Restricting official Israeli national representation** at international sporting events hosted in Canada, including the participation of national teams, official delegations, and athletes competing under Israeli national symbols, subject to applicable Canadian and international law.

2. **Applying consistent federal funding conditions** to international sporting competitions hosted in Canada, ensuring that public resources are not used to facilitate official state representation that contradicts Canada's stated policy concerning serious violations of international law.
3. **Reviewing relevant immigration and administrative measures**, within the scope of existing statutory authority and procedural safeguards, to determine how comparable restrictions on official national representation may lawfully be implemented.
4. **Establishing transparent, objective and consistently applied criteria** for determining when official state representation in international sport should be restricted, grounded in credible findings of serious violations of international law and subject to periodic review.

These measures should distinguish between official state representation and individual participation in a genuinely neutral capacity, consistent with Canada's own approach to Russian and Belarusian athletes.

CMPAC emphasizes that the proposed restrictions concern state representation and institutional accountability, not the nationality, religion, or personal identity of individual athletes. Canada's commitment to international law must be reflected in a coherent and consistent approach to all states, without exception.

CMPAC therefore calls on the Government of Canada to ensure that Israeli national representation in sports events is subject to comparable restrictions for as long as the underlying grounds for such measures persist, including continuing serious violations of international law and the absence of meaningful accountability.