

January 22, 2019

Mr. Andrew Parsons
President
International Paralympic Committee
Adenauerallee 212-214
53113 Bonn
Germany

Dear Mr. Parsons,

The ADL is a 105-year-old American anti-hate organization with a mission to “fight the defamation of the Jewish people and secure justice and fair treatment for all.”

We are deeply disturbed by the Malaysian government’s public refusal to host any events involving Israeli athletes, particularly their ban on Israeli swimmers participating in Malaysian-hosted international para swimming competition scheduled for July 2019.

According to reports, Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah told the Malaysian cabinet that, in solidarity with the Palestinians, no Israeli delegates will be allowed to enter Malaysia for sporting or any other events. And in response to pressure from the International Paralympic Committee (IPC), Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad indicated he would prefer that the IPC move the event to another location rather than let Israeli athletes into the country.

The politicization of sporting events has unfortunately become an all too frequent occurrence for Israeli athletes. Indeed, in recent years Malaysia has refused to accommodate Israeli athletes, including denying Israeli windsurfers a visa for a 2015 competition and forfeiting hosting a 2017 FIFA conference due to the inclusion of an Israeli delegation.

There have also been more positive outcomes involving Israeli athletes in sporting competitions in other countries. In July 2018, the International Judo Federation (IJF) stripped the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Tunisia from hosting international tournaments due to their refusal to allow equal treatment for Israeli competitors. The decision was taken following previous Judo competitions hosted by the UAE and Tunisia where Israeli symbols and the playing of the Israeli national anthem had been banned. And in December 2018, Saudi Arabia was barred by the FIDE chess federation from hosting a tournament because of the Saudi refusal to allow two Israeli chess players to compete in the prior years’ tournament.

The actions taken by the IJF and FIDE are models of how international sporting bodies should deal with host countries who discriminate against athletes because of their nationality. Indeed, the IJF’s firm position on the issue is what persuaded the UAE hosts

to relent and finally ensure the fair treatment of Israeli athletes at the Abu Dhabi Grand Slam judo tournament this past fall.

We note the IPC's strong statements condemning the stance of the Malaysian government, and ongoing efforts to rectify this matter. The anti-Israel statements and policies of the Malaysian government are offensive and unfair, and grossly violate the non-political competitive nature of international sporting events.

The IPC and Paralympic athletes are international role models for the values of inclusion and diversity. In light of this, should Malaysia refuse to reverse its discriminatory policies, we strongly urge the IPC to move the tournament to another country. For future tournaments, we would also encourage the IPC to require all prospective host countries to agree to permit all competitors to participate regardless of their nationality prior to hosting rights being awarded.

I look forward to your reply on this matter.

Sincerely,

Jonathan A. Greenblatt

CEO