

Paris Olympic Games: the opening ceremony today. Israeli and Palestinian athletes face fears of attacks and politics

Eight Palestinian athletes will compete at the Paris Olympics from 26 July to 11 August 2024. Seven of them have been invited by the IOC. Only one Palestinian athlete, Omar Ismail, has qualified for the Games in taekwondo. The remaining athletes will compete in track and field, swimming, judo, boxing and shooting. Israel will be represented by 88 athletes, including footballers who qualified for the Olympics for the first time in almost half a century at the UEFA European Under-21 Championship last summer. In addition to football, the Israeli athletes will compete in judo, archery, rifle shooting, badminton and fencing. The Israeli delegation includes Jewish and Arab athletes from all over Israel. They are under round-the-clock protection by French security services and Shin Bet officials due to threats related to the Gaza war. Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz raised the alarm in a letter to his French counterpart Stéphane Séjourné, warning of a potential Iranian-backed plot against the Israeli team, Israeli media reported.



[The Paris Games will be held at the height of the conflict in Gaza that broke out following the terrorist attack of 7 October 2023, between Israeli forces on one side and Hamas on the other. Last autumn's UN resolution calling for an Olympic Truce was in vain. The Truce is a tradition dating back to the ancient Greece, where in the 9th century BC the kings of the region signed a treaty to ensure the safe participation of all athletes and spectators in the ancient Olympic Games. According to custom, the Olympic Truce, or "Ekecheiria", halted the fighting for seven days before the beginning of the Games until seven days after they closed. The resolution, entitled "Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal", was adopted with 118 votes in favour and two abstentions. Pope Francis also mentioned the Games during his Angelus prayer, expressing the hope that: "this event may be a sign of the inclusive world we wish to build. According to the ancient tradition, may the Olympic Games be an opportunity to establish a truce in wars, demonstrating a sincere desire for peace."](#)



[That wish is bound to fall on deaf ears, including at the Paris Olympic Games, due to kick off on Friday evening \(19:30\) with the Opening Ceremony that, for the first time in history, will be held not in a stadium but on the banks of the River Seine with a global TV and Internet audience of 1.5 billion people. Around 8,000 athletes \(out of more than 11,000 competing\) from 206 different National Olympic Committees will take part in a parade of 94 boats along a 6-kilometre stretch of river before a crowd of more than 300,000 spectators in the presence of the IOC and International Olympic Committee chiefs, French President Emmanuel Macron and the heads of state and government of several countries, among them Sergio Mattarella. The boats will pass near historical monuments such as Notre-Dame and the Louvre.](#)

