
Paris 2024 Olympic Games. Jayousi (head of the Palestinian delegation): “To bring the resilient spirit of Gaza’s children in the competition”

Palestine is taking part in the ongoing Olympic Games in Paris (26 July - 11 August) with eight athletes. This will be Palestine's eighth appearance in the history of the Olympic Games, made all the more significant by the ongoing war in Gaza between Israel and Hamas. The choice of swimmer Valerie Tarazi as one of the two flag bearers at the opening ceremony along the Seine River was no coincidence. She was chosen, **Nader Jayousi**, deputy secretary-general of the Palestinian Olympic Committee and head of the delegation in Paris, told SIR, “because she belongs to one of the oldest families in Gaza. The pride and courage for Palestine that emanates from her shows that Gaza has always nurtured sporting talents.” Boxer Waseem Abu Sal from Ramallah was the second flag bearer, “chosen because he trains in Palestine, which reflects our country's improved sport training capacities for competing in such an important sporting event.” Of the eight athletes competing, seven are there on invitation from the IOC, while only one, Omar Ismail, has qualified in men's taekwondo. Jayousi is proud of his team. In addition to the two flag bearers and Omar Ismail, who was born in Jenin but was raised in the United Arab Emirates, the team includes, as he proudly points out, "Faris Badawi, a judoka who lives in Germany and represents the Palestinian diaspora, Mohammed Dwedar from Jericho, a 800m specialist like Layla Almasri, a US-based athlete with roots in Nablus, shooter Jorge Salhe, a Palestinian who lives in Chile, and swimmer Yazan Al-Bawab.”



[It means many things. First and foremost, it illustrates the progress of Palestinian sports. We may not win any medals in the current Games, but we are confident that we will win gold in the next Olympics. Additionally, our presence in Paris allows us to defend and protect our national identity from the threats we currently face. The participation of our delegation, comprising athletes representing Palestinians from the West Bank, Jerusalem, Gaza and the diaspora, in this major sporting event, is a source of pride for us. All our athletes have been displaced from their homes. This is an opportunity to celebrate our national identity by bringing together all facets of Palestine. Last but not least, our aim in Paris is to show the world how strong, determined and resilient the Palestinian people are.](#)

[We are not looking for sympathy, we want people to stand in solidarity with us and our just cause.](#)

[The competitions have already begun. Fares Badawi will take to the tatami this morning, while boxer Wasim Abusal ended his first Olympic experience after losing to his Swedish counterpart Ibrahim Nabil. Swimmer Al-Bawab, who finished third in his backstroke heat, failed to qualify. What is the spirit of these athletes? The spirit of a combative Palestinian, a never-die, never-surrender spirit. It's the resilient spirit of the Palestinian children of Gaza: the athletes know that they are fulfilling the dreams of our children in Gaza and throughout Palestine. It's the dream of every Palestinian who is striving to experience a moment of peace. How has the war affected Palestinian sport? What are the consequences? It has had a major impact due to the total closure of all Palestinian sports activities. In addition, our athletes should have been training and practicing for the Olympic qualifying rounds, but they were deprived of this right due to the movement restrictions imposed by Israel. This had a major impact on their performance. Finally we are here, and our athletes have a strong and adaptable spirit that has helped them overcome the challenges they have faced over the past six months, with their gaze fixed on the flag and the Palestinian people.](#)



[Sport is a universal language between nations and it is our fervent hope that it will also become a tool for peace in these hard and difficult times that we are facing as Palestinian people.](#)

[Daniele Rocchi](#)