



FIDE ETHICS AND DISCIPLINARY COMMISSION

APPEAL CHAMBER

The EDC Appeal Chamber, sitting in the following composition –

Chairperson: Mrs. Yolander Persaud

Members: Mr. Khaled Arfa
Mr. Ali Nihat Yazici

In accordance with Article 26.4 of the FIDE Charter, hereby renders the following:

DECISION

CASE NO: 04/2025 (A): ALLEGED BOYCOTTING OF THE MATCH (WOMEN'S SECTION) AGAINST ISRAEL BY THE CHESS FEDERATION OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN DURING THE 45TH FIDE CHESS OLYMPIAD IN BUDAPEST, 2024.

1. This is an appeal against the Decision of the EDC First Instance Chamber (per David Hater, Ravindra Dongre, Olga Baskakova) dated 9th January 2026.
2. In the First Instance Decision, the EDC found that the Iranian Chess Federation had deliberately boycotted the scheduled match of its Women's Team against the Israel Women's Team during the final round of the 45th FIDE Chess Olympiad 2024. The First Instance Chamber further concluded that such conduct constituted discrimination based on national origin, in breach of Article 4.4 of the FIDE Charter and Article 6.6 of the FIDE Ethics & Disciplinary Code and imposed a fine of €25,000 upon the Respondent.

3. The Parties:

3.1. The Appellant is **the Chess Federation of Islamic Republic of Iran.**

3.2. The Respondent is the **Israel Chess Federation.**

4. Admissibility of Appeal

The Appellant's statement of Appeal dated 28th January 2026 was received by the EDC on 28th January 2026, within the permissible appeal period and complied otherwise with the formal requirements for the admissibility of an internal appeal before the EDC Appeal Chamber. Accordingly, the Appellant's appeal is declared admissible.

5. Factual Background

5.1. This appeal arises from the final round of the 45th FIDE Chess Olympiad, held in Budapest, Hungary, on 22 September 2024.

5.2. The Iranian Women's Team was paired to play against the Israeli Women's Team. It is undisputed that the Iranian Women's Team did not appear for the scheduled match, which was consequently recorded as a 4–0 forfeit in favor of the Israeli Women's Team.

5.3. Following a complaint submitted by the Israel Chess Federation, disciplinary proceedings were initiated before the First Instance Chamber of the FIDE Ethics & Disciplinary Commission. The complaint alleged that the failure of the Iranian Women's Team to appear constituted a deliberate boycott in violation of the FIDE Charter and the FIDE Ethics & Disciplinary Code.

5.4. The Iranian Chess Federation denied the allegation of boycott and maintained that the team's failure to appear resulted from circumstances unrelated to any intention to refuse to compete.

6. Grounds of Appeal

In its Notice of Appeal, the Iranian Chess Federation challenged both the factual findings and the legal conclusions reached by the First Instance Chamber. It argued, inter alia, that the Women's Team had intended to play but arrived only a few minutes late (as evidenced by the taxi receipt submitted which specifies the exact arrival time of the women's team) due to circumstances beyond its control, that the evidence was insufficient to establish a deliberate boycott or any instruction attributable to the Federation, and that the sanction imposed was disproportionate. The Iranian Chess Federation denied the allegation of boycott and maintained that the team's failure to

appear resulted from circumstances unrelated to any intention to refuse to compete. The Appellant further submitted that neither the Federation nor any of its representatives had ever declared, publicly or otherwise, any intention or policy to boycott the match and that no public statement or other evidence existed demonstrating such an intention. The Appellant therefore requested that the First Instance Decision be set aside.

7. Response to Appeal

In its Response to the Appeal, the Israel Chess Federation submitted that the Appeal was devoid of merit and should be dismissed. It maintained that the First Instance Chamber had correctly established both the relevant facts and the applicable law, that the Appellant had failed to identify any material error of fact or law, and that the evidence clearly demonstrated a deliberate refusal by the Iranian Women's Team to compete against Israel. The Respondent therefore requested that the First Instance Decision be upheld in its entirety and further sought reimbursement of the filing fee and an award of the costs incurred in the proceedings.

8. Discussion

The present appeal concerns an allegation of boycott. The Appeal Chamber considers that, before assessing the facts of the present case, it is necessary to determine the proper legal meaning of the concept of a "**boycott**". As neither the FIDE Charter nor the FIDE Ethics & Disciplinary Code provides a definition of that term, the Chamber considers that identifying its accepted legal meaning is an essential preliminary step towards the proper determination of the issues raised in this appeal.

8.1. The Legal Concept of a Boycott

Neither the FIDE Charter nor the FIDE Ethics & Disciplinary Code defines the term *boycott*. The Appeal Chamber therefore considers it necessary to interpret the concept in accordance with its ordinary legal meaning, the purpose of the relevant disciplinary provisions and generally accepted principles of legal interpretation.

Although the term *boycott* is frequently used in legal, political and public discourse, legal scholarship has observed that no universally accepted legal definition exists. Following a comprehensive review of legislation, judicial decisions, legal dictionaries and academic literature, Aharoni-Goldenberg and Leisman proposed the following definition:

"A boycott is an intentional refusal to participate in a certain activity as a voluntary statement of disapproval that targets the disapproved-of party."

(Sharona Aharoni-Goldenberg & Gerry Leisman, "Boycott" – A Proposed Legal Definition Put to Test, 41 Hofstra Labor & Employment Law Journal 91- 2024)

The same authors further observed that: *"Simply labeling a certain behavior as a 'boycott' does not make it one."*

The Appeal Chamber finds this analysis persuasive. In the Chamber's view, the defining characteristic of a boycott is not merely the fact that participation did not occur but the existence of a **specific intention** to refuse participation as an expression of disapproval directed at the particular opponent or target. This intentional element is also apparent from Article 11.5(c), whose reference to “inciting a boycott” and withdrawing from a FIDE Competition without a valid reason presupposes a deliberate decision not to participate.

Accordingly, the Chamber considers that the mere fact that a player or team does not participate in a scheduled sporting event does not, in itself, establish the existence of a boycott.

Equally, the existence or absence of such intention cannot be determined solely on the basis of the explanation subsequently offered by the player, team, or federation concerned. Rather, the Chamber must assess all the objective circumstances of the particular case to determine whether the conduct, viewed as a whole, demonstrates the specific intention required to constitute a boycott.

Chamber finds that, while every boycott essentially involves a refusal to participate, a refusal to participate does not always constitute a boycott.

Accordingly, a boycott constitutes misconduct under Article 6.6 of the Code only if it is intended to discriminate on the basis of race, gender, ethnic origin, colour, culture, religion, political opinion, marital status, sexual orientation or any unfair or other irrelevant factor, except as permitted by law.

8.2. **Assessment of the Evidence**

Having established the legal elements required for a violation of Article 6.6 of the Code, the Appeal Chamber must assess whether the evidence before it satisfies the applicable standard of proof.

The Chamber first observes that it is undisputed that the Iranian Women's Team did not appear for its scheduled match against the Israeli Women's Team. That fact,

however, is not determinative of the legal characterization of the conduct.

The central question is whether the evidence establishes, to the comfortable satisfaction, that the team's non-participation constituted a boycott as defined above. In the Chamber's view, the available evidence does not permit such a conclusion.

The Respondent submitted as primary evidence a taxi receipt establishing their team's travel and indicating the times of departure and arrival at the competition venue; the stated arrival time was 11:24, which is subsequent to the expiration of the tolerance period of 15 minutes.

A discriminatory boycott constitutes an intentional failure to appear; however, failing to play due to arriving late and beyond the allotted time limit, at which point the match had already been declared a forfeit, represents an entirely different circumstance; Such a situation precludes the finding of a clear and unequivocal intent to commit an intentional act of boycott within the meaning of Article 6.16 of the Code of Ethics.

Having carefully reviewed the record, the complainant's allegations and evidence presented by both parties, the Appeal Chamber **finds** that the respondents' women team conduct does not support a conclusion of guilt to the comfortable satisfaction and **concludes** that the evidentiary basis is insufficient to sustain the finding that the Iranian Chess Federation organized, instructed or endorsed a boycott of the scheduled match, and is therefore should not be held responsible.

Despite the above conclusion, The Appeal Chamber considers that every member federation participating in a FIDE competition bears responsibility for ensuring that its official delegation complies with the obligations arising under the FIDE Charter, the FIDE Ethics & Disciplinary Code and the applicable competition regulations.

In the present case, the pairing between the Iranian Women's Team and the Israeli Women's Team was known in advance. Regardless of the reason for the team's eventual non-participation, the Federation should reasonably have anticipated that any failure of its official team to appear for such a scheduled Olympiad match would inevitably give rise to serious disciplinary concerns and would likely be perceived as a refusal to compete.

The Chamber therefore considers that, under the particular circumstances of this case, the Federation was under a heightened obligation to take all reasonable organizational measures to ensure that its official delegation arrived at the playing venue in sufficient

time to participate in the match. The Chamber is not satisfied that the Federation discharged that responsibility with the degree of diligence required in the circumstances.

The Appeal Chamber further emphasizes that this conclusion is independent of the identity of the opposing federation. The same principles would apply irrespective of the opponent. The failure of an official national team to appear for a scheduled match at a FIDE competition, where the federation has failed to exercise the necessary organizational diligence, is capable of constituting a disciplinary violation under the FIDE Ethics & Disciplinary Code.

8.3. Appropriate Disciplinary Consequences

Having concluded that the evidence is insufficient to establish a boycott within the meaning of Article 6.6 of the FIDE Ethics & Disciplinary Code, the Appeal Chamber must determine whether the conduct identified above nevertheless constitutes a disciplinary negligence under the Code.

The Appeal Chamber **finds** the Iranian Chess Federation **not guilty of violating Article 6.6 of the FIDE Ethics & Disciplinary Code**.

However, for the reasons set out in Section 8.2 above, the Appeal Chamber **finds** the Federation **guilty of violating Article 6.3 of the Code** (Human dignity and respect) as this must be regarded as a lesser transgression than discrimination, the EDC may sanction a respondent in accordance with said article even if it was not included in the initial charges notified to him (see precedent case 06/2023 paragraph 26), establishing the failure to ensure that its official delegation fulfilled its obligations towards its opponent and the competition, thereby failing to demonstrate the degree of respect expected under the FIDE Ethics & Disciplinary Code.

9. Decision

For the reasons set out above, the Appeal Chamber **unanimously decides** as follows:

- 9.1. The Appeal is allowed.
- 9.2. The Decision of the First Instance Chamber dated 9 January 2026 is set aside.
- 9.3. The Appeal Chamber finds the Iranian Chess Federation **not guilty of violating Article 6.6** of the FIDE Ethics & Disciplinary Code.
- 9.4. The Appeal Chamber finds the Iranian Chess Federation **guilty of violating**

Article 6.3 of the FIDE Ethics & Disciplinary Code.

- 9.5. The Iranian Chess Federation is sanctioned with a **Warning**.
- 9.6. The Israel Chess Federation's request for reimbursement of the filing fee is **dismissed**.
- 9.7. Each party shall bear its own costs.
- 9.8. This Decision shall enter into force upon notification to the parties.
- 10. In accordance with Article 17.2 and 17.4 of the EDC Code and Procedural Rule 73.1, this final decision of the Appeal Chamber is appealable to the CAS within 21 (twenty-one) days following communication of this decision.
- 11. The FIDE Office is requested to communicate this decision forthwith to the Parties and to publish the decision on the FIDE website in due course.

DATED ON THIS 12th day of September 2026.

Yolander Persaud

YOLANDER PERSAUD

APPEAL CHAMBER Chairperson

FIDE ETHICS & DISCIPLINARY COMMISSION