



Seagulls Against Apartheid,
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To: Mr Paul Barber, CEO & Deputy Chairman, BHAFC

Cc: Mr Tony Bloom, Chairman, BHAFC; Mr Ray Bloom, Non-Executive Director, BHAFC; Mr Paul Brown, Non-Executive Director, BHAFC; Mr Robert Comer, Non-Executive Director, BHAFC; Mr Lee Cooper, Finance Director, BHAFC; Mr Adam Franks, Non-Executive Director, BHAFC; Mr Peter Godfrey, Non-Executive Director, BHAFC; Ms Anna Jones, Non-Executive Director, BHAFC; Ms Michelle Walder, Non-Executive Director, BHAFC; Mr Paul Mullen, Chief Operating Officer, BHAFC; Mr Richard Valder-Davis, Head of Safeguarding, BHAFC; Mr Paul Camillin, Head of Media and Communications, BHAFC; Mr Lloyd Thomas, General Counsel BHAFC; Ms Rose Read, Head of People and Culture, BHAFC; Mr Joss Albert, DSO for the Academy, BHAFC; Holly Baker, DSO for the BHAFC Foundation; Kick It Out; Show Racism the Red Card

Thursday, 5 December 2024

Dear Chairmen, Directors and Officers,

Re: Academy Mentor and former footballer, Tomer Hemed

As anti-racists and supporters, season ticket holders or concerned members of the public we are writing to express our shock and dismay at social media posts sent by Tomer Hemed, the Academy Mentor of Brighton and Hove Albion Football Club ("the Club").

Ms Leyla Hamed¹, a sports and investigative journalist, reported that this individual posted the most extreme form of racist commentary on social media. He wished death and suffering upon the indigenous people of Palestine (the Palestinians). He stated :

"Human animals are not human!!! Monsters! Let them die a death of suffering!"

In a tweet on 14th October 2024 Ms Hamed quoted the above social media post and commented as follows:

"This is what Tomer Hemed, former Israeli footballer & current Brighton Academy mentor had to say about Palestinians facing a genocide."

"OfficialBHAFC @kickitout anything to say?"

We are aware that Ms Hamed contacted Mr Valder-Davis, Head of Safeguarding and Academy Player Care at the Club. She did not receive a response. Others also wrote in and were thanked for "offering" their "opinions". No reference was made to the comments or an internal investigation.

As far as we are aware the Club has not condemned any comments by Tomer Hemed nor sought to disassociate itself from them.

Any such comments are undoubtedly a breach of the Equality Act 2010 and the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (as amended). They bring into disrepute the Club, the players, the staff, the fans of the Club, Brighton and Hove as well the sport of football itself.

There can be no room for racism in sport and certainly no room for views which celebrate and appear to endorse genocide, death and suffering of innocent civilians in Palestine.

If the tables were turned and a footballer uttered words wishing death on Israeli civilians, these would be quickly dealt with by their club and the football authorities. Indeed, last October the Netherlands international Anwar El Ghazi posted on social media:

“Stand for what is right, even if it means standing alone”

There was no calling for Israelis to be killed in his statement – he was just showing support for Palestinians. However, the German Bundesliga team Mainz sacked him from his post in November 2023³.

Background

You will be aware of the background to these events, Palestine and Palestinians have been under occupation from a brutal, racist, apartheid regime since 1948.

Since October 2023 the Lancet medical journal estimates 186,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israel⁴. This is a genocide and decent people worldwide are able to see this. They also see this genocide being celebrated by sick individuals who identify with Israel's war crimes.

In the same way as people exposed and worked hard to defeat and undermine the brutal racist apartheid regime in South Africa, we are pleased to see so many people joining us to undermine and destroy apartheid, racism and white supremacy conducted and endorsed by the Israeli regime.

BHAFC Equality, Diversity and inclusion

On the [BHAFC Equality, Diversity & Inclusion web page](#) Brighton & Hove Albion FC professes to want tolerance and inclusion to be observed by its supporters, players and employees:

We celebrate and value the diversity brought by staff, applicants, supporters, participants on community programmes, and customers and believe we benefits from engaging with everyone from a variety of backgrounds, thus allowing us to meet the needs of a diverse population within a multi-cultural society. We share and are committed to the standards, values, and expectations set by the Premier League, the Football Association, the EFL, and Kick it Out, who each assert that football is for everyone and that it belongs to, and should be enjoyed by anyone who wants to participate in it, whether as a player, official, staff member or spectator.

We vow to treat everyone with respect and dignity and seek to provide a positive environment for all of our stakeholders, free from discrimination, harassment, victimisation or abuse. Our aim is to create a positive, inclusive ethos that will work towards the elimination of discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and abuse whether overt or covert.

Our aim is to confront and eliminate discrimination whether by reason of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, sex, sexual orientation, religion or belief. These are known as ‘protected characteristics’ under the Equality Act 2010.

This is very useful but these good intentions must be acted upon or they are meaningless. If someone within the club appears to put these values in jeopardy, you are obliged to deal with it.

I understand that the 'Kick it Out' anti-racist group have responded to Tomer Hemed's post and are starting their own investigation. I am sure that many other supporters would be eager to hear their conclusions and observations about the matter.

In addition to equality, diversity and inclusion there is also the huge question of safeguarding. The club has to ensure that employees who have contact with children are DBS checked. In this case, Tomer's racist and inflammatory comments will surely be flagged as a safeguarding issue with any child from an Arab/Muslim background. Can the club reassure all stakeholders that the Albion is a safe and "positive environment" that is "free from discrimination, harassment, victimisation or abuse" when one of its staff members has wished death upon a particular community?

We hope the club will make a statement and respond to the accusations contained in the original X/Twitter post from Leyla Hamed.

What is not acceptable is a continuing silence over this incident, and a hope that it will just 'go away'. As supporters we want the club to be expressly anti-racist and act in a transparent manner to communicate clearly what they are doing about this incident.

In our view the Club should:

1. Publicly condemn any racist comments by Tomer Hemed;
2. Publicly condemn anyone else holding or expressing such views within the Club;
3. Publicly disassociate themselves from Tomer Hemed and anyone else holding such views at the Club;
4. Ensure that the Club abides by legislation prohibiting hate speech and that those involved in the Club are aware of the importance of this.

Yours sincerely,

Seagulls Against Apartheid

Footnotes

1. Leyla Hamed has catalogued the huge number of Palestinian footballers and officials that have been killed during the current conflict and indeed, way before the October 7th attack. And yet there is no action from football governing bodies, and Israel is free to play on, whilst Russia were banned almost immediately following their invasion of Ukraine.

<https://x.com/leylahamed/status/1846881485330022546>

2. Leyla Hamed posted her response on X/Twitter. We are unable to view Tomer's account because he has made it private, but Seagulls Against Apartheid have seen screenshots of his original Instagram posts and can confirm that these are his comments.

<https://x.com/leylahamed/status/1845801539115385328>

3. A German court subsequently ruled that El Ghazi had been unfairly dismissed in July, and he is now plying his trade back in the UK with Cardiff City FC BBC Sport: Ex-Villa winger El Ghazi wins case against Mainz

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/articles/c4nq0wzlp68o>

4. The Lancet: Counting the dead in Gaza: difficult but essential

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(24\)01169-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(24)01169-3/fulltext)

SIGNATURES:

All **759** signatures collected so far have an email address linked – and all duplicates have been removed.

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Alisha
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Andrew Rusch
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