

OLYMPICS FAIL TO HONOR SLAIN ISRAELIS

Leading up to the start of the Summer Olympics, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) made the decision not to allow a moment of silence at the opening ceremony for the 11 Israeli athletes who were murdered by an arm of the Palestinian Liberation Front at the 1972 Munich games.

A few days before the games began, Olympic officials led a small gathering of attendees in a moment of silence in memory of the Munich massacre. If they were truly interested in honoring the Israelis who were murdered by terrorists, they would not have chosen a pre-Olympic event: they would have chosen the opening ceremonies. The official reason given for not doing so was that such an event would be “political.”

The Olympics are not exactly virginal in matters political. For example, at the 1908 Summer Olympics, the Irish were told they could not fly the Irish flag; they had to compete under the British flag. At the 1964 Summer Olympics, South Africa was suspended because of its practice of apartheid (the suspension was not lifted until 1992).

Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, also pointed out some hypocrisy on the part of the IOC: “It should be noted that moments of silence have been held at previous Olympic ceremonies, including one remembering the victims of the 9/11 attack at the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, Utah.”

If anything, it appeared that politics explained why the Munich massacre was not considered worthy of commemoration. Were officials afraid of incurring a backlash from Muslim extremists? Was cowardice at play? Or was something else at work?

When Bob Costas of NBC Sports caught wind of this he pledged that he would observe a moment of silence during the televised opening ceremonies; he fulfilled that pledge. Leading up to his 12-second moment of silence, Costas acknowledged the small memorial service the week before but said, "for many, tonight, with the world watching, is the true time and place to remember those who were lost, and how and why they died."