

SPORT & POLITICS

["Handball deserves more": Resistance against Hassan Moustafa](#)

For a quarter of a century, the scandal-ridden Pharaoh Hassan Moustafa has ruled world handball and, now in his ninth decade and marked by illness, wants to be crowned IHF president again in Cairo shortly before Christmas. Three opponents want to prevent this.

By Jens Weinreich • 2 Oct 2025



IHF presidential candidates: Tjark de Lange, Pharaoh Hassan Moustafa, Franjo Bobinac, Gerd Butzeck. (Collage: SPORT & POLITICS. Photos: Kapp, Alamy/ZUMA Press, Gorenje Group, private)

A few days ago was the deadline for nominations for the **40th Ordinary IHF Congress**, which will take place in Cairo on 21 December 2025. It has been known since April that **Gerd Butzeck**, a German, will challenge the long-standing incumbent **Hassan Moustafa**...

... since then, there has been little communication between Germany, the **German Handball Federation** (DHB), which officially submitted Butzeck's candidacy to the *International Handball Federation* in Basel in mid-September, and Hassan Moustafa.

Hassan Moustafa, who apparently suffers from Alzheimer's and whose age-related mental lapses are legendary, recently stayed away from the *European Handball Federation* (EHF) congress in Andau (Austria). Currently at the *IHF Super Globe*, where the final is taking place today (unfortunately, for once without the glorious SC Magdeburg), Moustafa sits tiredly in his presidential seat in the empty hall. Just ten kilometres away, at *The St. Regis New Capital*, the election will take place in December. Anything less than a clear majority of the 211 national associations for the Pharaoh would be a sensation.

It would be the landslide victory that the IHF needs.

As an exception, I am making this article available to you in its entirety in the newsletter. This will only happen rarely in future. To stay well informed, you should consider taking out a subscription – you will need it.

The fact that Hassan Moustafa is running for another term to extend his tenure indefinitely has been clear since the IHF Council Meeting in June at the latest.

At the EHF Congress in September, the candidacy of Slovenian **Franjo Bobinac** for the IHF presidency was announced. However, what has not yet been made public is that there is a fourth candidate for the presidency of the world federation. His silence so far has been purely tactical, as **Tjark de Lange** explained to me on the phone two weeks ago:

The former president of the *Nederlands Handbal Verbond* did not want to risk losing twice in Andau. In consultation with his association, he decided not to make his candidacy for the IHF public yet, because he feared that he would not be elected to the EHF Executive Board otherwise. It was in the interests of the *Nederlands Handbal Verbond*, which is hosting the Women's World Cup together with the German Handball Federation from the end of November until a few days before the IHF Congress, to at least secure a place on the EHF Executive Committee.

Sports politics, tactics. Just like in real life.

In the IHF, Tjark de Lange does not consider himself the favourite, to put it mildly. 'My chances of becoming IHF President are less than five per cent,' he says:

'But it is important that the IHF gets a signal. A lot has to change. I don't want to be part of the old system.'

Well then.

So we have these candidates:

- **Hassan Moustafa** (EGY), 81 years old, incumbent since 2000.
 - **Franjo Bobinac** (SLO), who will turn 67 in a few days, is the head of the household appliance manufacturer *Gorenje*, which has been part of the Chinese *Hisense* Group for several years, which in turn is a FIFA sponsor. An interesting CV. *Gorenje* has been an active sponsor in handball (and other sports) for many years. Bobinac is also **president of the Olimpijski komite Slovenije** (OKS), the Slovenian NOC. That adds up to quite a lot – money and contacts in sports politics. After all, Slovenia
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is also home to UEFA President Aleksander Čeferin, one of the most powerful football officials on the planet.

- **Tjark de Lange** (NED), 58, was president of the Dutch Handball Federation for ten years, a member of the EHF Executive Committee, and has worked for a number of companies and institutions around the world, including as chair of *Heat Transfer Research, Inc.*
- **Gerd Butzeck** (GER), 66, has been well connected in handball for more than four decades, with a somewhat adventurous career as manager of numerous stars and coaches, and as a mediator between worlds even as a young man during the Cold War, when he studied Russian in Moscow, among other things. He was a manager, referee, and even a member of the EHF Executive Committee, and founded and heads the *Forum Club Handball*, which is why I referred to him [in this article](#) as a kind of Nasser Al-Khelaifi of handball – only without the billion-dollar war chest. After all, Butzeck does not have to invest his own funds in his presidential campaign; the DHB is supporting him to the best of its ability, as is the federal government, which has had a budget line for German officials running for office in international associations for many years. If I remember correctly and am paraphrasing freely, in the past this involved sums of around 50,000 euros.

When Butzeck contacted the IOC in the spring and, as the newly minted IHF presidential candidate, requested an audience with the then incumbent IOC President **Thomas Bach**, the IHF immediately intervened: Contacts with the IOC remain a matter for the IHF leadership and are reserved exclusively for Hassan Moustafa!

However, Hassan Moustafa's three challengers must first have their candidacies reviewed by a so-called *Working Group of Candidatures for IHF Positions*, a group that is completely *independent* according to the IHF:

"An independent electoral working group, shall ensure the compliance of the candidates' applications with the conditions stipulated in the IHF Statutes."

Everyone knows that there is no independence at the top of the IHF. 'Most of the time, only those who have been approved by Hassan make it onto the list of candidates,' says Tjark de Lange.

Well, these are the members of the *independent electoral working group*:

- Chairperson: **Jean Brihault** (FRA), former IHF Council Member (chairperson of Working Group of Candidatures for IHF Positions in 2013, 2017 and 2021)
- **Jörgen Holmqvist** (SWE), IHF Honorary Member (member of Working Group of Candidatures for IHF Positions in 2017 and 2021)
- **Lanre Glover** (NGR), former IHF Arbitration Tribunal Member (nominated by the chairperson afterwards)

The IHF did not respond to my request for documentation on all candidates, which is standard practice in some other world federations.

Moustafa had named the trio at the **Council meeting on 4 June in Basel**, when the Pharaoh also announced his intention to remain in office. In great Olympic tradition, the key dates for the election congress and the delegates were also set. Important details, catering and all kinds of amenities have been taken care of:

6.1.4. IHF financial assistance regarding travel expenses

President Moustafa gave the floor to the General Director who reminded the attendees that on 30 September 2024, the Council approved a daily accommodation fee of USD 350 per person (single room) and USD 300 per person (double room) for the 2025 Ordinary IHF Congress. She explained that, as usual, the IHF will cover the participation fee including accommodation, meals, simultaneous translation, social programme, etc. for one delegate of every Member Federation during the period from 19 December 2025 (arrival) to 22 December 2025 (departure). She added that any extras and travel costs usually have to be paid by the representatives or the federation concerned, remarking that as for previous IHF Congresses, financial support may be granted



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to some of the IHF Emerging National Federations in terms of travel costs in order to guarantee the participation of all affiliated members in the most important gathering on IHF level and to give them the opportunity to interact and express their opinions and suggestions to the IHF.

In this context, the General Director presented the requests from different Continental Confederations to be granted financial assistance from the IHF regarding travel expenses for some of their Member Federations for the 2025 Ordinary IHF Congress.

She added that President Moustafa is currently in contact with the Administrative Capital for Urban Development (ACUD) in Egypt, aiming to conclude a partnership according to which ACUD is covering the accommodation and Congress facilities to be provided free of charge.

Decision

The Council unanimously agreed that the IHF will cover the participation fee for one delegate of every Member Federation during the official period of the 2025 Ordinary IHF Congress in Egypt. In addition, the Council unanimously approved the requests from the Continental Confederations to receive IHF financial assistance regarding the travel expenses for some of their emerging nations for the 2025 Ordinary IHF Congress.

Here are a few key historical dates.

All IHF Presidents:

- 1946-1950: **Gösta Björk** (SWE)
- 1950-1971: **Hans Baumann** (AUT)
- 1971-1984: **Paul Högberg** (SWE), initially for one year on an interim basis
- 1984-2000: **Erwin Lanc** (AUT)
- since 2000: **Hassan Moustafa** (EGY)

All congresses/elections that confirmed the Pharaoh:

- In November **2000**, Hassan Moustafa became IHF President in Estoril. Aziz Derouaz (Algeria) and Staffan Holmqvist (Sweden) had withdrawn, as did incumbent Erwin Lanc (Austria) at the last minute. The Egyptian received 103 votes with 4 against.
- In **2004**, Moustafa won 85:46 against Staffan Holmqvist at the congress in El Gouna.
- In **2009**, Moustafa won 125-25 against Jeannot Kaiser in Cairo.
- In **2013**, **2017** and **2021**, Moustafa had no opponents and was confirmed in office. Most recently in November 2021 in Antalya with 135 votes – and one vote against.

Three Europeans are therefore running against Moustafa this time. In the first round of voting, which could be the only and final round, the European votes will be nicely distributed, especially since quite a few Europeans will also vote for Moustafa. These include: **Spain, France, Switzerland** (with whose top officials Hassan Moustafa has reached agreements) and several others.

In America, Africa and Asia, Hassan Moustafa has always enjoyed huge majorities, if not 100% support, backed by former IOC bigwigs such as **Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah**, who is no longer in office, however.

Gerd Butzeck believes he can score points with a deal he has struck with **Ali Mohamed Isa Eshaqi** from Bahrain, Vice-President of the *Asian Handball Federation (AHF)*, which on paper is still under the control of the Al-Sabah dynasty; officially, Sheikh Ahmad is only *self-suspended* there:



The AHF Council is composed of the AHF President, First Vice President, four (4) Vice Presidents, Secretary General, Treasurer, five (5) Council members, one (1) female Council Member, and the Chairmans of the AHF Commissions who are not already on the council. The AHF Council will hold an ordinary meeting at least once a year.



President
(Self-suspended)

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

(Kuwait)



And Sheikh Ahmad's successor, who will be appointed in Cairo on 20 December 2025, one day before the IHF Congress, will also come from Kuwait: **Bader Mohammed Al-Theyab**.

In any case, Butzeck explains on his campaign website [Handball deserves more](#):

Ali Mohamed Isa Eshaqi, since 2008 President of the Bahrain Handball Federation and Vice President of the Asian Handball Federation, will join forces and cooperate with IHF presidential candidate Gerd Butzeck. After several meetings of the two handball leaders, both agreed on a mutual cooperation for the elections at the IHF Congress in Cairo in December. Ali Mohamed Isa Eshaqi will candidate for a position in the IHF Executive Committee, while Gerd Butzecks candidates to become IHF President. "Since weeks, I receive more and more consent for my candidacy from all over the world. Ali and I have the same objectives and visions what it means that handball deserves more in future. We will support each other in the upcoming weeks until the IHF Congress, and I am truly happy to have such an experienced partner at my side," Butzeck says, adding: "It proves that the idea to put handball globally on a higher level is recognized and supported."

Let's put it this way, and I'll leave it at that for today with any projections and analyses: I wouldn't count on much support from Asia if I were in Butzeck's shoes. But what do I know, I'm just observing.

This will be exciting – or will the Pharaoh keep his flock together one last time?
