



Gianni Infantino
President

Fatma Samoura
Secretary General

In copy:
UEFA

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Dear Mr President, der Madame Secretary General

In 2010 Qatar was announced as the host of the 2022 World Cup, becoming the first nation in the Middle East to hold the competition. The award surprised the world. Repeated reports of the situation surrounding human rights and the rights of workers give cause for concern. Respect for human rights is a fundamental value for the Norwegian Football Association (the Norwegian FA).

Recently, Norwegians have debated a potential boycott of the World Cup in Qatar. This is an important debate, which we welcome.

An article in The Guardian¹, which reported the great number of migrant workers who have died in Qatar, ignited the debate. We urge FIFA to conduct a comprehensive investigation of the alleged number of deaths among migrant workers in Qatar. Norwegian clubs and supporters have added their voices of concern, and several professional clubs have announced their desire for Norway to boycott the playoffs in Qatar. The Norwegian FA will hold an extraordinary congress on 20 June, where a final decision on the matter will be taken. The Norwegian FA has so far opposed a boycott, considering the chances for improvement in Qatar to be greater through influencing the Qatari authorities. However, this approach depends on the world of football being united.

Football is the world's greatest sport. The World Cup engages millions of football fans around the globe and gives us attention other sports only dream of. This gives FIFA a great opportunity to create unforgettable moments on the pitch. But this massive attention requires responsibility off the pitch as well. The world's eyes are on football, and we must show ourselves worthy of the world's trust.

The concern runs deep in our association, and both of our national teams have championed human rights in Qatar. They have worn T-shirts bearing the writing, "Human rights – on and off the pitch," and have displayed the hand sign for human rights during the playing of the national anthem on five separate occasions.

The gravest criticism of the World Cup in Qatar involves the deprived conditions for the guest workers building the football stadia. The Norwegian FA has involved itself in addressing their situation since 2015. In 2016 and in 2019 we visited Qatar along with our Scandinavian neighbours of Denmark and Sweden. While there, we met with guest workers and their organisations in order to hear directly from those affected. We have met with the Qatari authorities and presented our



concerns of the treatment of the guest workers. We have cooperated with Norwegian and international trade unions to initiate reforms in Qatar, and we have worked with Amnesty International to present facts about the situation for human rights in the country. We are aware that Qatar has introduced a number of positive reforms, but we share concerns about their practical implementation. We acknowledge the efforts and progress of the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy on improving the conditions for stadium workers, but more work remains.

When the World Cup in the end is to be held in Qatar, it is our responsibility to make sure that the event can contribute to raise awareness about the human rights issues in the country. The most important way of making sure that the international community gets a view into what is going on in Qatar, is by assuring that journalists can operate freely and without fear. According to the Reporters Without Border's Press Freedom Index the situation in Qatar has deteriorated over the past few years. The Norwegian FA asks FIFA to initiate an assessment of the measures that have been taken to guarantee international press access to conduct critical journalism in Qatar, complete with an evaluation of the effectiveness of these measures. The international football family must guarantee the safety of all journalists before and during the tournament and must contribute to lasting improvements for press freedom in Qatar.

Up until now, it is the situation for guest workers in the building and construction sector, which has received most attention. Now that preparations are entering a new phase, it is vital to be vigilant of the conditions for workers in the service sector as well, including cleaners, restaurant workers, and hotel employees. We are concerned about women's rights in Qatar. As the service sector will see the greatest growth leading up to the tournament, the share of women among the migrant workers will increase. A recent report by Human Rights Watch shows that women in Qatar are subject to a system of control which violates domestic and international laws. Such laws and attitudes are unacceptable.

Homosexuality is forbidden in Qatar. This past January the country announced it would allow rainbow flags in connection with the World Cup. This is encouraging. Football is supposed to be for everyone – independent of sexual orientation. The thought of traveling to a country which punishes homosexuality makes players, coaching staff and fans who identify as members of a sexual minority, uncomfortable.

The Norwegian FA spotlights the following issues, which are central to the debate in Norway:

- Which reforms can FIFA document that Qatar has carried out to ensure the rights and safety of workers?
- How is FIFA monitoring whether or not these reforms are actually being implemented?
- How is FIFA ensuring that the reforms will not be reversed – and how can FIFA ensure lasting change in Qatar beyond the World Cup of 2022?
- How will FIFA ensure that the press gets access within Qatar until the tournament starts, as well as during the tournament, and how will FIFA ensure that the safety and press freedom of all journalists is guaranteed?
- Will supporters and players have the freedom to express themselves during the World Cup, by wearing statements etc?
- How can FIFA guarantee that the rights of women migrant workers are protected?



- What has been done to ensure that gay, lesbian and other sexual minorities will feel safe participating in and attending the tournament, and what has FIFA done to promote the rights of non-heterosexual individuals in Qatar more broadly?

NFF recognises that FIFA has since 2017 made important changes to the bid criteria for the Men's and Women's World Cup, for instance the requirement to submit an independent human rights context assessment. FIFA should, however, take the necessary steps to ensure that all future bidding processes in all other tournaments hosted by FIFA also include an independent assessment of the human rights situation of the applicant country.

The Norwegian FA asks FIFA for a meeting to discuss these questions, as well as how we can work together to strengthen workers' rights, press freedom, and the safety and security of women and sexual minorities. We are also asking for an update regarding the dialogue between FIFA and the Qatari authorities. Such a meeting can be arranged with the Norwegian FA alone, or together with other European football associations which have raised similar concerns.

We hope this letter finds you well. We look forward to continuing our common mission to promote the game worldwide as true friends of football.

Kind regards,

The Football Association of Norway

Terje Svendsen
President

Pål Bjerketvedt
Secretary General

[ⁱ The Guardian](#)