



FIFA comment on the Human Rights Watch article “Welcome Support for Workers’ Rights Advocate in Russia” of 26 February 2018

FIFA welcomes the acknowledgement by Human Rights Watch of FIFA’s efforts in support of Semyon Simonov. These activities are a reflection of FIFA’s belief that all those who advocate for human rights to be upheld need to be able to do so freely and without fear of reprisals. Any activity that limits the important and legitimate work of human rights defenders therefore is in opposition to the values FIFA stands for.

FIFA is fully committed to implementing its own responsibility to respect and help protect the rights of human rights defenders who work to advance human rights in relation to FIFA’s activities in accordance with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. As outlined in paragraph 11 of [FIFA’s Human Rights Policy](#),

“FIFA helps protect those who advocate respect for human rights associated with its activities ... and will respect and not interfere with the work of both human rights defenders who voice concerns about adverse human rights impacts relating to FIFA and media representatives covering FIFA’s events and activities. Where the freedoms of human rights defenders and media representatives are at risk, FIFA will take adequate measures for their protection including by using its leverage with the relevant authorities.”

FIFA is currently in the process of finalising a more detailed statement on human rights defenders and media representatives specifying this broad commitment and takes a series of measures to implement its commitments. This includes for instance the development of a complaints reporting mechanism for human rights defenders and media representatives, which FIFA intends to launch in due course. Furthermore, FIFA engages closely with entities it has relationships with to convey its expectations and address specific cases.

One example in that respect is the situation of Semyon Simonov, a human rights activist based in Sochi. As outlined by Human Rights Watch in its article, FIFA has taken a series of measures in support of Mr Simonov, including the attendance of a court hearing in February 2018. As part of these efforts, FIFA has repeatedly stated its position that Mr. Simonov, and indeed all human rights defenders working to advance human rights in relation to FIFA’s activities, need to be able to go about their work without restrictions, which includes freedom from being surveilled.

FIFA recognises that, as is the case with all of its human rights work, the implementation of its commitment in relation to human rights defenders requires ongoing efforts. FIFA strives to continually improve its processes and mechanisms and will continue to exchange with relevant stakeholders and learn from others who are in the process of engaging in similar activities.

Zurich, 22, April 2018