

PRESS RELEASE

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FIFA: NOT ONE CANDIDATE PLEDGES ADEQUATE STEPS TO PREVENT HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE AND CORRUPTION

“Let’s be clear. There is no time to waste in taking action to prevent human rights abuses linked to the World Cups in Russia in 2018 and Qatar in 2022” – Sylvia Schenk, Transparency International Germany

FIFA still has to prove it is serious about dealing with human rights abuses and corruption linked to the World Cup. Not one of the organisation’s presidential candidates has either signed up to the full range of pledges presented to them by a group of leading NGOs ahead of the election next week (26 February), or articulated alternative measures that would effectively address the underlying issues.

NGOs including Human Rights Watch, Football Supporters Europe, Terre des Hommes and Transparency International Germany asked the five candidates to commit to taking six clear steps in their first 100 days as president to put FIFA on the road to ensuring the World Cup and other tournaments do not cause or contribute to human rights abuses and corruption.

While none of the candidates signed up to the full range of pledges, four replied – Jerome Champagne, Prince Ali bin Al-Hussein, Gianni Infantino and Sheikh Salman Al-Khalifa -and expressed their commitment to dealing with some of the issues raised by the NGOs. They acknowledged that transparency and accountability need to improve at all levels, but none accepted the need for an independent advisory panel to oversee measures to tackle this. However, Prince Ali has since announced plans for former UN General Secretary Kofi Annan to lead an independent oversight group.

“We come with specific demands for reforms. The devil is in the detail and the general announcements will not be sufficient. As a child rights organization, we are committed in bringing the specific child rights perspective in changing the game of FIFA” said Ignacio Packer, Terre des Hommes Secretary General.

Sylvia Schenk from Transparency International Germany said:

“The fact that none of the candidates is willing to pledge strong enough action to prevent human rights abuses and corruption linked to big sports events shows what a long way those at the top of FIFA have to go. The same goes for understanding the importance of consulting in a systematic way with local communities that could be affected by an event, and with groups with expertise on human rights and transparency.”

“Let’s be clear. There is no time to waste in taking action to stop human rights abuses linked to the World Cup in Russia in 2018 and Qatar in 2022. The World Cup should not harm the local population.”

“Actions speak louder than words and whoever becomes the next FIFA president must act immediately if they don’t want future events to be marred by human rights abuses and corruption.”

The pledges put forward by the NGOs included commitments to:

- Take steps to ensure that effective measures to protect human rights and prevent corruption are taken at every stage of hosting a World Cup or other FIFA event
- Put in place effective measures to identify, prevent and mitigate the risk of corruption and human rights abuses linked to the World Cup and other FIFA events
- Call on the Russian and Qatari authorities to prevent human rights abuses linked to the 2018 and 2022 World Cups
- Increase accountability and transparency in national and continental federations as well as within FIFA and establish an independent advisory committee to oversee the implementation of the measures
- Promote gender equality by investing in the women’s game and tackle discrimination against women and LGBTI people, and to make ending discriminatory practices a condition of hosting a World Cup or other FIFA event
- Consult NGOs and local communities affected by the arrival of a World Cup or other FIFA event and address, and where appropriate provide remedy for, any human rights abuses communities face that are tied to the event

How the candidates replied to the pledge card:

Jerome Champagne responded with an amended pledge card in which he agreed to call on the Russian and Qatari authorities to prevent human rights abuses around the 2018 and 2022 World Cups. He pledged to tackle discrimination against women and LGBTI people and to make ending discriminatory practices a condition of hosting an FIFA event. He did not pledge to establish an independent advisory panel or to consult with NGOs and communities affected by FIFA events ‘without a precise definition’ of those groups.

Prince Ali bin Al-Hussein did not sign the pledge card but responded with a letter in which he said his manifesto prioritises tackling the trafficking of young players as well as the protection of players and fans from racism. He highlighted action he has taken to promote women’s football, and said that during his campaign he has spoken of the need for future FIFA World Cups to respect the basic standards of human rights and labour rights, and has pledged that as president he would hold the host countries of future tournaments accountable on these issues. He did not make specific commitments to raising human rights problems linked to World Cups in Russia or Qatar, to introducing due diligence measures to identify potential human rights abuses linked to a FIFA event, or to setting up an independent advisory panel to oversee accountability measures.

Gianni Infantino responded with a letter saying that much of the content of the pledges was covered in his manifesto, including around governance, transparency, stakeholder engagement, diversity and transparent bidding processes. He said FIFA has a ‘clear responsibility’ to ensure workers ‘directly involved in the delivery of its tournaments should have their human rights respected’. He referred to UEFA EURO 2016’s stated support for human rights and anti-corruption measures.

He did not commit to putting in place due diligence measures or to calling on Russia and Qatar to prevent human rights abuses linked to the 2018 and 2022 World Cups. He did not commit to setting up an independent advisory panel to oversee accountability measures.

Sheikh Salman Al-Khalifa signed an amended pledge card in which he said he would invest in the women's game and make ending discriminatory practices against minority groups a condition for hosting an event. He said he would call on all hosts of the World Cup to prevent human rights abuses and secure workers' rights but he removed references to Russia 2018 and Qatar 2022. He also deleted mentions of abuses against women and LGBT people and removed references to engaging with NGOs. He did not commit to setting up an independent advisory panel to oversee accountability measures.

Tokyo Sexwale did not respond.

ENDS

The pledge card was sent to the candidates from the following organisations:

Amnesty International Netherlands

Amnesty International UK

Human Rights Watch

Football Supporters Europe

Terre des Hommes

Transparency International Germany

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Terre des Hommes launched the Children Win campaign in February 2014 to ensure that leading sports bodies mitigate risks and enhance opportunities of Mega Sporting Events on children, both direct and indirect.

www.childrenwin.org

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