



From the North–South Project for People(s)-Centered Human Rights

Re: 2026 FIFA World Cup in the United States — Human Rights, Safety, and Inclusivity Concerns

We submit this statement to the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) to urgently highlight how the decision to hold the 2026 FIFA Men’s World Cup in the United States risks violating FIFA’s own human-rights commitments and undermining the safety, dignity, and inclusion of millions of fans, athletes, journalists, and teams — particularly those from the Global South.

This submission demonstrates that the current U.S. context is defined by:

- the normalization of mass human-rights violations, including U.S. political and military support for Israel’s assault on Gaza;
- acts of rogue state violence abroad, including the recent U.S. military capture of the Venezuelan president in violation of international law and the UN Charter; and
- the expansion of domestic repression through immigration enforcement, racialized policing, and surveillance that already affect participants in international sporting events.

Taken together, these dynamics form a coherent pattern of domination, exclusion, and lawlessness that contradicts FIFA’s statutes, its Human Rights Policy, and the values it claims to uphold. Moreover, the actions of the U.S. state domestically with the recent killing of a protestor against the draconian actions of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE) has highlighted for many around the world unsafe conditions in the U.S. that has precipitated the cancellation of tickets and the emergency meeting that has been called for by FIFA to address these concerns.

The issue is not whether the United States can host matches logistically, but whether FIFA can legitimately associate its premier global tournament with a host state whose conduct — domestically and internationally — violates fundamental principles of human dignity, equality, and the rule of law.

FIFA’s Human-Rights Obligations

FIFA’s Statutes and Human Rights Policy commit the organization to respect internationally recognized human rights across all its activities, in alignment with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. The 2026 bidding requirements explicitly obligated host governments to demonstrate how human-rights risks would be prevented, mitigated, and remedied.

These commitments are not symbolic. They are binding expectations that require FIFA to avoid complicity in human-rights harms and to act when credible risks are identified.

The current political, legal, and enforcement environment in the United States presents precisely such a risk.

Immigration Enforcement as a Human-Rights Risk

Human Rights Watch and other organizations have documented cases in which non-citizens attending FIFA events in the U.S. were detained by immigration authorities — including an asylum seeker attending the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup with his children who was subsequently deported.

Civil-rights organizations have warned that immigration enforcement at or near World Cup venues transforms participation in a sporting event into a potential site of arbitrary detention, family separation, and exposure to danger.

This reality fundamentally contradicts the notion of the World Cup as a safe, open, and inclusive global gathering. A tournament in which fans must weigh their love of football against the risk of detention or deportation cannot be said to meet FIFA's human-rights standard.

Exclusionary Policies vs. Football's Inclusive Ethos

Restrictive visa regimes, discriminatory border enforcement, and political screening further threaten to exclude fans, families, journalists, and civil-society observers — particularly from the Global South — from participating in the tournament.

The result is not merely inconvenience, but structural exclusion: the transformation of a global event into one accessible primarily to those from wealthy and politically favored states.

This undermines the universality of football itself.

U.S. International Conduct and the Political Climate

The legitimacy of the World Cup cannot be separated from the global conduct of its host.

The United States is currently engaged in and enabling actions that have been widely condemned by human-rights bodies and international legal experts:

- the political, military, and diplomatic enabling of Israel's assault on Gaza, which has produced catastrophic civilian harm and credible allegations of genocidal acts;
- and the recent U.S. military seizure of the Venezuelan president, an act that violates the UN Charter's prohibition on the use of force and undermines the international legal order.

These actions signal that the U.S. government is operating outside fundamental norms of international law and human rights. Hosting the World Cup in this context risks transforming the tournament into a tool of moral laundering — normalizing and legitimizing state violence through spectacle and celebration.

This is incompatible with FIFA's stated values.

Impact on Global South Nations and Marginalized Communities

Communities from the Global South are uniquely and disproportionately affected:

- as migrants and diasporic communities targeted by enforcement;
- as fans facing exclusion, fear, and surveillance;
- and as nations whose sovereignty and people are directly harmed by U.S. foreign policy.

The message received is unmistakable: some lives are protected, others are managed; some fans are welcomed, others are policed.

This hierarchy of belonging is the opposite of what the World Cup claims to represent.

Call to Action

To uphold its responsibilities, FIFA must:

1. Publicly acknowledge the risks posed by the U.S. domestic and international context rather than minimizing or depoliticizing them.
2. Consider relocating or redistributing matches to jurisdictions that can credibly guarantee safety, dignity, and inclusion.

The World Cup is not merely a sporting event. It is a global ritual of belonging for peoples and nations across the planet.

The World Cup cannot meaningfully fulfill that role when hosted by a state that normalizes genocide abroad, violates international law with impunity, and governs marginalized populations in the U.S. through fear, exclusion, and repression.

FIFA now faces a choice: whether to treat human rights as a branding exercise, or as a real ethical commitment with real consequences.

We urge FIFA to choose the latter — and to act accordingly.