



REPORTERS' GUIDE

2026 FIFA World Cup in Canada, Mexico, and the United States

HUMAN
RIGHTS
WATCH



Reporters' Guide for the 2026 FIFA World Cup in Canada, Mexico, and the United States

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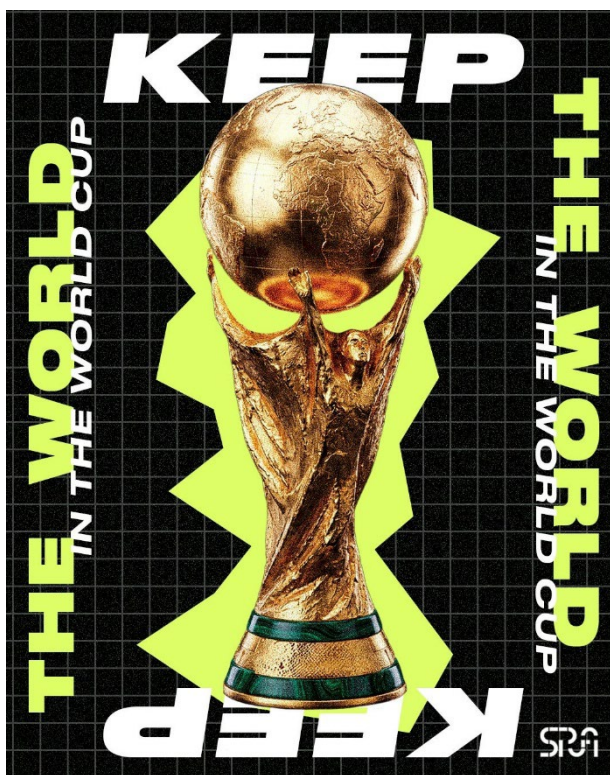
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I. Introduction: Keep The World in the 2026 World Cup

On June 11, 2026, one of the world's most popular sporting events will kick off across Canada, Mexico, and the United States. FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) President Gianni Infantino has said¹ that the 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup will be the "greatest and most inclusive show on the planet"—the largest tournament ever staged, featuring 48 nations competing across three countries, and welcoming an estimated 5 million² attendees in a global celebration of "the beautiful game."



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But with weeks until the first tournament ball is kicked, FIFA's weak response to the threats to human rights caused up by US President Donald Trump administration's brutal immigration crackdown means the tournament risks being defined by exclusion and fear.

The 2026 World Cup was supposed to be a gamechanger for human rights. After discrimination³ against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people at Russia's

¹ Instagram post from Gianni Infantino's Instagram account (@gianni_infantino), with FIFA (@fifa) and FIFA World Cup (@fifaworldcup), dated December 29, 2025, available at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DS2dKSaiKUI/> (accessed April 21, 2026).

² "104 Super Bowls? Five Million Fans? The 2026 World Cup Will Be Colossal in Big Ways," *FOX Sports*, June 27, 2025, <https://www.foxsports.com/stories/soccer/2026-fifa-world-cup-colossal-be-let-us-count-ways> (accessed April 21, 2026).

³ Minky Worden (Human Rights Watch), "Will FIFA Force Russia to Make the World Cup Friendly to L.G.B.T. People?," Commentary, *The New York Times*, May 28, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/28/opinion/fifa-world-cup-russia-lgbtq.html> (accessed April 21, 2026).

2018 World Cup and thousands⁴ of migrant worker deaths ahead of Qatar's 2022 World Cup, unions, fans, and human right groups pressured⁵ FIFA to commit to steps to address human rights risks linked to its events. For the first time, FIFA conditioned hosting the World Cup on meeting human rights bidding requirement,⁶ designed a Human Rights Strategy⁷ for the tournament, and created a Human Rights Framework⁸ providing guidance on human rights for host city committees.

So far, however, FIFA has done far too little⁹ to ensure the first test of the new commitments results in meaningful human rights protections for athletes, fans, and workers. All but one of the host city committees have either failed to present human rights action plans or produced plans that ignore or fail to adequately address risks, including those faced by immigrants, LGBT people, and journalists. FIFA itself has not made meaningful efforts to use its leverage to push the Trump administration to roll back or pause abusive policies. Instead, in December 2025, it awarded¹⁰ Donald Trump the first ever FIFA Peace Prize.

This Reporters' Guide looks at both the human rights conditions in the three host nations and FIFA's efforts to respond to risks in the United States, drawing in detail from Human Rights Watch reporting. It also includes, in an annex, letters written to FIFA by Human Rights Watch sharing our human rights concerns and any responses from FIFA.

The US will host the vast majority of World Cup matches, 78, including the semi-final and final. Since taking office in January 2025, Donald Trump has rolled out abusive policies

⁴ Michael Page and Minky Worden, "Qatar World Cup Chief Publicly Admits High Migrant Death Tolls," Human Rights Watch Dispatch, November 30, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/11/30/qatar-world-cup-chief-publicly-admits-high-migrant-death-tolls>.

⁵ "Qatar: Rights Abuses Stain FIFA World Cup," Human Rights Watch Presser Plus, November 14, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/11/14/qatar-rights-abuses-stain-fifa-world-cup>.

⁶ "FIFA Statutory Human Rights Requirements," Human Rights Watch Background Briefing, October 27, 2023 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/10/27/fifa-statutory-human-rights-requirements>.

⁷ FIFA, "Proposal for a United Human Rights Strategy," March 16, 2018, <https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/35837f1073bdad15/original/s2xnrvfjg9kpozehxnt-pdf.pdf> (accessed April 21, 2026).

⁸ FIFA, "FWC26 Human Rights Framework: A shared platform for positive impact," June 2024, https://www.sporhumanrights.org/media/oq5nowgz/fwc26-human-rights-framework_final_en_24-july-2024_updates_clean.pdf (accessed April 21, 2026).

⁹ "World Cup: 2 Months Out, FIFA and Host Cities Sideline Rights," Human Rights Watch News Release, April 10, 2026, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2026/04/10/world-cup-2-months-out-fifa-and-host-cities-sideline-rights>.

¹⁰ Minky Worden (Human Rights Watch), "FIFA's Sportswashing 'Peace' Prize," Commentary, *Newsweek*, December 9, 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/12/10/fifas-sportswashing-peace-prize> (accessed April 21, 2026).

and actions targeting immigrants, protesters, human rights defenders, transgender people, and civil society. In the year leading up to the World Cup, the Trump Administration has wrongfully expelled thousands, including by deporting asylum seekers—and legal US residents—to third countries, including some with records of abusing detainees such as El Salvador, Panama, South Sudan, Mexico, and Rwanda as part of an abusive anti-immigrant campaign.

Immigration enforcement raids have targeted immigrant communities, especially those of color. Enforcement has targeted immigrants regardless of how long they have been in the US, and US immigration law does not consider their contributions to their communities. As a result, there are communities where, at various points over the last year, some people have been so terrified that they avoid going to places of worship¹¹ or the hospital, and some children did not go to school.

Fans from immigrant communities gathering to celebrate their national teams and heritage, in stadiums or fan zones, may be at heightened risk of abuse. From January 20, 2025, to March 10, 2026, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) arrested¹² at least 167,000 people in and around the 11 US cities where games will be played, based on ICE data provided in response to a freedom of information request to the Deportation Data Project analyzed by Human Rights Watch.

Press freedom in the US is also under new pressure. Concerning cases include journalist Mario Guevara, who was arrested and detained in World Cup host city Atlanta, reportedly for filming a political protest, transferred to ICE custody, and deported to El Salvador. In March 2026, Estefany Rodríguez, a journalist who had been covering ICE immigration raids, was reportedly arrested without her captors presenting a warrant.

¹¹ Rebecca Santana, “Migrants can now be arrested at churches and schools after Trump administration throws out policies,” *Associated Press*, January 22, 2025, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/migrants-can-now-be-arrested-at-churches-and-schools-after-trump-administration-throws-out-policies> (accessed April 21, 2026).

¹² “World Cup: 2 Months Out, FIFA and Host Cities Sideline Rights,” Human Rights Watch News Release.



Demonstrators against the FIFA 2026 World Cup draw take part in a protest called “No ICE in my Cup!”, in Washington, December 5, 2025. © Francis Chung/POLITICO via AP Images

The 2026 World Cup is the first to span three countries, creating unprecedented logistical challenges for the estimated 50,000+ media professionals expected to cover it. Journalists will be crossing international borders with different immigration regimes, visa requirements, and press freedom environments, in some cases multiple times over the course of the tournament. FIFA has no public framework to address this.

Host nation Mexico remains one of the most dangerous countries in the world for the press. Press freedom organization Article 19¹³ reported that seven journalists were killed in Mexico in 2025. Impunity for such killings remains the norm. Last year Congress passed a

¹³ “Ofrenda a periodistas asesinados en 2025: Exigimos un alto a la impunidad en los crímenes contra la prensa,” Article 19 News Release, <https://articulo19.org/ofrenda-a-periodistas-asesinados-en-2025-exigimos-un-alto-a-la-impunidad-en-los-crimenes-contra-la-prensa/> (accessed April 21, 2026).

law¹⁴ that grants authorities virtually unlimited¹⁵ power to access information about citizens without judicial authorization, directly impacting press freedom. To date, FIFA has not addressed risks to journalists working in Mexico's World Cup host cities, including reporters covering the intersection of soccer and organized crime.

At past World Cups, we have identified¹⁶ FIFA's failures to address arbitrary treatment sports fans can face in the absence of proper safeguards. Over the past year, Human Rights Watch, working alongside fans, athletes, affected families, and unions,¹⁷ has engaged extensively with FIFA about the threats to human rights posed by Trump administration's policies, as well as the wider human rights context of the 2026 tournament. Human Rights Watch spoke out¹⁸ as FIFA scrapped planned anti-discrimination messaging for the 2025 Club World Cup, billed as a "trial run" for the 2026 World Cup. We also documented the arrest and transfer to immigration detention of a non-US citizen fan who had come to attend a 2025 Club World Cup tournament match in New Jersey with his children, and inadvisably had brought along a recreational drone for taking pre-game pictures in the "American Dream" mall parking lot next to the stadium.

FIFA has since announced it plans to restore anti-discrimination messaging for this summer's tournament but many fans – particularly non-US citizens, LGBT people, or those who engage in certain kinds of political protest – continue to be at risk from the Trump administration's abusive policies.

¹⁴ LEY DEL SISTEMA NACIONAL DE INVESTIGACIÓN E INTELIGENCIA EN MATERIA DE SEGURIDAD PÚBLICA, DECRETO por el que se expide la Ley del Sistema Nacional de Investigación e Inteligencia en Materia de Seguridad Pública, Estados Unidos Mexicanos. Presidencia de la República, July 16, 2025, https://www.dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=5763160&fecha=16/07/2025#gsc.tab=0 (accessed April 21, 2026).

¹⁵ Las nuevas leyes de transparencia y protección de datos personales: retrocesos y oportunidades perdidas, Red en Defensa de los Derechos Digitales News Release, <https://r3d.mx/2025/03/21/las-nuevas-leyes-de-transparencia-y-proteccion-de-datos-personales-retrocesos-y-oportunidades-perdidas/> (accessed April 21, 2026).

¹⁶ Robbie Newton (Human Rights Watch), "Promises of a safe and welcoming 2026 World Cup – but Qatar's failures still echo," Commentary, *Play the Game*, April 21, 2025, <https://www.playthegame.org/news/promises-of-a-safe-and-welcoming-2026-world-cup-but-qatar-s-failures-still-echo/> (accessed April 21, 2026).

¹⁷ Adam Crafton, "SoFi stadium workers union files complaint over ICE concerns at the World Cup," *The New York Times*, April 17, 2026, https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/7203430/2026/04/17/world-cup-sofi-stadium-fifa-union/?source=emp_shared_article&unlocked_article_code=1.bIA.d5vA.bWOISa-rwdDc&smid=ta-ios-share (accessed April 21, 2026).

¹⁸ "US: FIFA Cancels Anti-Bias Messaging for Club World Cup," Human Rights Watch News Release, July 3, 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/07/03/us-fifa-cancels-anti-bias-messaging-for-club-world-cup>.

With the tournament now six weeks away, the 2026 World Cup risks becoming a sportswashing bonanza for the Trump administration and a cautionary tale about the need to address human rights risks at major sporting events. FIFA needs to act urgently to address the risks of human rights abuses for athletes, fans, and workers. One concrete thing it should do is work to persuade the Trump administration to establish an “ICE Truce,” that includes a public guarantee from federal authorities to refrain from immigration enforcement at games and venues. FIFA should also update and strengthen its media freedom policy to help guarantee the safety and accreditation of journalists covering human rights issues in all three host countries, consistent with FIFA’s commitments to human rights defenders and media representatives.

FIFA should put in place grievance mechanisms and legal support to help ensure respect for the rights of players, fans, participants, and host city communities.

The beautiful game deserves better than to be played against a backdrop of ugly anti-human rights policies.

II. FIFA and Human Rights

FIFA's Statutory Human Rights Framework

The Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) Human Rights Policy states:

“Guided by its human rights approach, FIFA embeds its commitment throughout the organisation and engages in an ongoing due diligence process to identify, address, evaluate and communicate the risks of involvement with adverse human rights impacts.” It also states that, “FIFA will constructively engage with relevant authorities and other stakeholders and make every effort to uphold its international human rights responsibilities.”

FIFA is an association registered in the Commercial Register in accordance with article 60 ff. of the Swiss Civil Code. Starting with the John Ruggie report “For The Game, For The World”¹⁹ in 2016, commissioned by FIFA under pressure as a result of corruption revelations²⁰ and serious human rights abuses during preparations for the 2018 Russia World Cup and the awarding of the 2022 World Cup to Qatar, FIFA President Gianni Infantino pledged²¹ that “FIFA is fully committed to respecting human rights” and to “meet its responsibilities under the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.”

In April 2016, FIFA adopted the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights²² and revised its own Statutes²³ to include its responsibility to respect human rights in article 3 of the FIFA governing Statutes (non-discrimination was already long enshrined in article 4). Its Statutes state: “FIFA is committed to respecting all internationally recognized human rights and shall strive to promote the protection of these rights.” FIFA

¹⁹ John G. Ruggie, “For the Game. For the World, FIFA and Human Rights,” (Harvard University: 2016).

²⁰ Tariq Panja and Kevin Draper, “U.S. Says FIFA Officials Were Bribed to Award World Cups to Russia and Qatar,” *The New York Times*, December 18, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/06/sports/soccer/qatar-and-russia-bribery-world-cup-fifa.html> (accessed April 21, 2026).

²¹ Report by Harvard expert Professor Ruggie to support development of FIFA's human rights policies, FIFA Media Release, April 14, 2016, <https://inside.fifa.com/organisation/media-releases/report-by-harvard-expert-professor-ruggie-to-support-development-of-fi-2781111> (accessed April 21, 2026).

²² “The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights An Introduction,” United Nations Working Group on Business and Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Business/Intro_Guiding_PrinciplesBusinessHR.pdf (accessed April 21, 2026).

²³ “FIFA publishes landmark Human Rights Policy,” FIFA Media Release, June 8, 2017, <https://inside.fifa.com/organisation/news/fifa-publishes-landmark-human-rights-policy-2893311> (accessed April 21, 2026).

“bodies and officials must observe the Statutes, regulations, decisions and Code of Ethics of FIFA in their activities.”²⁴

In the 2015-2018 timeframe, FIFA took concrete steps to identify human rights abuses in its operations and commit to remedying them. In September 2016, FIFA created and staffed a Human Rights Manager (now director²⁵) position and set up a system by which whistleblowers, athletes and human rights activists could directly report abuse to FIFA officials. In 2016, FIFA established an independent Human Rights Advisory Board²⁶ to provide advice and report on FIFA’s implementation of its human rights commitments. FIFA did not renew the mandate for the advisory board in March 2021.

In June 2017, following adoption by the FIFA Council in May 2017, FIFA adopted and published its Human Rights Policy²⁷ stating that human rights commitments are binding on all FIFA bodies and officials.

1. BIDDING/HOSTING EVENTS

The introduction to FIFA’s Human Rights Policy (page 4), signed by President Gianni Infantino, expressly references FIFA’s responsibilities and the bidding and event hosting process:

FIFA recognises its obligation to uphold the inherent dignity and equal rights of everyone affected by its activities. This responsibility is enshrined in article 3 of the FIFA Statutes, according to which: FIFA is committed to respecting all internationally recognised human rights and shall strive to promote the protection of these rights.

²⁴ FIFA Statutes, May 2022 Edition, FIFA, May 2022, https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/3815fa68bd9f4ad8/original/FIFA_Statutes_2022-EN.pdf (accessed April 21, 2026).

²⁵ Sami Mokbel, “FIFA are set to create a new director of human rights and sustainability role, amid increased Middle Eastern involvement at the top of English football and criticisms over the governing body’s actions at the Qatar World Cup,” *The Daily Mail*, February 14, 2023, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article-11749363/FIFA-set-create-new-director-human-rights-sustainability-role.html> (accessed April 21, 2026).

²⁶ “FIFA Human Rights Advisory Board provides closing report,” FIFA Media Release, March 23, 2021, <https://inside.fifa.com/organisation/committees/news/fifa-human-rights-advisory-board-provides-closing-report> (accessed April 21, 2026).

²⁷ “FIFA publishes landmark Human Rights Policy,” FIFA Media Release, June 8, 2017.

... We are committed to embedding this policy across our activities through ongoing due-diligence processes, which includes anchoring respect for human rights in the bidding and hosting of our events and throughout our relationships with third parties.

FIFA announced that human rights requirements would be part of the consultation and bid-to-host process phases of the selection of the 2026 World Cup host.²⁸ Bidding countries were required to submit a Human Rights Strategy²⁹ in preparing for and hosting the tournament, as part of the process before selection.

Human Rights Watch made recommendations to FIFA on the bidding requirements,³⁰ and was one of the 30 nongovernmental organizations that the “United Bid” of US/Canada/Mexico consulted as part of its human rights stakeholder consultation.

In November 2017, FIFA published a guide to the bidding process for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.³¹

The 2026 Bidding Guide Infantino’s Foreword reads: “This evaluation process will generate reports, which will serve as the basis for a valuation by the FIFA Council. Our strategic body will study these reports and shortlist the bids that qualify to then be voted on by the FIFA Congress. And that is how the final decision on the host or hosts of the 2026 FIFA World Cup will be taken: in an open vote by our 211 member associations. Whoever ends up hosting the FIFA World Cup must prove that they know and have what it takes to deliver the tournament. Not only that, they must also formally commit to conducting their activities based on sustainable event management principles and to respecting international human rights and labour standards according to the United Nations’ Guiding Principles.”

²⁸ FIFA, Guide to the Bidding Process for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, <https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/5730ee56c15eeddb/original/hgopypqftviladnm7q90-pdf.pdf> (accessed April 21, 2026).

²⁹ FIFA, “Proposal for a United Human Rights Strategy,” March 16, 2018, <https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/35837f1073bdad15/original/s2xnrvfjg9kpozelhxt-pdf.pdf> (accessed April 21, 2026).

³⁰ Letter from Human Rights Watch to FIFA Regarding Human Rights Requirements, July 26, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/07/26/letter-to-fifa-regarding-human-rights-requirements>.

³¹ FIFA, Guide to the Bidding Process for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

- In 2018, FIFA set up a stakeholder consultation and bidding process³² for the 2026 World Cup, which Human Rights Watch and a broad coalition of stakeholders (now known as “Dignity 2026”) were part of.
- Here are summaries of the human rights strategies for 2026 bidders in their “Bid Books.”³³

“Bidding requirements for 2026 include due diligence about existing human rights conditions and a requirement for the bidding countries to submit a human rights strategy in preparing for and hosting the 48-team tournament,”³⁴ Human Rights Watch wrote at the time.

The two World Cup finalists, the United Bid of the US/Canada/Mexico and Morocco—both included independent human rights assessments of their bid, and also their own Human Rights Strategy. The United Bid succeeded and is governed by that 90-page Human Rights Strategy,³⁵ including regular stakeholder consultations with FIFA.

2. REMEDY

As set out in the Ruggie Report, FIFA has human rights responsibilities to remedy abuses to which it has contributed, under the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and as recognized by FIFA’s own policies.

Citations from Key Elements of FIFA’s Human Rights³⁶

- Article 3: “In line with the UNGPs [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights], FIFA will exercise its leverage, and seek to increase said leverage where necessary, in connection with adverse human rights impacts arising through its

³² “FIFA: 2026 World Cup Bids Test Reforms,” Human Rights Watch News Release, June 12, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/06/12/fifa-2026-world-cup-bids-test-reforms>.

³³ “FIFA publishes bid books for the 2026 FIFA World Cup incl. summaries of human rights strategies provided by bidders,” Business and Human Rights Center Press Release, April 3, 2018, <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/fifa-publishes-bid-books-for-the-2026-fifa-world-cup-incl-summaries-of-human-rights-strategies-provided-by-bidders/> (accessed April 21, 2026).

³⁴ “FIFA: 2026 World Cup Bids Test Reforms,” Human Rights Watch News Release, June 12, 2018.

³⁵ FIFA, Proposal for a United Human Rights Strategy, March 16, 2018.

³⁶ FIFA, FIFA’s Human Rights Policy, May 2017 edition, <https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/1a876c66a3fo498d/original/kro5dqyhwr1uhqy2lh6r-pdf.pdf> (accessed April 21, 2026).

business relationships. To this end, FIFA will explore and make use of all options available to it within the said relationships.”

- Article 4: “FIFA will strive to go beyond its responsibility to respect human rights, as enshrined in the UNGPs, by taking measures to promote the protection of human rights and positively contribute to their enjoyment, especially where it is able to apply effective leverage to help increase said enjoyment or where this relates to strengthening human rights in or through football.”
- Article 11: “FIFA helps protect those who advocate respect for human rights associated with its activities and is committed to contributing to providing remedy where individuals have been adversely affected by activities associated with FIFA.”
- Article 11: “FIFA 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.”
- Article 5: “Discrimination is an issue in the world of football both on and off the pitch. FIFA strives to create a discrimination-free environment within its organisation and throughout all of its activities.... Article 4 of the FIFA Statutes prohibits discrimination of any kind against a country, private person or group of people on account of race, skin colour, ethnic, national or social origin, gender, disability, language, religion, political opinion or any other opinion, wealth, birth or any other status, sexual orientation or any other reason.”

In November 2017, Federico Addiechi, FIFA’s then-head of sustainability and diversity, told the *New York Times*: “If there are any cases of abuse, or even possibility of human rights defenders or journalists being forced into a difficult corner, then according to our statutes and human rights policy, FIFA will intervene.”

Finally, FIFA is an international sports federation under the International Olympic Committee (IOC), and the IOC has adopted the UN Guiding Principles and mandated a “Strategic Framework on Human Rights”³⁷ since September 2022.

3. DUE DILLIGENCE

FIFA’s Human Rights Policy states: “Guided by its human rights approach, FIFA embeds its commitment throughout the organisation and engages in an ongoing due diligence process to identify, address, evaluate and communicate the risks of involvement with adverse human rights impacts.” It also states that, “FIFA will constructively engage with relevant authorities and other stakeholders and make every effort to uphold its international human rights responsibilities.”

³⁷ IOC approves Strategic Framework on Human Rights, International Olympics Committee Press Release, September 9, 2022, <https://www.olympics.com/ioc/news/ioc-approves-strategic-framework-on-human-rights> (accessed April 21, 2026).

“FIFA’s Sportswashing ‘Peace’ Prize”

By Minky Worden³⁸

When FIFA President Gianni Infantino awarded the new FIFA Peace Prize to President Donald Trump, the global soccer federation had no transparent process³⁹ for the award, which appears to be cravenly created for Trump, who was disappointed⁴⁰ in October when Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado was awarded the Nobel Prize instead of him.



FIFA President Gianni Infantino, right, awards President Donald Trump with the FIFA Peace Prize during the draw for the 2026 soccer World Cup at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, December 5, 2025. © 2025 AP Photo/Chris Carlson, File

³⁸ This section is a previously published Op-ed by Minky Worden from Human Rights Watch, which appeared in *Newsweek* on December 9, 2025. It is available on *Newsweek's* website at: <https://www.newsweek.com/fifas-sportswashing-peace-prize-opinion-11188232>.

³⁹ Letter from Human Rights Watch to FIFA on FIFA’s Peace Prize, November 11, 2025, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2025/12/FIFA%20Peace%20Prize%20letter%20from%20Human%20Rights%20Watch%20.pdf.

⁴⁰ Kayla Epstein, "White House blasts Nobel Committee for not awarding Peace Prize to Trump," *BBC*, October 10, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c7842qg15p60> (accessed April 21, 2026).

The Nobel Committee often awards its Peace Prize to leaders who champion democracy and human rights, including those whose sacrifices include years as political prisoners. Past recipients include Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, China’s Liu Xiaobo, Mother Teresa and the Dalai Lama.

According to a post on Infantino’s Instagram, the FIFA Peace Prize aims to “recognise exceptional actions for peace and unity.”

Human Rights Watch has written⁴¹ to Gianni Infantino to request details of the Peace Prize’s nominees, judges, terms of reference and selection process. Unlike the detailed arrangements for the Nobel Peace Prize, FIFA has issued no criteria for nomination or selection for its new prize.

By concocting this award, Infantino risks turning the 2026 FIFA World Cup to be held in the U.S., Canada and Mexico into yet another sportswashing event in a world that already has far too many. Human Rights Watch has long documented “sportswashing,” meaning when governments use mega-sporting events to sanitize their reputations while committing grave human rights abuses at home or abroad.

In 2008, China spent over \$40 billion to dazzle with a spectacular Olympics. Outside the limelight, the authorities evicted⁴² hundreds of thousands of residents to make way for Olympic venues, detained⁴³ journalists and set up designated “protest zones” but prohibited anyone from protesting there. One man who applied to protest was imprisoned⁴⁴ for three years. While the world applauded Beijing’s organizational prowess, the Chinese surveillance state tightened its grip.

Then came Russia. Both the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics and the 2018 FIFA World Cup were vehicles for President Vladimir Putin to project Russian prestige, while wielding a

⁴¹ Letter from Human Rights Watch to FIFA on FIFA’s Peace Prize, November 11, 2025.

⁴² “China: Olympics Harm Key Human Rights,” Human Rights Watch News Release, August 6, 2008, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2008/08/06/china-olympics-harm-key-human-rights>.

⁴³ “China: Olympics Media Freedom Commitments Violated,” Human Rights Watch News Release, July 7, 2008, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2008/07/07/china-olympics-media-freedom-commitments-violated>.

⁴⁴ “China: Police Detain Would-Be Olympic Protesters,” Human Rights Watch News Release, August 13, 2008, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2008/08/13/china-police-detain-would-be-olympic-protesters>.

staggering crackdown⁴⁵ on civil society and LGBTQ rights.⁴⁶

The Qatar 2022 World Cup led to preventable deaths⁴⁷ of thousands of migrant workers who built stadiums and infrastructure worth \$220 billion⁴⁸ to elevate Qatar's status on the world stage. FIFA's own human rights committee concluded⁴⁹ the soccer body had "a responsibility" to financially compensate families of those who were harmed or died building World Cup infrastructure in Qatar, but FIFA has paid no compensation to those families.

After human rights crises tied to the Russia and Qatar World Cups, FIFA pledged that the 2026 World Cup would be different. FIFA adopted the U.N. Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, published a Human Rights Policy and said the U.S./Canada/Mexico World Cup would be the first with a human rights strategy.⁵⁰

Instead, Infantino's FIFA is enabling the Trump administration's sportswashing campaign. Trump has named himself chairman of the White House Task Force⁵¹ on the 2026 World Cup, and human rights risks due to U.S. visa and immigration policies are escalating. FIFA's so-called peace prize is being awarded against a backdrop of violent detentions of immigrants, national guard deployments in U.S. cities and the obsequious cancellation⁵² of FIFA's own anti-racism and anti-discrimination campaigns. Trump claims the U.S. will welcome the world, but has simultaneously imposed a harsh travel ban⁵³ excluding or

⁴⁵ "Russia: Repression, Discrimination Ahead of World Cup," Human Rights Watch News Release, May 15, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/05/15/russia-repression-discrimination-ahead-of-world-cup>.

⁴⁶ Minky Worden (Human Rights Watch), "Will FIFA Force Russia to Make the World Cup Friendly to L.G.B.T People?," Commentary, *The New York Times*, May 28, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/28/opinion/fifa-world-cup-russia-lgbtq.html> (accessed April 21, 2026).

⁴⁷ Minky Worden (Human Rights Watch), "The World Cup is Exciting, Lucrative, and Deadly," Commentary, *Newsweek*, August 23, 2022, <https://www.newsweek.com/world-cup-exciting-lucrative-deadly-opinion-1735799> (accessed April 21, 2026).

⁴⁸ Human Rights Watch Testimony to the European Parliament on "The High Human Cost of the World Cup," November 14, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/11/14/european-parliament-testimony-the-high-human-cost-of-the-world-cup>.

⁴⁹ FIFA Sub-Committee on Human Rights & Social Responsibility, Report on remedy and legacy for workers in the context of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, December 22, 2023, <https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/774a7297f704cebb/original/FIFA-Sub-Committee-on-Human-Rights-Social-Responsibility-Report.pdf> (accessed April 21, 2026).

⁵⁰ FIFA, Proposal for a United Human Rights Strategy, March 16, 2018.

⁵¹ Establishing the White House Task Force on the FIFA World Cup 2026, The White House, Presidential Action, March 7, 2025 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/establishing-the-white-house-task-force-on-the-fifa-world-cup-2026/> (accessed April 21, 2026).

⁵² "US: FIFA Cancels Anti-Bias Messaging for Club World Cup," Human Rights Watch News Release, July 3, 2025.

⁵³ "Restricting the Entry of Foreign Nationals to Protect the United States from Foreign Terrorists and Other National Security and Public Safety Threats," The White House, Proclamations, June 4, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/06/restricting-the-entry-of-foreign-nationals-to-protect-the-united-states-from-foreign-terrorists-and-other-national-security-and-public-safety-threats/> (accessed April 21, 2026).

restricting fans from as many as 30 countries.⁵⁴ The only exceptions are for World Cup athletes and key staff.

As FIFA's Club World Cup tournament games began in Los Angeles, thousands of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents stormed⁵⁵ into predominantly Latino communities, tearing families apart. Human Rights Watch has documented⁵⁶ how the Trump administration arrested and summarily deported noncitizens, including people who had a lawful right to apply for asylum and have their claims heard. Human Rights Watch documented⁵⁷ the arrest and return of an asylum seeker who took his children to the Club World Cup soccer tournament final, was detained, separated from his children and deported.

Trump policies on refugees,⁵⁸ crackdowns on free speech, maritime strikes that amount to extrajudicial killings⁵⁹ and deportations⁶⁰ of asylum seekers are at odds with any credible "peace prize."

Gianni Infantino and his FIFA colleagues should use their leverage to demand that the Trump administration do what's right for the games: roll back discriminatory travel bans, refrain from abusive immigration enforcement operations in and around World Cup venues, protect children's rights⁶¹ and commit to uphold freedom of assembly and speech.

FIFA's job is to help make the World Cup tournament safe and successful, not to fabricate a peace prize.

⁵⁴ Daniel Miller, "Trump administration to expand travel ban to over 30 countries, Noem says," *FOX News*, December 8, 2025, <https://www.livenowfox.com/news/trump-administration-expand-travel-ban-countries>

⁵⁵ "US: ICE Abuses in Los Angeles Set Stage for Other Cities," Human Rights Watch Presser Plus, November 4, 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/11/04/us-ice-abuses-in-los-angeles-set-stage-for-other-cities>.

⁵⁶ Human Rights Watch, *Nobody Cared, Nobody Listened: The US Expulsion of Third-Country Nationals to Panama* (New York: April 2025), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2025/04/24/nobody-cared-nobody-listened/the-us-expulsion-of-third-country-nationals-to>.

⁵⁷ "US: ICE Arrest at FIFA Event Spotlights Dangers for World Cup," Human Rights Watch Presser Plus, December 3, 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/12/03/us-ice-arrest-at-fifa-event-spotlights-dangers-for-world-cup>.

⁵⁸ Human Rights Watch, *Nobody Cared, Nobody Listened*.

⁵⁹ "US: Maritime Strikes Amount to Extrajudicial Killings," Human Rights Watch News Release, September 18, 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/09/18/us-maritime-strikes-amount-to-extrajudicial-killings>.

⁶⁰ Human Rights Watch, *The Strategy Is to Break Us: The US Expulsion of Third-Country Nationals to Costa Rica* (New York: May 2025), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2025/05/22/the-strategy-is-to-break-us/the-us-expulsion-of-third-country-nationals-to-costa>.

⁶¹ Katherine La Puente and Minky Worden, "FIFA Has No Child Safeguarding Policy for 2026 World Cup," Human Rights Watch Dispatch, April 23, 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/04/23/fifa-has-no-child-safeguarding-policy-2026-world-cup>.

“Promises of an Inclusive 2026 World Cup but Qatar’s Failures Echo”

By Robbie Newton⁶²

The US government’s World Cup task force has promised a safe and welcoming 2026 World Cup, but past failures raise serious concerns. In this commentary, Robbie Newton of Human Rights Watch argues that without enforceable safeguards, fans remain at risk of discrimination, arbitrary treatment, and unequal access.

During half time of a 2022 men’s football World Cup match in Qatar, I witnessed eight security officers conducting a full body search of a female fan. They eventually lifted her trousers at the ankle, revealing a pair of rainbow-colored socks – which the officers made her remove before allowing her to return to the stands.

This happened despite repeated public assurances⁶³ from Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) to fans’ groups over the decade before the World Cup that rainbow colors would be permitted at the tournament. The incident is emblematic of the arbitrary treatment sports fans can face in the absence⁶⁴ of proper safeguards.

As the 2026 FIFA World Cup in Canada, the United States, and Mexico approaches – similar concerns persist. With 75 percent of the matches taking place on US soil, fans may face a range of human rights risks, from abusive immigration raids and arbitrary detention to racial profiling, and discriminatory visa bans for dozens of countries.⁶⁵ The US government’s World Cup task force has promised the “safest and most welcoming sporting

⁶² This section is a previously published Op-ed by Robbie Newton from Human Rights Watch, which appeared in *Play the Game* on April 21, 2026. It is available on *Play the Game’s* website at: <https://www.playthegame.org/news/promises-of-a-safe-and-welcoming-2026-world-cup-but-qatar-s-failures-still-echo/>. Play the Game is an initiative run by the Danish Institute for Sports Studies (Idan) that promotes democratic values in world sports with an emphasis on freedom of expression, transparency, and open dialogue. See more at: <https://www.playthegame.org/about/>.

⁶³ Miguel Delaney, "Fifa says rainbow colours now allowed in Qatar after flags confiscated," *The Independent*, November 24, 2022, <https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/football/world-cup/fifa-rainbow-lgbtq-qatar-2022-b2232145.html> (accessed April 21, 2026).

⁶⁴ Ali Walker, "EU warns FIFA over leadership before World Cup," *Politico*, March 17, 2026, <https://www.politico.eu/article/glenn-micallef-fifa-gianni-infantino-world-cup/> (accessed April 21, 2026).

⁶⁵ Human Rights Watch Letter to FIFA on Human Rights Responsibilities in 2026 World Cup, May 5, 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/05/06/letter-fifa-re-human-rights-responsibilities-2026-world-cup>.

event in history,”⁶⁶ but FIFA’s past failures to protect fans warn that could be another story once the first whistle blows.

In Qatar, where same-sex relations are criminalised⁶⁷ and where LGBT people have been subjected to ill-treatment in detention,⁶⁸ widespread and unjust confiscations of rainbow-colored paraphernalia in stadiums⁶⁹ became a tournament-defining issue. Prior to the tournament, FIFA held multiple awareness trainings with the Qatari government, including on LGBT rights. Yet, when the late journalist Grant Wahl⁷⁰ arrived at the Ahmad bin Ali Stadium wearing a rainbow-colored football t-shirt, he said he was detained and told to remove the t-shirt by security officers, who claimed it was “political.”⁷¹ He was later released.⁷²

Throughout the tournament, before entering World Cup stadiums, scores of Welsh fans were reportedly forced to remove and discard their “Rainbow Wall” bucket hats⁷³ – an important symbol of inclusivity and solidarity with the Welsh LGBTQ+ supporters and allies group.⁷⁴ Having repeatedly assured fans that rainbow flags would be permitted at the tournament, FIFA failed to issue a corrective statement acknowledging these risks, leaving fans feeling intimidated⁷⁵ and exposed to arbitrary treatment.

⁶⁶ Dan Roan, “Fan group ‘concerned’ by raids before World Cup,” *BBC*, January 30, 2026, <https://www.bbc.com/sport/football/articles/c3014ndv1q50> (accessed April 21, 2026).

⁶⁷ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2026* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2026), Qatar chapter, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2026/country-chapters/qatar#e81181>.

⁶⁸ “Qatar: Security Forces Arrest, Abuse LGBT People,” Human Rights Watch News Release, October 24, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/10/24/qatar-security-forces-arrest-abuse-lgbt-people>.

⁶⁹ Ben Church, “Exclusive: World Cup soccer fans stopped by security officials for wearing rainbow-colored items,” *CNN*, November 28, 2022, <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/11/26/football/german-soccer-fans-rainbow-colors-qatar-2022-world-cup-spt-intl> (accessed April 21, 2026).

⁷⁰ Russel Lewis, “American soccer sportswriter Grant Wahl died of an aneurysm at the Qatar World Cup,” *NPR*, December 14, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/12/14/1142647682/grant-wahl-autopsy-world-cup-qatar> (accessed April 21, 2026).

⁷¹ Grant Wahl, “An Unexpected Detention by World Cup Security,” *Fútbol with Grant Wahl*, November 21, 2022, <https://grantwahl.substack.com/p/an-unexpected-detention-by-world> (accessed April 21, 2026).

⁷² Guardian sport, “US journalist Grant Wahl says he was detained in Qatar for rainbow shirt,” *The Guardian*, November 21, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2022/nov/21/us-journalist-grant-wahl-says-he-was-detained-in-qatar-for-rainbow-shirt> (accessed April 21, 2026).

⁷³ Sean Ingle, “Fifa and Qatar in urgent talks after Wales rainbow hats confiscated,” *The Guardian*, November 22, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2022/nov/22/fifa-qatar-talks-wales-rainbow-hats-confiscated-world-cup> (accessed April 21, 2026).

⁷⁴ “The Rainbow Wall – Cymru’s New LGBTQ+ Supports Group,” PAWB Media Release, April 7, 2021, <https://faw.cymru/pawb/news/the-rainbow-wall-cymrus-new-lgbtq-supports-group/> (accessed April 21, 2026).

⁷⁵ “Qatar World Cup: Laura McAllister told to remove rainbow bucket hat,” *BBC*, November 22, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-63710435> (accessed April 21, 2026).

FIFA's experience in Qatar did not result in the kind of progress many hoped for. Ahead of the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup in the US – billed as a “trial run”⁷⁶ for this summer's tournament – FIFA scrapped planned anti-discrimination messaging, which rights groups and fans denounced as a serious “step backward.”⁷⁷ The tournament saw incidents of homophobic chanting⁷⁸ at the July 2 Dortmund-Monterrey match in Atlanta, Georgia. Human Rights Watch also documented⁷⁹ the arrest and transfer to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents on July 13, 2025, of a non-US citizen fan who was attending the tournament with his children. He was initially detained for a minor offense, before being handed over to ICE, locked up for months in an ICE detention center in Newark, and then returned to his country of origin. The case raises serious questions about the intersection of immigration enforcement and access to major sporting events.

FIFA recently announced that it plans to restore⁸⁰ anti-discrimination messaging for the World Cup, following a spate of harrowing incidents of racism and homophobia⁸¹ in world football, including the alleged discriminatory abuse directed at Real Madrid's Vinícius Júnior. But many fans – particularly non-US citizens,⁸² LGBTQ+ people,⁸³ or those who engage in certain kinds of political protest⁸⁴ – continue to be at risk from the Trump administration's abusive policies.

⁷⁶ Kevin Baxter, "Why? Why not. The Club World Cup is more than a trial run for FIFA's marquee event," *Los Angeles Times*, June 13, 2025, <https://www.latimes.com/sports/soccer/story/2025-06-13/fifa-club-world-cup-is-more-than-you-might-think> (accessed April 21, 2026).

⁷⁷ US: FIFA Cancels Anti-Bias Messaging for Club World Cup," Human Rights Watch News Release, July 3, 2025.

⁷⁸ Felipe Cardenas, "Supporters warned over homophobic chant during Monterrey's Club World Cup defeat by Borussia Dortmund," *The Athletic*, July 9, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6467780/2025/07/02/club-world-cup-homophobic-chant/> (accessed April 21, 2026).

⁷⁹ "US: ICE Arrest at FIFA Event Spotlights Dangers for World Cup," Human Rights Watch Presser Plus, December 3, 2025.

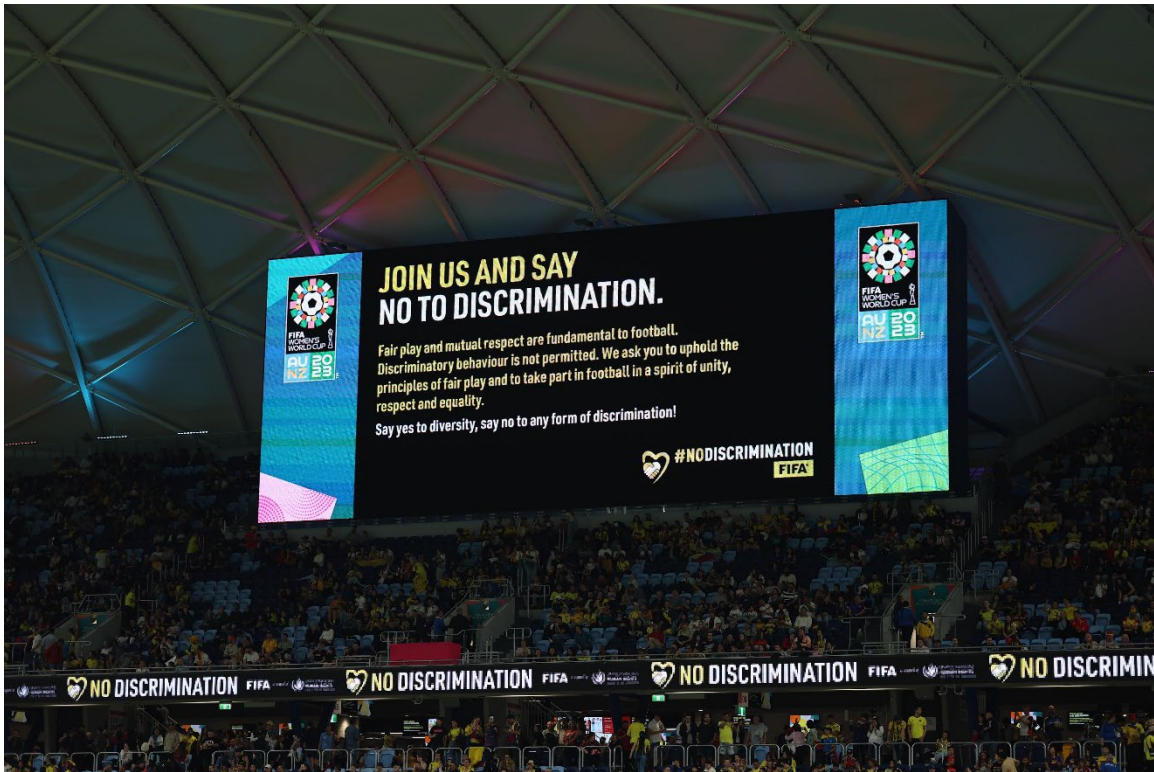
⁸⁰ Adam Crafton, "FIFA plans to restore anti-racism messaging at the World Cup," *The Athletic*, February 27, 2026, <https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/7073064/2026/02/27/fifa-world-cup-anti-racism/> (accessed April 21, 2026).

⁸¹ Vincent Sima Olé and Robbie Newton, "FIFA Needs to Call Full Time on Discrimination," Human Rights Watch Dispatch, February 24, 2026, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2026/02/24/fifa-needs-to-call-full-time-on-discrimination>.

⁸² Human Rights Watch Letter to FIFA on the Impact of U.S. Immigration Policies on the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup and the 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup, July 1, 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/07/01/letter-to-fifa-re-impact-of-us-immigration-policies-on-the-2025-fifa-club-world-cup>.

⁸³ Ryan Thoreson, "US Supreme Court Allows Discriminatory Passport Rule," Human Rights Watch Dispatch, November 10, 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/11/10/us-supreme-court-allows-discriminatory-passport-rule>.

⁸⁴ ACLU, "Khalil v. Trump," Court Case, March 11, 2025, <https://www.aclu.org/cases/khalil-v-trump> (accessed April 21, 2026).



No Discrimination board during the FIFA Women's World Cup at the Sydney Football Stadium, Australia, July 30, 2023. © 2023 Mark Metcalfe - FIFA/FIFA via Getty Images

Ambassador of Athlete Ally, an LGBTQ+ athlete support group, and former professional player Matthew Pacifici told⁸⁵ Human Rights Watch that, “LGBTQ+ players and fans need more than symbolic gestures – we need enforceable protections ... Players and fans must know that FIFA will protect them, not abandon them.”

FIFA’s Human Rights Policy⁸⁶ commits the organisation to respect freedom of expression and ensure non-discrimination. To give these commitments substance, FIFA should also establish a formal human rights monitoring mechanism, with independent oversight, engagement with civil society, and public reporting, for the duration of the tournament.

⁸⁵ "World Cup 2026: FIFA Needs to Act on Human Rights," Joint Press release from Sport & Rights Alliance, Dignity 2026, ACLU, AFL-CIO, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Independent Supporters Council, NAACP, Athlete Ally, and Reporters Without Borders, December 3, 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/12/03/world-cup-2026-fifa-needs-to-act-on-human-rights>.

⁸⁶ FIFA, FIFA's Human Rights Policy, May 2017 edition.

To learn lessons from human rights failures in Qatar and the 2025 Club World Cup, FIFA should work with the Trump administration to put in place⁸⁷ stronger protections for players and fans. This should include securing a public commitment to refrain from immigration enforcement operations at all World Cup events and venues; and doing everything possible to ensure that all qualified teams, media, visitors, and fans will have equal access to the tournament regardless of nationality, religion, gender, or opinion.

Without such measures, FIFA risks once again falling short of its own promises.

⁸⁷ "Keep the World in the World Cup," Open Letter from Human Rights Watch and the Sport & Rights Alliance to Gianni Infantino, March 11, 2026, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2026/03/12/keep-the-world-in-the-world-cup>.

FIFA Club World Cup Arrest and Return Documented by Human Rights Watch

The arrest and return⁸⁸ of an asylum seeker who took his children to the Club World Cup soccer tournament final on July 13, 2025, underscores the serious concerns about the rights of non-citizens attending the 2026 World Cup in the United States.

The man, whose name and country of origin are being withheld at his request, was detained in New Jersey before the Club World Cup tournament final between Chelsea (England) and Paris Saint-Germain (France). He was in the American Dream Mall parking lot near MetLife Stadium with two of his children, ages 10 and 14, waiting for the match to begin.

The man and his family members told Human Rights Watch that police questioned and then detained him after he attempted to fly a small drone to take a photograph of his family. When the drone malfunctioned, he put the drone back in his car and was detained as he was doing so.

A local ordinance prohibits the use of drones⁸⁹ on or over the MetLife Complex, implementing a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) directive against flying drones in and around stadiums during sporting events. Unintentionally violating the FAA prohibition is a civil offense and usually only results in a fine, according to an aviation lawyer consulted by Human Rights Watch.

The man said that the officer who questioned him initially told him they would issue him a citation and release him quickly. Instead, law enforcement officers asked about his immigration status and then handed him over to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents. ICE agents detained the man the same day and moved to deport him.

Interviewed in the detention facility, he told Human Rights Watch that his last memory of the day of his arrest was “seeing my kids cry because I was captured.”

⁸⁸ “US: ICE Arrest at FIFA Event Spotlights Dangers for World Cup,” Human Rights Watch Presser Plus.

⁸⁹ Borough of East Rutherford, NJ, ight2025-10-21, Volume I, Part II: Genereal Legislation, Chapter 133 Drones and Unmanned Aircraft, 133-2Regulations, <https://ecode360.com/37107081#37107083> (accessed April 21, 2026).

The impact of arrests and raids on communities where World Cup games will be hosted has been devastating. From January 20, 2025 to March 10, 2026, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) arrested⁹⁰ at least 167,000 people in and around the 11 US cities where games will be played, based on ICE data provided in response to a freedom of information request to the Deportation Data Project⁹¹ analyzed by Human Rights Watch. Those arrests are part of an abusive campaign of immigration enforcement that has entailed widespread human rights violations across the United States.

⁹⁰ Deportation Data Project, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, <https://deportationdata.org/data/ice.html> (accessed April 21, 2026).

⁹¹ Bill Frelick (Human Rights Watch, “Dirty (Baker’s) Dozen: 13 Harmful Trump 2.0 Administration Immigration, Citizenship, and Refugee Policies,” as of January 20, 2026, Commentary, January 20, 2026, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2026/01/20/dirty-bakers-dozen-13-harmful-trump-20-administration-immigration-citizenship-and>.

III. Human Rights Issues in the United States

United States President Donald Trump’s second administration has been marked from the [start](#) by blatant disregard for human rights and egregious violations. The US took significant steps backward on immigration, health, environment, labor, disability, gender, criminal justice, and freedom of speech rights, among others.⁹²

On the first day of his second term, Trump ordered the termination of all federal diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, the first of a series of actions that eroded initiatives and institutions designed to combat racial and other discrimination. The actions included a spate of executive orders and policies that gutted meaningful civil rights enforcement in various government departments and eliminated virtually all federal initiatives aimed at redress for past invidious discrimination including ongoing legacies of chattel slavery. The administration also reshaped the country’s refugee resettlement efforts, so they now benefit white South Africans almost exclusively.

Starting in January, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents and other law enforcement personnel, often masked, conducted hundreds of unnecessarily violent and abusive raids in hundreds of locations. Starting in June, President Trump deployed national guard troops to cities led by opposition Democratic Party officials under the guise of combatting “insurrection” and crime, despite falling crime rates. At time of writing, troops had been deployed to five cities, four of which have Black mayors. Protests against administration actions in [Los Angeles](#), [Chicago](#), and elsewhere, were met with violence by federal agents and local police forces.

The administration’s racial and ethnic scapegoating, domestic deployment of national guard forces in pretextual power grabs, repeated acts of retaliation against [perceived political enemies](#) and [former officials](#) now critical of him, as well as attempts to expand the coercive powers of the executive and neuter democratic checks and balances, underpin a decided shift toward authoritarianism in the US.

⁹² This section is Human Rights Watch’s 2026 World Report chapter on the US, analyzing the human rights situation in the US for the year 2025, and was published on February 4, 2026. The full text is also available at: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2026/country-chapters/united-states>.

Some states and localities took positive steps to resist abusive actions and support human rights, but such efforts paled in comparison to the federal-government-led assault on rights.

Structural Racism and Other Discrimination

In early January 2025, before President Trump's second-term inauguration, the US Department of Justice [issued a report](#) on the [Tulsa race massacre of 1921](#), which decimated that city's growing Black middle class, an emblem of the lasting impact of slavery and [Jim Crow](#) racism. The report [confirmed](#) white law enforcement and residents were responsible for the attack, but ultimately concluded legal redress was not available.

Starting on inauguration day, the new administration initiated [drastic backsliding](#) on [racial justice](#), dismantling [civil rights mechanisms](#) and eliminating federal [diversity, equity, and inclusion](#) efforts. It aggressively sought to [erase Black history](#), including [Harriet Tubman's legacy](#), and to downplay or obscure racial injustice and [resist accountability](#).

Indigenous peoples continued to face obstacles to realization of their rights, including those affected by the [Thacker Pass lithium mine](#) in Nevada. The Thacker Pass case exposed the need for new federal reforms to ensure projects on Indigenous lands proceed only with the [free, prior, and informed consent](#) of affected Tribes, and take into account negative cultural, environmental, and health impacts.

[H.R. 40](#)—a Congressional 30-year old bill advocating for a national [reparations](#) commission to study the legacy of enslavement—remained under consideration. [Several state and local initiatives](#) advanced or were already being implemented to study and provide reparations, reflecting efforts to address historical racial injustices.

Democracy and the Right to Vote

Important pillars of US democracy came under serious attack in 2025. The current administration advanced efforts to restrict voting, including an executive order that sought to impose proof-of-citizenship requirements, shorten mail-in ballot deadlines, and limit fixes for ballot errors, though courts struck down some provisions as unlawful.

Congressional House Republicans pushed the [SAVE Act](#) mandating documentary proof of citizenship for voter registration, but the bill failed in the Senate. These and other efforts that would weaken voting protections are [expected to return](#) ahead of the 2026 mid-term elections.

The administration launched sweeping measures to weaken core pillars of civil society it associates with opposition to its policies, including executive orders cutting university [research funding](#) over purported ideological [disagreements](#), restricting government access for law firms engaged in certain [legal work](#), threatening the [tax-exempt status](#) of some non-governmental organizations and misusing the [Federal Communications Commission](#) and [Department of Justice](#) in attempts to intimidate and silence critics. The administration has also moved to [erode US oversight institutions](#) by [politicizing](#) federal agencies and [purging](#) independent officials.

Immigrants and Asylum Seekers

Since taking office in January, the Trump administration has imposed broad anti-immigrant policies, utilized [racial profiling](#) in immigration enforcement, limited asylum claims based on [intimate partner violence](#), and [sought to preclude newly arriving asylum](#) seekers from lodging claims, despite their right to do so under US and international law.

The administration [arrested](#) and summarily deported an increasing number of primarily [Black and Brown immigrants](#), [violating due process](#) rights and [fomenting fear](#). Courts stopped particularly egregious abuses, such as an attempt to [deport unaccompanied children to Guatemala](#). In many areas, local law enforcement [expanded](#) collaboration with federal immigration enforcement agencies, in some cases with [dire consequences](#).

Immigration enforcement raids occurred throughout the country, including in [Colorado](#), [Los Angeles](#), [Washington D.C.](#), [Chicago](#), and at [factories](#), [farms, and meatpacking sites](#). Raids occurred in [streets](#), [homes](#), [workplaces](#), [regular immigration check-ins](#), [courthouses](#), [medical centers](#), and [university campuses](#). [Federal guidance](#) that had limited immigration enforcement in “sensitive locations” such as schools, hospitals, and places of worship was revoked, extending arrests to such locations.

Many [raids](#) were [violent and abusive](#), terrorizing entire communities. While a legal challenge is ongoing, the US Supreme Court allowed law enforcement to continue using ethnicity and perceived national origin as factors that may justify detaining people to determine their immigration status.

Some immigration enforcement actions were accompanied by National Guard deployments and were met with widespread protests. In [Los Angeles](#) and [Chicago](#), law enforcement responses violated free speech and assembly rights and involved excessive and in many cases entirely unwarranted use of force.

In what constituted the international crime of [enforced disappearance](#), the administration used the [Alien Enemies Act](#)—a 1798 law previously only invoked three times and only in the context of wars declared against foreign nations—to expel 252 Venezuelan immigrants to a [notorious maximum security prison in El Salvador](#) where they were [subjected to torture and inhuman and degrading conditions](#). After months of incommunicado detention, they were transferred to Venezuela.

The US also transferred third-country nationals to other countries, including [Costa Rica](#), [Panama](#), Ghana, Mexico, [South Sudan](#), [Eswatini](#), and [Rwanda](#), under a variety of bilateral agreements that lacked transparency and that in some cases involved the US sending millions of dollars to the recipient countries. These transfers were challenged in the courts as due process and nonrefoulement violations.

The administration sought to terminate Temporary Protected Status designations for [Afghanistan](#), [Cameroon](#), [Ethiopia](#), [Haiti](#), [Honduras](#), [Myanmar](#), [Nepal](#), [Nicaragua](#), [South Sudan](#), and [Venezuela](#), threatening the legal status of thousands of people who cannot safely return to their countries of origin.

Numerous immigrant university students were detained and put into [deportation proceedings because of their political speech](#), particularly on Palestine issues, prompting [court challenges](#). Senior government officials indicated that visa applicants' social media posts and public comments [were being used](#) as a criterion for denying US admission.

New detention facilities were opened at [military sites](#) and in [states including Florida](#). [Abusive conditions](#)—including [gross medical neglect](#), [overcrowding and lack of sanitation](#)—were reported in facilities. By late August, ICE had already detained more than three times as many people as in all of 2024. In December, the administration [suspended immigration processing](#) for nationals from 19 countries and suspended pending asylum procedures for all nationalities.

Criminal Legal System

The US has among the [highest incarceration](#) rates in the world, with nearly 2 million people in [jails, prisons, and immigration detention](#) facilities on any given day. Most in jails are [held pretrial](#), not convicted of a crime but often unable to afford bail to secure release. [Federal](#) and some [local authorities attempted](#) to increase pretrial incarceration and roll back [other measures](#) that reduce incarceration.

[Black people](#) and [Latinos](#) are disproportionately overrepresented in [prison populations](#).

Though [crime rates](#) across the US continued to fall, including in the cities targeted, national guard forces were deployed in [Los Angeles](#), [Chicago](#), [Washington D.C.](#), [Portland](#), and [Memphis](#), possibly [unlawfully](#) and often [over](#) local [opposition](#). The deployments were ostensibly to [combat crime](#) and protect immigration agents in the performance of their enforcement efforts.

In 2025, the US Department of Justice [dropped prosecutions](#) of current administration [allies](#), and [threatened](#) or [prosecuted](#) perceived [opponents](#), while curtailing enforcement of laws targeting [white collar](#) crime, [corruption](#), and [racial discrimination](#).

The president expanded the [death penalty](#) in Washington DC by ordering the federal prosecutor to seek death wherever possible, despite local abolition of the death penalty in 1981, and US states [executed](#) 47 people.

Enforcement of laws and [policies criminalizing houselessness](#) reportedly [increased](#) following the Supreme Court's 2024 [Grants Pass](#) decision, as did efforts to [involuntarily detain](#) people with mental health conditions or who [use drugs](#). Police [killed](#) 1301 people in 2025.

While the United States has seen an overall decline in youth incarceration over the past two decades, it still confines youth at a rate [more than twice the global average](#). Children continue to be [prosecuted as adults](#) in all 50 states with [racial and ethnic disparities](#) persisting throughout the criminal legal system, including at arrest, detention, and sentencing. This year, the president [called for harsher punishment](#) of children and [Congress advanced legislation](#) to increase the prosecution of children as adults in Washington, DC. The United States remains the only country in the world that [sentences children to die in prison](#).

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

Three years after the Supreme Court overturned [Roe v. Wade](#), anti-abortion lawmakers continued to advance legislation to restrict sexual and reproductive rights.

Since 2022, [multiple states](#) banned abortion and others restricted access. The fragmented legal landscape created fear, caused harmful delays, and forced many to [travel considerable distances](#) for health care. [State lawmakers moved](#) to limit medication abortion, halt sexuality education, [prosecute healthcare providers](#), and criminalize those helping youth travel out of state to access health care.

Laws in 25 states [requiring parental consent or notification](#) for abortion had devastating impacts on young people's health and lives.

In the two years following the overturning of *Roe*, [prosecutors initiated](#) at least 412 cases charging pregnant people with crimes related to pregnancy, pregnancy loss, or birth.

The current administration [blocked Planned Parenthood](#) from receiving reimbursements from Medicaid, the public health insurance program for people with low incomes. As a result, more than a million people lost insurance coverage for health care they were receiving from the nonprofit organization, the single largest provider of reproductive health care in the US.

The administration's sweeping financial cuts to reproductive healthcare programs further threatened the right to health. The administration [fired staff](#) working on [reproductive health](#), [froze funds](#) for family planning, cervical cancer screening, and other services, and

dismantled a [research project](#) that investigates significant and unjust racial inequities in pregnancy and newborn health.

The [budget reconciliation law](#) enacted in July extended tax cuts that disproportionately benefit the country's wealthiest while significantly reducing public spending on health and other public programs essential for human rights. The [law](#) will strip millions of people of health insurance coverage in coming years, including millions of women of reproductive age.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

In many parts of the US, officials at all levels continue to target the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. The current administration has escalated attacks on transgender communities. It has taken executive actions that prohibit government use of the term gender, [narrowly define sex as that assigned at birth](#), [restrict](#) and [withdraw support](#) for gender-affirming care for youth, and [roll back protections](#) for transgender students.

[Twenty-seven states](#) now ban medically indicated gender-affirming care for youth, and several impose criminal penalties on providers. In June, the Supreme Court upheld these bans, which have a [devastating impact](#) on young peoples' health and well-being. [Eight](#) states require school staff to [disclose](#) students' gender identity to parents and [twenty](#) states restrict bathroom [access](#) for transgender people in schools. [Nineteen](#) states restrict classroom discussion of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Less than half of US states [prohibit discrimination](#) based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Congress has [failed to enact](#) comprehensive federal protections for LGBT people in education, housing, public accommodations, and federally funded programs.

Disability and Older Peoples' Rights

During the first 100 days of the current administration, [older people and people with disabilities](#) faced heightened income and food insecurity after avoidable delays in Social Security payments, and cuts to federal financial support for supplemental nutrition

programs like [Meals on Wheels](#). People with disabilities were further affected by the termination of federal [programs mandating accessibility](#) and [accessibility guidance](#).

Environment and Human Rights

In January, the [US withdrew from the Paris Agreement](#), the landmark international treaty aiming to limit global temperature rise. In July, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [proposed](#) revoking its prior finding that greenhouse gases endanger public health, jeopardizing regulations curbing climate-warming pollutants.

The current administration's [closure](#) of EPA environmental justice offices, [deregulation](#), and [budget cuts](#) have drastically limited any ability to address harms concentrated within poor communities, disproportionately people of color, undermining people's health and livelihoods.

Technology and Human Rights

Administrative actions and the lack of federal [comprehensive data protection](#) legislation further eroded privacy. The administration [ordered](#) extensive [sharing of sensitive personal data](#) across government agencies, with the "Department of Government Efficiency" (DOGE) [centralizing government-collected sensitive personal data](#), creating an opportunity for mass [privacy violations](#).

ICE [procured](#) phone-hacking and other surveillance technology, including [reactivating a contract](#) for commercial spyware that [poses a risk to rights](#) and [risks exacerbating agency harassment](#) of journalists, activists, and lawyers.

US agencies [monitored social media](#) and used other types of surveillance to flag people for deportation based on their speech, in particular speech on Palestine issues.

The administration revoked an [executive order](#) that sought to ensure fair and accountable AI systems, launching an [AI Action Plan](#) that centers deregulation and investment in military AI.

Digital labor platforms misclassify millions of gig workers, [denying](#) them labor rights and often paying them less than state or local minimum wages. Gig workers, managed by algorithms, have no understanding of how they are assigned work, pay rates, or why they are deactivated. In July, federal lawmakers [proposed legislation](#) that would bring much-needed transparency to the sector and ensure fair treatment of gig workers.

Foreign Policy

The Trump administration rapidly downgraded human rights as a pillar of US foreign policy and worked to undermine international institutions created to uphold human rights standards and accountability. In his first year after his re-election, President Donald Trump emboldened autocratic governments through transactional deals, prioritizing short-term security and commercial and political gains over human rights.

Beginning in February, the administration abruptly [terminated](#) nearly all US foreign aid, including funding that supported human rights defenders, local civil society groups, and life-saving humanitarian assistance for populations facing conflict, displacement, or famine. The [dismantling](#) of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) removed one of the primary instruments for US global engagement on human rights. US foreign aid cuts were applied broadly, undermining programming across the globe, including in crisis-affected regions and repressed societies. Those cuts are having widespread impacts around the globe, including limiting human rights organizations' ability to operate and undermining access to health services and emergency care, including for [LGBT people](#), women, children, and [older people](#).

A sweeping [restructuring](#) of the US State Department institutionalized the retreat from human rights in US foreign policy. The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor faced deep funding and staffing reductions and a hollowing out of its mandate to advocate for human rights within the government, while offices dedicated to women's rights and atrocity prevention were eliminated outright.

In an escalation of US hostility toward independent accountability and global justice efforts, the administration abolished the State Department's global criminal justice office and expanded a [sanctions regime](#) against the International Criminal Court (ICC). The

sanctions targeted not only ICC staff, including judges, but also a UN human rights expert and nongovernmental organizations assisting survivors seeking justice for atrocities.

The Trump administration [politicized](#) and badly distorted the State Department's annual human rights report mandated by Congress. The 2025 report omitted key categories of violations and whitewashed the conduct of certain allied governments. Reports downplayed grave violations in countries such as El Salvador, where the US government sent deportees, including Venezuelan nationals, who were subjected to torture. This selective approach undermined the credibility of the reports, long considered a flawed but important resource for civil society and policymakers worldwide.

Trump withdrew the United States from multilateral forums central to global human rights protection including the [UN Human Rights Council](#), the [World Health Organization](#), and the [Paris Climate Accords](#). The administration [withheld](#) assessed dues to the United Nations and canceled nearly all voluntary funding streams, [undercutting](#) the UN's ability to adequately support human rights mechanisms, humanitarian operations, and peacekeeping missions.

The Trump administration carried out a series of lethal military strikes on small boats in the Caribbean, killing alleged drug smugglers in operations that were brazenly unlawful extrajudicial killings under international human rights law.

These Trump administration actions posed a significant threat to the global human rights framework. The administration's open abandonment of a longstanding— but uneven —US commitment to make rule of law, democracy, and human rights central elements of foreign policy signaled to other governments that the United States cannot be relied on to stand up for international human rights law or use its influence to press for accountability for violations.

“The World Cup Needs an ICE Truce”

By Minky Worden⁹³

Like the “Olympic Truce,” the United States should call a truce in ICE's campaign of terror for cities hosting World Cup matches

With the world’s largest sporting event, the World Cup, slated to begin in June, the United States should call a truce in the [campaign of terror](#) being waged by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and other federal agencies against immigrants and others.

Major sporting events have long relied on the so-called [Olympic Truce](#), which dates back to the eighth century B.C., when the warring city-states of ancient Greece agreed to cease hostilities so that athletes and fans could travel safely to and from the games. The International Olympic Committee and the United Nations revived the concept in 1993, and to this day, the United Nations puts forward a [resolution](#) before each Olympics calling on member nations to observe the Olympic Truce.

Given the risks posed by the Trump Administration’s abusive immigration operations to World Cup 2026 soccer fans, tournament workers and communities hosting the games, FIFA should back a similar “ICE Truce” as it organizes this year’s World Cup.

During the first weeks of 2026, the world watched in horror as federal agents in Minneapolis [shot and killed](#) two U.S. citizens, Renée Good and Alex Pretti, who were protesting and observing immigration enforcement operations in their community. Beyond Minnesota, immigration officers are engaging in [excessive violence](#) and deploying military-grade weapons during enforcement operations.

In communities across the nation, federal agents, [masked](#) and without identification, have [swarmed](#) individuals, broken car windows and front doors, and injured people. Rising

⁹³ This section is a previously published Op-ed by Minky Worden from Human Rights Watch, which appeared in *The Progressive* on March 26, 2026. It is available on *The Progressive's* website at: <https://progressive.org/op-eds/the-world-cup-needs-an-ice-truce-worden-20260326/>.

numbers of people are [locked up](#) in ICE detention centers. Thirteen people [have died](#) in ICE custody since the beginning of 2026.

Fans attending the upcoming tournament, regardless of their immigration status, may be at risk. From January to October 2025, ICE [arrested](#) at least 92,392 people in and around the eleven U.S. cities hosting World Cup matches, according to data analyzed by Human Rights Watch. Some of these operations [relied](#) on detaining people on the basis of their perceived national origin.

To be a host city for the World Cup should not mean becoming an ICE enforcement epicenter.

On February 10, Democratic U.S. Congressmember Nellie Pou of New Jersey—whose district includes MetLife Stadium, where the World Cup final will be played—[asked](#) acting ICE Director Todd Lyons if he would pause operations at World Cup matches. Lyons testified that ICE is a “key part of the overall security apparatus for the World Cup.”

Since then, Pou and members of Congress from World Cup host states have [introduced three bills](#) to block ICE during the World Cup, including restrictions on ICE on public transport and Fan Fests during the tournament.

We know from our research at Human Rights Watch that ICE has conducted immigration enforcement actions around FIFA events. Last July, a father, an asylum seeker, took his two children—ages ten and fourteen—to the Club World Cup final at MetLife Stadium. Police detained him, then [turned him over](#) to ICE. Instead of celebrating their favorite sport together, his children watched their father taken away in handcuffs.

FIFA built out a [human rights framework](#) for 2026, with lofty language about welcoming everyone “in an environment where they feel safe, included, and free to exercise their rights.” A [coalition](#) of human rights and labor organizations has pressed FIFA to match its rhetoric with action.

[Human rights commitments](#) are baked into the bid that the United States, Canada, and Mexico made to host the World Cup, an event that is [expected](#) to bring more than one

million visitors to the United States. A World Cup ICE Truce should guarantee, at minimum, that fans, players, journalists, and their families can travel to and inside the United States freely, safely, and with dignity.

On January 13, Human Rights Watch [wrote](#) to FIFA to express “grave concerns over the potential impact of U.S. government immigration policies on the 2026 FIFA World Cup,” warning that ICE activities at stadiums, fan zones, and in host cities could violate the human rights of fans, workers, and community members. FIFA did not reply.

To protect fans—and indeed, its World Cup brand—FIFA should harken back to the practices of ancient Greece and insist on an ICE Truce to ensure federal agents do not conduct violent immigration enforcement in and around World Cup venues.

Rights-abusive arrests and deportations have no place in the world’s game.

IV. Human Rights Issues in Mexico

Claudia Sheinbaum, who became the first woman to serve as Mexico’s president in October 2024, inherited serious human rights challenges, including extreme criminal violence and grave abuses by the military.⁹⁴

Her predecessor, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, [presided over a process of democratic backsliding](#), undermining judicial independence, transparency, and the rule of law. At the same time, 13 million people were [lifted](#) out of poverty during his government.

With the backing of Sheinbaum and López Obrador, Congress passed a [justice reform](#) in September 2024 that could severely undermine judicial independence. The amendment mandated that all judges in the country run for election, the first of which was held on June 1.

Security and Criminal Violence

Violence, [which increased dramatically](#) after the government announced a “war on drugs” in the mid-2000s, continued at extremely high levels. The official 2024 homicide rate stood at [more than 25 per 100,000 inhabitants](#), one of the [highest](#) in the world.

[Official figures](#) released in August indicated that more than 1,800 people had been killed in Sinaloa since a kingpin was taken to the United States and detained in July 2024, triggering fighting between factions of the Sinaloa cartel.

In May, two advisors to the Mexico City mayor [were](#) murdered. At time of writing, authorities had detained two people allegedly involved in the crime, but had yet to identify the person who ordered the killings and the motivations behind it.

In September, police in Paraguay [detained](#) the former secretary of security of the state of Tabasco and expelled him to Mexico on charges of collusion with cartels.

⁹⁴ This section is Human Rights Watch’s 2026 World Report chapter on Mexico, analyzing the human rights situation in Mexico for the year 2025, and was published on February 4, 2026. The full text is also available at: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2026/country-chapters/mexico>

In November, the mayor of Uruapan, Michoacán, who had openly denounced criminal groups in the area and pointed out their links to state politicians, was murdered.

Authorities estimate that [around 70 percent of firearms](#) recovered at crime scenes in Mexico were trafficked from the US. In June, the US Supreme Court [dismissed a legal action](#) brought by Mexico against some US arms manufacturers.

Access to Justice

Impunity remains widespread.

Prosecutors solve approximately [one in ten intentional homicides](#) they investigate, in many cases with evidence that has been altered, fabricated, or obtained through threats or torture. Prosecutors' offices often [lack qualified investigators, basic materials and resources, and adequate protection](#) to carry out their work.

In September 2024, Congress passed a [constitutional amendment](#) that requires [all state and federal judges](#), including Supreme Court and Electoral Tribunal justices, to step down and be replaced through popular elections in 2025 and 2027. The amendment also created a new “Judicial Disciplinary Tribunal” with broad powers to sanction or remove judges. The constitutional change [threatens judicial independence](#) in the country and fails to address key obstacles Mexicans face to access justice.

In June, Mexico conducted popular elections to appoint half of the judiciary, including 881 federal judges and members of the Supreme Court. The elections were marked by [low turnout](#) and concerns about the integrity of the process.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers [expressed concerns during the process](#) and after the election [said](#) that “the deficiencies observed in this first election jeopardize institutional integrity and public confidence in the justice system.”

In November 2024, Congress re-elected Rosario Piedra Ibarra as head of the Ombudsperson’s Office, a supposedly independent agency charged with protecting human

rights. During her first tenure in office (2019-2024), she repeatedly failed to subject the López Obrador administration to robust, meaningful scrutiny.

Torture

Police officers, prosecutors, and soldiers continued to use torture. In June, the Federal Institute of Public Defense, which is part of the federal judiciary, had [documented](#) 3,177 incidents reported as acts of torture, involving 4,100 victims between 2019 and 2025.

The World Organisation Against Torture, a human rights group, said in June that torture continued to be a [“widespread practice”](#) in Mexico.

Arbitrary Detention

Congress passed a series of laws, [the most recent one in April](#), to expand mandatory pretrial detention. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights [has twice ordered](#) Mexico to eliminate mandatory pretrial detention because it is incompatible with human rights standards.

In September, Congress approved a reform that makes it harder for people to request injunctions (“amparo”) against judicial decisions ordering the pretrial detention of detainees. It also limits judicial protection in collective matters such as environmental protection.

Around [40 percent](#) of those imprisoned in the country have not been sentenced. They remain in prison with harsh conditions, including overcrowding and lack of medical and mental health services. [Media outlets, human rights groups, and public defenders](#) have reported an increase in suicide among female detainees in some prisons.

Military Abuses

The government has continued to expand the use of the military in public security and civilian tasks.

In [November 2024](#) and July 2025, Congress passed laws transferring the National Guard, a force deployed to carry out public security tasks, to the control of the Army.

The military continued to carry out extrajudicial executions. Human rights groups and media outlets reported several cases of abuse, including [the killing of two girls](#), aged 7 and 11, in Sinaloa in May.

In August, [residents of Cozumel set fire](#) to a military garrison after accusing a soldier of raping a 9-year-old girl.

The military and the Ministry of Defense continued to deny the military's role in human rights violations. Organization of American States (OAS) experts said in [2023](#) that the military had obstructed the investigation into the unresolved disappearance of 43 students in Ayoztinapa in 2014. During the first year of President Sheinbaum's administration, the military continued to refuse to hand over relevant documents to the new special prosecutor appointed to the case in July.

A government-mandated "[Truth Commission](#)" found in 2024 that the military committed "systematic and widespread" human rights violations [between 1965 and 1990](#), but the Ministry of Defense has still not acknowledged the military's responsibility for the crimes.

In September, the [government acknowledged](#) that there were [corrupt links](#) between the Navy and criminal groups involved in the illegal trafficking of diesel.

Disappearances

Thousands of people continue to disappear in Mexico every year, with the official total in 2025 [reaching](#) more than 130,000 individuals (the total includes cases reported since 1952). Authorities have not taken sufficient measures to prevent these disappearances and hold those responsible to account.

[In March](#), a local group of volunteers who search for missing people reported the discovery of hundreds of shoes, clothing items, charred human remains, and what appeared to be several underground ovens on a ranch outside the city of Guadalajara, in the state of Jalisco.

That same month, the [UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances](#) initiated, for the first time in its history, [a review under article 34 of the International Convention for the](#)

[Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance](#) into whether enforced disappearances in Mexico were “widespread or systematic.” [President Sheinbaum](#) denied that there was a “policy of disappearances” in the country and the [speaker of the Senate](#) said he would ask the UN to “sanction” the president of the committee.

Relatives of disappeared people continued to face risks. [Human rights groups reported](#) in September that eight people looking for the disappeared [had been killed in 2025](#).

Privacy and Access to Public Information

In November 2024, [Congress reformed the Constitution](#) to shut down the National Institute for Access to Information and Personal Data Protection, an independent government body, and transfer its powers to an agency within the Ministry of Anti-Corruption, [which began operating in May](#). Article 19, a press freedom group, [reported](#) that the new agency undermined public access to information, ruling against most of the of the petitions.

In July, Congress [passed a law](#) creating new mandatory identity and cell phone registries. The law grants authorities [virtually unlimited power](#) to access information about citizens without judicial authorization.

Attacks Against Journalists and Human Rights Defenders

Mexico remained one of the most dangerous countries in the world for the press. Article 19 reported in November that [seven journalists had been killed](#) in 2025.

Article 19 also reported that authorities and individuals connected to them launched [51 cases of “judicial harassment”](#) against journalists and critics between January and August.

Mexico remained a dangerous country for human rights defenders. In April, the body of [Sandra Domínguez, an Indigenous human rights lawyer](#) who had disappeared months earlier, was found in Oaxaca.

Migrants and Asylum Seekers

In April, the [UN Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families](#) examined Mexico’s compliance with the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. The body acknowledged the assistance provided to Mexican workers abroad, but [expressed concern](#) about the apparent “outsourcing of border control by US authorities” and the “militarization of migration management.”

According to Mexican authorities, as of April, Mexico had received nearly 39,000 immigrants deported from the US, including 33,000 Mexicans. Humanitarian groups have expressed concern about the risks faced by deportees due to criminal violence in areas like Tapachula.

According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), in 2024 the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance received “[almost 80,000 asylum and refugee applications](#).” UNHCR estimated that the figure [could be even higher in 2025](#). Despite the increase, the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance faced budget cuts, [partly due to US foreign aid cuts](#).

Women’s and Girls’ Rights

In November 2024, [Congress amended the Constitution](#) to recognize women’s rights and mandated gender parity in elected positions. In January, President Sheinbaum created the [Ministry of Women](#).

In July, Mexico appeared before the [UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women](#). The committee welcomed the election of the country’s first female president, while [noting](#) “an increase in gender-based violence against women and girls committed by state and non-State actors.”

[In June](#), Guanajuato’s Congress voted against a bill that would have decriminalized abortion. Supreme Court rulings protect women and girls from criminal prosecution for abortion and 24 of the country’s 32 states have explicitly decriminalized abortion. However, gaps persist in women’s sexual and reproductive health care, particularly for rural and Indigenous women. Maternal mortality remains high in some regions, and [reports](#) of obstetric violence continue.

Femicide continues to be a “[major concern](#).” According to official figures, [444 women and girls](#) were murdered during the first half of 2025.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Same-sex marriage is available in all 32 states. In 2025, Veracruz state passed a law allowing transgender people to change their names and gender markers on birth certificates through a simple administrative process, bringing the number of states that [have done so](#) to 23.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people continued to face violence. According to the [National Observatory of Hate Crimes Against LGBT People](#), run by human rights groups, 31 people were killed between January and September due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Rights of Older People and People with Disabilities

In December 2024, [Congress amended the Constitution](#) to guarantee a pension for people living with a “permanent disability” and to require the government to ensure “rehabilitation and habilitation.” At time of writing, the disability pension covered about [1.5 million](#) of the [8.8 million](#) people with disabilities officially registered in Mexico.

Also in December 2024, [Mexico City’s Congress](#) reformed civil law to abolish [guardianship](#) and recognize full legal capacity for all people aged 18 and older, including people with disabilities and older people.

Congress also changed the Constitution to establish that adults 65 and older are entitled to a [non-contributory pension from the state](#).

Indigenous People’s Rights

In September 2024, [a Constitutional reform](#) strengthened the recognition of the rights of Indigenous and Afro-Mexican peoples, for instance, by explicitly recognizing their right to be consulted in decisions regarding administrative or legislative measures that significantly affect them.

Policies on Climate Change and its Impacts

The Sheinbaum administration [announced plans](#) in August to ensure that 35 percent of electricity generation comes from renewable sources by 2030.

Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

According to [official numbers](#), from 2018 to 2024, a total of 13.4 million people in Mexico were lifted out of poverty and 1.7 million out of extreme poverty. Official studies indicate that 6.6 million of them were lifted out of poverty mainly due to increases in the minimum wage. Since July, the government has begun implementing new labor rules requiring digital platform companies to register workers with the Social Security Institute and contribute based on their net income.

Foreign Policy

In October 2024, Mexico was elected as a member of the [Human Rights Council](#) for the 2025-2027 term.

Mexico has [supported efforts](#) to advance a treaty on [crimes against humanity](#). But Mexico has been ambivalent regarding some of the most critical human rights situations in Latin America, often invoking the doctrine of “non-intervention.”

“The Stadium of the Disappeared”

World Cup Should Kick Off Justice for Families

By Juanita Goebertus and Delphine Starr⁹⁵

This week marks the six-week countdown to the opening game of the 2026 FIFA World Cup, which kicks off with a match between Mexico and South Africa on Thursday, June 11, at the Estadio Azteca in Mexico City.

Mexico is co-hosting the 2026 World Cup even as the country has been shaken by a wave of cartel violence and [revelations](#) of mass graves. In February, Jalisco New Generation Cartel, one of the country’s largest, retaliated after the government [killed](#) its longtime leader. The cartel established [roadblocks](#), [burned vehicles](#), and carried out other attacks across [much of the country](#), including in Guadalajara, the capital of Jalisco state and one of three World Cup host cities in Mexico.

These scenes mark the latest escalation of [ongoing violence](#). Four tournament games will be played at Guadalajara’s Akron Stadium. For the families of Mexico’s [disappeared](#), the stadium holds little association with sports, fun, and cheering. Instead, the surrounding area has become synonymous with excavations, exhumations, mass graves, and the agony of not knowing where missing loved ones are.

Civilian search collectives such as the Searching Warriors of Jalisco reported nearly [two dozen](#) clandestine graves last year, and recovered at least [500 bags](#) containing human remains, all less than 20 kilometers from the stadium. In Las Agujas, a nearby plot of land, they found [270 bags](#).

These horrors are part of an ongoing national crisis that has devastated thousands of families in Mexico, where, according to an official registry, [over 100,000 people](#) are missing. And reported disappearances have increased [more than 200 percent](#) since 2015.

⁹⁵ This section is an Op-ed by Juanita Goebertus, Americas director, and Delphine Starr, Editorial officer, from Human Rights Watch, which appeared in the *Inter Press Service News Agency* on April 22, 2026. It is available on the *Inter Press Service News Agency’s* website at: <https://www.ipsnews.net/2026/04/the-stadium-of-the-disappeared-world-cup-should-kick-off-justice-for-families/>

The state of Jalisco sits at the [epicenter](#) of the crisis, with a staggering [16,079](#) recorded disappearances as of March (this figure includes cases reported since 1952, although most are missing from 2006 onward). Experts say even this number may not reflect the [true scale](#) of the problem. The other two host cities — Mexico City and Monterrey — also have their own share of disappearances.

People are disappeared in Mexico for many reasons, often tied to organized crime. Criminal groups frequently use disappearances as a [tool](#) of control and intimidation. In Jalisco, the cartel's [forced recruitment](#) of teenagers plays an important role. When families report disappearances, authorities often [fail to investigate](#). Investigators and forensic technicians often lack the training and basic resources needed to do key parts of their jobs, like securing crime scenes, analyzing evidence, or identifying and storing human remains. Witnesses and victims are frequently terrified of retaliation for cooperating with investigations, and the authorities are unable or unwilling to effectively protect them.

Mexico's government has also historically downplayed the scale of the crisis. During former president Andres Manuel López Obrador's term, the number of people reported missing [surpassed 100,000](#). He [falsely claimed](#) that the count had been "altered to attack the government," prompting the top official searching for the disappeared to resign. López Obrador's successor, President Claudia Sheinbaum, has [rejected](#) a UN inquiry over the disappearances and advanced legal changes that, relatives of some disappeared say, would weaken the search for the missing.

Many relatives of the victims feel justice will never come. Forensic work near Akron Stadium is incomplete; bags are still unprocessed and there is no comprehensive report on the total number of victims.

Most football fans visiting Guadalajara this summer will have no idea of the heavy history beneath its polished pedestrian walkways, modern stadium, and restaurants boasting artisanal tequilas. Fans should know that in the very same state rushing to spend [US\\$1.3 billion](#) on highway reconstruction and hotel developments for the World Cup, mothers will continue digging in the dirt for their disappeared children.

To start putting an end to their suffering, the Mexican government should use the World Cup and the world's spotlight to strengthen its justice system so that people feel safe and at the same time the authorities can effectively search for the missing people. That would be a World Cup worth cheering for.

V. Human Rights Issues in Canada

Prime Minister Mark Carney assumed office in April 2025 following national elections that month. He replaced fellow Liberal Party leader, Justin Trudeau, who had served as prime minister since 2015. Carney's [platform](#) included a commitment to equality, protecting diversity, and championing rights, democracy, and the rule of law. In his first months in office, Carney focused largely on expanding Canada's economy and creating new economic opportunities abroad. The Canadian government took positive steps on some human rights issues, including transnational repression (TNR), but significant domestic challenges remain. These include the rights of Indigenous people and the rights of refugees and asylum seekers, including those with disabilities.⁹⁶

Indigenous Peoples' Rights

In June, Bill C-5, the [Building Canada Act](#), was passed as a [counter-measure](#) to US President Donald Trump's tariffs on Canada. The legislation allows large projects, such as ports, pipelines, and dams, deemed beneficial to "national interest," to bypass some federal laws to speed up the approval process. Indigenous and environmental advocates expressed [strong concern](#) that the legislation would weaken environmental protection and Indigenous Nations' right to free, prior, and informed consent over building projects that affect their territories.

At the same time, legislation was introduced in Ontario ([Bill 5](#)) and British Columbia ([Bill 15](#)), giving provincial leaders the power to fast-track large infrastructure and mining projects deemed provincially significant. First Nations leaders have criticized both bills for [lack of consultation](#) during the drafting phase and potential [violation of treaty rights](#) once the bills are implemented.

[Nine First Nations](#) communities in Ontario asked a court to declare both the federal and Ontario laws unconstitutional and a similar legal challenge to British Columbia's Bill 15 was [expected](#) at time of writing.

⁹⁶ This section is Human Rights Watch's 2026 World Report chapter on Canada, analyzing the human rights situation in Canada for the year 2025, and was published on February 4, 2026. The full text is also available at: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2026/country-chapters/canada>.

Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Migrants

The Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) has traditionally had broad latitude to place people in migrant detention centers, provincial jails, or other detention facilities, which has resulted in [serious human rights violations](#). With no time limits on immigration detention, individuals, including those with disabilities, can be detained for months or years, [including in solitary confinement](#).

In a major victory for migrant and refugee rights, in September, [Ontario](#) became the last province in Canada [to block the CBSA](#) from using provincial jails to incarcerate migrants and asylum seekers on administrative grounds. The border agency [said](#) that “as of September 15, there are no people detained in a provincial correctional facility.” Yet the federal government moved in the [opposite direction](#). In July, [CBSA announced](#) it had begun incarcerating detainees at its “temporary designated immigrant station” at a federal prison in Sainte-Anne-des-Plaines, Quebec.

After a review of Canada’s disability rights record, the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in March issued a [bleak assessment](#) of Canada’s immigration detention system, calling for Canada to protect the [legal capacity rights](#) of people with disabilities in detention and urging an end to immigration detention altogether. Similarly in August, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention [released its report](#) on its visit to Canada, expressing “alarm” at reports of plans to use federal correctional facilities for immigration detention. It also expressed concern with infringements on legal capacity rights, noting that “substituted decision-making for persons with disabilities restricts their legal capacity and may negatively affect their proceedings.”

In 2025, the Canadian government also introduced immigration Bill C-2, the [Strong Borders Bill](#). Under Bill C-2, a claim for refugee protection would be ineligible for referral to the Immigration and Refugee Board if protection is claimed more than one year after an individual’s first entry into Canada after June 24, 2020. The bill would also prevent people who cross the US border irregularly from claiming asylum if they have been in Canada for at least 14 days. Refugee experts [criticized](#) the bill’s proposed changes to immigration and asylum law, warning that dissidents and members of marginalized groups facing persecution abroad could find themselves unable to get asylum hearings in Canada. In

June, over 300 civil society organizations [demanded](#) the complete withdrawal of Bill C-2, citing the threat it poses to human rights and at-risk populations.

Transnational Repression

Transnational repression (TNR) continues to pose a threat to diaspora groups and civil society organizations in Canada. In July, Hong Kong authorities issued [international arrest warrants](#) for 19 activists, including Canadian citizens and residents, for their activism promoting democracy in Hong Kong while living abroad. Authorities also offered rewards for information leading to their arrest. In August, several UN experts [raised concerns](#) about credible threats by Iran's authorities to the lives and safety of 45 Iran International journalists in seven countries, including Canada, in what experts described as an effort to silence the journalists and deter critical reporting. The threats prompted the Canadian Security Intelligence Service to open an [investigation into the threats](#).

The Canadian government issued several joint statements condemning acts of transnational repression, including statements on [Iran](#) and [Hong Kong](#). G7 countries, including Canada, issued a [joint statement on TNR](#) in June, outlining a number of actions G7 countries pledged to take, including building global understanding of the threat; developing a TNR Resilience and Response Framework; launching a Digital TNR Detection Academy; and supporting those who may be targets of TNR.

Women's and Disability Rights

In his first major move as Canada's prime minister, Carney eliminated roughly a third of all cabinet positions, including the [minister of women and gender equality](#) and [minister of diversity, inclusion and persons with disabilities](#). Carney reinstated the first position in May but opted not to reinstate the second. Disability advocates [warned](#) of the harm of losing critical representation in the cabinet, stressing the continuing need for concerted government action on disability rights, including to address [high poverty rates](#) among people with disabilities, which particularly [impacts](#) women. Carney later [appointed](#) a more junior role outside of cabinet, a parliamentary secretary for persons with disabilities under the minister of jobs and families.

Foreign Policy

In 2025, Canada held the G7 Presidency and hosted several heads of state at the G7 Leaders' Summit in June in Kananaskis, Alberta. In addition to economic matters, the summit [focused](#) on agreements and coordinated action on countering transnational repression, support for a just and lasting peace for Ukraine, and commitment to peace and stability in the Middle East.

Following the G7 Leaders' Summit, Canada announced new measures in support of Ukraine, including [sanctions on individuals, entities, and vessels](#) that continue to support Russia's war in Ukraine. In August, Canada, as a member of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children, [reiterated its commitment](#) to the protection of children affected by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and called on Russia to facilitate the return of all unlawfully deported and forcibly transferred Ukrainian children.

In 2025, Canada increased its condemnation of Israel's military operations in Gaza. In May, it issued a [joint statement](#) with France and the United Kingdom committing to taking further concrete action if Israel did not end its ongoing military offensive and lift restrictions on humanitarian aid. In August, Canada [stated](#) that "Israel, as the occupying power, is failing to fulfill its obligations under international humanitarian law by refusing to allow and facilitate the passage of humanitarian aid and by failing to ensure provision of adequate food and medical supplies to the civilian population in Gaza."

In June, Canada [imposed sanctions](#) on two Israeli ministers, National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, for allegedly inciting violence against Palestinians in the West Bank. In June, Canada joined other countries in [recognizing](#) the state of Palestine.

In February, Canada issued a [joint statement](#) on Syria "acknowledge[ing] and support[ing] the Syrian transitional government in their existing commitment to upholding human rights and fundamental freedoms for all Syrians." In March, Canada [eased](#) some sanctions on Syria to allow funds to be sent through certain banks in the country to "enable the stable and sustainable delivery of aid, support local redevelopment efforts, and contribute to a swift recovery for Syria."

In 2025, Canada again faced criticism that it had failed to take adequate steps to assist and repatriate Canadians unlawfully detained in northeast Syria in locked desert camps and prisons for Islamic State (ISIS) suspects and their families. In June, a complaint was [filed](#) with the Canadian Human Rights Commission on behalf of 12 Canadian men and children detained in Syria. The complaint claims that the government is discriminating against them by not assisting their return to Canada. To date, Canada has not repatriated any of the detained Canadian men in Syria, some of whom have been held [since 2017](#) in [dire and life-threatening conditions](#).

VI. Recommendations to FIFA and Host City Committees

FIFA and host city committees need to take concrete steps in the weeks remaining before kickoff.

- FIFA should insist that all 16 host committees work with local stakeholders to publish and implement full Human Rights Action Plans before May 11.
- Every plan should explicitly address immigration enforcement risks, including that ICE could target World Cup venues, fan festivals, and surrounding areas with abusive operations. Given the abusive nature of the Trump administration’s immigration enforcement efforts, FIFA should seek an “[ICE Truce](#),” a public guarantee from federal authorities to refrain from immigration enforcement at games and venues.
- Every plan should include LGBT-specific protections and anti-discrimination messaging. FIFA and host committees should plan to support abuse victims.
- FIFA should update and strengthen its media freedom policy to help guarantee the safety and accreditation of journalists covering human rights issues in all three host countries, consistent with FIFA’s [commitments](#) to human rights defenders and media freedom.
- Host cities in states with 287(g) immigration enforcement agreements should publicly clarify how those agreements will impact the tournament and what protections and legal support services exist for workers, residents, fans, and other groups at risk of detention.

VII. Appendices

Appendix I: Human Rights Watch Letter to FIFA, April 6, 2026

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April 6, 2026

Gianni Infantino
President

Fédération Internationale de Football Association
FIFA-Strasse 20, P.O. Box 8044 Zurich, Switzerland

Re: FIFA and Press Freedom Responsibilities at the FIFA 2026
Men's World Cup

Dear Mr. Infantino,

We write to raise urgent concerns and questions about conditions for journalists covering the 2026 FIFA World Cup, and to call attention to FIFA's obligations under its own [human rights commitments](#) to help ensure that press freedoms are protected throughout the tournament. Human Rights Watch will publish a Reporters' Guide to the World Cup 2026 in Mexico, Canada, and the United States, which will include an assessment of human rights risks in all three countries.

The 2026 World Cup is the first to span three countries, creating unprecedented logistical challenges for the estimated 50,000+ media professionals expected to cover it. Journalists will be crossing international borders with different immigration regimes, visa requirements, and press freedom environments, in some cases multiple times over the course of the tournament. FIFA has no public framework to address this.

Mexico, as [Human Rights Watch's World Report 2026](#) documents, remains one of the most dangerous countries in the world for the press. Press freedom organization [Article 19](#) reported that seven journalists were killed in Mexico in 2025. Impunity for such killings remains the norm. Last year, Congress [passed a law](#) that grants authorities [virtually unlimited power](#) to access information about citizens without judicial authorization, directly impacting press freedom. To date, FIFA has not addressed direct risks to journalists working in Mexico's World Cup host cities, including reporters covering the intersection of soccer and organized crime.

In the **United States**, press freedom is under intense new pressure since US President Donald Trump took office. Concerning cases include journalist Mario Guevara, who was arrested and [detained in World Cup host city Atlanta](#), reportedly for filming a political protest, transferred to ICE custody, and deported to El Salvador. In March 2026, Estefany Rodríguez, a journalist who had been covering ICE immigration raids, was reportedly [arrested without her captors presenting a warrant](#). The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has [recommended](#) that journalists develop contingency plans to address the risks of reporting on the tournament and has issued a [Safety Advisory](#) outlining the risks for reporters traveling to the US. The advisory warns that US Customs and Border



AMMAN - AMSTERDAM - BEIRUT - BERLIN - BRUSSELS - CHICAGO - COPENHAGEN - GENEVA - JOHANNESBURG - KINSHASA - LONDON - LOS ANGELES - MIAMI
NAIROBI - NEW YORK - PARIS - SAN FRANCISCO - SÃO PAULO - SILICON VALLEY - STOCKHOLM - SYDNEY - TOKYO - TORONTO - WASHINGTON - ZÜRICH

Protection (CBP) officials are scrutinizing visitors' travel documentation with heightened vigilance, [affecting travelers](#) with valid visas and green cards.

[FIFA's World Cup 2026 Human Rights Framework](#) commits to “a tournament environment that aims to respect and protect the right to peaceful assembly, the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and freedom of the press, and emphasizes the protection of human rights defenders, journalists, and other media workers.”

The framework required all 16 host cities to publish Human Rights Action Plans by August 2025, including press freedom protections. Two months before the June 11 kickoff, the results are dismal: four World Cup host cities published full plans—all late—two issued thin statements, and ten published nothing. Human rights stakeholders, including the [Dignity 2026 Coalition](#) and [Sport & Rights Alliance](#), have pressed host cities since 2018 to ensure these plans include commitments to protect fans, workers, athletes, journalists, and communities.

Human Rights Watch requests your response to the following questions:

1. What steps, if any, is FIFA taking to alert journalists of human rights risks and potential mitigation measures regarding their coverage of the 2026 World Cup?
2. What specific steps, if any, is FIFA taking to ensure that journalists—including those who face arbitrary or discriminatory US immigration or visa restrictions—can obtain the access necessary to cover matches on US soil?
3. Human Rights Watch has [documented](#) that US officers fired tear gas, pepper balls, hard foam rounds, and flash-bang grenades directly at [protesters](#), [journalists](#), and other observers, often at close range and often without sufficient warning or provocation. Has FIFA developed any protocols to respond if journalists covering the tournament are threatened or subjected to violence?
4. Has FIFA established any protocols to respond if journalists covering the tournament are detained, deported, or denied entry?
5. Is FIFA taking any concrete measures, in coordination with Mexican authorities and host city organizers, to protect journalists from threats, intimidation, and violence in Mexican host cities — and what mechanisms exist for reporters to report safety incidents during the tournament?
6. Ten of 16 World Cup host cities have failed to publish the mandatory “Human Rights Action Plans” due in August 2025 under the [FWC26 Human Rights Framework](#). Will FIFA publicly identify non-compliant cities or indicate whether failure to publish and implement the required human rights plans carries any consequences?
7. Will FIFA commit to holding regular presidential press conferences open to all accredited media throughout the 2026 World Cup, consistent with IOC practice at the Olympics?

In order for us to reflect your responses in our upcoming reporting, we request that you respond by April 20, 2026. Please note that we may publish your response, in whole or in part, and at our discretion.

Regards,



Minky Worden

Director of Global Initiatives, Human Rights Watch



Appendix II: Sport & Rights Alliance Letter to FIFA, March 11, 2026



Amsterdam, Netherlands, 11 March 2026

Mr. Gianni Infantino
President

Fédération
Internationale de
Football Association

FIFA-Strasse 20
Zurich, Switzerland

Re: Keep the World in the World Cup

Dear President Infantino,

FIFA is planning the biggest World Cup ever: 48 teams, games in 16 cities across the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, billions watching from home. FIFA promised a safe, welcoming and “inclusive” tournament in your [Human Rights Framework](#). But under U.S. President Donald Trump, [harsh anti-human rights rhetoric and immigration policies](#) are creating fear instead.

Football brings the world together — but not if U.S. visa bans and mass deportation raids keep immigrants, workers, journalists, communities, and fans away. The 2026 World Cup needs explicit protections to live up to its principles.

With less than 100 days until kick-off, the [escalating attacks](#) on immigrants in the United States, lack of clear safeguards in communities and at stadiums against abusive federal immigration enforcement, FIFA’s [cancellation of anti-discrimination](#) messaging, and threats to press freedom and the rights of peaceful protesters signal a tournament heading in the wrong direction.

According to official [U.S. government data](#), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and other federal law enforcement agencies have arrested hundreds of thousands of people in the US in 2025, including many in World Cup host cities. Agents, often in [masks](#), plainclothes, and unmarked vans, have detained people at their homes, in their vehicles, at courthouses, near schools, on streets, and in workplaces, often targeting Latino, Black, [Asian](#), and other communities of color. And in some locations, contracts between state and local law enforcement and ICE result in people being handed over to ICE after routine encounters. Some of the people at highest risk of detention by ICE are workers, whether at their places of work or in transit.

U.S. citizens have been [killed](#) while protesting ICE arrests. One asylum seeker father at the FIFA Club World Cup was [detained](#) for a minor offense, handed over to ICE, locked up for months and returned to his country of origin, while his children watched him taken away in handcuffs. People inside many ICE detention centers are subject to arbitrary detention, cruel and inhumane treatment, inadequate food and water, lack of medical care, and denial of due process. Already in 2026, 11 people have died in immigration detention.



With weeks until kick-off, most of the 16 World Cup host committees still have not released the Human Rights Action Plans they are supposed to produce. It is impossible to manage human rights risks without identifying them and putting in place systems to manage them.

New U.S. visa bans are blocking [fans from qualified teams](#) from attending the tournament. Haiti will compete in the World Cup for the first time in five decades — but the U.S. travel ban [prohibits their supporters](#) from coming. The same unjustifiable national exclusions apply to fans from Senegal, Côte D'Ivoire, Iran — all qualified nations. More than 75 countries face [paused](#) immigrant visas, with invasive 5-year [social media checks](#) for travelers from 42 more.

Players on many national teams, including hosts U.S., Canada and Mexico, are often immigrants or have immigrant heritage — football's story is one of crossing borders and chasing dreams. But new U.S. rules and rhetoric slam the door on the world.

We are a movement of football fans, athletes, workers, community members and human rights organizations united under the banner of "*Keep the World in the World Cup*." We are calling on FIFA to work with host countries to protect host city residents and communities, athletes' rights, free speech, fans' rights, press freedom, LGBTI rights, workers' rights, and children's rights to a safe tournament environment. This means among other things:

- Securing a public commitment to refrain from immigration enforcement operations at all World Cup events and venues, as a first step to ending abusive detention and deportation practices throughout the U.S.
- Ensure that all qualified teams, media, and fans affected by discriminatory visa and entry bans and social media surveillance will have equal access to the tournament regardless of nationality, religion, gender, or opinion.
- Establishing a formal FIFA human rights monitoring mechanism, with independent oversight, engagement with civil society, and public reporting, for the duration of the tournament.
- Implementing a FIFA child safeguarding policy that ensures families — including mixed-immigration status families — can attend the World Cup without fear of separation.
- Making a clear public commitment to press freedom and regular access for journalists, from the border to the stadium and everywhere in between, so journalists can do their jobs telling the full story of this tournament both on and off the field.

FIFA is not a bystander to human rights abuses. FIFA has signed contracts with host countries. FIFA participates in the U.S. government World Cup task force with the White House. FIFA awarded U.S. President Donald Trump a so-called "Peace Prize."

FIFA has the leverage — and the legal and moral responsibility — to stand up to demand protections for everyone who will work at or attend the 2026 World Cup.

Yours sincerely,



Andrea Florence
Executive Director
Sport & Rights Alliance

About the Sport & Rights Alliance

The Sport & Rights Alliance's mission is to promote the rights and well-being of those most affected by human rights risks associated with the delivery of sport. Its partners include **Amnesty International, The Assist, Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI), Football Supporters Europe, Human Rights Watch, ILGA World – the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Transparency International, and World Players Association, UNI Global Union**. As a global coalition of leading NGOs and trade unions, the SRA works together to ensure sports bodies, governments and other relevant stakeholders give rise to a world of sport that protects, respects, and fulfills international standards for human rights, labor rights, child wellbeing and safeguarding, and anti-corruption.

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* *

Appendix III: Human Rights Watch Letter to FIFA, January 13, 2026

January 13, 2025

Gianni Infantino
President
Fédération Internationale de Football Association
FIFA-Strasse 20, P.O. Box 8044 Zurich, Switzerland

Subject: FIFA's Response to US Policies on ICE Enforcement and Protest Risks Affecting the 2026 World Cup

Dear Mr. Infantino,

We are writing to reiterate our grave concerns over the potential impact of US government immigration policies on the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

In [July 2025](#), we joined with dozens of civil society and fan groups to warn you of the threat posed by the immigration policies of the administration of President Donald Trump, including to the estimated 2.6 million visitors [projected](#) to attend the World Cup. We highlighted a series of repressive executive orders, policy changes, and actions that violate both US and international human rights law and underscored the risk that non-US nationals traveling to or from the United States could face detention and abuse if they are able to enter the country at all—even people with prior authorization to travel to the US.

Human Rights Watch had outlined similar concerns in a May 2025 [letter](#). FIFA did not respond to either letter.

Escalating Immigration Crackdown

At the beginning of 2026, and less than six months before the World Cup begins, the Trump Administration has escalated its violent militarization of US immigration enforcement and has taken steps to punish and deter some forms of protected free expression and protest.

- On January 7, an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officer [shot and killed](#) Minnesota resident Renee Nicole Good in south Minneapolis without any possible justification. Without even waiting for any formal investigation to proceed, administration officials immediately rushed to defend the shooting in the most strident terms.
- In the US, federal immigration agents now commonly [operate masked and without visible identification](#), using unmarked vehicles to arrest people at courthouses, schools, workplaces, homes, and on the street. International human rights law requires law enforcement officers to be identifiable except when necessary and proportionate to address concerns over their safety. Operating masked and without identification makes it harder to ensure officers implicated in abuses are investigated and held accountable.
- Since May 2025, federal agents have [conducted hundreds of raids targeting Latino communities and individuals](#), with 66 percent of those detained having no US criminal history. These operations rely in large part on detaining people on the basis of their perceived race, ethnicity, or national origin. Raids at parking lots, car washes, farms, and street vendor locations have resulted in family separations and have caused fear and protest in communities in the 11 US World Cup host cities such as Los Angeles.

Appendix IV: Human Rights Watch Letter to FIFA, November 11, 2025



November 11, 2025

Gianni Infantino
President, Fédération Internationale de Football Association
FIFA-Strasse 20, P.O. Box 8044 Zurich, Switzerland

Subject: "FIFA's Peace Prize"

Dear Mr. Infantino,

We write to seek more detail on FIFA's announcement of an inaugural "FIFA Peace Prize – Football Unites the World," reported to be awarded at the 2026 World Cup draw on December 5.

Human Rights Watch is an international nongovernmental organization that conducts research and advocacy on human rights in over 100 countries. We regularly reach out to governments, businesses, and sporting bodies to share concerns and collect their responses.

We would be grateful to learn:

1. What are the formal criteria FIFA will use to evaluate nominees for the FIFA Peace Prize?
2. Will FIFA publish these criteria before the December 5 award ceremony?
3. How will FIFA identify and receive nominations for the prize? Can you share a list of the nominees?
4. Who will serve as judges or decision-makers in selecting the recipient, and what are their qualifications?
5. We note that FIFA adopted the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and published a Human Rights Policy which guides FIFA's operations. How will human rights considerations factor into the selection of the FIFA Peace Prize recipient(s)?

In order for us to reflect your responses in our upcoming reporting, we request that you respond to us by November 20. Please direct your response to [REDACTED]

Regards,

[REDACTED]

Minky Worden
Director of Global Initiatives, Human Rights Watch

[REDACTED]

Appendix V: Joint Civil Society Letter to FIFA, July 1, 2025

July 1, 2025

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Gianni Infantino
President
Fédération Internationale de Football Association
FIFA-Strasse 20, P.O. Box 8044 Zurich, Switzerland

Re: Impact of U.S. Immigration Policies on the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup and the 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup

Dear Mr. Infantino:

The undersigned civil society organizations are writing to you to express our deep concern about current immigration policies and enforcement measures in the United States and their impact on the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup and the 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup. Since the inauguration of President Trump in January 2025, the U.S. government has issued a series of repressive executive orders and enacted policy changes that violate both U.S. and international human rights law. These actions pose a serious threat to individuals—particularly non-citizens—traveling to or residing in the United States, including the [estimated 1.5 million foreign visitors](#) attending this summer's Club World Cup and [2.6 million visitors projected](#) to attend next summer's Men's World Cup. Increased immigration enforcement actions, abusive Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) operations, and broader border restrictions have also contributed to widespread fear and uncertainty. Several foreign governments have already issued [travel advisories](#) to its citizens, warning of risks of being denied entry or detained and deported when traveling to the United States.

On May 5, 2025, Human Rights Watch wrote to you with their detailed concerns about U.S. immigration policies and [requested information](#) on the steps that FIFA is taking to ensure “that the U.S. government will permit players, fans and journalists from around the world to safely attend the 2026 World Cup,” including any steps FIFA is taking to advocate for “changes in policies to align with international human rights, FIFA's Statutes, and FIFA's Human Rights Policy.” [FIFA's response](#) on June 3, 2025, did not meaningfully address any of the issues raised in Human Rights Watch's letter, stating simply that “if FIFA becomes aware of potentially adverse human rights impacts...we will engage with the relevant authorities.”

This response ignores the clear evidence of the significant deterioration of the rights climate in the United States:

- Non-U.S. nationals traveling to or from the United States with prior authorization from the U.S. government are nevertheless at risk of arbitrary [denial of entry](#), [detention](#), and/or [deportation](#);

- [Individuals](#) in the U.S. who express [political opinions](#) that [diverge](#) from those of the current administration are similarly at risk of arbitrary detention and/or deportation;
- Individuals in the U.S. are being arrested by disguised individuals and transferred to immigration detention sites and staging facilities where they are denied access to counsel and swiftly deported, while loved ones and their attorneys are unable to secure basic information about their whereabouts, in cases that may amount to [enforced disappearances](#) under international law;
- Conditions in U.S. [immigration detention facilities](#) expose detainees to a serious risk of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment;
- The U.S. government has arbitrarily designated certain groups of foreign nationals as [alien enemies](#) without presenting evidence, and has summarily [deported them](#) to El Salvador, where they are held incommunicado and in [conditions](#) that may amount to cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment; and
- The U.S. government has also deported other third country nationals including asylum seekers and children to countries not their own, such as [Panama](#) and [Costa Rica](#), after subjecting them to harsh detention conditions and denying them due process.

We urge FIFA to consider the broader context in which the tournaments are taking place, not just the accessibility and safety of teams and visitors. We draw your attention to a [joint communication sent to United Nations human rights experts](#) on June 6, 2025 by 27 U.S. civil society organizations and individuals, which contains detailed information regarding enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions committed by the U.S. government. The communication notes that “U.S. authorities have engaged in a systematic campaign of abducting civilians across the country, imprisoning them in detention centers in the U.S. and abroad without due process” and that “the [U.S.] government openly broadcasts that they are targeting migrant communities, with arrest patterns that suggest racial profiling rather than targeting individuals on a legitimate legal basis.” As you are aware, many of the U.S. host cities for the World Cup are home to large immigrant populations. These communities now live in daily fear of detention, family separation, and deportation due to the U.S. government’s aggressive immigration enforcement policies.

On June 5, 2025, President Trump signed an [Executive Order](#) that fully restricts and limits the entry of nationals from twelve countries (Afghanistan, Burma, Chad, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Haiti, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen) and partially restricts and limits the entry of nationals from another seven (Burundi, Cuba, Laos, Sierra Leone, Togo, Turkmenistan, and Venezuela). According to a U.S. State Department June 14 cable reviewed by [The New York Times](#), a further 36 countries, most of them in Africa, may be added to the travel ban list. The ban currently exempts athletes and coaches traveling for the World Cup (and may, at the discretion of the Secretary of State, also exempt athletes and coaches traveling for

the Club World Cup), but all or nearly all spectators from the banned countries—a list that perhaps will stay at 19 countries, but could be 54 or even more—will be barred from attending these FIFA events. Spectators from other countries remain subject to invasive and burdensome vetting procedures and the possibility of being denied travel authorization or entry due to their political or religious views.

FIFA has a responsibility to act. In its [2017 Human Rights Policy](#), FIFA declared that it would “seek[] to prevent or mitigate adverse human rights impacts that are directly linked to its operations, products or services by its business relationships, even if FIFA has not contributed to those impacts.” Further, FIFA committed to “exercise its leverage, and seek to increase said leverage where necessary, in connection with adverse human rights impacts arising through its business relationships.” The policy specifically identifies that “providing for the safety and security of people who are attending or are otherwise involved in or affected by FIFA’s events may impact certain fundamental human rights, such as freedom of movement, expression and assembly” as one of FIFA’s five salient human rights risks.

FIFA also has leverage. Under your leadership, FIFA is uniquely positioned to influence U.S. government policies that will impact people attending its tournaments. Your recent high-profile engagements with President Trump included [attending his inauguration](#) in January and [joining him](#) on a tour of the Gulf in May. Notably, in March, you were [present in the White House](#) when President Trump signed a Presidential Executive Order that provided for the institution of the [White House Task Force on the FIFA World Cup 2026](#), established to “assist in the planning, organization, and execution of the events surrounding the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup and the 2026 FIFA World Cup.” On June 6, a post on the X (formerly Twitter) account of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) stated that their agents would be “suited and booted ready to provide security for the first round of games” of the Club World Cup, which began on June 14. As reported by [The Athletic](#), the post was deleted after senior personnel from FIFA expressed concerns to the CBP about the reaction it had provoked.

The success of international events like the FIFA Club World Cup and FIFA Men’s World Cup depend not only on infrastructure and logistics, but also on the spirit of openness and safety extended to all who participate and attend. People of all nationalities should be able to travel to the United States without fear of arbitrary denial of entry, arbitrary detention, or deportation without due process; people in the United States should be able to exercise their right to freedom of expression without fear of arbitrary detention and deportation; and immigrant communities should not live in perpetual fear of CBP and ICE raids. If FIFA continues to stay silent, not only will millions be placed at risk, but the FIFA brand will also be used as a public relations tool to whitewash the reputation of an increasingly authoritarian government.

We call on FIFA to use its influence to encourage the U.S. government to guarantee the fundamental rights of the millions of foreign visitors and fans who seek entry to the United States to attend the tournaments, and the constitutional rights of the many immigrants who already live, work, and contribute meaningfully to the cities selected to host them. FIFA should publicly recognize the severity of the risks that U.S. government policies and practices pose to

FIFA tournament attendees and migrant communities in the U.S. and publicly urge President Trump to reverse these policies and practices.

Sincerely,

Action Center on Race and the Economy
Aiken County Branch NAACP
American Civil Liberties Union
Amnesty International
Asian Americans Advancing Justice -- Atlanta
Asian American Advocacy Fund
Atlanta Democratic Socialists of America
Beyond the Bars
CASA in Georgia
Center for Human Rights and Constitutional Law
Center for Victims of Torture
Central Florida Jobs With Justice
Centro de los Derechos del Migrante (CDM)
Coalition of Latino Leaders (CLILA)
Color of Change
Community Justice Project
Dignidad Inmigrante en Athens
Equality California
Florida Immigrant Coalition
Florida Student Power
GALEO Impact Fund
Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights (GLAHR)
Georgia Muslim Voter Project
Georgia Strategic Alliance for New Directions and Unified Policies (Georgia STAND-UP)
Housing Justice League
Human Rights Watch
Jobs With Justice Education Fund
Justice at Work
Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE)
Missouri Workers Center
NAACP
New Disabled South
New Labor
New York Immigration Coalition
Philadelphia Jobs with Justice
Pippin Project
Policing Alternatives & Diversion Initiative
Puget Sound Sage

Refugee Women's Network
Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
Sant La Haitian Neighborhood Center
Texas Young Active Labor Leaders
Working Partnerships USA

Supporters groups

Angel City Valkyries
Cloud 9 Supporters Club
Doopin Delinquents
Galactic Ambassadors
Midnight Riders
Resurgence Supporters Group
Timbers Army
Tulsa Lunatics

Labor organizations

Atlanta North Georgia Labor Council
Dallas AFL-CIO Labor Council
Florida AFL-CIO
Georgia State AFL-CIO
Greater Boston Labor Council AFL-CIO
Heat & Frost Insulators & Allied Workers, Local 22
IATSE District 14 - Florida
IATSE Local 31 - Kansas City
IATSE Local 51 - Houston/Galveston
IATSE Local 127 - Dallas
IATSE Local 784 - San Francisco Bay Area
IATSE Local 927 - Atlanta
Independent Drivers Guild
International Union Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT)
IUPAT District Council 78 - Florida
Massachusetts AFL-CIO
MLK Labor, AFL-CIO (King County, WA)
New York City Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO
Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU) Local 153 - New York
Philadelphia Council AFL-CIO
San Francisco Labor Council
SEIU Local 32BJ
SEIU6 Property Services Northwest
South Florida AFL-CIO
South Florida Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA)
Tarrant County Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO
Texas Gulf Coast Area Labor Federation, AFL-CIO

Texas AFL-CIO
UNITE HERE International Union
UNITE HERE Local 2
UNITE HERE Local 8
UNITE HERE Local 19 - San Jose
UNITE HERE Local 23 - Houston
UNITE HERE Local 23 - Georgia
UNITE HERE Local 26
UNITE HERE Local 274 - Philadelphia
UNITE HERE Local 355
United Steelworkers (USW) Dallas Area SOAR Chapter 13-6
Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO

Appendix VI: Human Rights Watch Letter to FIFA, May 5, 2025

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May 5, 2025

Gianni Infantino
President
Fédération Internationale de Football Association
FIFA-Strasse 20, P.O. Box 8044 Zurich, Switzerland



HRW.org

**Subject: FIFA's Human Rights Responsibilities in
2026 World Cup**

Dear Mr. Infantino,

We write to express grave concerns about the impact of current United States immigration policies on the 2026 FIFA World Cup and the 2025 US Club World Cup. With just over one year until the World Cup opening match, immediate action is needed to address policies that directly contradict FIFA's stated values of human rights, inclusion and global participation.

When FIFA awarded the 2026 World Cup to the "United Bid" of the United States, Canada, and Mexico, your organization celebrated this decision as one that would "unite and inspire people to create positive change through football." Following systemic human rights violations at previous tournaments such as those in [Russia](#) and [Qatar](#), the 2026 World Cup was intended to raise the bar with its published [Human Rights Strategy](#). These commitments are now at serious risk.

The FIFA World Cup 2026 [is projected](#) to have as many as 6.5 million attendees traveling to or between the host countries of Canada, Mexico, and the US. An estimated 3.7 million fans are expected to attend Club World Cup matches this summer.

Since its return to office, the administration of President Donald Trump has implemented or is planning policies that fundamentally undermine the inclusive spirit of the World Cup and the non-discrimination policies under FIFA's Statutes:

- US authorities are [reportedly](#) preparing travel restrictions and outright bans that may affect the ability of citizens from as many as 43 countries from entering the US.
- New visa practices require applicants—including athletes and tourists—to [disclose their sex assigned at birth](#) and only recognize [binary sex categories](#), discriminating against and erasing

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transgender identities and leaving gender non-binary individuals without appropriate options.

- The Trump administration has detained international students legally in the US for study under obscure provisions of US law that the administration argues allows them to remove anyone whose presence is deemed to “compromise a compelling United States foreign policy interest.” The administration has also conducted seemingly arbitrary [visa revocations](#) largely [reversed](#) upon appeal to the courts.
- The US government, Department of Homeland Security, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement have also wrongfully deported third country nationals, legal US residents and those seeking asylum, to countries including [El Salvador](#), [Panama](#), [Costa Rica](#) and [Rwanda](#).
- The administration has blocked refugees who were vetted and cleared to arrive in the US in order to be resettled and instead diverted them into immigration detention. Immigration-related US [executive orders are rejecting](#) rights of refugees and targeting marginalized populations, both in the US and abroad.

These policies would directly affect the World Cup in ways that contravene FIFA’s human rights responsibilities. In 2016, FIFA adopted the [United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#) (UNGPs), and revised its statutes to reflect the principles. The FIFA [Statutes \(Article 3\)](#) state that, “FIFA is committed to respecting all internationally recognized human rights and shall strive to promote the protection of these rights.” FIFA’s Human Rights Policy (Article 4) [states](#) that “FIFA will strive to go beyond its responsibility to respect human rights, as enshrined in the UNGPs, by taking measures to promote the protection of human rights and positively contribute to their enjoyment, especially where it is able to apply effective leverage to help increase said enjoyment or where this relates to strengthening human rights in or through football.”

1. If implemented, the proposed visa bans would effectively bar teams and fans from previous World Cups such as Iran and Cameroon from competing, with neither players nor their families able to secure visas.
2. For many other countries not on the proposed ban/restrictions list, prohibitively long visa wait times may make it extremely difficult for people to attend. Players and fans from several countries would theoretically have already had to apply in order to attend next year’s games: visa wait times are estimated to be 700 days in Colombia, 560 days in Turkey, and 332 days in Morocco.
3. Even with proper visa documentation and tickets to attend World Cup events, players and fans face potential [detention](#), [interrogation](#), and humiliation at US borders, including being [screened](#) for social media posts or even [denied](#) entry for expressing opinions on Trump administration policies in private messages. This would be a violation of the right to free expression.
4. Transgender and non-binary people applying to travel to the games may be stigmatized by [new visa practices](#) that require them to disclose their sex assigned at birth, potentially [subjecting them](#) to discrimination, contravening FIFA’s non-discrimination policies and Statutes ([Article 4](#)).

5. Fans or players who expect to [engage](#) in the time-honored [tradition of using football](#) to raise awareness about [human rights](#) may encounter chilling limits on free speech and peaceful assembly.


FIFA's [Human Rights Policy](#) outlines the responsibility to identify and address adverse human rights impacts of its operations, including taking adequate measures to prevent and mitigate human rights abuses. Article 7 of FIFA's Human Rights Policy [states](#): "Where the national context risks undermining FIFA's ability to ensure respect for internationally recognised human rights, FIFA will constructively engage with the relevant authorities and other stakeholders and make every effort to uphold its international human rights responsibilities."

As FIFA President, you have both the responsibility and authority to address the repudiation of human rights commitments at the 2026 World Cup.

Human Rights Watch requests your response to the following questions:

- What actions is FIFA taking so that the US government will permit players, fans and journalists from around the world to safely attend the 2026 World Cup in the US?
- What actions does FIFA plan to take in the event any players, fans or journalists are subject to discrimination, wrongful interrogation or arbitrary arrest while in the US?
- What steps is FIFA taking with the US government and the [White House Task Force on The FIFA World Cup 2026](#) chaired by President Trump to advocate for changes in policies to align with international human rights, FIFA's Statutes, and FIFA's Human Rights Policy?

FIFA should publicly acknowledge the threat US immigration policies pose to the tournament's integrity and urge the US government to ensure that all qualified teams, support staff, media, and fans will have equal access to enter the US regardless of nationality, religion, or opinion. FIFA should also establish clear benchmarks and timelines for US immigration policy changes needed to ensure respect for the rights of players, fans, and other participants in the World Cup and be prepared to reconsider the hosting decision if such guarantees cannot be secured.

In order for us to reflect your responses in our upcoming reporting, we request that you respond to us by May 19. Please direct your response to .

Regards,



Minky Worden
Director, Global Initiatives
Human Rights Watch

Appendix VII: FIFA Letter to Human Rights Watch, April 20, 2026



20 April 2026

Dear Minky Worden and Human Rights Watch,

Thank you for reaching out with your questions regarding human rights considerations and the role of media at the FIFA World Cup 2026™.

First and foremost, it should be stated that FIFA is committed to ensuring that the FIFA World Cup 2026™ is delivered in a manner that respects internationally recognised human rights standards, including the protection of journalists and media representatives covering the tournament and has taken active steps at every stage of the process - from bidding, to preparing to delivery - to ensure this will be the case in June and July, in Canada, Mexico and the United States.

FIFA's Human Rights Policy affirms its commitment to respect and help protect the rights of media representatives. Through the FIFA World Cup 2026™ Human Rights Framework, ongoing stakeholder engagement, and established grievance mechanisms, FIFA works to promote an enabling environment for journalists across all Host Countries and Host Cities. Since 2018, FIFA has operated a dedicated complaints mechanism for human rights defenders and media representatives who believe their rights have been adversely impacted in connection with FIFA-related activities. Any credible interference with legitimate journalistic activity is treated seriously and may be escalated to the relevant authorities.

With regard to access and accreditation, FIFA works in close coordination with the relevant national authorities across the three host countries to support the smooth and timely entry of accredited media. While visa and immigration processes remain the responsibility of sovereign governments, FIFA engages with host authorities to facilitate clear processes and ensure that accredited journalists are able to carry out their professional duties in line with applicable laws and regulations.

FIFA has in place mechanisms and procedures to respond to any human rights or safeguarding-related incident, including those involving journalists. Each situation is assessed on a case-by-case basis, recognising that individual circumstances require tailored processes covering intake, review, and, where appropriate, remediation. This includes incidents relating to safety, security, or alleged interference with media activity. Within this framework, FIFA has also established processes to engage with the relevant authorities where issues affecting accredited journalists arise. Any such cases are reviewed individually, with FIFA seeking to facilitate appropriate communication and resolution, in line with applicable laws and regulations.

|

In parallel, FIFA has established reporting and grievance channels, including safeguarding mechanisms, which will be widely communicated in advance of and during the tournament. Awareness-raising efforts will ensure that accredited individuals, including journalists, are informed of available support structures, including local rapid-response channels where applicable. FIFA works closely with public authorities and Host City organisers - particularly in relation to safety and security planning - to help ensure that appropriate measures are in place to protect all tournament participants, including media representatives.

The FIFA World Cup 2026™ Human Rights Action Plans, developed by Host Cities in line with the overarching framework, provide an additional mechanism to identify and address salient human rights risks at the local level. These plans - which will all be rolled out before the tournament begins - will be implemented in consultation with FIFA, local authorities and relevant stakeholders, and reflect the specific operational and regulatory contexts of each Host City. All parties involved in the delivery of the tournament are working collaboratively to support a safe, inclusive, and rights-respecting environment.

As part of its broader media engagement approach, invitations to FIFA press conferences will be shared via the FIFA Media Hub closer to the relevant dates. FIFA President Gianni Infantino routinely engages with international media, including recent interviews with CNBC and Sky, and participated in an open media session ahead of the FIFA Club World Cup 2025™ final in New York in July 2025, reflecting FIFA's ongoing commitment to accessibility and dialogue with the global media. FIFA responds every day to thousands of enquiries a year, reflecting its ongoing commitment to accessibility and dialogue with global media.

The FIFA World Cup 2026™ represents not only the biggest sporting event in the world, but a shared responsibility to uphold the values that underpin the global game. FIFA, together with its Host Countries, Host Cities and partners, is fully committed to ensuring that the tournament is delivered in a way that safeguards human rights, protects those who report on it and leaves a positive and enduring legacy well beyond the final whistle.

FIFA



Appendix VIII: FIFA Letter to Human Rights Watch, June 3, 2025



Human Rights Watch
350 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10118-3299

Zurich, 3 June 2025

Your letter regarding human rights and the FIFA World Cup 2026™

Dear Ms Worden, *DEAR MINKY*

Thank you for your letter dated 5 May 2025 with respect to human rights and the FIFA World Cup 2026 (FWC2026).

FIFA is committed to play its part, amongst all stakeholders, in ensuring respect for human rights in matters linked to any of its activities. In that respect, FIFA strives to create a discrimination-free, inclusive and safe environment for everyone involved in its competitions. This work is grounded in the FIFA Statutes, FIFA's Human Rights Policy and further relevant FIFA regulations and codes and focuses on matters with a direct link to FIFA.

As such, FIFA expects that any of its host countries take measures to ensure that any eligible persons who are involved in the Competition are able to enter the respective countries. Ahead of the FWC2026, FIFA is actively working on this matter with the relevant authorities, including, in the United States, The White House, the White House Task Force on the FIFA World Cup 2026, the U.S. Department of State, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

If FIFA becomes aware of potentially adverse human rights impacts, whether through our proactive measures and monitoring or a submission to FIFA's human rights grievance mechanism, we will engage with the relevant authorities in line with established protocols.

In line with the commitments expressed at the inaugural Task Force meeting of 6 May 2025, we are confident that the relevant authorities will capitalise on the once-in-a-generation opportunity presented by the FWC2026, which will bring millions of people from all around the world together to celebrate football.

Yours sincerely,



WITH KIND REGARDS,

Kevin Lamour
Chief Operating Officer

Fédération Internationale de Football Association
FIFA-Strasse 20 P.O. Box 8044 Zurich Switzerland T: +41 (0)43 222 7777 www.FIFA.com

REPORTERS' GUIDE

2026 FIFA World Cup in Canada, Mexico, and the United States

The 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup was promoted as the largest and most inclusive tournament in history – 48 teams competing in 16 host cities across the United States, Canada, and Mexico, with billions of spectators worldwide.

But with weeks until the first tournament ball is kicked, FIFA's weak response to the threats to human rights caused by the Trump administration's brutal immigration crackdown means the tournament risks being defined by exclusion and fear.

This Reporter's Guide looks in detail at both the human rights conditions in the three host nations and FIFA's inadequate efforts to respond to risks in the United States, drawing in detail from Human Rights Watch reporting. Unless FIFA acts urgently to address threats to fans, athletes, and workers, the 2026 World Cup risks becoming a sportswashing bonanza for the Trump administration and a platform for abusive policies targeting immigrants and visitors, showcasing racism, exclusion, fear, and discrimination.



FIFA President Gianni Infantino and US President Donald Trump on stage during the FIFA World Cup 2026 official draw on December 5, 2025 in Washington, DC.

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