

## HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

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HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
WATCH

January 5, 2017

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Mr. Gianni Infantino  
President, FIFA  
Zurich, Switzerland  
Sent by email to: [gianni.infantino@fifa.org](mailto:gianni.infantino@fifa.org)

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Ms. Fatma Samoura  
Secretary General, FIFA  
Zurich, Switzerland  
Sent by email to: [fatma.samoura@fifa.org](mailto:fatma.samoura@fifa.org)

Dear Mr. Infantino and Ms. Samoura,

We are contacting you on behalf of a coalition of civil society and human rights organizations to share with you our opinion about the effect of the December 23, 2016 United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334 (UNSCR 2334) on the issue of Israeli football clubs operating in Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Representing this coalition are Mr. Martin Konecny, Director of the European Middle East Project, Mr. Fadi Quran, Senior Campaigner for Avaaz in Palestine, and myself on behalf of Human Rights Watch. Below, you will find a description of each organization and our expertise on this issue.

Our coalition has written to you in the past to ask that FIFA adopt a rules-based approach to resolving this issue. We believe that following the rules – both FIFA’s statutes and the human rights responsibilities it has affirmed under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights – requires FIFA to instruct the Israel Football Association (IFA) to cease sponsoring games in unlawful Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank.

UNSCR 2334 provides a renewed, unequivocal basis for FIFA to address the question of football clubs, leaving no doubt that football clubs in settlements are located on the Palestinian side of the internationally recognized border and that the settlements in the occupied territory are unlawful. The resolution states that “the establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law.” It goes on to call upon all states “to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967.”

### HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

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All Israeli settlements, including the five that contain IFA-approved playing arenas, are located on land occupied in 1967 and therefore cannot be considered part of Israel. The UNSCR made it clear that the West Bank, including Area C where the settlements are located, is not disputed territory but rather occupied Palestinian territory. It further clarified that Israel should immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Therefore third parties, and in particular those conducting business activities, should not validate or assist these unlawful settlements.

We appreciate FIFA's desire to avoid politicizing the beautiful game of football. But continuing to allow the IFA to hold games in settlements is itself a deeply political act: a decision to endorse football matches on stolen land and to flout FIFA's human rights responsibilities and the overwhelming consensus of the international community against settlements and against the attempts of the Israeli government to treat parts of the West Bank as if they were part of Israel. Further delay in requiring the IFA to stop sponsoring games in settlements would place FIFA far outside international consensus and place it in contravention of its responsibilities under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

FIFA has an opportunity to uphold international standards, by implementing its own rules and acting in accordance with the human rights responsibilities it has recently reaffirmed.

We trust that you will make the right decision at the upcoming FIFA Council meeting, and we look forward to meeting with you in person, as previously requested, at a date of your time and convenience.

Sincerely yours,



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Cc: Mr. Tokyo Sexwale, via e-mail to: [global@sexwale.co.za](mailto:global@sexwale.co.za)

**Avaaz** is a 44-million-person global campaign network that works to ensure that the views and values of the world's people shape global decision-making. Avaaz has launched an [online petition](#), with more than 150,000 signatures, asking that the Israel Football Association cease holding games in Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

**The European Middle East Project (EuMEP)** is an independent NGO/thinktank in Brussels specialising in European and international policies on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. EuMEP has issued briefing papers analyzing implications of FIFA statutes and of precedents from other occupied territories for the football clubs in Israeli settlements.

**Human Rights Watch** is an independent, non-governmental organization that monitors and reports on human rights in 90 countries around the world. Human Rights Watch has released a [publication](#) documenting the activities of the Israel Football Association in settlements in the West Bank and arguing that these activities violate FIFA's responsibilities under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.