



# SPORT AND HUMAN RIGHTS

OVERVIEW

October-December 2023

**FAIRPLAY**

SPORT FOR FAIR, EQUAL AND INCLUSIVE WORLD

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# List of acronyms

AFC — Asian Football Confederation  
AFF — Afghanistan Football Federation  
EIHL — Elite Ice Hockey League  
FIFA — Fédération Internationale de Football Association  
IFA — Israel Football Association  
IIHF — International Ice Hockey Federation  
IOC — International Olympic Committee  
JFF — Jamaica Football Federation  
MLB — Major League Baseball  
MLB — Major League Baseball  
MLS — Major League Soccer  
NHL — National Hockey League  
NOC — National Olympic Committee  
UAF — Ukrainian Football Association  
UEFA — Union of European Football Associations  
USMNT — United States Men's National Team  
USSF — United States Soccer Federation  
USWNT — United States Women's National Team  
UWCL — UEFA Women's Champions League  
WSL — Women's Super League  
WTA — Women's Tennis Association

# Introduction

In the analytical report for October-December 2023 we analyzed the most significant events and news in sports through the prism of international human rights standards.

Belarusian de facto authorities continue to persecute the representatives of the sports industry who disagree with the regime; the practice of recording “repentance” videos persists. Meanwhile, the IOC decided to admit athletes from Belarus and Russia to the Olympic Games in 2024 in a neutral status.

During the analyzed period, we were able to note the events that testify to the development of women's sports, in particular, football. A significant event is the example of building stadiums specifically for women – this is an important step to ensure the principles of inclusion and non-discrimination.

Football fan clashes remain a key concern in the context of safety and security at sport events during this period. Unfortunately, people continue to be put at risk, with their health and even their lives threatened. One of the most high-profile incidents was the clash between Brazilian and Argentine fans during a World Cup-2026 qualifying match.

The right to health is one of the most pressing issues this year in the world of sport, and especially in football. Overloaded matches, high injury rates and the specificity of injuries in women's sport. In the report we talked about athletes who have faced injuries and the existing research on the topic.

In our overview we also covered news on the topics of LGBTQ+ community rights, racism and antisemitism, the war between Hamas and Israel, the struggle of athletes and fans against corruption and more.

**What's wrong with human rights  
in sport in Belarus?**

Karate coach Rostislav Losev was detained in Mahiliou. A Telegram channel published a “repentance” video in which Losev says he has been writing angry comments since 2020 and was registered in the chatbot of the “Peramoga” plan. “Repentance” videos are one of the common forms of pressure from the de facto authorities of Belarus, which violates freedom from degrading treatment, freedom of expression, and the right to non-interference in private life.

In the material for the previous period we shared the news about the detention of FC Dynamo-Minsk academy coach Artur Mustyhin in September 2023. November 6, it became known that Mustyhin received 3 years of domestic chemistry under Article 342 of the Criminal Code of Belarus. Mustyhin was also included in the list of citizens of the Republic of Belarus, foreign citizens and stateless persons involved in extremist activities.

Parents and brother of world sambo champion Stiapan Popov were fired from Vitebsk regional sports school (СДЮШОР), where they worked as judo and sambo coaches, for not going to work during the period when they were arrested for 10 days for subscribing to resources on Facebook, recognized as extremist.

The children's coach of HC Lokomotiv-Orsha has been detained. In correspondence in one of the Telegram chats he wrote “Zelensky is a beautiful surname”. Information about this appeared in the Telegram-channel of the GUBOPiK – the statement of the coach was called “political camming-out”, reported that officers conducted “anti-extremist training”, and published another “repentance” video. GUBOPiK also said that the Federation would ensure that the trainer “is never allowed to coach again”.

Anastasia Mironchik-Ivanova, a Belarusian track and field athlete and a signatory to the pro-government athletes' letter, won a medal at the 2011 World Championships — where she placed 4th, but the 3rd place athlete was later disqualified for doping. In December 2023, Mironchik-Ivanova spoke about how she received the medal: “When my medal from the World Championships came back to me, it came with an LGBT ribbon. ... I cut that ribbon. ... I often come to children at school and they ask why the medal is without a ribbon. I tell them that Belarus is for traditional family values. It so happened that the medal came with an LGBT ribbon, which had to be removed.” The promotion of heteronormative values by the de facto authorities of Belarus creates an environment in which LGBTQ+ people may be afraid to openly express their identity, which contradicts the principles of equality and non-discrimination.

The sports media Tribuna.com was declared an “extremist formation” and the Instagram account of sports journalist Aliaksandr Ivulin was recognized as “extremist materials”. Restricting media freedom and labeling independent

media as “extremist” is one of the main levers of pressure by the de facto authorities of Belarus. These actions undermine the fundamental principles of freedom of expression and freedom of the press, which are essential components of a democratic society.

The IOC decided to admit athletes from Belarus and Russia to the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris. The athletes will be able to participate in the competitions in a neutral status. At the moment, 8 Russian and 3 Belarusian athletes have qualified. The reaction to this news was mixed — it was criticized by some Ukrainian representatives of the sports industry, while the former Russian Sports Minister called such conditions of participation in the competition “humiliating” and the IOC decision — “a handout”. The NOC of Belarus called the conditions of admission “discriminatory” and “not satisfying the interests of the Belarusian sports community in full”.

The IOC decision was supported by Thomas Bach, IOC president; he stated that “individual athletes should not be penalized for the actions of their governments” and also spoke about the war in Ukraine: “One war out of 28 wars and conflicts that are going on in the world right now, and all the other athletes are competing peacefully with each other.”

Belarusian track and field athlete Yana Maksimava said she disagrees with the fact that Belarusian athletes, even those who are against the war, have been “equated with Russian athletes” and cannot participate in the Olympic Games as free athletes.

In their statement, the IOC again indicated that athletes who support the war and/or have contracted with the Belarusian or Russian military or national security agencies will not be able to participate in the Olympic Games. However, the involvement with the Belarusian military was confirmed for athlete Vanessa Kaladzinskaya, who had already qualified for the Olympic Games.

In December, a charity fundraiser was held to support Uladzislau Kovaleu, a Belarusian grandmaster and free athlete, to cover expenses related to preparation and participation in the World Championships. The necessary sum was collected in just a few days, which is another example of solidarity of the Belarusian society.

On the International Human Rights Day, December 10th, a race in support of Belarusian political prisoners, organized by the human rights organization Libereco, was held in Zurich. During the event each runner participated on behalf of one political prisoner — in this way, the organizers planned to collect donations for each of them. At the time of publication, 1415 people were recognized as political prisoners in Belarus.



## **Women rights in sport**

Kim Ng became the first female MLB manager to make the playoffs. Allysa Nakken is the first woman to interview for a managerial position in MLB. Union Berlin made Bundesliga history by appointing a woman, Marie-Louise Eta, as an assistant coach. Rebecca Welch became the first woman to referee a Premier League game. Laila Edwards is the first black woman on the U.S. national hockey team.

This is another set of news about “firsts” for women in the sports industry. Such news is certainly examples of success and development, but it also demonstrates the need for systematic change to overcome gender inequality.

Carson Pickett became the first female football player with a disability in the FC 24 series. Pickett's play at the highest level of football is proof that disability does not have to be a barrier to playing the sport, and with the inclusion of a football player in the most popular simulation, her story can continue to inspire and encourage others on a global scale.

Emma Hayes has become the highest paid coach in women's soccer at \$1.6 million per year. Hayes has signed a contract with the USWNT. Her contract will “equal the salary” of the current USMNT male head coach. This is truly a landmark moment for soccer and all women coaches as it demonstrates equality in practice. USSF is doing a lot for gender equality — you can learn about the historic deal between the U.S. Men's and Women's National Teams in our previous period overview.

The Arsenal FC-Chelsea FC match saw a new WSL attendance record of almost 60,000 fans. At the same time, Arsenal, as well as Juventus, Wolfsburg and Manchester United, failed to qualify for the UWCL group stage this season, much to the disappointment of the clubs and fans. In turn, UEFA have announced their intention to implement changes to the women's game — next season there will be an increase in the number of teams that can participate in the tournament, the tournament itself will be in a table format; UEFA will also launch a second European women's tournament, most likely similar to the European League. These decisions are a logical response to the growing interest in women's football around the world.

Kansas City Current built the world's first stadium and training complex specifically for a women's professional sports team. The stadium is scheduled to open in 2024 and has a capacity of 11,500. The training complex was built by Monarch Build, a women-owned building company. In doing so, the KC Current team has shown a real commitment to setting the standard for the future of women's sports.

Brighton were also given permission to build a stadium specifically for women. The fact that women have to share the football field with men and are usually prioritized for games of men's teams is a common problem.

Brighton could be a good example for other clubs not only in England but around the world. There is no definite information yet on exactly what the stadium's infrastructure will be like, or whether there will be any fundamental differences from the “men's” stadiums. Brighton Hove City Council member John Hewwit believes: “One of the reasons for having a purpose-built stadium is different needs. For example, playing in a men’s stadium, dressing rooms might only have two cubicles, whereas a purpose-built women’s ground would have more.”

For several months, the Jamaica Reggae Girlz national team has been fighting for their rights and fair labor conditions. Back in June, the players published an open letter to the JFF, in which they expressed their dissatisfaction with the training base, living conditions and transportation, compensation for training camps, and communication with the JFF. In an earlier period report, we shared the news of the incredible result achieved by the Jamaican national team at the 2023 World Cup — 1/8 finals. In a new statement released by the Reggae Girlz, the players claim that they have yet to receive full payment after participating in the World Cup; previous claims have also been upheld. Due to inappropriate and disrespectful treatment by the JFF, the players have decided to boycott the October 2023 international window, which includes a Gold Cup qualifier.

Women's football is becoming more and more popular, which entails changing conditions within the game. At the moment we can already see positive changes, but situations like this show the need to continue working at all levels to ensure fair and safe working conditions for female athletes.

The WTA also faced a protest from many leading female players over pay and working conditions in women's tennis. The players signed a collective letter with a list of demands, including guaranteed pay according to the player's ranking, compensation in cases of injury or pregnancy break, and official PTPA representation on the WTA Players' Council. The players did not receive a written response, but were invited to two meetings with WTA management, the results of which left the players dissatisfied. However, at the end of 2023 for the first time in history more than 100 WTA players earned more than 500 thousand dollars.

**LGBTQI+**

After banning rainbow jerseys because there were too many “distractions,” the NHL banned players from using rainbow stick tape in early October. But on Oct. 21, Arizona Coyotes defenseman Travis Dermott wrapped the previously banned tape around his stick in a game against the Anaheim Ducks. And on October 24, the NHL made an official statement in which they canceled the previously introduced ban on wrapping sticks with pride tapes.

In an earlier report, we shared the news that World Aquatics became the first international federation to create a special open competition category for transgender athletes. However, the category was canceled at October's World Cup due to lack of entries. World Aquatics said it will try to reintroduce the initiative.

Belarusian basketball player Katherina Snytsina made a coming-out during one of the Internet shows. And in an interview for “Zerkalo” the athlete shared her thoughts about why there was no desire and opportunity to be open while in Belarus. Snytsina noted that for 3 days after the coming-out she didn't receive a single negative comment, but only words of support and gratitude. When asked whether she felt that she had done something important for Belarus, the basketball player said: “I didn't realize the scale, but then again, I received a huge number of grateful messages that a public person so openly, sincerely, calmly and unobtrusively tells and shows her happiness and orientation.” And indeed, among public people, in particular, in the world of Belarusian sport, there were no such precedents before.

A transgender footballer from Rossington Main Ladies has decided to quit the team and women's football in general, as opponents boycotted matches involving the athlete. At the moment, the Football Association has a policy on transgender athletes, but its essence is that “gender identity should not be a barrier to participation in football”, however, in practice, decisions are made on a case-by-case basis. The main criterion for players over the age of 18 is testosterone levels. However, this is a discriminatory approach that does not take into account the many other factors that influence the performance of athletes. The FA said they are “currently reviewing their transgender policy for English football to ensure it is inclusive, fair and safe for all.”

## **Racism and antisemitism**

Arsenal FC published a photo of the 2023/24 season women's team, which includes only light-skinned players. After the photo was published, the club faced criticism over the lack of diversity. The club recognized the problem and assured that they are making efforts to change the situation: "It's a priority for the club to continue to drive greater diversity and inclusion and create a sense of belonging for everyone connected to the club."

Lack of diversity is a major problem in European women's football. For this reason, Versus and Spotify released "The Equaliser", a film exploring racial inequality in women's football. Three professional female players took part in the study. They had already participated in Spotify and She Plays Football project, aimed at increasing grassroots team diversity and providing unique opportunities for girls who aspire to play football, which we covered in the April-June 2023 report. In the film, players share their experiences and lessons learned, and talk about the need to include light-skinned players and fans in creating an inclusive environment.

Sam Allison has become the first dark-skinned referee at a Premier League match in 15 years and only the second ever. The first was Uriah Rennie, with his last game officiated in matchday 38 of the 2007/2008 season. Wilfried Nancy became the first dark-skinned coach to win an MLS Cup. As we can see, there are problems with ethnic diversity in football on and off the field, not just in England or America, but all over the world. As of the 2023/2024 season, there have only been 11 dark-skinned managers in Premier League history, and according to the Black Footballers Partnership, only 4.4% of managerial positions in English football are held by dark-skinned people, while the rate of dark-skinned players in the Premier League is 43%. The examples of Sam Allison and Wilfried Nancy can inspire new generations of players, coaches and fans to believe that positive change is real.

"Blue is The Color" is a documentary about what it's like to be a dark-skinned Chelsea FC fan. The project was part of the Blue Creator Fund initiative, which aims to give young people from underrepresented backgrounds the opportunity to develop a creative project about Chelsea and its community. There were two winners, the second was an emerging jewelry designer who created a capsule collection of Chelsea rings. The initiative exemplifies the existing potential for culture change in football, supporting new generations of people for whom football is more than just a game.

**Safety, security  
and service during sport events**



The match between Belgium and Sweden was stopped at the request and agreement of the two teams at half-time following the news that an armed man had shot and killed two Swedish fans before the match in Brussels. The fans were forced to stay in the stadium for 2.5 hours before evacuation began. In an attempted arrest, police shot and killed the suspect. After halftime, the score of the game was 1-1. UEFA decided to recognize the match as abandoned and the 1-1 result was declared final.

The match of the 10th round of the French Football Championship between Olympique de Marseille and Olympique Lyonnais was disrupted due to an attack by Marseille fans on a bus carrying players and representatives of the Lyon coaching staff. The windows on the right side of the bus exploded. Fabio Grosso and the club's coach suffered serious facial injuries.

Two Celtic FC fans were stabbed by S.S. Lazio ultras before the match in a pub in Rome. This incident was preceded by several episodes of conflict between Celtic and Lazio: before the match at Celtic Park, Lazio fans marched through Glasgow in a fascist salute, and in response Celtic fans used a banner with an upside down Benito Mussolini with the inscription "Follow Your Leader." UEFA fined Celtic FC for this banner and "offensive chants" and S.S. Lazio for "offensive chants."

In Greece, the match between FC Panathinaikos and FC Olympiakos was stopped at the beginning of the second half because a firecracker exploded near Panathinaikos player Juan Carlos. This incident is yet another proof of the high level of violence in Greek football and the lack of an adequate mechanism to counter it.

An important circumstance characterizing the context of this match is the fact that initially the referee did not want to stop the game after the firecracker burst; the fact is that European referees belonging to the elite category and category A of UEFA referees do not work at Greek Championship matches. This decision comes in response to the actions against the Pole Pavel Pacovský and the Italian Davide Massa, who officiated the match between A.E.K and Aris. Thus, scandals in Greek football, which entail a decrease in the level of refereeing, can lead to tragic consequences affecting the lives and health of participants in football matches.

As a result, football clubs in Greece's top division must play all their matches without fans for two months.

After the SSC Napoli-AC Milan match in the 10th round of Serie A, the body of a 42-year-old man was found at night in the underground parking lot of the Diego Armando Maradona stadium. The corpse was found under the stadium's guest section. According to the police reconstruction of events, two people without tickets tried to enter the stands through a tunnel; the dead man tried to climb the stand but fell to the ground from a height of about 20 meters.

The president of Turkish club MKE Ankaragucu Faruk Koca punched in the face the referee of the match against Caykur Rizespor, which ended 1-1, thanks to a goal scored in added time. Koca was arrested and later resigned. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan expressed condemnation and said that “sport is incompatible with violence.” Turkey suspended all domestic football matches indefinitely.

A violent clash occurred between Brazilian and Argentinean fans during a World Cup-2026 qualifying match. A fight broke out in one of the stands during the singing of the anthems; police intervened, beating the fans with batons; the fans responded by throwing chairs at the police, while others panicked and left the stands, entering the field to avoid the fight. The Argentine team left the field for safety, including the fans themselves. The match started after almost 30 minutes. FIFA President Gianni Infantino said: “Without exception, all players, fans, teams and officials have to be secure and safe to play and enjoy football. I call on relevant authorities to ensure that this is respected at all levels.”

These incidents, in which people from different groups of the sporting community have been affected, once again highlight the urgent need for collective efforts to overcome hostility, discrimination and violence in football and to ensure a safe and inclusive space for everyone.

Hockey player Adam Johnson died during an EIHL game this October as a result of an “accident”: a player from the opposing team slashed his throat with a skate during a collision. This tragic event led to much debate about the need for players to use visors — neck and face shields — and protective equipment in general.

Wearing neck guards was not previously mandatory, nor was protection for wrists and the back of the legs, the parts of the body most vulnerable to cuts. However, in early December, the IIHF announced that neck guards will become mandatory for competitions under their auspices. This mandate will not apply to professional hockey leagues, including the NHL. USA Hockey “continues to recommend” the use of neck shields, cut-resistant socks, sleeves and underwear. The EIHL will not make the use of neck shields mandatory, but will “strongly encourage” wearing them.

Among the reasons hockey players don't use visors voluntarily cite discomfort, lack of mandatory use, and even “looking silly.” The Seattle Times sports journalist believes that “safety evolutions have usually needed death or serious injury to occur first.” No reason for not wearing protection is worth the health and life of the athletes so it's important to keep talking about it, to promote safety, at all levels, without waiting for another tragedy.

## **War and sport**

On October 5, 2023, the NOC of Russia unilaterally decided to include in its membership the regional sports organizations administered by the NOC of Ukraine (Donetsk, Lugansk, Kherson, Zaporizhzhya). Such a decision is a violation of the Olympic Charter (OC), as it violates the territorial integrity of Ukraine. As a consequence, the IOC Executive Board decided to suspend the NOC of Russia. In practice, this means that the NOC of Russia can no longer act as an NOC according to the definition of the OC, as well as receive funding from the Olympic Movement. The IOC reserves the right to decide on the participation of neutral athletes from Russia at the Summer and Winter Olympic Games (2024 and 2026).

FIFA decided to lift restrictions on the participation of Russian U-17 national teams in competitions. Now the teams will be able to participate in competitions in a neutral status — without national anthem, flag, equipment. A similar decision was made earlier by UEFA — “children should not be punished for actions whose responsibility lies exclusively with adults.” The UFA condemned such a decision and called for a review. In addition, Denmark, England, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Poland joined the boycott of matches against Russia.

On October 7, the war between Hamas and Israel began with a Hamas incursion from the Gaza Strip. At the moment the conflict is in an active phase, thousands of people have been killed, wounded or are in captivity. The ongoing events are also having an impact on the field of sports.

Anwar El Ghazi, a striker for German FC Mainz, expressed his support for Palestine on his Instagram, which led to him being suspended from training, but after he “showed remorse,” according to the club, he was allowed to return. The footballer later published a new statement in which he said that he did not renege on his words. “I am against war and violence. I am against the killing of all innocent civilians. I am against all forms of discrimination. I am against islamophobia. I am against antisemitism. I am against genocide. I am against apartheid. I am against occupation. I am against oppression.” The Koblenz prosecutor's office opened an investigation against El Ghazi on suspicion of “disturbing the public peace by condoning criminal offenses in conjunction with incitement to hatred by disseminating content.” As a consequence, Mainz terminated the footballer's contract.

PUMA has announced that it will end its partnership with the IFA — Israel Football Association — after the current contract expires in 2024. The brand has faced boycotts and public protests over the sponsorship. Palestinian communities called for a boycott through the “Boycott, Divest, Sanctions” (BDS) movement, which played a role in Adidas' decision to sever its partnership with the IFA in 2018.

**Right to Health**

The Formula-1 Grand Prix in Qatar in October 2023 has caused competitors to consider the race a “found limit” in the industry. Due to the heat and the need to respect the track boundaries, competitors faced enormous health risks leading to:

- Esteban Ocon threw up in his helmet after the 15th lap of the Grand Prix;
- Alexander Albon of “Williams” was unable to climb out of the cockpit after the finish – he required assistance. The team confirmed: the pilot was taken to the medical center, where he was diagnosed with severe heat stroke;
- Lance Stroll of “Aston Martin” headed for the ambulance immediately after the race;
- The pilots opened their visors at speeds in excess of 300 km/h, which could have resulted in injury.

It is an open question how the race organizers will be able to reduce the negative impact of the environment on the health of the athletes given the fact that the Qatar Grand Prix is signed in F-1 for the next 10 years. The idea of increasing the popularity/profit of a particular sport by expanding the geography of competitions should not be in contrast to ensuring the realization of the human right to health.

A study that examined the extent to which match congestion affects the health of football players found that hosting the World Cup in Qatar in the middle of the 2022-23 season, in the winter, led to an increase in the number of injuries, recovery period and financial costs associated with it. According to the study, there were 3,985 injuries in Europe's top five leagues during the 2022-23 season, with ankle, calf/shin and hamstring injuries being the most severe.

FC Barcelona player Pablo Gavira suffered a torn anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) and associated meniscus damage during a Euro-2024 qualifying match. At the moment, the footballer will undergo surgery and a long period of rehabilitation (on average, recovery from an ACL injury takes from 6 to 9 months).

The problem of high injury rate in sports is also acute in women's football during this year.

Mapi Leon, FC Barcelona's central defender, suffered a meniscus tear during a training session. She will also undergo surgery. Leon was one of 15 players who went on strike in September 2022, speaking out about how the emotional environment of the Spanish national team was affecting their health. The player refused to be part of the national team, even before the 2023 World Cup: “I can't go back if the situation hasn't changed.”

Arsenal FC have published a documentary series on Beth Mead and Vivianne Miedema's recovery from their ACL injury called “Step by Step”. The series is not only a way to tell the story of how the recovery is going, but also an

important statement in the aspect of preventing ACL injuries in women's football. The series contains footage from Mead and Miedema's personal archives, which gives a deeper insight into what the athletes had to face. ACL injuries are not just something athletes face in football. LSU (basketball) forward Sa'Myah Smith is sidelined for the remainder of the 2023-24 season after tearing her ACL, medial collateral ligament (MCL) and meniscus. UConn defender Azzi Fudd will also miss the remainder of the 2023-24 season after tearing the ACL and MCL in her right knee during practice.

The fact that athletes at this stage are on rigorous training and competition schedules with little time for recovery certainly has an impact on the increased injury rate. The specificity of injuries in women's sport is insufficiently studied, which increases the risk directly to female athletes and requires the development of specific prevention strategies. The right to health of athletes should be a priority for sports organizations and governments.

Mental health also remains a focus for the sporting community.

Burnley FC's Lyle Foster has taken a break from football due to mental health issues. Burnley have supported the player's decision and are trying to normalize conversations about mental health in football. The club released an official statement on behalf of Foster and his family, saying that the player is under the care of a specialists, the club is trying to do what is necessary and asked for understanding and respect. This problem requires a major comprehensive effort — it is necessary that mental health issues are treated on an equal footing with physical health, so that the mental health of football players is no longer a stigma.

**Other human rights violations in sport**



Striker Jürgen Lokadia (Netherlands) transferred to Iranian Persepolis FC in 2022. After protests started in Iran in the fall of 2022 (in connection with the death of Mahsa Amini after being detained by the “morality police”), the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs advised its citizens to leave Iran for safety reasons. Lokadia left Iran and terminated its contract with Persepolis FC in December 2022. However, the club was not in agreement with this version of what happened. As a result — in 2023 the footballer lost the court in FIFA and now has to pay compensation to Persepolis FC. The decision on this case has not yet been published — we will definitely write about it in future materials.

At the end of October the parents of Luis Diaz, Liverpool FC footballer, were kidnapped by rebels in Colombia. The player's mother was found, while his father was reported missing. During a match against Luton Town, Diaz scored a goal, during the celebration of which he showed his shirt with the inscription “Libertad Para Papa” (“Freedom For Dad”). Afterwards, the footballer published a post on Instagram asking ELN to free his father. Liverpool FC supported the player by publishing an official statement. The father was released on November 9. Later, Diaz's parents were present at the Colombia-Brazil World Cup qualifying match, where Luis Diaz scored 2 goals and the team won 2-1.

The Eritrean men's football team will not take part in the qualifying matches of the World Cup-2026 — according to some sources, the country's authorities fear that the players will try to seek political asylum in the countries that will host the away matches, but there was no official explanation of the decision taken by the federation. Eritrea currently has a repressive regime considered one of the worst in the world, with mandatory military service with indefinite conscription, restrictions on media freedom, arrests for “dissent”, torture and other human rights violations. Players of Eritrea's men's and women's national football teams have requested asylum while participating in international matches in the past.

18 players of Afghanistan national team boycotted a World Cup qualifying match with Qatar to protest against “substandard treatment” by the AFF, pointing out the issue of corruption. A letter signed by three players was also sent to FIFA and AFC. The players shared that there is misappropriation of funds from FIFA in AFF, which should be used for the development of football in Afghanistan. The players say they want change and development of football in their country and have called for an end to FIFA funding. The AFF denies these allegations. Thousands of Everton FC fans marched before the match with Manchester City FC to protest against the decision to strip their team of 10 points for breaching the league's profit and sustainability rules. The marchers held pink cards with the Premier League logo and the word “corrupt”. A banner “Where there is power, greed and money there is corruption” was also displayed during the match.

Talking about his work as head coach of Independiente Football Club, Carlos Tevez spoke about the importance of education for footballers. He shared the observation that three players on his team do not know how to add and subtract. Tevez believes this situation is due to poverty. “We can help the boy with food, we can help him in many ways, but education is also important... He must be able to defend himself, he must be able to read what he signs. We organize a project in collaboration with the club to provide them with a teacher, and after training we conduct two hours of lessons.” An example of an initiative at Independiente is creating a model for other clubs to emulate, demonstrating that education and sports can go hand in hand, contributing to the all-round development of individuals.

Levante UD players took to the pitch of Ciutat de València wearing T-shirts symbolizing breast mastectomy. Not only the symbolism of the gesture is important, but also the fact that all profits from the sale of these shirts will go to support the Valencia branch of the Spanish Breast Cancer Association.

Atletico Madrid are promoting the “We Love Football” project, which aims to “create the football we want to see, a football characterized by diversity, inclusion, respect and tolerance.” The project aims to raise awareness and educate young people, working with sports organizations to overcome inequality and any form of discrimination, seeing football as a tool to transform society.

iFlipp have published a report on the Governance Index in European football — levels of gender and ethnic representation in leadership positions. The study aims to track the extent to which policies and actions taken at different levels to encourage gender and ethnic diversity have led to increased diversity in football leadership.

**Conclusion**

The persecution of representatives of the sports industry in Belarus is an example of ongoing human rights violations in the country. The restriction of media freedom by recognizing independent media and journalists as “extremist” deprives sports media of the opportunity to develop, which in turn negatively affects the entire sports industry.

In the world of women's sports, positive changes from a human rights perspective can be observed: individual examples of equal working conditions for men and women, the building of special stadiums, and the growing interest in women's sports in general. These are all important steps in the process of ensuring fair working conditions, inclusion and non-discrimination. Further work is needed at all levels to ensure that new generations of girls and women can realize their maximum potential in the world of sport.

The lack of diversity in football around the world, but especially in Europe, is a problem in the spotlight. It is important to note the commitment of clubs, players and sports organizations to overcome these barriers and further ensure diversity.

Another wave of incidents related to football fan activity reminds us of the need to work comprehensively to ensure a safe environment so that football or any other sport can be enjoyed by everyone without risk of violence or fear for their lives.

News on the topics of the right to health, LGBTQ+ community rights, anti-corruption, wars and social action shows us the extent of sport's impact on society and human rights. Promoting diversity, inclusion and equality in sport can lead to important social changes.

**FairPlay** is a human rights in/through/for sports organization.

**Our mission:** empowering people in exercising sports and human rights for equal, inclusive, and fair Belarus and the World.

**Our goal:** human rights are respected in the sports industry.

To achieve our mission, we:

- **Analyze** policies, laws and practices and share about them in clear and accessible language;
- Engage in human rights **advocacy** at the national and international levels;
- **Educate** and raise awareness, including through sporting events.

This text was prepared jointly by a team of authors.

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