

# **Sport and Human Rights**

## **Overview April-June 2024**

## **Content:**

Introduction.....	1
What's wrong with human rights in sport in Belarus?...	3
Women's rights in sport.....	5
Rights of LGBTQ+ people in sport.....	7
Right to health.....	8
Sports uniforms and human rights.....	9
EURO-2024.....	10
Other news in the field of sport and human rights.....	11

## List of acronyms

**DFB** – Deutscher Fußball-Bund

**DBU** – Dansk Boldspil-Union

**FFF** – Fédération Française de Football

**FIFA** – Fédération Internationale de Football Association

**FIFPRO** – The Fédération Internationale des Associations de Footballeurs Professionnels

**IOC** – International Olympic Committee

**MLS** – Major League Soccer

**NBA** – National Basketball Association

**NHL** – National Hockey League

**NHLPA** – National Hockey League Players' Association

**NWSL** – National Women's Soccer League

**UEFA** – The Union of European Football Associations

**USWNT** – United States Women's National Soccer Team

**WSL** – Women's Super League

# **Introduction**

In this article, we have analyzed the most significant events and news in sports for April-June 2024 through the lens of international human rights standards.

In Belarus, persecution of representatives of the sports industry who disagree with the Belarusian de facto authorities continues, which is a manifestation of systematic and widespread violation of human rights in the country. The reasons for persecution in the analyzed period were participation in peaceful protests in 2020, leaks of personal data of law enforcers, participation in an "extremist formation", nomination of a candidate to the Coordinating Council, and inscription "zyvie Belarus". The practice of recording and distributing "penitential" videos continues, which violates the fundamental right to protection from degrading treatment and punishment.

In the field of women's sports, more and more clubs and federations are trying to develop training infrastructure and organize matches in stadiums that can accommodate tens of thousands of spectators, indicating a growing interest in women's games or providing infrastructure on a scale to match the demand, as well as the development of the industry. However, female players still have to fight for favorable conditions and fair pay. These developments affect fundamental human rights, including the right to equality and non-discrimination. Addressing these issues is essential for the sustainable development of women's sport and the protection of human rights.

June is a month of pride for the LGBTQ+ community. The analyzed period was marked by a large number of support actions in a variety of sports. But there is also still discrimination and rejection. Opposing trends indicate progress, but also emphasize the need for continuous efforts to create an inclusive and safe environment for everyone.

Positive trends are evident in the right to health dimension. More and more organizations and federations are taking a "people-first" approach to the health of athletes. These include rapid response to concussions, specific protocols for women's well-being and a project to find ways to reduce the risk of injury in women's football. Athletes themselves continue to talk about the importance of mental health on par with physical health. Ensuring access to proper medical care, injury prevention and mental health support protects the well-being of athletes in their careers.

We have repeatedly highlighted how sports uniforms can be used as a way to promote human rights and socially relevant issues. The material looks at similar examples to highlight the hearing impaired community, domestic violence, as well as racism, anti-semitism, homophobia, sexism and other forms of discrimination. This is important because in this way the broad appeal and media coverage of sport is used to address critical human rights issues, promoting an inclusive culture both inside and outside the sporting community.

One of the most significant and global sporting events during the analyzed period was the European Football Championship (EURO-2024). Global sporting events often become a platform for discussing significant societal issues and also help to draw attention to existing problems in the aspect of human rights. It is essential that organizers, participants and spectators work together to promote inclusion, combat discrimination and ensure respect for human rights at all levels at these global events. This approach can lead to lasting positive change in the sporting world and society as a whole.

News stories about the use of artificial intelligence to protect athletes and the sports arena as a platform to call for votes in parliamentary elections, as well as more fan clashes with varying degrees of consequences, athletes fighting for the right to fair pay and even pushing

the climate change agenda, are evidence of sport's broad impact on all spheres of life to build a diverse and inclusive society.

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

At the end of May the apartment of the parents of track and field athlete Krystsina Tsimanouskaya was searched by the Investigative Committee, the athlete reported about it in social networks. A new wave of searches took place in Belarus in the period before the elections to the Coordinating Council, while the Investigative Committee opened criminal cases against all candidates to the Coordinating Council. Tsimanouskaya was a candidate for a seat in the Coordinating Council.

Earlier bodybuilder Aliaksandr Sharabaiko, who was sentenced to 1,5 years in prison for “insulting the president”, was again charged under three articles of the Criminal Code, including Article 361-1 of the Criminal Code (participation in an extremist formation). As a result, Sharabaiko was sentenced to 6 years in prison.

The co-founder of the Free Association of Athletes (SOS BY) and journalist Andrei Hnet, who was detained in Serbia at the end of October 2023, has had his health deteriorate in prison. This was reported to the working group of MEPs by the People's Anti-Crisis Office (PAO). Hnet itself also sent a letter to the court.

On June 13, the Supreme Court of Serbia decided to extradite Andrei Hnet, the journalist reported about it on social networks. According to Hnet, the court found no grounds preventing his extradition. At the moment, the journalist is under house arrest, while his defense lawyers have prepared an appeal against the court's decision.

Pavel Pashkevich, an event host, who worked at the matches of “Minsk” basketball club, was detained. The reason was a photo, on which Pashkevich holds a microphone with the inscription “ZYVIE BELARUS”. One of the pro-government Telegram channels published a “penitential” video, in which the host admits to participating in peaceful protests in 2020 in Minsk, as well as sending data on the moving of law enforcers (during the peaceful protests) through the resource “Black Book of Belarus”<sup>1</sup>. According to the Telegram channel, Pashkevich faces up to 5 years in prison.

The Investigative Committee started “special proceedings” against the krav maga instructor Hennadzi Kapitanov. He is charged under four articles of the Criminal Code – incitement to hatred (part 1 of Article 130 of the Criminal Code), calls for actions against national security (part 3 of Article 361 of the Criminal Code), insulting a representative of authority (Article 369 of the Criminal Code) and insulting the president (part 1 of Article 368 of the Criminal Code).

The political persecution of representatives of the sports industry is a manifestation of widespread and systematic violations of human rights in the country, in particular the right to work and profession, freedom of expression, and freedom from degrading treatment. There is a need to continue to raise awareness of these violations, including at the international level, and to support the persecuted members of the industry.

De facto authorities of Belarus continue to use the concept of “extremism”, which is blurred in the legislation, for the purpose of political persecution, which is also faced by sportsmen. Thus, the Ministry of Information of Belarus recognized the Instagram account of basketball player Katerina Snytsina as “extremist material”.<sup>2</sup>

Marjolen Nekesa, a player of the national team of Kenya and the Czech club “Slavia Praga”, waited 18 months for her agent Dmitri Margolenko to pay her money for her performances in FC “Minsk”. During the period of work at the club in the spring of 2022, the athlete had

<sup>1</sup> “Black Book of Belarus” – an initiative that emerged at the beginning of peaceful protests in 2020. Its Telegram channels published personal data of law enforcers, judges, and officials who might be involved in beating peaceful protesters, abusive trials, and other human rights violations in Belarus.

<sup>2</sup> The Republican List of Extremist Materials.



to rent her own accommodation. At the end of the first month, Nekesa was supposed to receive 5500BYN ( $\approx 1556\text{€}$ ), but received only 1300BYN ( $\approx 367\text{€}$ ), some of which had to be paid for rent. Her colleague from Nigeria was in the same situation. According to the footballer, it was extremely difficult to live on this money. Three months later, Nekesa filed a complaint with the FIFA Dispute Resolution Chamber, and in the summer of 2022 moved to "Slavia Praga". However, for various reasons, the agent delayed the payment of the player's earnings for many months afterward. Nekesa has received payment of part of the due amount, but is still waiting for the remaining \$4200 to be paid. This is not the first example, which shows that Belarusian football is not ready for transfers of this level due to the inability to provide favorable and fair working conditions for players in accordance with international standards. Earlier we [reported](#) about the case of a player from Canada Patricia Lamanna.

# **Women's rights in sports**

Jamie Chadwick became the first female winner of the Indy NXT Race in 15 years, the third ever and the first ever to win a road race. Doris Burke officially became the first female analyst for the NBA Finals, one of the four major professional American sports leagues. "The meaning for me would be if, in some way, this assignment makes life for women in sports easier or somehow aids in their process, then nothing could be more meaningful," Burke commented on her appointment.

The first ever Women's Club World Cup is set for 2026. The tournament will be held every 4 years, the first of which will take place in January-February 2026, with 16 teams taking part in the tournament, with specific qualification criteria yet to be confirmed. The competition will provide an opportunity to meet clubs that rarely have the opportunity in women's football. However, another tournament on the schedule could again spark discussions about increased workloads and injury risks.

Chelsea FC Women's have sold out all tickets for the first ever match against FC Barcelona in the Champions League semi-finals at Stamford Bridge Stadium. The stadium has a capacity of 41 000. Chelsea FC Women's side usually play at the Kingsmeadow ground, which has a capacity of 4350.

Arsenal FC women's team will play most of their home matches next season at the Emirates Stadium. The stadium has a capacity of 60704. The average attendance of Arsenal FC matches at Emirates has increased by 11% compared to last season. This is an important decision for both players and fans.

The Liverpool FC women's team will play next season at their new home stadium, Totally Wicked Stadium, with a capacity of 18000 spectators. A specially made locker room will also be new for the team.

Manchester City FC are building a new training facility specifically for the women's team. This will provide the team with a customized and modern environment for training and recovery.

We can see that more and more women's clubs continue to invest and try to provide the best facilities and support for female players, which in turn helps them to succeed and develop the sport as a whole.

FIFA's protocols for protecting the welfare of women in football came into effect on June 1, with the innovations particularly relating to health and maternity. According to the new regulations, female players and coaches are entitled to a minimum of 14 weeks paid maternity leave and a minimum of 8 weeks paid leave for those who have adopted a child under 2 years of age. Also, a minimum of 8 weeks of vacation is paid for women who are not the biological parents of newborns. The regulations also allow players to take paid time off from matches or training for menstrual health reasons. FIFA's chief women's football officer Dame Sarai Bareman said the new measures recognize the fact that players are major stakeholders in the industry.

South Korea's women's national football team is fighting for their rights, gender equality and better working conditions. The main problems the players cite are the differences in training facilities and conditions compared to the men's team, unstable schedules and poor travel arrangements, and the resulting lack of adequate recovery time. The main reason for such working conditions is once again the lack of necessary funding.

3 female Argentine national team players, Julieta Cruz, Laurina Oliveros and Lorena Benítez, left the team in protest over pay disputes and poor working conditions. The players announced their departure on social media. "We reached a point in which we are tired of the injustices,

of not being valued, not being heard and, even worse, being humiliated. We need improvements for Argentina's women's soccer national team, and I am not only talking about finances. I speak about training, having lunch, breakfast," Julieta Cruz stated in her Instagram post.

During the match against Santos FC, Corinthians FC players [protested](#) – they covered their ears and mouths during the Brazilian national anthem. The protest was directed at Santos coach, Kleiton Lima, who was previously accused of harassment but returned to the club after 7 months. Lima left the club again a week later as he said he had received death threats and asked for a temporary leave of absence.

Numerous examples of infrastructure development specifically for women show a positive shift towards greater gender equality and recognition of women's contributions to sport. However, female athletes continue to fight for fair conditions, equal pay and against harassment. These developments affect fundamental human rights, including the right to equality and non-discrimination, the right to fair and favorable working conditions, and suggest that more work needs to be done to achieve full equality. Further addressing these issues is necessary for the sustainable development of women's sport and the protection of human rights.

# **The rights of LGBTQ+ people in sport**

June is traditionally considered Pride Month for the LGBTQ+ community. This year we could observe numerous actions of support.

USWNT players wore jerseys with numbers in Progress Pride colors on June 1. "Football v Homophobia" organized Football Pride, which was hosted by Chelsea FC at Stamford Bridge Stadium – the program focused on LGBTQ+ football culture, activities and discussions, and networking opportunities. The NHL and NHLPA teamed up to celebrate Pride in June and will continue throughout the season. 32 NHL clubs hosted Pride Night and raised funds to support nearly 100 LGBTQ+ organizations. On June 16, the Crystal Palace Sports Center in London hosted the first LGBTQ+ festival to break down barriers to sports. MLS teamed up with Adidas to present a "rainbow" line of apparel. Pride Swim 2024 initiative launched at the British Aquatics Championships – the swims aim to bring together the LGBTQ+ community and like-minded individuals to support their physical and mental health, promote inclusion and raise money for charity Switchboard.

The NWSL teamed up with Athlete Ally to increase LGBTQ+ inclusivity in women's soccer. They published the "Pride Plays Here" video, which also aired during all NWSL matches in June, and relaunched the Playing for Pride 365 initiative – for every goal and assists scored in June, the league donated \$150. During the month, fans were also able to participate in their favorite team's Pride Night and purchase merchandise, with 10% of the proceeds donated by the League to Athlete Ally.

For the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris, led by Fier-Play and in collaboration with Paris 2024 and other stakeholders, The Pride House was opened as a safe, accessible and welcoming space for all: LGBTQ+ representatives, athletes and like-minded individuals.

To combat homophobia, the 34th and final round of League One was marked by a number of actions in support of this goal. The players' jerseys bore the inscription "No to Homophobia" and the League logo was done in a themed color scheme. However, AS Monaco FC player Mohamed Camara taped up sections of his uniform with elements of the anti-homophobia campaign. He also refused a pre-match photo showing the Monaco and Nantes teams standing behind a banner in support of the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Interphobia and Transphobia. Meanwhile, FC Nantes striker Mostafa Mohamed, who for the second year in a row has been left out of his team's entry due to his reluctance to take part in the action against homophobia, missed the game against Monaco.

During the analyzed period, we could observe numerous examples of support for the LGBTQ+ community in sport. However, there were also instances of reluctance to provide support, which may indicate continued resistance or lack of understanding of the causes and consequences of discrimination. This ambivalence emphasizes the need for continued efforts to create an inclusive environment. To advance LGBTQ+ rights in sport, it is crucial to raise awareness, implement anti-discrimination policies and ensure that LGBTQ+ persons are actively supported and protected at all levels.

Volleyball players of "Lokomotiv" basketball club were accused of "LGBT propaganda". Such an article appeared on the website of rival club "Dynamo" after their defeat in the semifinals of the Russian Super League. The article pointed to "monstrous gestures imitating sexual intercourse," "same-sex kisses on the lips and other abominations," and claimed "a demonstration of complete disregard for the culture and moral values of the country." "The international LGBT social movement" has been recognized as extremist in Russia since the end of 2023, its "propaganda" has been banned, particularly among young people, special attention has been paid to the significance of "traditional values", "gay clubs" have been closed, and criminal cases have been opened against LGBTQ+ activists.

# **Right to Health**

The pink card will be used as a measure to ensure the safety of football players during a match. The new regulation published by the Confederation of South American Football (CONMEBOL) states that in case of "substitution for suspected traumatic brain injury and concussion", the coaching staff will notify the substitute by showing the pink card to the head or reserve referee. The innovation was to be applied at the America's Cup June 21-July 15. A substitution due to concussion can be made regardless of the number of substitutions made up to the time of the occurrence. The enshrinement of this practice is an example of the "people first" principle: keeping the athlete's health at the forefront of the competition.

Merel van Dongen, defender of the Dutch national team and member of the FIFPRO Global Player Council, spoke about the problem of high stress and burnout in football on The Guardian's Women's Football Weekly podcast. The footballer sees fixed rest as the solution to the problem. At the same time, the overloaded, "underloaded" calendar is also a problem, and one that is specific to women's football. Innovations should include increased competition and adequate game planning.

Nike, PFA, FIFPRO and Leeds Beckett University are teaming up in an ACL project focusing on professional women's football. The project will involve WSL clubs who will be the subject of a three-year research initiative to find ways to reduce the incidence of ACL injuries (anterior cruciate ligament). In recent years we can see a veritable epidemic of ACL injuries in women's football. These injuries are 2-6 times more common in women than in men and 2/3 of the injuries occur in the absence of physical contact. Although the study will focus on WSL clubs, the results are planned to be disseminated to leagues and federations around the world. The project is a response to the needs of players for more research in this area, as well as contributing to the development of the industry more broadly.

According to some studies, footwear is suspected to be a factor in the number of ACL and other long-term injuries. Until the last two years, female players were forced to wear shoes designed with male or pediatric anatomy in mind. In recent years, shoe manufacturers, including popular ones such as Adidas and Nike, have begun to produce shoes specifically for women, tailored to their anatomy and needs. During the analyzed period, a new pair of such shoes, the F50 boot, was presented by Adidas.

The right to health should be fundamental and prioritized in sport because of its inherent physical demands and increased health risks. Prioritizing health in sport promotes a safer environment, improves performance, and protects the well-being of athletes. This concern for health is necessary to create a sustainable and ethical sports industry.

Lionel Messi has come out in favor of mental health awareness for men. The footballer spoke about his experience with therapy and how it has positively impacted his life. Athletes face immense pressure both on and off the field throughout their careers. Messi's openness can have a positive impact on overcoming stigma, especially for young athletes, and encourage people to seek help.

Per Mertesacker, a professional footballer and coach and current manager of Arsenal FC Academy, has opened a mental health center in North London. "This is an issue that is close to my heart. Our mental wellbeing is just as important as our physical wellbeing," said the football player.

Although the topic of mental health in sport is still stigmatized, the efforts being made by individual athletes, sports federations and clubs, and partner organizations are making a positive impact on the community and serving as a support for everyone in the sports industry.



# **Sports uniforms and human rights**

Lionesses FC **are raising** awareness of the hearing impaired community with special pre-match jerseys. For the EURO-2025 qualifying match against Sweden, the Lionesses FC players wore jerseys with their names written in British Sign Language (BSL). In this way, the players promote the use and teaching of BSL and remind that football can be more accessible to both fans and players.

BSC Young Boys partnered with Amnesty International to **present** special uniforms from Nike to speak out against racism, anti-semitism, homophobia, sexism and discrimination of any kind in hopes of a diverse and open society.

Corinthians **teamed up** with Nike to promote anti-racism initiatives and unveiled the uniforms for the 2024/25 season. At least 41% of players competing in major championships in Brazil have experienced racism. Among the initiatives supported are racial literacy classes for sportsmen and other collaborators.

“Pari NN” footballers **took** to the pitch in uniforms embroidered by the Nizhny Novgorod Crisis Center to draw attention to the problem of domestic violence. Anastasia Ermolaeva, founder and head of the Nizhny Novgorod Crisis Center, said: “According to researchers, the level of aggression after a football match increases by 8.5%. At the same time, adrenaline and accumulated emotions do not have to be brought home, causing pain to loved ones – and here sport can easily be our friend”.

Sports uniforms can be a powerful tool to promote human rights, a message to raise awareness of many issues and a demonstration of solidarity with different social groups. This visibility on the global sporting stage can spark debate, influence public opinion and compel organizations and federations to make a difference.

**EURO-2024**

In November 2023, in the run-up to UEFA EURO-2024, UEFA, DFB, EURO 2024 GmbH and others [adopted](#) a ["Declaration of Human Rights for EURO-2024"](#), stating that they were aware of their human rights obligations and responsibilities in organizing and hosting the event. The declaration included commitments, risk analysis, grievance mechanism and reporting.<sup>3</sup>

Later, UEFA [presented](#) an overview of key measures to ensure an inclusive and respectful tournament for all. In addition to the Human Rights Declaration and the grievance mechanism, the measures included a rapid response [mechanism](#) (immediate assistance to female spectators who find themselves in trouble), UEFA's Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) [strategy](#), integration of fans and the EURO-2024 human rights board.

However, the tournament organizers have faced criticism. In particular, activists [drew attention](#) to sponsorship contracts with Chinese companies whose supply chains reportedly used forced labor of Uyghurs or facilitated surveillance of the Uyghur population.

German authorities [have come up](#) with a code word in case of danger from fans at EURO-2024. Thus, in case of tense situations or threats from ultras, the German authorities urged citizens to use the code word ["panama"](#). Such a measure will save time when addressing police officers and avoid difficulties related to the language barrier.

Before the England-Serbia match, which ended with the score 1:0, conflicts [broke out](#) between the fans. Videos have surfaced online showing fans throwing tables, chairs and bottles at each other. Police arrived on the scene and some of the fans were arrested.

A man [was shot](#) after threatening several passers-by and police with a hammer and a Molotov cocktail in the fan zone in Hamburg before the Netherlands-Poland match. The victim was hospitalized.

"Einigkeit und Recht und Vielfalt" ("Unity, Justice and Diversity") is a documentary about the German national football team that has been the subject of intense public debate. The film [addresses](#) important questions about multiculturalism, the fate of migrants and their integration, and the manifestation of racism through the stories of football players. However, the main focus of attention was concentrated on interviews with players. Thus, during a conversation in a parking lot, the male interviewee became indignant: "Where are the white Germans? They can play football too. For me, a real German is white." Another man stated, "An African cannot be a German. It's logical." Philipp Awounou, the author of the movie, asked WDR to conduct a representative survey. One of the questions was: "Do you want more white football players to play in the German national team again?" 21% of the 1304 respondents agreed with this statement. This survey (not only the results, but also the fact that it was conducted) caused a negative reaction in the football community; the coach of the German men's national football team [called](#) the survey "racist".

Global sporting events such as EURO-2024 are closely linked to human rights, as they draw international attention to both positive initiatives and current challenges. The adoption of special documents to ensure human rights during the tournament highlights the desire of international organizations to set new standards. However, conflicts between fans and new discussions around issues such as racism highlight persistent problems that require solutions. These developments underscore the dual role of sport as a platform for promoting human rights and reflecting societal concerns.

---

<sup>3</sup> [Human Rights Declaration for UEFA EURO 2024](#)

**Other news  
in the field of sport  
and human rights**

An artificial intelligence system [will protect](#) athletes from online abuse during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. The system will monitor thousands of accounts on major platforms and in more than 35 languages in real time. Any threats will be flagged and processed, sometimes even before athletes can see the potential offense. The problem of online abuse is one of the key issues in modern sport, affecting the mental and physical health of athletes and interfering with their ability to focus on competition. "Safe sporting environments also have to mean safe digital environments," said Kirsty Burrows, head of the IOC's Safe Sport Unit.

Amnesty International [submitted](#) the report in connection with the joint bid by Morocco, Spain and Portugal to host the 2030 FIFA World Cup and Saudi Arabia's bid to host the 2034 World Cup. The main message of the report is to call on FIFA to conduct an independent risk assessment of each bid to ensure that the countries that want to host the tournament are able to fully respect human rights, and to reject any bids that carry risks of abuse. Numerous groups could be affected – workers, players and supporters, ethnic and religious minorities, local communities, women, LGBTQ+ communities. According to Steve Cockburn, head of labor rights and sports at Amnesty International, the greatest number of human rights concerns arise from the prospect of hosting the 2034 World Cup in Saudi Arabia.

Amnesty International [calls for](#) signatures on the petition "Put Human Rights at the Heart of Sport". The petition [calls on](#) the Swiss Federal Council to develop effective measures to ensure that sports associations based in Switzerland [comply with their human rights obligations](#). The fact is that Switzerland is home to [more than 50 international sports federations](#), but human rights measures are not mandatory for them – existing initiatives are based [on a voluntary basis](#).

French national football team striker, Ousmane Dembélé, [urged](#) people in France to vote in the National Assembly (parliament) elections. "I think we need to mobilize ourselves to vote, all together," – Dembélé said. The FFF are providing the opportunity for players and other representatives of the national team at EURO-2024 to vote by proxy. France national team captain Kylian Mbappe also [urged](#) French people to vote in the election and warned against "extremes". Mbappe said he wanted to convince young people that their votes could make a difference. The FFF urged the media to refrain from any pressure and political use of the national team.

In Poland, Zagłębia Sosnowiec fans [attacked](#) the team's coach Aliaksandr Hackiewicz. A group of fans broke into the training session and hit Hackiewicz in the face. According to the club's sports director, Mikhail Zalevsky, there were about 20-30 fans and they expressed complaints about the team's performance. "Fans have the right to express their dissatisfaction, only it should be done in a civilized way, not by attacking the team," Zalevsky [said](#).

The Czech Cup final between men's teams FC Viktoria Plzeň and AC Sparta Praha [ended in a mass brawl between fans](#). The leadership of the Czech Football Association immediately after the final match of the MOL Cup [started](#) its own investigation into the incidents that accompanied the above-mentioned match. Czech police classified the match as a high-risk event, but until the last tried not to intervene in the disturbances taking place on the pitch.

Three Valencia CF fans [were sentenced](#) to 8 months in prison for a hate crime against Vinicius Junior in May 2023. This is [the first sentence](#) for a crime of this nature in Spain. In addition

---

<sup>4</sup> [Olympic AI Agenda](#).

<sup>5</sup> [Playing a Dangerous Game?](#) Human Rights Risks Linked to the 2030 and 2034 FIFA World Cups.

<sup>6</sup> Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally party was in the lead in the first round of France's national elections.

to the prison sentence, the fans were banned from the stadium for 2 years and ordered to pay court fees. La Liga said the decision “sends a clear message to those people who go to a football stadium to insult that La Liga will identify them, report them and there will be criminal consequences.”

CD Palestino players took to the pitch unaccompanied by children, but mimicking the gesture of holding their hands in the air – in solidarity with the fallen children of Palestine. Bohemian FC played a friendly match with the Palestinian women's national team as a sign of solidarity and to raise funds for humanitarian efforts in the region. The match took place on May 15, a day to commemorate the mass displacement of Palestinians during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.

With the help of the FIFA Footballers' Foundation and FIFPRO, FK Olipmik players received most of the money, payments of which were delayed for several months after the club collapsed in its final season in 2020/21.

The Danish men's national team refused to increase their salaries so that the women's national team could receive equal pay with them. DBU tried to ensure equal pay for the national teams, but none of them liked the approach of taking money from the men's team. Then the players union Spillerforeningen devised a plan whereby the men's team players would forgo salary increases to ensure equal base pay for teams to play on national teams. Reducing the men's team's insurance coverage by 15% allowed the women's team's insurance coverage to increase by 50%. Support for women from male colleagues, and not just on the field, can help ensure sustainability and reach new heights.

Héctor Bellerín, a Real Betis FC player, is launching his own sustainable clothing brand inspired by Spanish culture and heritage. Bellerín utilizes his media power and regularly speaks out about climate change and sustainability. In addition, Bellerín is considered one of the most stylish football players. The launch of such a brand is therefore a logical manifestation of important aspects of the player's life.

The variety of human rights issues covered in sports news during the period analyzed indicates that the sports industry is increasingly becoming an arena for grappling with broader societal issues, and reflects the intersection of sport with serious human rights issues.

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.

E-mail: [sport@humanconstantia.org](mailto:sport@humanconstantia.org)





# **Sport and Human Rights**

## **Overview April-June 2024**

## **Content:**

Introduction.....	1
What's wrong with human rights in sport in Belarus?...	3
Women's rights in sport.....	5
Rights of LGBTQ+ people in sport.....	7
Right to health.....	8
Sports uniforms and human rights.....	9
EURO-2024.....	10
Other news in the field of sport and human rights.....	11

## List of acronyms

**DFB** – Deutscher Fußball-Bund

**DBU** – Dansk Boldspil-Union

**FFF** – Fédération Française de Football

**FIFA** – Fédération Internationale de Football Association

**FIFPRO** – The Fédération Internationale des Associations de Footballeurs Professionnels

**IOC** – International Olympic Committee

**MLS** – Major League Soccer

**NBA** – National Basketball Association

**NHL** – National Hockey League

**NHLPA** – National Hockey League Players' Association

**NWSL** – National Women's Soccer League

**UEFA** – The Union of European Football Associations

**USWNT** – United States Women's National Soccer Team

**WSL** – Women's Super League

# **Introduction**

In this article, we have analyzed the most significant events and news in sports for April-June 2024 through the lens of international human rights standards.

In Belarus, persecution of representatives of the sports industry who disagree with the Belarusian de facto authorities continues, which is a manifestation of systematic and widespread violation of human rights in the country. The reasons for persecution in the analyzed period were participation in peaceful protests in 2020, leaks of personal data of law enforcers, participation in an "extremist formation", nomination of a candidate to the Coordinating Council, and inscription "zyvie Belarus". The practice of recording and distributing "penitential" videos continues, which violates the fundamental right to protection from degrading treatment and punishment.

In the field of women's sports, more and more clubs and federations are trying to develop training infrastructure and organize matches in stadiums that can accommodate tens of thousands of spectators, indicating a growing interest in women's games or providing infrastructure on a scale to match the demand, as well as the development of the industry. However, female players still have to fight for favorable conditions and fair pay. These developments affect fundamental human rights, including the right to equality and non-discrimination. Addressing these issues is essential for the sustainable development of women's sport and the protection of human rights.

June is a month of pride for the LGBTQ+ community. The analyzed period was marked by a large number of support actions in a variety of sports. But there is also still discrimination and rejection. Opposing trends indicate progress, but also emphasize the need for continuous efforts to create an inclusive and safe environment for everyone.

Positive trends are evident in the right to health dimension. More and more organizations and federations are taking a "people-first" approach to the health of athletes. These include rapid response to concussions, specific protocols for women's well-being and a project to find ways to reduce the risk of injury in women's football. Athletes themselves continue to talk about the importance of mental health on par with physical health. Ensuring access to proper medical care, injury prevention and mental health support protects the well-being of athletes in their careers.

We have repeatedly highlighted how sports uniforms can be used as a way to promote human rights and socially relevant issues. The material looks at similar examples to highlight the hearing impaired community, domestic violence, as well as racism, anti-semitism, homophobia, sexism and other forms of discrimination. This is important because in this way the broad appeal and media coverage of sport is used to address critical human rights issues, promoting an inclusive culture both inside and outside the sporting community.

One of the most significant and global sporting events during the analyzed period was the European Football Championship (EURO-2024). Global sporting events often become a platform for discussing significant societal issues and also help to draw attention to existing problems in the aspect of human rights. It is essential that organizers, participants and spectators work together to promote inclusion, combat discrimination and ensure respect for human rights at all levels at these global events. This approach can lead to lasting positive change in the sporting world and society as a whole.

News stories about the use of artificial intelligence to protect athletes and the sports arena as a platform to call for votes in parliamentary elections, as well as more fan clashes with varying degrees of consequences, athletes fighting for the right to fair pay and even pushing

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

At the end of May the apartment of the parents of track and field athlete Krystsina Tsimanouskaya was searched by the Investigative Committee, the athlete reported about it in social networks. A new wave of searches took place in Belarus in the period before the elections to the Coordinating Council, while the Investigative Committee opened criminal cases against all candidates to the Coordinating Council. Tsimanouskaya was a candidate for a seat in the Coordinating Council.

Earlier bodybuilder Aliaksandr Sharabaiko, who was sentenced to 1,5 years in prison for “insulting the president”, was again charged under three articles of the Criminal Code, including Article 361-1 of the Criminal Code (participation in an extremist formation). As a result, Sharabaiko was sentenced to 6 years in prison.

The co-founder of the Free Association of Athletes (SOS BY) and journalist Andrei Hnet, who was detained in Serbia at the end of October 2023, has had his health deteriorate in prison. This was reported to the working group of MEPs by the People's Anti-Crisis Office (PAO). Hnet itself also sent a letter to the court.

On June 13, the Supreme Court of Serbia decided to extradite Andrei Hnet, the journalist reported about it on social networks. According to Hnet, the court found no grounds preventing his extradition. At the moment, the journalist is under house arrest, while his defense lawyers have prepared an appeal against the court's decision.

Pavel Pashkevich, an event host, who worked at the matches of “Minsk” basketball club, was detained. The reason was a photo, on which Pashkevich holds a microphone with the inscription “ZYVIE BELARUS”. One of the pro-government Telegram channels published a “penitential” video, in which the host admits to participating in peaceful protests in 2020 in Minsk, as well as sending data on the moving of law enforcers (during the peaceful protests) through the resource “Black Book of Belarus”<sup>1</sup>. According to the Telegram channel, Pashkevich faces up to 5 years in prison.

The Investigative Committee started “special proceedings” against the krav maga instructor Hennadzi Kapitanov. He is charged under four articles of the Criminal Code – incitement to hatred (part 1 of Article 130 of the Criminal Code), calls for actions against national security (part 3 of Article 361 of the Criminal Code), insulting a representative of authority (Article 369 of the Criminal Code) and insulting the president (part 1 of Article 368 of the Criminal Code).

The political persecution of representatives of the sports industry is a manifestation of widespread and systematic violations of human rights in the country, in particular the right to work and profession, freedom of expression, and freedom from degrading treatment. There is a need to continue to raise awareness of these violations, including at the international level, and to support the persecuted members of the industry.

De facto authorities of Belarus continue to use the concept of “extremism”, which is blurred in the legislation, for the purpose of political persecution, which is also faced by sportsmen. Thus, the Ministry of Information of Belarus recognized the Instagram account of basketball player Katerina Snytsina as “extremist material”.<sup>2</sup>

Marjolen Nekesa, a player of the national team of Kenya and the Czech club “Slavia Praga”, waited 18 months for her agent Dmitri Margolenko to pay her money for her performances in FC “Minsk”. During the period of work at the club in the spring of 2022, the athlete had

<sup>1</sup> “Black Book of Belarus” – an initiative that emerged at the beginning of peaceful protests in 2020. Its Telegram channels published personal data of law enforcers, judges, and officials who might be involved in beating peaceful protesters, abusive trials, and other human rights violations in Belarus.

<sup>2</sup> The Republican List of Extremist Materials.

to rent her own accommodation. At the end of the first month, Nekesa was supposed to receive 5500BYN ( $\approx 1556\text{€}$ ), but received only 1300BYN ( $\approx 367\text{€}$ ), some of which had to be paid for rent. Her colleague from Nigeria was in the same situation. According to the footballer, it was extremely difficult to live on this money. Three months later, Nekesa filed a complaint with the FIFA Dispute Resolution Chamber, and in the summer of 2022 moved to "Slavia Praga". However, for various reasons, the agent delayed the payment of the player's earnings for many months afterward. Nekesa has received payment of part of the due amount, but is still waiting for the remaining \$4200 to be paid. This is not the first example, which shows that Belarusian football is not ready for transfers of this level due to the inability to provide favorable and fair working conditions for players in accordance with international standards. Earlier we [reported](#) about the case of a player from Canada Patricia Lamanna.



# **Women's rights in sports**

Jamie Chadwick became the first female winner of the Indy NXT Race in 15 years, the third ever and the first ever to win a road race. Doris Burke officially became the first female analyst for the NBA Finals, one of the four major professional American sports leagues. "The meaning for me would be if, in some way, this assignment makes life for women in sports easier or somehow aids in their process, then nothing could be more meaningful," Burke commented on her appointment.

The first ever Women's Club World Cup is set for 2026. The tournament will be held every 4 years, the first of which will take place in January-February 2026, with 16 teams taking part in the tournament, with specific qualification criteria yet to be confirmed. The competition will provide an opportunity to meet clubs that rarely have the opportunity in women's football. However, another tournament on the schedule could again spark discussions about increased workloads and injury risks.

Chelsea FC Women's have sold out all tickets for the first ever match against FC Barcelona in the Champions League semi-finals at Stamford Bridge Stadium. The stadium has a capacity of 41 000. Chelsea FC Women's side usually play at the Kingsmeadow ground, which has a capacity of 4350.

Arsenal FC women's team will play most of their home matches next season at the Emirates Stadium. The stadium has a capacity of 60704. The average attendance of Arsenal FC matches at Emirates has increased by 11% compared to last season. This is an important decision for both players and fans.

The Liverpool FC women's team will play next season at their new home stadium, Totally Wicked Stadium, with a capacity of 18000 spectators. A specially made locker room will also be new for the team.

Manchester City FC are building a new training facility specifically for the women's team. This will provide the team with a customized and modern environment for training and recovery.

We can see that more and more women's clubs continue to invest and try to provide the best facilities and support for female players, which in turn helps them to succeed and develop the sport as a whole.

FIFA's protocols for protecting the welfare of women in football came into effect on June 1, with the innovations particularly relating to health and maternity. According to the new regulations, female players and coaches are entitled to a minimum of 14 weeks paid maternity leave and a minimum of 8 weeks paid leave for those who have adopted a child under 2 years of age. Also, a minimum of 8 weeks of vacation is paid for women who are not the biological parents of newborns. The regulations also allow players to take paid time off from matches or training for menstrual health reasons. FIFA's chief women's football officer Dame Sarai Bareman said the new measures recognize the fact that players are major stakeholders in the industry.

South Korea's women's national football team is fighting for their rights, gender equality and better working conditions. The main problems the players cite are the differences in training facilities and conditions compared to the men's team, unstable schedules and poor travel arrangements, and the resulting lack of adequate recovery time. The main reason for such working conditions is once again the lack of necessary funding.

3 female Argentine national team players, Julieta Cruz, Laurina Oliveros and Lorena Benítez, left the team in protest over pay disputes and poor working conditions. The players announced their departure on social media. "We reached a point in which we are tired of the injustices,

of not being valued, not being heard and, even worse, being humiliated. We need improvements for Argentina's women's soccer national team, and I am not only talking about finances. I speak about training, having lunch, breakfast," Julieta Cruz stated in her Instagram post.

During the match against Santos FC, Corinthians FC players [protested](#) – they covered their ears and mouths during the Brazilian national anthem. The protest was directed at Santos coach, Kleiton Lima, who was previously accused of harassment but returned to the club after 7 months. Lima left the club again a week later as he said he had received death threats and asked for a temporary leave of absence.

Numerous examples of infrastructure development specifically for women show a positive shift towards greater gender equality and recognition of women's contributions to sport. However, female athletes continue to fight for fair conditions, equal pay and against harassment. These developments affect fundamental human rights, including the right to equality and non-discrimination, the right to fair and favorable working conditions, and suggest that more work needs to be done to achieve full equality. Further addressing these issues is necessary for the sustainable development of women's sport and the protection of human rights.

# **The rights of LGBTQ+ people in sport**

June is traditionally considered Pride Month for the LGBTQ+ community. This year we could observe numerous actions of support.

USWNT players wore jerseys with numbers in Progress Pride colors on June 1. "Football v Homophobia" organized Football Pride, which was hosted by Chelsea FC at Stamford Bridge Stadium – the program focused on LGBTQ+ football culture, activities and discussions, and networking opportunities. The NHL and NHLPA teamed up to celebrate Pride in June and will continue throughout the season. 32 NHL clubs hosted Pride Night and raised funds to support nearly 100 LGBTQ+ organizations. On June 16, the Crystal Palace Sports Center in London hosted the first LGBTQ+ festival to break down barriers to sports. MLS teamed up with Adidas to present a "rainbow" line of apparel. Pride Swim 2024 initiative launched at the British Aquatics Championships – the swims aim to bring together the LGBTQ+ community and like-minded individuals to support their physical and mental health, promote inclusion and raise money for charity Switchboard.

The NWSL teamed up with Athlete Ally to increase LGBTQ+ inclusivity in women's soccer. They published the "Pride Plays Here" video, which also aired during all NWSL matches in June, and relaunched the Playing for Pride 365 initiative – for every goal and assists scored in June, the league donated \$150. During the month, fans were also able to participate in their favorite team's Pride Night and purchase merchandise, with 10% of the proceeds donated by the League to Athlete Ally.

For the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris, led by Fier-Play and in collaboration with Paris 2024 and other stakeholders, The Pride House was opened as a safe, accessible and welcoming space for all: LGBTQ+ representatives, athletes and like-minded individuals.

To combat homophobia, the 34th and final round of League One was marked by a number of actions in support of this goal. The players' jerseys bore the inscription "No to Homophobia" and the League logo was done in a themed color scheme. However, AS Monaco FC player Mohamed Camara taped up sections of his uniform with elements of the anti-homophobia campaign. He also refused a pre-match photo showing the Monaco and Nantes teams standing behind a banner in support of the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Interphobia and Transphobia. Meanwhile, FC Nantes striker Mostafa Mohamed, who for the second year in a row has been left out of his team's entry due to his reluctance to take part in the action against homophobia, missed the game against Monaco.

During the analyzed period, we could observe numerous examples of support for the LGBTQ+ community in sport. However, there were also instances of reluctance to provide support, which may indicate continued resistance or lack of understanding of the causes and consequences of discrimination. This ambivalence emphasizes the need for continued efforts to create an inclusive environment. To advance LGBTQ+ rights in sport, it is crucial to raise awareness, implement anti-discrimination policies and ensure that LGBTQ+ persons are actively supported and protected at all levels.

Volleyball players of "Lokomotiv" basketball club were accused of "LGBT propaganda". Such an article appeared on the website of rival club "Dynamo" after their defeat in the semifinals of the Russian Super League. The article pointed to "monstrous gestures imitating sexual intercourse," "same-sex kisses on the lips and other abominations," and claimed "a demonstration of complete disregard for the culture and moral values of the country." "The international LGBT social movement" has been recognized as extremist in Russia since the end of 2023, its "propaganda" has been banned, particularly among young people, special attention has been paid to the significance of "traditional values", "gay clubs" have been closed, and criminal cases have been opened against LGBTQ+ activists.

# **Right to Health**

The pink card will be used as a measure to ensure the safety of football players during a match. The new regulation published by the Confederation of South American Football (CONMEBOL) states that in case of "substitution for suspected traumatic brain injury and concussion", the coaching staff will notify the substitute by showing the pink card to the head or reserve referee. The innovation was to be applied at the America's Cup June 21-July 15. A substitution due to concussion can be made regardless of the number of substitutions made up to the time of the occurrence. The enshrinement of this practice is an example of the "people first" principle: keeping the athlete's health at the forefront of the competition.

Merel van Dongen, defender of the Dutch national team and member of the FIFPRO Global Player Council, spoke about the problem of high stress and burnout in football on The Guardian's Women's Football Weekly podcast. The footballer sees fixed rest as the solution to the problem. At the same time, the overloaded, "underloaded" calendar is also a problem, and one that is specific to women's football. Innovations should include increased competition and adequate game planning.

Nike, PFA, FIFPRO and Leeds Beckett University are teaming up in an ACL project focusing on professional women's football. The project will involve WSL clubs who will be the subject of a three-year research initiative to find ways to reduce the incidence of ACL injuries (anterior cruciate ligament). In recent years we can see a veritable epidemic of ACL injuries in women's football. These injuries are 2-6 times more common in women than in men and 2/3 of the injuries occur in the absence of physical contact. Although the study will focus on WSL clubs, the results are planned to be disseminated to leagues and federations around the world. The project is a response to the needs of players for more research in this area, as well as contributing to the development of the industry more broadly.

According to some studies, footwear is suspected to be a factor in the number of ACL and other long-term injuries. Until the last two years, female players were forced to wear shoes designed with male or pediatric anatomy in mind. In recent years, shoe manufacturers, including popular ones such as Adidas and Nike, have begun to produce shoes specifically for women, tailored to their anatomy and needs. During the analyzed period, a new pair of such shoes, the F50 boot, was presented by Adidas.

The right to health should be fundamental and prioritized in sport because of its inherent physical demands and increased health risks. Prioritizing health in sport promotes a safer environment, improves performance, and protects the well-being of athletes. This concern for health is necessary to create a sustainable and ethical sports industry.

Lionel Messi has come out in favor of mental health awareness for men. The footballer spoke about his experience with therapy and how it has positively impacted his life. Athletes face immense pressure both on and off the field throughout their careers. Messi's openness can have a positive impact on overcoming stigma, especially for young athletes, and encourage people to seek help.

Per Mertesacker, a professional footballer and coach and current manager of Arsenal FC Academy, has opened a mental health center in North London. "This is an issue that is close to my heart. Our mental wellbeing is just as important as our physical wellbeing," said the football player.

Although the topic of mental health in sport is still stigmatized, the efforts being made by individual athletes, sports federations and clubs, and partner organizations are making a positive impact on the community and serving as a support for everyone in the sports industry.

# **Sports uniforms and human rights**



Lionesses FC **are raising** awareness of the hearing impaired community with special pre-match jerseys. For the EURO-2025 qualifying match against Sweden, the Lionesses FC players wore jerseys with their names written in British Sign Language (BSL). In this way, the players promote the use and teaching of BSL and remind that football can be more accessible to both fans and players.

BSC Young Boys partnered with Amnesty International to **present** special uniforms from Nike to speak out against racism, anti-semitism, homophobia, sexism and discrimination of any kind in hopes of a diverse and open society.

Corinthians **teamed up** with Nike to promote anti-racism initiatives and unveiled the uniforms for the 2024/25 season. At least 41% of players competing in major championships in Brazil have experienced racism. Among the initiatives supported are racial literacy classes for sportsmen and other collaborators.

“Pari NN” footballers **took** to the pitch in uniforms embroidered by the Nizhny Novgorod Crisis Center to draw attention to the problem of domestic violence. Anastasia Ermolaeva, founder and head of the Nizhny Novgorod Crisis Center, said: “According to researchers, the level of aggression after a football match increases by 8.5%. At the same time, adrenaline and accumulated emotions do not have to be brought home, causing pain to loved ones – and here sport can easily be our friend”.

Sports uniforms can be a powerful tool to promote human rights, a message to raise awareness of many issues and a demonstration of solidarity with different social groups. This visibility on the global sporting stage can spark debate, influence public opinion and compel organizations and federations to make a difference.

**EURO-2024**

In November 2023, in the run-up to UEFA EURO-2024, UEFA, DFB, EURO 2024 GmbH and others adopted a “Declaration of Human Rights for EURO-2024”, stating that they were aware of their human rights obligations and responsibilities in organizing and hosting the event. The declaration included commitments, risk analysis, grievance mechanism and reporting.<sup>3</sup>

Later, UEFA presented an overview of key measures to ensure an inclusive and respectful tournament for all. In addition to the Human Rights Declaration and the grievance mechanism, the measures included a rapid response mechanism (immediate assistance to female spectators who find themselves in trouble), UEFA's Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) strategy, integration of fans and the EURO-2024 human rights board.

However, the tournament organizers have faced criticism. In particular, activists drew attention to sponsorship contracts with Chinese companies whose supply chains reportedly used forced labor of Uyghurs or facilitated surveillance of the Uyghur population.

German authorities have come up with a code word in case of danger from fans at EURO-2024. Thus, in case of tense situations or threats from ultras, the German authorities urged citizens to use the code word “panama”. Such a measure will save time when addressing police officers and avoid difficulties related to the language barrier.

Before the England-Serbia match, which ended with the score 1:0, conflicts broke out between the fans. Videos have surfaced online showing fans throwing tables, chairs and bottles at each other. Police arrived on the scene and some of the fans were arrested.

A man was shot after threatening several passers-by and police with a hammer and a Molotov cocktail in the fan zone in Hamburg before the Netherlands-Poland match. The victim was hospitalized.

“Einigkeit und Recht und Vielfalt” (“Unity, Justice and Diversity”) is a documentary about the German national football team that has been the subject of intense public debate. The film addresses important questions about multiculturalism, the fate of migrants and their integration, and the manifestation of racism through the stories of football players. However, the main focus of attention was concentrated on interviews with players. Thus, during a conversation in a parking lot, the male interviewee became indignant: “Where are the white Germans? They can play football too. For me, a real German is white.” Another man stated, “An African cannot be a German. It's logical.” Philipp Awounou, the author of the movie, asked WDR to conduct a representative survey. One of the questions was: “Do you want more white football players to play in the German national team again?” 21% of the 1304 respondents agreed with this statement. This survey (not only the results, but also the fact that it was conducted) caused a negative reaction in the football community; the coach of the German men's national football team called the survey “racist”.

Global sporting events such as EURO-2024 are closely linked to human rights, as they draw international attention to both positive initiatives and current challenges. The adoption of special documents to ensure human rights during the tournament highlights the desire of international organizations to set new standards. However, conflicts between fans and new discussions around issues such as racism highlight persistent problems that require solutions. These developments underscore the dual role of sport as a platform for promoting human rights and reflecting societal concerns.

---

<sup>3</sup> [Human Rights Declaration for UEFA EURO 2024](#)

**Other news  
in the field of sport  
and human rights**

An artificial intelligence system [will protect](#) athletes from online abuse during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. The system will monitor thousands of accounts on major platforms and in more than 35 languages in real time. Any threats will be flagged and processed, sometimes even before athletes can see the potential offense. The problem of online abuse is one of the key issues in modern sport, affecting the mental and physical health of athletes and interfering with their ability to focus on competition. "Safe sporting environments also have to mean safe digital environments," said Kirsty Burrows, head of the IOC's Safe Sport Unit.

Amnesty International [submitted](#) the report in connection with the joint bid by Morocco, Spain and Portugal to host the 2030 FIFA World Cup and Saudi Arabia's bid to host the 2034 World Cup. The main message of the report is to call on FIFA to conduct an independent risk assessment of each bid to ensure that the countries that want to host the tournament are able to fully respect human rights, and to reject any bids that carry risks of abuse. Numerous groups could be affected – workers, players and supporters, ethnic and religious minorities, local communities, women, LGBTQ+ communities. According to Steve Cockburn, head of labor rights and sports at Amnesty International, the greatest number of human rights concerns arise from the prospect of hosting the 2034 World Cup in Saudi Arabia.

Amnesty International [calls for](#) signatures on the petition "Put Human Rights at the Heart of Sport". The petition [calls on](#) the Swiss Federal Council to develop effective measures to ensure that sports associations based in Switzerland [comply with their human rights obligations](#). The fact is that Switzerland is home to [more than 50 international sports federations](#), but human rights measures are not mandatory for them – existing initiatives are based [on a voluntary basis](#).

French national football team striker, Ousmane Dembélé, [urged](#) people in France to vote in the National Assembly (parliament) elections. "I think we need to mobilize ourselves to vote, all together," – Dembélé said. The FFF are providing the opportunity for players and other representatives of the national team at EURO-2024 to vote by proxy. France national team captain Kylian Mbappe also [urged](#) French people to vote in the election and warned against "extremes". Mbappe said he wanted to convince young people that their votes could make a difference. The FFF urged the media to refrain from any pressure and political use of the national team.

In Poland, Zagłębia Sosnowiec fans [attacked](#) the team's coach Aliaksandr Hackiewicz. A group of fans broke into the training session and hit Hackiewicz in the face. According to the club's sports director, Mikhail Zalevsky, there were about 20-30 fans and they expressed complaints about the team's performance. "Fans have the right to express their dissatisfaction, only it should be done in a civilized way, not by attacking the team," Zalevsky [said](#).

The Czech Cup final between men's teams FC Viktoria Plzeň and AC Sparta Praha [ended in a mass brawl between fans](#). The leadership of the Czech Football Association immediately after the final match of the MOL Cup [started](#) its own investigation into the incidents that accompanied the above-mentioned match. Czech police classified the match as a high-risk event, but until the last tried not to intervene in the disturbances taking place on the pitch.

Three Valencia CF fans [were sentenced](#) to 8 months in prison for a hate crime against Vinicius Junior in May 2023. This is [the first sentence](#) for a crime of this nature in Spain. In addition

---

<sup>4</sup> [Olympic AI Agenda](#).

<sup>5</sup> [Playing a Dangerous Game?](#) Human Rights Risks Linked to the 2030 and 2034 FIFA World Cups.

<sup>6</sup> Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally party was in the lead in the first round of France's national elections.

to the prison sentence, the fans were banned from the stadium for 2 years and ordered to pay court fees. La Liga said the decision “sends a clear message to those people who go to a football stadium to insult that La Liga will identify them, report them and there will be criminal consequences.”

CD Palestino players took to the pitch unaccompanied by children, but mimicking the gesture of holding their hands in the air – in solidarity with the fallen children of Palestine. Bohemian FC played a friendly match with the Palestinian women's national team as a sign of solidarity and to raise funds for humanitarian efforts in the region. The match took place on May 15, a day to commemorate the mass displacement of Palestinians during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.

With the help of the FIFA Footballers' Foundation and FIFPRO, FK Olipmik players received most of the money, payments of which were delayed for several months after the club collapsed in its final season in 2020/21.

The Danish men's national team refused to increase their salaries so that the women's national team could receive equal pay with them. DBU tried to ensure equal pay for the national teams, but none of them liked the approach of taking money from the men's team. Then the players union Spillerforeningen devised a plan whereby the men's team players would forgo salary increases to ensure equal base pay for teams to play on national teams. Reducing the men's team's insurance coverage by 15% allowed the women's team's insurance coverage to increase by 50%. Support for women from male colleagues, and not just on the field, can help ensure sustainability and reach new heights.

Héctor Bellerín, a Real Betis FC player, is launching his own sustainable clothing brand inspired by Spanish culture and heritage. Bellerín utilizes his media power and regularly speaks out about climate change and sustainability. In addition, Bellerín is considered one of the most stylish football players. The launch of such a brand is therefore a logical manifestation of important aspects of the player's life.

The variety of human rights issues covered in sports news during the period analyzed indicates that the sports industry is increasingly becoming an arena for grappling with broader societal issues, and reflects the intersection of sport with serious human rights issues.

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.

E-mail: [sport@humanconstantia.org](mailto:sport@humanconstantia.org)

