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February 3, 2023

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

**Re: FIFA Human Rights Due Diligence Process for Tournament Host Selection, Awarding Commercial Sponsorship Contracts**

Dear Gianni Infantino,

We write to request information about the due diligence on human rights ahead of awarding hosting rights for major tournaments and for major commercial sponsorships.

We understand that on February 1, 2023, [Saudi Arabia has been confirmed](#) as the host of the **2027 Asian Cup** at the 33rd Asian Football Federation Congress in Manama. As one of the six governing regional associations of FIFA, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) is a statutory body obligated to carry out FIFA's [Human Rights Policy, including human rights due diligence](#).

We are aware that multiple countries have expressed interest in bidding to host the 2030 Men's World Cup including Egypt, Greece and Saudi Arabia. In particular, we understand that Saudi Arabia's Sports Minister, Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki Al Faisal, has [confirmed to the media](#) that Saudi Arabia wants to host the World Cup. The Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia and Prime Minister reportedly met with you at the World Cup, in Qatar, and discussed [Saudi Arabia hosting the 2030 World Cup, jointly with Egypt and Greece](#).

It has also been [widely reported](#) that the Saudi Tourism Authority is the newest sponsor for the 2023 Women's World Cup under its "Visit Saudi" brand. The deal has [reportedly](#) been agreed under FIFA's new "commercial partnership structure" dedicated to developing revenues specifically for the women's game, with funds generated from the World Cup going back into the sport.

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

Human Rights Watch reports extensively on abuses in Saudi Arabia and, along with members of the Sport & Rights Alliance, maintains contacts with

human rights defenders who should be part of any human rights risk assessment for future World Cups, including consideration of the major human rights risks to athletes, fans, workers, journalists and others.

We are deeply troubled by how Saudi Arabia was chosen as the 2027 AFC Asian Cup host, apparently without considerations of human rights playing a part and how the Saudi Tourism Authority could reportedly become FIFA's major commercial partner for the 2023 Women's World Cup, given Saudi Arabia's poor track record of human rights and the arrest of peaceful critics and women's rights defenders.

Human Rights Watch has [documented](#) how Saudi Arabia spends billions of dollars hosting major entertainment, cultural, and sporting events as a deliberate strategy to deflect from the country's image from its pervasive and systemic violations of human rights. Scores of human rights activists and dissidents remain in prison or on trial for their peaceful criticism. Authorities failed to hold high-level officials accountable for suspected involvement in the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018.

While the Saudi authorities have made some reforms on women's rights, they continue to severely discriminate against women, including by imposing male guardianship policies and subjecting women's rights activists to travel bans and suspended imprisonment sentences. In 2022, Saudi authorities imposed decades-long imprisonment sentences on women for their peaceful activities on the internet or Twitter. LGBT people in Saudi Arabia practice extreme self-censorship to survive their daily lives. LGBT players and fans visiting Saudi will also likely face censorship, stigma, and discrimination on the basis on their sexual orientation and gender identity.

Saudi authorities also impose the kafala labor migration system that allows employers to control migrant workers' legal status and has led to mass abuses against migrant workers including forced labor.

Human Rights Watch calls on FIFA to apply clear, objective human rights criteria to all states for hosting both the men's and women's World Cup and other tournaments and for any major commercial sponsorships, including labor protections, press freedom, non-discrimination and inclusion.

**Please provide answers to the following questions** so that they can be reflected in our reporting:

1. **What was the bidding process** for the 2027 Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Asian Cup, recently awarded to Saudi Arabia? **Was there any human rights risk assessment** as required under the UN Guiding Principles before the AFC's appointment? Was this applied to every state applying to host in the same way? If not, why? If so, please share the results of that assessment (past human rights assessments by FIFA of hosts have been made public).
2. **Has the AFC or FIFA conducted any stakeholder consultation** with external stakeholders and internally affected groups before the decision to award the Asian Cup was made?

3. **Given the challenges of labor and supply chain monitoring, how do FIFA and the AFC intend to uphold human rights standards in Saudi Arabia at the Asian Cup or a future World Cup, when there are no independent labor unions and no free media to ensure independent reporting of abuses? What arrangements are in place now to monitor labor conditions at [stadiums that are reportedly being remodeled or built for the Asian Cup](#) and other football tournaments?**
4. **Is human rights due diligence part of the assessment of FIFA sponsors and partners? What consultation with players, host nations and other stakeholders did FIFA undertake before granting official commercial sponsorship for the Women's World Cup to Saudi's state-run Tourism Authority? What efforts were made to assess the human rights implications of that decision?**
5. **In light of pushback from host nations and players in the women's game to the decision to grant Saudi Arabia's state-run Tourism Authority sponsorship, what steps has FIFA taken to revisit the decision to make Saudi Tourism Authority a sponsor for the women's World Cup?**
6. **What is the bidding process, [human rights due diligence](#) arrangements and timeline for selection, including human rights stakeholder consultations, for the 2030 World Cup? Will Independent [Human Rights Strategies](#) and Risk Assessments be required [and published](#), as for the 2026 World Cup?**
7. **Will the 2030 World Cup selection and bidding process be transparent, and if so, where [will it be made public](#)? Will the human rights monitoring be applied equally and publicly to each bidding state—including consideration of whether there is, and can be, free and independent monitoring of human rights in each state?**

We would be deeply grateful for a prompt written response to the questions above by February 15, 2023, so we can reflect them in our publications.

Thank you for your attention to this request. We are grateful for your cooperation particularly during the lead up to the 2023 Women's World Cup.

Sincerely,



Minky Worden  
Director, Global Initiatives  
Human Rights Watch

Cc Andreas Graf, Human Rights Director