

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 25, 2024

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

Dear Mr. Infantino:

We strongly oppose FIFA's plans to award the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's uncontested bid to host the 2034 FIFA World Cup, and we urge you to seek out a host country with a record of upholding human rights. Approving Saudi Arabia's bid this December endangers workers, athletes, tourists, and members of the press, and it runs counter to FIFA's own human rights policies. Given the high stakes and scope of these games, FIFA cannot accept any assurances offered by the Saudi government nor aid the Saudi government in its effort to sportswash its bloody record.

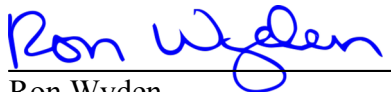
The Saudi regime has long violated human rights and has made no progress toward meaningful reform and accountability. The Kingdom continues to torture dissidents, engage in extrajudicial killings, discriminate against the LGBTQ+ community, oppress women and religious minorities, exploit and abuse foreign workers, and restrict almost all political rights and civil liberties. In fact, Saudi Arabia hit a new record high in annual executions this year. Further, the Saudi government has continued to crack down on media, labor unions, civil societies, and more. If Saudi Arabia assumes the responsibilities of hosting the World Cup, these human rights abuses are sure to escalate throughout the planning, execution, and conclusion of the tournament.

To prevent such abuses and protect all those participating in World Cup-related activities, your organization assembled basic human rights requirements for host countries. However, the repressive Saudi regime is incapable of meeting FIFA's own requirements. Among other things, FIFA's policies require bidders to engage with human rights stakeholders, allow independent human rights monitoring, and permit independent media. While the Saudi bid document pledges to engage with its own state agencies on these issues, the Saudis have failed to provide any mention of partnerships with Saudi human rights experts, human rights organizations, trade unions, or rights advisors to ensure basic standard. More concerningly, the Saudis have failed to address how they will uphold labor protections, press freedoms, non-discrimination and inclusion standards. Indeed, human rights organizations, experts, and governing bodies, like the United Nations, continue to sound the alarm on Saudi Arabia's deteriorating human rights conditions and their inability to monitor labor and human rights conditions on the ground due to Saudi's repressive and restrictive policies.

FIFA knows firsthand what is at stake hosting the World Cup in countries without a demonstrated commitment to human rights. In the lead up to the 2022 Qatar World Cup, scores of domestic and migrant laborers worked in egregious conditions on tournament-related projects, resulting in widespread wage theft and a high death toll. Despite numerous workers and civil society groups issuing warnings, FIFA could not curb these abuses or adequately remedy harm. Similarly, FIFA could not ensure the safety of the LGBTQ+ community, women, and journalists in Qatar. For example, Qatari officials detained journalists ahead of the tournament. These experiences in Qatar clearly demonstrate that promises of reform and accountability in bidding documents by repressive regimes do not actually ensure compliance with human rights and labor laws at the tournaments. These experiences also raise serious concerns about FIFA's ability to mitigate harm once planning is underway for the games. The Saudis have put forward an ambitious proposal to host 48 teams through 15 state-of-the-art stadiums across five cities for World Cup 2034 with no sincere intention of upholding human rights.

While FIFA appears poised to confirm Saudi Arabia's bid on December 11, your organization has a responsibility to uphold and promote human rights. We strongly urge FIFA to take all steps necessary to thoroughly re-evaluate Saudi Arabia's ill-equipped World Cup bid ahead of December and select a rights-respecting host country for World Cup 2034.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator