



Strasbourg, 13 June 2018

**To Mr Gianni Infantino,**  
President of FIFA

Dear Mr Infantino,

We, Members of the European Parliament, are writing to you in relation to the World Cup 2018 and, in particular, the shocking fact that Grozny, the capital of the Chechen Republic, was not only included into the list of authorised training bases of the tournament, but was chosen by one of the finalists, Egypt and consequently endorsed by FIFA.

We strongly believe that Russia for many reasons - including its increasingly worrying human rights record, to the recent unprecedented doping related scandals -- should not have been awarded the responsibility to host the 2018 World Cup, and more so, Chechnya should not been given the opportunity to appear on the list of any activities related to the tournament.

For the past decade, under its president Ramzan Kadyrov, Chechnya has been a place where even the slightest dissent has been repressed with impunity, where disrespect for basic human rights and freedoms has become systematic, where not only critics of the regime, but even human rights defenders and journalists have been persecuted, threatened and killed.

We are very saddened to have learnt that FIFA was making its decisions on selecting the sites of training bases for the tournament just at around the same time when Oyub Titiev, prominent human rights defender and the head of Chechen office of the Memorial Human Rights Centre, the 2009 Sakharov Prize winning organisation, was put behind the bars on fabricated criminal charges in Grozny. And just around the same time when entire democratic world was hearing in shock the news about the anti-gay purge carried out in Chechnya in spring of 2017, when as a result of persecutions orchestrated by the local authorities, at least 300 homosexual (or perceived to be) men were affected and at least 15 persons were killed.

In the Human Rights Policy of FIFA we can read as follows: “where the freedoms of human rights defenders are at risk, FIFA will take adequate measures for their protection, including by using its leverage with the relevant authorities”.

With this in mind, we are calling on FIFA to act with no delay on this commitment and to use its leverage to deal with the Russian highest authorities, with president Vladimir Putin first and foremost, in order to ensure that Oyub Titiev is released immediately and unconditionally.

We are certain that given its unique position, FIFA and you, Mr Infantino, personally are obliged to make every effort to influence the Russian and Chechen authorities to free Oyub Titiev and thus minimise a scandalous situation when sports is used to hide and legitimise grave human rights violations, such as in the case of today's Chechnya and Russia.

Yours sincerely,

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