

BIRD

BAHRAIN INSTITUTE FOR
RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY



Michael J. Garcia
FIFA Ethics Committee
FIFA-Strasse 20
P.O. Box 8044
Zurich

Dear Mr. Garcia,

I am writing to you to request the launch of an immediate investigation into the conduct of the Bahrain Football Association (BFA) and its complicity in the mistreatment of football players in Bahrain that is in breach of the FIFA Code of Ethics (FCE). I also urge an investigation into the President of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), Sheikh Salman Bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa, for breaches of the FCE during his time as President of the Bahrain Football Association.

The preamble of the FCE places a special responsibility upon FIFA to safeguard the integrity and reputation of football worldwide from jeopardy or harm as a result of illegal, immoral or unethical methods and practices. This covers conduct that damages the integrity and reputation of football within association football that has little or no connection with action on the field of play (Article 1). These are applicable to all officials and players including every 'board member, committee member and any other person' responsible for matters in FIFA, a Confederation, Association, League or club' (FIFA Statutes, Definitions, No. 10). This includes individuals that have left their posts after committing a violation (Article 56 (1)).

Since 2011, Bahrain officials have been systematically targeting and mistreating athletes whom have taken part in anti-government protests. This has included publicly identifying, targeting, and arresting footballers that attended peaceful protests to voice their opinions freely and peacefully. At least six footballers from the Bahrain national football team were arrested, defamed and tortured following their public identification and humiliation by authorities, including the BFA. More than 150 athletes, coaches and referees were jailed after a special committee, chaired by the former BFA president Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa, identified them from protest photos. Additionally, soccer clubs that were discriminately targeted for being in Shiite villages were fined \$20,000 each and were suspended. Head of the committee was Sheikh Nasser Bin Hamad Al Khalifa—also head of the Bahrain Olympic Committee—who in a public statement, called for “a wall to

fall on [protesters'] heads ... even if they are an athlete.” He also stated that ‘if it were up to him’, he would give all of those athlete’s life in prison.

This has included Bahrain national team footballers Alaa Hubail, Ali Saeed Abdullah and Mohammed Hubail all of whom were tortured by authorities because they were present at peaceful protests and identified by the BFA. Alaa Hubail was top scorer at the 2004 Asian Cup, a league now regulated by the AFC, whose newly appointed president—Sheikh Salman Bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa—directly caused the torture and mistreatment of Alaa in 2011. Alaa was also targeted live on Bahrain State TV, and defamed as a ‘traitor’ prior to preventing him from playing for the national team again. Mohammed Hubail, his brother, was sentenced to two years in prison.

The BFA and Sheikh Salman have completely ignored their obligations to protect both the physical and mental integrity and personal rights of those individuals, who have been directly affected by their actions (Article 24).

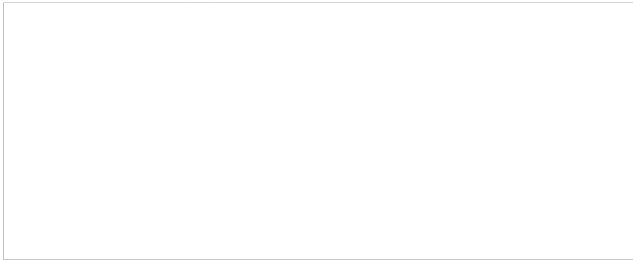
As a person bound by the FCE, Sheikh Salman neglected his duties, obligations and responsibilities to protect footballers in Bahrain, and to respect the applicable laws and regulations of FIFA. Sheikh Salman has failed to demonstrate a commitment to ethics and integrity (Article 13), and has gone beyond his position in directly causing the physical and psychological torture of footballers in Bahrain. Sheikh Salman is a member of the Bahrain Royal Family, and the abuse of his position has been for political gain. This is in breach of Article 19(2) that includes in its definition of *private or personal interests* the gaining of “any possible advantage for the persons bound by this Code themselves, their family, relatives, friends and acquaintances”. He has furthermore displayed an inability to perform his duties with integrity in an independent and purposeful manner, as required under Article 19(2). Additionally, his actions are in direct breach of Article 23 which states that a person bound by the Code must not offend the dignity or integrity of a country, private person or group of people through any contemptuous, discriminatory or denigratory words or actions on account of race, skin colour, ethnic, national or social origin, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, wealth, birth or any other status, sexual orientation or any other reason.

The crackdown in Bahrain against footballers, and their dismissal from representing their country, has damaged the reputation and integrity of football in the country. The appointment of the person responsible for these abuses to a more senior position at the AFC has also damaged the reputation of football in Asia. There is a responsibility upon FIFA, and upon its Ethics Committee to look into these breaches of FCE. Moreover, there is also an absolute duty upon the parties in breach of the Code to cooperate with the ethics committee in their investigation (Articles 38, 41, 42). We call for sanctions to be placed upon the BFA, and upon Sheikh Salman for the breach of FIFA’s Codes of Ethics, including the conduct of their participants and accomplices, committed or omitted, intentional or negligent. We also call

for decision to appoint Sheikh Salman as president of the AFC to be overturned for his role in the heinous human rights abuses in Bahrain against footballers that is in breach of the FCE and international law.

Thank you for much for your consideration

Sincerely,



Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy

