



Aleksander Čeferin  
President  
UEFA

Copied to:  
Theodore Theodoridis, UEFA General Secretary

11 March 2024

**SUBJECT: Rules for exclusion from competition**

Dear Mr Čeferin,

In light of recent comments made by you and UEFA General Secretary, Theodore Theodoridis, we are writing to request clarification on the rules and policies guiding UEFA's suspension of teams from its competitions. UEFA's decision to exclude Russian teams and its failure to countenance similar action against Israel appears to reflect a troubling double standard on matters of critical importance.

FairSquare is a non-profit organisation one of whose aims is to ensure better, more democratic governance to prevent sporting institutions and competitions contributing to harm and suffering.

UEFA condemned the use of force by Russia on 24 February 2022 shortly after Russian troops invaded Ukraine. On 28 February 2022, UEFA issued decision 10/2022 stating that "in order [for UEFA] to be able to achieve its statutory objectives, all Russian representative teams and clubs are suspended from taking part in UEFA competition matches, until further notice." UEFA cited as reasons for its decision articles 2(1)(b) and 2(1) (d) of its statutes. Article 2(1)(b) is UEFA's commitment to "**promote football in Europe in a spirit of peace, understanding and fair play, without any discrimination on account of politics, gender, religion, race or any other reason**". Article 2(1) (d) is UEFA's commitment to "**organise and conduct international football competitions and tournaments at European level for every type of football whilst respecting the players' health**".

UEFA also cited the following as reasons for its decision:

- "an increasing number of UEFA national associations publicly voiced their intention to not participate in matches against teams from the Russian Football Union (RFU)."
- "the general public's reaction has the consequence that, even if matches against Russian teams would be staged on a neutral territory, there are serious concerns about the ability to ensure the safety and security for all those involved, i.e. delegations, players, supporters etc."
- "several governments and the EU institutions have imposed flight bans from or to the Russian territory. This would have an additional considerable impact on the smooth staging and running

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of UEFA competition matches.”

Russia challenged this decision at the Court of Arbitration for Sport, arguing that it had been unfairly punished. UEFA’s argument at CAS was that the decision “was a fully valid exercise of UEFA’s statutory prerogatives in very extraordinary circumstances and not the exercise of its disciplinary power.” The Court agreed, deeming that the decision was “clearly not a disciplinary decision, a disguised sanction or a decision that has an inherent disciplinary aspect” and that UEFA was simply trying to “impose a measure to deal with the consequences of a military conflict for football competitions that it organises.”

However two subsequent statements from UEFA’s most senior officials appear to contradict the position outlined by UEFA at CAS, suggesting that UEFA’s decisions regarding Russia were in fact disciplinary sanctions, in response to the Russian state’s behaviour in Ukraine. They additionally imply that UEFA believes Israel’s actions in Gaza do not warrant any such disciplinary sanction, as UEFA concludes that Israel did not “start” events in Gaza.

- On 26 September 2023, when UEFA announced that it would readmit Russian youth teams into the competition, you said, “UEFA’s continuing suspension against Russian adult teams reflects its commitment to take a stand against violence and aggression. UEFA is determined that this position will continue until the war is over and peace restored.”
- At the UEFA congress on 8 February 2024, after being asked about UEFA’s position on Israeli teams in the light of its actions in Gaza, UEFA General Secretary Theodore Theodoridis responded as follows: “There was no such discussion or such intention [to take action against Israel] from the UEFA administration...There are two completely different situations between the two countries. Don’t forget the start of the war in Russia and Ukraine and the start of what is happening now - which is regrettable, of course - in the Middle East.”

These are matters of the utmost importance. Russia’s illegal aggression against Ukraine has resulted in the deaths of at least 10,000 civilians, including more than 560 children in 18 months, according to the United Nations. Israel’s response to Hamas’s attack of 7 October has resulted in more than 30,000 deaths, including more than 10,000 children in 5 months. The civilian death toll from Israel’s campaign has risen at a rate that even conservative estimates find dramatically exceeds that of the Syrian or Ukrainian conflicts, and which the UN Secretary General says is “unprecedented during my years as Secretary-General”. On 26 January, less than two weeks before Mr Theodoridis’s comments, the International Court of Justice ordered Israel to implement a range of provisional measures to prevent a genocide of Palestinians in Gaza, an outcome that the ICJ described as “plausible”.

There is a large body of evidence to suggest that both Russia and Israel have committed serious violations of the most fundamental norms of international law, much of it presented in separate ongoing cases brought against Russia and Israel at the International Court of Justice. If UEFA intends to exercise its powers as a means of, “demonstrating a commitment to take a stand against violence and aggression”, as you put it in October 2023, and to ensure compliance with Article 2 (1) (b) of the UEFA statutes, which UEFA cited in its decision to exclude Russia, it is imperative that it does so consistently.

The current situation appears to reflect a clear and obvious double standard, and one which appears to stem from arbitrary and ad hoc rule-making. In that regard, we would appreciate your prompt clarification of the following points:

- Has UEFA drawn up any rules or solicited any expert legal advice to guide its conduct in response to gross violations of international law by states with UEFA member associations?
- Does UEFA have an official position or policy on whether and when violations of international law should result in the suspension of a country's national and club teams from UEFA competition? If not, does it plan to develop such a policy?
- Is it UEFA's official position that because Israel's actions in Gaza are a response to the Hamas attacks of 7 October, UEFA will not sanction Israel regardless of how unlawful or how disproportionate its reprisals in Gaza?

As one of the world's most influential sporting bodies, UEFA's response to global crises are carefully watched by other sporting and cultural institutions in Europe and beyond, who look to it for guidance and leadership. It is therefore critical that UEFA bases its decisions in such moments on consistent, objective criteria and applies these fairly across the board.

Yours sincerely,



Nicholas McGeehan  
Director



James Lynch  
Director