

Aleksander Čeferin  
President  
UEFA

Copied to:  
Theodore Theodoridis, UEFA General Secretary

**SUBJECT: Racial discrimination and violence in Amsterdam**

Dear Mr Čeferin

FairSquare is a non-profit organisation one of whose aims is to ensure better, more democratic governance of sport. We are writing to you in relation to the violence that preceded and followed Maccabi Tel Aviv's match against Ajax Amsterdam in Amsterdam on 7 November. On 19 November, the Netherlands Public Prosecution Service stated that nine individuals were in pre-trial detention (with nine actually in custody), as a result of their role in the violence over a number of days. On 14 November, the same Dutch agency had stated that investigations were ongoing into the actions and motivations of those in pre-trial detention, and that more arrests were expected.

UEFA issued a statement on 8 November saying that it “strongly condemns the incidents and acts of violence that occurred last night in the city of Amsterdam before and after the UEFA Europa League match between Ajax and Maccabi Tel Aviv”, and that it “will examine all official reports, gather available evidence, assess them and evaluate any further appropriate course of action in accordance with its relevant regulatory framework.”<sup>1</sup>

**We are asking you to ensure that your response to these events - including evidence gathering, assessment, and resulting actions - is transparent and that throughout, you fully implement article 7<sup>bis</sup> (7) of UEFA's statutes, which requires member associations to “implement an effective policy aimed at eradicating racism and any other forms of discrimination from football and apply a regulatory framework providing that any such behaviour is strictly sanctioned”. This requirement should be applied without discrimination to the Koninklijke Nederlandse Voetbalbond (KNVB) and the Israel Football Association (IFA), as appropriate depending on the evidence gathered. Violence motivated by Islamophobia, anti-Arab racism or anti-semitism is unacceptable and must play no role in football. Efforts to eradicate racism from the game require that all stakeholders adhere to their own obligations and responsibilities.**

**Actions of Maccabi Tel Aviv fans, and responsibilities of IFA**

With regard to the actions of Maccabi Tel Aviv supporters, credible evidence shows large groups of fans in

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<sup>1</sup> As reported by the New York Times and other media outlets:

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/5908079/2024/11/08/dutch-police-arrests-maccabi-tel-aviv/>



Maccabi Tel Aviv colours and shirts engaging in racist behaviour. These are detailed in the annex but include:

- tearing down Palestinian flags from the facades of Amsterdam residences;
- hundreds of supporters chanting “fuck Palestine” and “death to Arabs” in Amsterdam; and
- scores of Maccabi Tel Aviv supporters chanting “why is school out in Gaza? There are no children left there”, upon their return to Ben Gurion Airport.

The actions of Maccabi Tel Aviv supporters in Amsterdam should be set in the context of a broader pattern of Israeli football supporters’ racist behaviour, including incitement and celebration of genocidal violence in the context of Israeli military operations in Gaza, against Arabs and Palestinians, which predates events in Amsterdam. In this regard, we would draw UEFA’s attention firstly to a 14 November [report](#) by the United Nations Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, which concluded that Israel’s warfare in Gaza is “consistent with the characteristics of genocide” and secondly to the work of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which has underlined [the role of racist hate speech](#) in processes leading to mass violations of human rights and genocide.

The annex also details violent actions by Maccabi Tel Aviv fans, including attacking Amsterdam taxis before the match and following the match, [arming themselves](#) with makeshift weapons and [instigating violence](#).

Neither the IFA nor the Israeli government have expressed any alarm at the egregious racism exhibited by Maccabi Tel Aviv supporters and their role in the violent unrest. The IFA has not made any comment about the behaviour of the Maccabi Tel Aviv fans in Amsterdam. IFA President Shino Moshe Zuares has confined his [comments](#) to the violence to which Maccabi Tel Aviv fans were subjected.

**It appears obvious that the IFA is not adhering to its obligation under article 7<sup>bis</sup> (7) of UEFA’s statutes to eradicate racism by sanctioning clubs whose supporters engage in racist behaviour. In view of the IFA’s abdication of its responsibilities to eradicate racism, we urge UEFA to immediately remind the IFA of its obligations and - if the IFA fails to impose the appropriate sanctions on the teams concerned - to invoke article 9 of its statutes, which empowers UEFA to immediately suspend any member association that has committed a “serious breach” of its statutes.**

In that regard, we would also like to draw FIFA’s attention to a [report](#) that FairSquare sent to FIFA on 18 July 2024, in which we outlined the case for FIFA to sanction the Israel Football Association (IFA) in accordance with provisions of the FIFA Statutes. The report argued that the IFA has enabled the most serious forms of racial discrimination to be directed against Arabs and Palestinians, in contravention of Article 4(1) of FIFA Statutes, which states that, “discrimination of any kind against a country, private person or group of people on account of race, skin colour, ethnic, national or social origin... is strictly prohibited and punishable by suspension or expulsion.”



## **Attacks on Maccabi Tel Aviv fans, and responsibilities of KNVB**

Amsterdam authorities reported that in the hours after the match Maccabi Tel Aviv fans were attacked by rioters who “moved in small groups, on foot, by scooter, or car, briefly attacking Maccabi supporters before quickly disappearing.” Images on social media, broadcast by Channel 4 News in the UK, show one supporter being kicked on the ground, another being assaulted by several men in the street after shouting “I’m not Jewish”, and another apparently in a canal. Five Maccabi Tel Aviv supporters required hospital treatment overnight and that twenty to thirty sustained minor injuries, according to the Amsterdam authorities. The BBC interviewed two British Maccabi Tel Aviv supporters who attended the match, one of whom said he was punched in the face after helping an Israeli man who had himself been assaulted. “They said ‘you helped the Jew’” he told the BBC. The Telegraph newspaper reported that they had seen copies of messages from a group chat called Buurthuis, in which one poster referred to a “jew hunt” and another referred to “cancer dogs”. The Amsterdam authorities have documented reports of anti-semitic behaviour they received during these events.

The KNVB has expressed its support for the authorities’ efforts to investigate and hold accountable those responsible - expressing its shock at the events and stating that, “these acts of violence are far removed from the beautiful football evening in the Johan Crujff Arena. As a football community, we condemn violence. We trust that the authorities will catch and punish the perpetrators”. The statement does not make a distinction based on the identity of perpetrators or victims.

**Should evidence emerge to suggest that Ajax Amsterdam supporters, or supporters of any other Dutch football teams, engaged in antisemitism or any racially motivated violence against Maccabi Tel Aviv supporters, UEFA should assess whether that can be attributed in any way to any failure on the part of the KNVB to adhere to its obligations as a UEFA member association under article 7<sup>bis</sup> (7) of UEFA’s statutes, and act accordingly.**

We hope that UEFA’s zero-tolerance approach to racism will be fully reflected in its response to these events and would be happy to discuss any aspect of this letter with you by email or telephone.

Yours sincerely,



James Lynch  
Director



Nicholas McGeehan  
Director



# ANNEX

## Racist behaviour of Maccabi Tel Aviv supporters

Officials in Amsterdam have acknowledged that Maccabi Tel Aviv fans engaged in racist behaviour before and after the match against Ajax Amsterdam on 7 November. A [letter of 11 November](#) from the Mayor of Amsterdam to Amsterdam council members referred to “videos filled with hate-fueled, racist chants against ‘Arabs’”. The [Mayor of Amsterdam](#) has criticised the preparations of the local security forces, stating that “the story of a racist club was never properly told to me.” Numerous credible international news outlets broadcast images of these videos, many of which were uploaded from social media, verified their content, and translated the chants of Maccabi Tel Aviv supporters.

- [Sky News](#) verified two separate videos of Maccabi Tel Aviv fans climbing onto the facades of residential buildings in order to tear down Palestinian flags on 6 November, the day before the match.
- [Reuters](#) verified videos of Maccabi Tel Aviv supporters chanting anti-Arab slogans including “Fuck you Palestine” in front of the National Monument on Amsterdam’s central Dam square on 7 November.
- [Sky News](#) broadcast a video of Maccabi Tel Aviv fans entering an Amsterdam metro station singing a song that included the line “Let the IDF [Israeli Defence Forces] win to fuck the Arabs” apparently on their way to the match on 7 November. A website run by Maccabi Tel Aviv fans notes that this song has [a second verse](#), which includes the line “why is school out in Gaza? There are no children left there.” On 8 November, the [Times of Israel](#) reported that a [video](#) uploaded to social media showed scores of Maccabi Tel Aviv supporters, including young children, singing this song at Ben Gurion airport in Tel Aviv upon their return from Amsterdam.

Maccabi Tel Aviv fans previously engaged in racist chanting in Netherlands. A [video uploaded to a Youtube](#) site earlier this year shows fans in the Netherlands singing a song called ‘the rape song’, which is directed against Maccabi Tel Aviv’s rivals Hapoel Tel Aviv, and refers to their supporters as “the Arabs’ whores”.<sup>2</sup> It is highly likely that this video dates to October 2016, in the context of the team’s match against AZ Alkmaar, the last time Maccabi Tel Aviv played a fixture in a UEFA competition in the Netherlands.<sup>3</sup>

The Amsterdam authorities’ official version of the events, as outlined in the letter from the Mayor to Amsterdam city council members on 11 November, states that the first instances of serious violence in Amsterdam were instigated by Maccabi Tel Aviv supporters: “Around midnight [on the night of 5/6 November], disturbances arose at the Rokin [a major street in Amsterdam]. A group of approximately 50 Maccabi supporters pulled down a Palestinian flag hanging from a building. Some individuals wore face coverings. The group appeared to split, with some heading towards Central Station and Spui, and others toward the Red Light District, shouting slogans. Some individuals walking on the Rokin removed their belts and used them to attack a taxi. Elsewhere on the Rokin, other taxis were vandalized.”

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<sup>2</sup> Lyrics of the song are found on a [Maccabi Tel Aviv fan site](#).

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.maccabi-tlv.co.il/en/match/2016-10-maccabi-tel-aviv-6/>



The [New York Times](#) verified [dashcam footage](#) of one such attack. It is not possible to say if the violence against the Amsterdam taxi drivers, many of whom are of Turkish or Moroccan descent, was racially motivated. In March 2024, Maccabi Tel Aviv fans were [filmed](#) carrying out an act of apparently racist violence in Greece. Greek media reported on the incident, a [violent assaulted](#) on a man holding a Palestinian flag in Syntagma square in Athens, where supporters had gathered in advance of a match against the Greek side Olympiakos. Following the match, the [Amsterdam authorities](#) state that “around midnight, a large group of Maccabi supporters was walking around near Dam Square, some carrying sticks and committing acts of vandalism”. Video evidence also shows Maccabi fans [arming themselves](#) with makeshift weapons and [instigating violence](#).

### **Racist behaviour of other Israeli football supporters**

On 9 November, Israeli journalist Yoni Ben Menachem posted a [video](#) on social media which showed Maccabi Haifa supporters burning a Palestinian flag and a Dutch flag in Teddy stadium in Jerusalem, ahead of Maccabi Haifa’s match with Hapoel Jerusalem. Middle East Eye posted the same video and noted that some Maccabi Haifa fans were chanting “[Gaza is a cemetery](#)” in the background.

Teddy Stadium is also the home of Beitar Jerusalem, whose supporters are the most [notoriously racist](#) in Israel - regularly proclaiming, “Here we are, the most racist team in the country” - and who have enjoyed strong political support from the most senior far-right government figures in the country. The hardcore ultra element among Beitar Jerusalem supporters known as [La Familia](#), lead chants that include lines such as “I don’t care how many and how they will get killed, Eliminating Arabs makes me thrilled, Boy, girl or old, Will bury every Arab deep in the ground.” Benjamin Netanyahu has closely associated himself with Beitar and their supporters. In 1998, Netanyahu addressed Beitar fans celebrating a title win, and was, according to the Israeli journalist Shaul Adar, present while the supporters called for “death to the Arabs” during the celebrations.<sup>4</sup> Further details of the actions of Beitar Jerusalem supporters and their links to senior Likud politicians in Israel can be found in the [report](#) that FairSquare sent to FIFA on 18 July 2024.

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<sup>4</sup> Shaul Adar, “On the Border: The Rise and Decline of the Most Political Club in the World”, (Pitch Publishing, 2022), p. 291. Clip available at “Beitar Jerusalem fans: '[Here we are, we're the most racist football team in the country](#)'”

