



Presidents and General Secretaries
of UEFA Member Associations

Nyon, 27 September 2019

Dear Presidents and General Secretaries,

Dear friends,

On 9 September, 29-year-old Sahar Khodayari died in a hospital in Tehran after having set herself on fire to escape a prison sentence for trying to attend a football match in her native Iran.

As incredible, tragic and appalling as it may seem, today, in 2019, some women still cannot attend football matches alongside men without risking prosecution and heavy penalties. They are either banned outright from entering the stadium, or the restrictions they face (separate entrances, stands, etc.) discourage them from even trying to pursue their passion like any other person on the planet.

Their crime: being women who love football.

The justification for these draconian measures: throwbacks to a bygone age.

The consequences of such discrimination: a level of despair that led one young woman to take her own life, in a cry for help for a whole generation of women like her, who can no longer bear not having the same basic rights as others.

Although this is not a 'European matter' as such, the UEFA Executive Committee, which met in Ljubljana on 24 September, could not turn a blind eye to this tragedy or the unacceptable situation surrounding it, which has prevailed for far too long. We therefore opened the floor to debate the matter and reached a unanimous conclusion.

Article 4 of the FIFA Statutes 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, gender, disability, language, religion, political opinion or any other opinion, wealth, birth or any other status, sexual orientation or any other reason is strictly prohibited and punishable by suspension or expulsion."*

We know the situation is much more complex than it may seem. We know that FIFA is doing its best to change this inadmissible status quo and has engaged in months of discussions and negotiations to that end, which we commend and in no way wish to undermine. Our intentions are precisely not to punish, ban, exclude or reject, nor to adopt a legalistic logic that would put FIFA and the national associations concerned in a difficult, if not untenable situation. For all these reasons, we have decided not to ask FIFA to apply the letter of its own laws and suspend any association guilty of such discrimination.

But we cannot remain silent and blind to this intolerable situation either. Our role is not merely to organise matches in Europe, but to convey the universal values of football to Europe's youth. Our campaigns to promote equal opportunities and end discrimination – from *#EqualGame* to *#Togetherweplaystrong* and, of course, *Respect* – must be accompanied by concrete action, without which they would be reduced to meaningless, hypocritical slogans. Staying silent at this time would make us complicit and taking no action would make us culpable.

We have therefore decided to make an official recommendation to all UEFA member associations and their clubs. Our position is simple: we recommend that your national teams and clubs no longer play any matches in countries where stadiums are not fully accessible to women.

You are free to follow this recommendation from the UEFA Executive Committee or not. Personally, I am confident that I can count on your support and that your own values are such that you will take our position on board and take decisions accordingly.

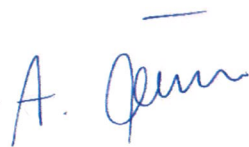
For any associations, leagues or clubs that have already entered into contractual arrangements that they must respect, that they cannot rescind and that oblige them to play in a country that does not allow women in stadiums (or imposes women restrictions to attend football matches), we have two alternative recommendations: to not renew any such contracts for as long as this discrimination persists, and to officially and publicly take a stand on behalf of those women who wish to attend your matches in any country that does not allow them this freedom.

We owe at least that to Sahar Khodayari and the tens of thousands of young women who are prepared to risk their lives to watch a football match.

Thank you for your understanding and your support.

Yours faithfully,

UEFA

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. Čeferin', with a horizontal line above the first part of the signature.

Aleksander Čeferin
President

Copy: UEFA Executive committee members; European FIFA Council members
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