

Brussels, 15 March 2023

Mr Aleksander Čeferin
UEFA President

Dear Mr Čeferin,

We undersigned Members of the European Parliament call on you to ban the Belarusian national football team from the UEFA 2024 Qualifiers and to expel the Belarusian team from I Group and matches that are going to kick-off in the coming weeks.

We believe it is important that UEFA reconsiders its current position on Belarusian football federation. It is clear from an international standpoint that the current measures are inadequate and fail to reflect what the Belarusian authorities are doing in relation to human rights and other UEFA values.

Over 40 000 inhabitants of Belarus have been detained or imprisoned since 2020, among them many football players. Almost 1 500 persons in Belarus have been recognised as political prisoners and are facing sentences of up to 20 years imprisonment. For example, a 48-year-old football coach - Oleg Fomin - spent 2,5 years in Belarusian prison on trumped up charges. These innocent detainees are being exposed to torture and abasement in clear violation of their rights and freedoms. Much of Belarusian society is now living in fear, intimidated and terrorised that even a slight sign of not supporting the Lukashenka regime could result in the loss of their careers or freedom. This includes Belarusian athletes and sportsmen. It is therefore clear for us that the footballers who are still on the Belarusian football team are supporting the Lukashenka regime.

Just few days ago, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, the leader of the Democratic Forces of Belarus was sentenced in absentia to 15 years in prison. Another exiled opposition leader, Pavel Latushka, who was also tried in absentia, was sentenced by the same court to 18 years in prison. One week earlier, the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Ales Bialiatski was sentenced to 10 years in prison and is currently serving his sentence. Belarus also takes an active part in the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. Independent observers report missile strikes and attacks on Ukraine by warplanes from Belarusian territory.

How can all these facts be aligned with UEFA values and the UEFA matches which should be emblematic of the peace and cooperation that are embodied in the football family? The very fact of participating in UEFA Championship by the Belarusian national team will be later used by Lukashenka and his propaganda team to prove he is well received in the international community.

This would be an offense to the victims of the Russian aggression in Ukraine and to all the Belarusians who were forced to flee from their homeland as well as those who stayed in Belarus and now must live in fear and terror.

Mr Čeferin, we join the call to UEFA to stand by its commitment to respect human rights! These are not only UEFA values at stake, but also UEFA's reputation and image within democratic societies and international community.

Best regards,

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