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*Deadline: 12 April 2017*

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Dear FIFA Council Members,

### **Put Human Rights Before Politics**

We write to you with regards to the seven clubs\* that are participating in the official Israeli football league while being located in illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). We have become gravely concerned by the repeated delays that have beset FIFA's deliberations regarding these clubs, despite crystal clear advice from human rights experts and FIFA's own statutes. We urge you to insist that the Israel Football Association immediately revoke the affiliation of the seven clubs in question, or else face suspension from membership of FIFA. Put human rights before politics.

Last October, UN Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace Wilfried Lemke wrote to FIFA to urge a resolution of the matter of the settlement clubs, ***"in line with the United Nations Security Council Resolutions and FIFA Statutes within a reasonable time frame"***. We commend his words.

We wish to draw your attention in particular to the reaffirmation within UN Security Council Resolution 2334 that the establishment of Israeli settlements in the OPTs ***"has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law"***. FIFA itself has a legal obligation to avoid contributing to such violations.

The development of FIFA's own human rights policy has formed an important part of your organisation's ongoing programme of self-reform, and your Statute No. 3 now reads: ***"FIFA is committed to respecting all internationally recognised human rights and shall strive to promote the protection of these rights"***. This laudable goal will be judged by the extent of its implementation in real-life contexts, where powerful political actors frequently seek to muffle legitimate calls for justice. It will be a tragedy for us all – and a poor commentary on the progress of self-reform at FIFA - if your policy falls at the first hurdle. We urge you to ensure an outcome that is consistent with this renewed commitment.

We also note the long-standing stipulation under FIFA Statutes that ***"Members and their clubs may not play on the territory of another Member without the latter's approval"***, and that FIFA has acted to prevent violations of this rule in the past. We worry that failure to enforce it now, in a context of grave human rights abuses, would cause further damage to FIFA's fragile reputation. We urge you, instead, to continue to apply this rule with scrupulous consistency, and we remind you of the duties of neutrality and non-discrimination enshrined in FIFA's Code of Ethics.

For all these reasons we urge you to insist that the Israel Football Association immediately revoke the affiliation of the seven clubs in question, or else face suspension from membership of FIFA. This is the only course of action that accords with FIFA's legal and ethical responsibilities.

Finally, we understand from media reports that Mr. Sexwale now intends to present his recommendations on this matter to FIFA Congress next month on May 11, 2017. In the interest of transparency, we urge you to publish his report in full at the earliest opportunity.

We look forward to your earliest response.

Yours sincerely,

\* Maccabi Ariel (indoor futsal), Ironi Ariel, Beitar Givat Ze'ev Shabi, Beitar Ma'ale Adumim, Hapoel Oranit, Hapoel Bik'at Hayarden, Hapoel Katamon Yerushalaim (primarily located in West Jerusalem but plays some home games in Ma'ale Adumim) – see

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/09/25/israel/palestine-fifa-sponsoring-games-seized-land>