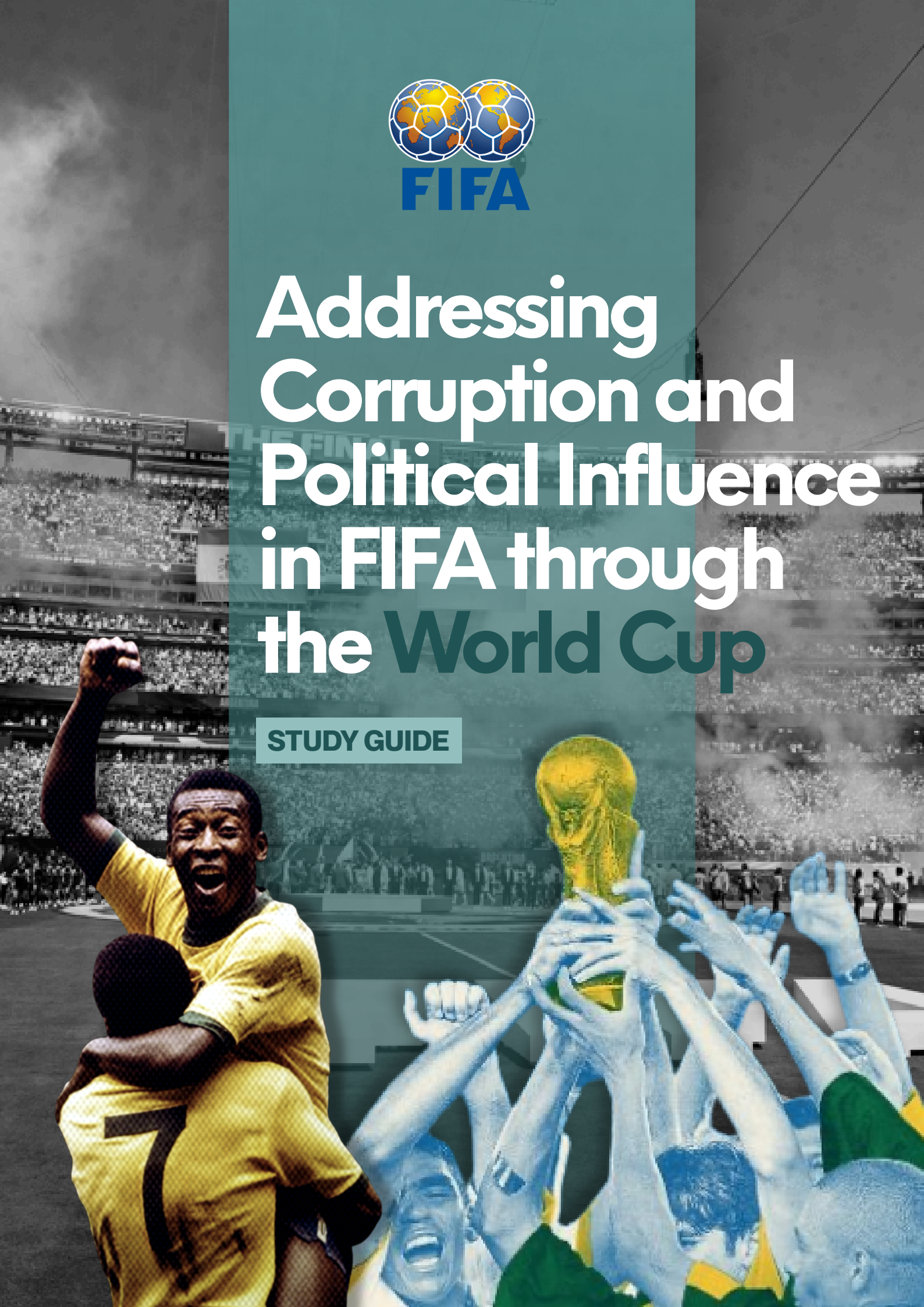




Addressing Corruption and Political Influence in FIFA through the World Cup

STUDY GUIDE





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LETTER FROM YOUR CHAIR

Dear delegates,

I'm your chair Santiago Hernandez from tenth grade and it is a pleasure to have you this year as my delegates for the FIFA committee. I hope this experience will make you grow as a person and acquire skills and abilities that will help you in the future. The first time I was in SPMUN was back in seventh grade and it wasn't being a delegate; I was actually a page. I had a very fun experience seeing all the delegates debate and having fun with the ice breakers, but it made me realize something. Seeing all those delegates debate over important topics in the world made me want to be in MUN being an actual delegate. In 2024 I decided to get involved in SPMUN, in the UNHRC with the topic of Transgender Rights in Sports. I was the delegation of Australia, and it was very interesting having to actually assume the role of one of the representatives of that nation like it would be done in the United Nations. In the beginning it was a little bit stressful and I was afraid of talking in front of other people, especially those from higher grades who had more experience than me. When the day finally came, I pushed myself to speak even though I was afraid to speak in public. When MUN ended, I really enjoyed the experience of discussing an actual topic of concern in the world and giving my point of view as a nation was something I enjoyed very much. So, I encourage you, don't be afraid of speaking up because maybe there are other people that have the same fear as you, so you are not alone in this. Involve yourself, speak out, and debate respectfully because you will enjoy this experience very much, and who knows, maybe in future years you will be in the same position that I am. To finish, I hope that you enjoy and have fun with MUN as much as you can.

Best regards, your chair
Santiago Hernández

LETTER FROM YOUR CHAIR

Dear delegates,

I'm Matías Chaverri, currently a senior, and it is a massive pleasure to be your chair at FIFA this year! This committee looks great, and I hope you enjoy Santiago's and my work. I've had my own experiences at MUN in past years; for example, my first MUN, where I participated as Argentina in the Human Rights Committee and discussed the mega prisons in El Salvador, where I pretty much got the hang of how MUN worked.

Due to this being my last year, I decided to do something different and become a chair for the first time, so we won't be that apart from new experiences. While on the topic of new experiences, I'd like to mention some things that I wish I knew when becoming a delegate. First and most importantly, I suggest you relax and “chill out” while debating; it is essential that you're aware that you don't have any pressure on you and that you're here to have fun. Secondly, I want to encourage you to really take on the role you're assigned, even if it goes against your morals, ideologies, or ways of thinking; it sounds crazy at first, but imagine a robber supporting anti-robbery policies; it just doesn't make sense to be against your beliefs. Stand your ground. Lastly, but most importantly, I want all of you delegates to really know your place when debating; when doing your position paper, take into account what countries share your situation, what countries disfavor it, what events encourage your situation, and which events discourage your “opponents” position so that you're “locked and loaded” for whatever you get thrown at. I hope this information helps you in a way. I'm looking forward to having you guys on my committee; best of luck!

Best regards, your chair
Matías Chaverri



COMMITTEE INTRODUCTION

Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) serves as the governing body of football, managing multi-billion-dollar international tournaments and exercising immense influence over national football associations, with its principal event being the World Cup. To clarify, this committee is not part of the United Nations, it is separate from this organization.

FIFA's primary role is to safeguard and promote football worldwide, while being separated from the UN. It organizes international competitions such as the World Cup, developing grassroots programs, and maintaining the Laws of the Game in cooperation with the International Football Association Board (IFAB). FIFA also acts as the representative body for national associations, ensuring unity and collaboration across continents.

The FIFA Congress is the supreme legislative body, where all member associations have voting rights. It elects the President, approves statutes, and decides on major changes. The FIFA Council serves as the oversight body, setting policies and supervising governance. The President represents FIFA externally, provides leadership, and ensures unity among all members. The Secretary General manages daily operations, staff, and the implementation of Council decisions.

FIFA enforces eligibility checks for leadership positions, requires structured decision-making processes, and emphasizes transparency through published reports and compliance programs. It also enforces strict anti-discrimination and anti-corruption measures, ensuring football remains a fair and inclusive sport.

COMMITTEE INTRODUCTION

FIFA is the supreme governing body of world football, responsible for regulating the sport, organizing global competitions, and ensuring fair governance across its 211 member associations. Its structure is built around the FIFA Congress, Council, President, Secretary General, and a network of standing and independent committees, all operating under the FIFA Statutes, Code of Ethics, and Disciplinary Code.

These concerns remain directly relevant to host nations, including the United States and Mexico, alongside the broader international community. Beyond individual member states, delegates will also represent FIFA's six continental confederations (CONCACAF, UEFA, CAF, CONMEBOL, AFC, and OFC) and certain FIFA committees related to the topics discussed. Ultimately, this committee's representatives must negotiate solutions aimed at restoring integrity, accountability, and balance to global football.

As FIFA conducts these competitions, the core focus of this committee arises: addressing the controversies surrounding corruption and political influence embedded within the World Cup. During this committee, delegates will debate critical issues such as the enforcement of anti-bribery policies following historic voting scandals; accountability surrounding state "sportswashing" used to cover geopolitical exploitation; addressing human rights and labor mandates for host nations; and the regulation of financial transparency across media rights, sponsorships, and development funds.

INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC

Corruption and political influence in FIFA, especially throughout the World Cup, have been recognized as systemic problems. Investigations have revealed that officials have accepted bribes to secure hosting rights and commercial contracts, while political leaders have at times pressured FIFA to alter disciplinary decisions or favor certain nations in other decisions. These practices weaken the organization's independence and compromise the fairness of football's most important tournament, the World Cup. Instead of being a celebration of global unity, the World Cup has often been manipulated for financial gain and political advantage, eroding trust among fans, players, and national associations.

This issue is important because the World Cup is the most watched sporting event in the world, generating billions in revenue and symbolizing international cooperation. When corruption and political interference taint its governance, they not only damage the credibility of football but also risk sidelining smaller nations and perpetuating human rights abuses in host countries. Solving these problems is essential to preserve the integrity of the sport, ensure fair competition, and protect the billions of fans who see the World Cup as a unifying event. Stronger transparency, accountability, and governance reforms are necessary to prevent exploitation and restore football's role as a truly global and fair game.



INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC

One of the most controversial aspects of FIFA governance has been the process used to select host nations for the FIFA World Cup. Because hosting a World Cup can generate billions of dollars in tourism, infrastructure investments, sponsorships, and international exposure, governments often compete aggressively for hosting rights. This high level of economic and political interest has created opportunities for corruption, bribery, and undue influence over FIFA decision-makers. Questions regarding transparency in the bidding process have repeatedly emerged, raising concerns about whether host selections are based on merit, development goals, and footballing interests, or on political and financial considerations.

Political influence extends beyond the bidding process. Governments frequently attempt to use international sporting events to strengthen national prestige, increase diplomatic influence, or improve their international image. While FIFA promotes political neutrality, host nations and political actors often seek to benefit from the global attention generated by the World Cup. This creates tension between FIFA's role as an independent sporting organization and the geopolitical interests of states seeking influence through football.



KEY TERMS

FIFA Governance— The system of rules, institutions, and processes used to manage FIFA and make decisions within the organization.

Kickbacks — Illegal payments or benefits given to someone in exchange for favorable treatment or a particular decision.

Money Laundering — The process of concealing the illegal origin of money by making it appear to come from legitimate activities.

Whistleblower — A person who reports suspected illegal, unethical, or corrupt activities within an organization, often to an authority capable of investigating them.

Sanctions — Penalties imposed on individuals, organizations, or countries for violating established rules or regulations.

Compliance — The process of ensuring that FIFA officials, members, and organizations follow FIFA's rules, regulations, ethical standards, and applicable laws.

Accountability — The obligation of FIFA officials and institutions to explain their decisions, accept responsibility for their actions, and face consequences for misconduct.

Corruption — The abuse of entrusted power for personal or organizational benefit, often involving illegal or unethical actions.

Bribery — Offering, giving, requesting or accepting something of value to improperly influence a person's decisions.



KEY TERMS

Financial Misconduct — Illegal, unethical, or improper behavior involving the management, use, reporting, or disclosure of financial resources.

Political Neutrality — The principle that FIFA should remain independent from political agendas and avoid favoring specific governments, political parties, or ideologies in its decisions.

Labor Rights — The protections and standards that guarantee fair wages, safe working conditions, reasonable working hours, and freedom from exploitation for workers.

Human Rights — Basic rights and freedoms that belong to every person, regardless of nationality, status, gender, or other characteristics.

Host Nation Selection — The process through which FIFA evaluates bids and chooses the country or countries that will host a World Cup.

Transparency — The principle that FIFA's decisions, finances, and procedures should be open and understandable to the public.

Conflict of Interest — A situation in which a person's private interests could improperly influence their official responsibilities.

Sports-washing — The use of sports to improve the public image or international reputation of a government while diverting attention from controversial actions or human-rights concerns.

Broadcasting rights — The legal rights granted or sold by FIFA to television networks, streaming platforms or other media organizations to broadcast the World Cup matches.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Historically, FIFA's hosting selections have often served the political ambitions of authoritarian regimes. When Fascist Italy hosted the 1934 World Cup under Benito Mussolini, and when Argentina hosted in 1978 under a military junta, both governments leveraged the tournament as a propaganda engine to project power internationally while masking their own issues, like Argentina's ongoing human rights abuses during the so-called "Dirty War". The 1934 World Cup in Italy and the 1978 World Cup in Argentina demonstrate that political influence in football is not a recent phenomenon. In both cases, the World Cup took place under governments that had strong political interests in how the country was represented internationally. By 2015, the U.S. Department of Justice exposed how deep this corrupt act ran by bringing racketeering, wire fraud, and money laundering charges against top FIFA executives. For instance, prosecutors detailed how former FIFA Vice President Jack Warner accepted a \$10 million bribe disguised as a diaspora development fund to steer the 2010 World Cup hosting rights to South Africa. Similarly, executives like Jeffrey Webb received over \$110 million in illegal kickbacks from sports marketing companies in exchange for awarding lucrative Copa América media rights, while other executive committee members took bribes to cast winning votes for Russia's 2018 and Qatar's 2022 World Cup bids.



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The United States Department of Justice charged several FIFA and football officials with racketeering, wire fraud, and money-laundering conspiracies. According to the indictment, officials allegedly accepted more than \$150 million in bribes and kickbacks from sports-marketing companies in exchange for helping those companies obtain valuable broadcasting and marketing rights for football tournaments. The allegations also included bribery connected to the selection of South Africa as the host of the 2010 World Cup and FIFA's 2011 presidential election. Some officials allegedly used intermediaries, companies, and disguised payments to conceal the money. The investigations also brought attention to the process of selecting World Cup hosts. In a later indictment, it was alleged that corruption was connected to votes concerning the 2018 World Cup in Russia and the 2022 World Cup in Qatar; because these were allegations contained in an indictment, delegates should distinguish them from conduct later established through guilty convictions. The Department of Justice explained that FIFA and its confederations generated substantial revenue by selling media and marketing rights to tournaments, demonstrating why commercial interests are relevant to the committee's debate. However, these reforms did not end the broader debate surrounding FIFA's governance. They created the foundation for the current discussion about transparency, political influence, human rights, financial accountability, and FIFA's responsibilities when organizing World Cups.



CURRENT SITUATION

Sportswashing refers to the use of major sporting events to improve a country's international image while criticism of its political or human-rights record continues. Argentina's 1978 World Cup took place under a military dictatorship that faced international criticism for serious human-rights abuses, while Russia's 2018 World Cup was held amid concerns about restrictions on civil society, freedom of expression, and the treatment of migrant workers. Qatar's 2022 World Cup received significant criticism over migrant-worker conditions, including wage problems, recruitment abuses, and restrictions on workers' rights, as well as concerns regarding freedom of expression, women's rights, and LGBTQ+ rights. These examples demonstrate how hosting the World Cup can provide governments with a highly visible international platform to promote their country and influence its global image while controversial political and human-rights issues remain under discussion.

From 2022 to 2026, FIFA has continued to face major debates concerning governance, transparency, political influence, and human rights. The 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar was especially important because of the treatment of migrant workers involved in preparing the country for the tournament. Qatar needed extensive infrastructure to host the World Cup, including stadiums, transportation systems, hotels, roads, and other facilities. Many of these projects depended on migrant workers, whom Human Rights Watch reported were exposed to serious labor abuses, including wage theft, excessive recruitment fees, injuries, and unexplained deaths. Human Rights Watch also reported that workers could face problems connected to Qatar's former *kafala* sponsorship system, which gave employers significant control over migrant workers' legal status. Although Qatar introduced several labor reforms before the tournament, human-rights organizations argued that some reforms were implemented too late, were limited in scope, or were not adequately enforced.

The Qatar situation also changed the discussion about FIFA's responsibilities when selecting future World Cup hosts. Human Rights Watch argued that FIFA knew, or should have known, that the massive infrastructure requirements in Qatar would create significant risks for migrant workers. The organization criticized FIFA for not making stronger labor-rights conditions part of the original hosting agreement and for not carrying out sufficient human-rights due diligence. At the same time, Qatar did introduce reforms, including changes to the *kafala* system, allowing many migrant workers to change jobs more easily and introducing a minimum wage.

CURRENT SITUATION

The 2026 World Cup, hosted by the United States, Mexico, and Canada, created a different set of concerns, particularly regarding immigration and the relationship between FIFA and national governments. FIFA introduced a Human Rights Framework for the tournament, making 2026 the first World Cup to incorporate human-rights requirements into the bidding and hosting process. However, Human Rights Watch raised concerns about immigration enforcement in the United States and its potential effect on fans, workers, immigrant communities, and journalists. According to Human Rights Watch's analysis of U.S. government data, ICE arrested at least 167,000 people in and around the 11 U.S. cities hosting World Cup matches. Additionally, during the World Cup, the US government denied the Iranian team's visas, as well as many fans from the same country; such occurrences kept getting ignored, covered up, and not really mentioned, so that the US didn't gain any controversy.

Apart from the situations that occurred in the US, Mexico also used the World Cup to project an image of safety and economic modernization, covering up cartel power, thousands of disappearances, systemic drug-war violence, poverty, and general violence. In both Mexico and the United States happened that much media surfaced on social media showing ICE deportations, fights, shootings, and even cartel blackmail that was rumored to go towards teams that went against Mexico. Finally, during the world cup in Mexico, "Las Madres Buscadoras" (a group of determined Mexican mothers who look for their relatives who disappeared due to the cartel), and other human rights activists were suppressed with limited public access, riot police, and tear gas, so that their demands weren't broadcast on global television. Additionally, behind the scenes of global soccer, financial opacity creates major inequalities and opportunities for abuse in three areas. First is media rights: wealthy, high-income countries pay full price for World Cup streaming rights (often totaling \$ 100 million), while networks from developing countries are either outpriced or rolled into backdoor deals to get their fair share. Secondly, sponsorships are increasingly dominated by state-owned corporations from wealthy regimes; these multi-billion-dollar partnerships act as political influence, allowing host nations to replenish their reputation (a form of sportswashing). Finally, the development funds used to finance youth academies and local stadiums in low-income federations are frequently extracted by corrupt local officials. Without strict monitoring or administration of these 3 streams, the massive wealth intended to grow the sport fairly worldwide gets concentrated at the top, or lost in backroom dealmaking.

PAST SOLUTIONS

International cooperation has been used to address human rights concerns connected to World Cups. Before the 2022 Qatar World Cup, the International Labour Organization (ILO) worked with Qatar to improve conditions for migrant workers. Qatar introduced several reforms and mechanisms for workers to submit complaints. These measures produced some improvements, including hundreds of thousands of approved job-change applications. Nevertheless, the ILO continued to identify problems involving wage delays, retaliation, access to justice, and workers' ability to organize. This demonstrates that international cooperation can lead to meaningful progress, but reforms can remain incomplete when enforcement is inconsistent or when workers cannot easily access the protections established by law.

Another approach has been incorporating human-rights requirements into the process of selecting World Cup hosts. FIFA's 2026 bidding process included human-rights requirements, making human rights a formal consideration when evaluating potential hosts. However, the experiences surrounding Qatar demonstrate that requirements on paper are not necessarily enough to prevent abuses in practice. The continuing debate over labor rights, immigration, and political influence shows why FIFA needs not only standards, but also mechanisms to independently verify compliance and respond when those standards are not met. The main lesson from previous solutions is therefore that rules, reforms, and international agreements can produce improvements, but their success depends heavily on independent monitoring, transparency, and meaningful enforcement.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Before proposing solutions, delegates should investigate the main areas where FIFA's governance, World Cup organization, and relationship with governments can be strengthened. The following areas provide a starting point for research and discussion while allowing delegates to develop their own proposals based on their countries' positions and the evidence they find.

1. World Cup Hosting and Human Rights

- Delegates could examine the relationship between World Cup hosting and the protection of human and labor rights. The experience of Qatar and the reforms implemented with the involvement of the International Labour Organization provide examples of both progress and remaining challenges. Research could consider whether human-rights and labor standards should play a greater role in determining which countries are eligible to host major sporting events, how compliance should be evaluated before and during a tournament, and what responsibilities FIFA, host governments, contractors, and international organizations should have when violations occur.

2. FIFA's Political Neutrality and Institutional Independence

- Delegates could investigate how FIFA can maintain political neutrality and independence while cooperating with national governments. Government involvement in areas such as World Cup organization, immigration, security, and individual football-related decisions raises questions about where legitimate cooperation ends and political influence begins. The 2026 World Cup, including debates surrounding U.S. immigration policies and the Folarin Balogun suspension, provides a contemporary case for research. Delegates could examine how FIFA defines political neutrality, how its disciplinary bodies are expected to operate independently, and how other international organizations protect their institutional independence.

BLOC POSITIONS

FIFA: the global governing body of football and the organization directly responsible for organizing the FIFA World Cup. Defends its authority and institutional independence while recognizing the need to strengthen transparency, accountability, and enforcement. Can argue that it has already introduced governance reforms and human-rights requirements, while emphasizing that host governments also have responsibilities.

UEFA: governing body of European football and one of FIFA's six continental confederations. Should support FIFA's overall role in international football while advocating strong governance, transparency, accountability, and institutional independence. Provides an important alternative institutional perspective. It can question whether FIFA's existing mechanisms are sufficiently effective without necessarily opposing FIFA itself.

United States: one of the three hosts of the 2026 FIFA World Cup and one of the world's most economically influential countries. Emphasize national sovereignty and the important role of governments in security, immigration, and tournament organization while supporting FIFA's authority over football-related matters.

Qatar: host of the 2022 FIFA World Cup and one of the most important examples in the debate surrounding FIFA, human rights, and World Cup hosting. Highlights the labor reforms implemented before and during the World Cup while defending its sovereignty and responsibility for domestic policies.

BLOC POSITIONS

CONCACAF: football association that represents North America, Central America and the Caribbean. Emphasizes cooperation between FIFA and continental confederations while supporting transparency, accountability and the protection of sporting integrity.

Mexico: one of the three 2026 World Cup hosts and an important football nation in CONCACAF. Can emphasize cooperation between FIFA and host governments while supporting stronger standards for transparency and responsible tournament organization. Serves as a bridge between delegations emphasizing national sovereignty and those demanding stronger external oversight. Its position can focus on balancing FIFA requirements with the economic and social benefits of hosting.

Brazil: one of football's most influential nations and the host of the 2014 FIFA World Cup. Supports stronger FIFA transparency and accountability while emphasizing the importance of giving developing and football-focused nations opportunities to host major tournaments. It can bring attention to the economic and social consequences of hosting a World Cup, including infrastructure costs, public investment, and the distribution of FIFA opportunities among different regions.

France: major European football nation and a historically important FIFA member. Brings strong sporting integrity, transparent governance, and the independence of football's disciplinary institutions.

QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION PAPER MUST ANSWER

1. How can FIFA improve transparency and accountability in its financial and administrative decision-making?
2. How can FIFA prevent and respond to corruption, including bribery, kickbacks, money laundering, and conflicts of interest?
3. How should FIFA ensure that World Cup host countries meet human-rights and labor standards before and during the tournament?
4. How can FIFA independently monitor compliance with its rules and human-rights requirements, and what should happen when those requirements are not met?
5. How should FIFA protect its political neutrality and institutional independence while still cooperating with national governments and host countries?
6. How can FIFA reduce the possibility of political influence over sporting decisions, including disciplinary or eligibility decisions involving players and national teams?
7. How can FIFA ensure that the proposed measures remain effective in the long term, rather than only being implemented after a corruption scandal, human-rights controversy, or case of political interference?

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