

To:  
Ms. Sari Bashi, Adv.  
Israel/Palestinian Director  
Human Rights Watch

September 22, 2016  
[sent Sept. 23 2016]  
16 Elul, 5776

By E-mail

Dear Madam,

Re: **Israeli football clubs in the Judea and Samaria Area**  
(Ref: Your letter dated August 28, 2016)

Your letter in reference has been received by the chairman of the Israel Football Association. In response thereto and following two telephone conversations between us, please see below my response on behalf of the Israel Football Association.

I would like to begin by noting that I am consciously and deliberately ignoring your choice of certain phrases that appear in your letter. The choice to use these phrases, like the basis for the letter, originates in political worldviews and choices, whereas I am responding on behalf of the IFA. As is known, the purpose of the IFA is to benefit football. That is its sole concern. Political issues are not part of our "playing field". Moreover, as you are certainly aware, FIFA, which you mention in your letter, is also not concerned with, or is not meant to be concerned with, political issues, matters and disputes. This fundamental principle of separation between sports and politics has been repeatedly iterated by senior FIFA officials and is expressly articulated in FIFA statutes.

Following your letter, I have reread the document that defines FIFA's position on human rights (2016 version) and found nothing in it to support your claims regarding football activity in the clubs mentioned in your letter.

Therefore, I will answer the questions that are relevant to football activity.

As is known and accepted, and as it should be, sports activities in general, and football in particular, are meant to serve as a means for promoting peace and neighborly relations among people and among nations. It is meant to bridge gaps and provide a platform for joint activity regardless of political questions or disputes. This has always been the IFA's conduct. The participation of Israeli athletes from all religions and sectors in the IFA, including in Israel's national football teams, has always been a source of pride and a leading example of comradery and neighborly relations.

On this issue, we make no distinction between any of the Israeli football teams that are active in the IFA and have players from different nationalities and backgrounds playing

together in comradery and full cooperation, regardless of where the clubs are located. The same holds true for clubs located in places whose final status is to be determined, according to valid agreements between the State of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, in negotiations between these parties, and which are currently under the authority of the State of Israel.

In conclusion, I note again that we at the IFA are not the people to whom your grievances should be addressed, and certainly not the people who must answer them. We have no intention of responding to, and certainly no intention of arguing over the claims made in your letter, which are fundamentally political, have nothing to do with sports and, I shall take the liberty to say, are contrary to one of the fundamentals of sporting activities, which is separation between sports and politics.

Sincerely,s

Efraim Barak, Adv.  
Legal Advisor  
Israel Football Association

CC:

Mr. Ofer Eini, IFA Chairman  
Mr. Rotem Kamer, IFA CEO