



**SPORT &  
RIGHTS  
ALLIANCE**

RAISING THE BAR FOR  
SPORT, HUMAN RIGHTS  
AND TRANSPARENCY

May 4, 2022

**Deutscher  
Bundestag**

**Ausschuss für  
Menschenrechte  
und humanitäre  
Hilfe** (Human  
Rights and  
Humanitarian Aid  
Committee)

Platz der Republik  
1 11011 Berlin,  
Deutschland

**Re: Sport & Rights Alliance Written Submission to the Public Hearing on  
“Human Rights and Sport” at the German Bundestag**

Dear Chairperson Alt,  
Dear Members of the Committee,

I am writing to you on behalf of the [Sport & Rights Alliance \(SRA\)](#), a global coalition of trade unions and non-governmental organizations committed to embedding human rights and anti-corruption standards in world sport, to submit our written Statement to the Public Hearing on “Human Rights and Sport”, scheduled for May 11, 2022 by the German Bundestag’s Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid.

The SRA works together to ensure sports bodies, governments and other relevant stakeholders give rise to a world of sport that protects, respects, and fulfills international standards for human rights, labor rights, child wellbeing and safeguarding, LGBTIQ+ rights, press freedom and anti-corruption.

As independent global organizations with vast experience researching, reporting, campaigning and advocating to promote the rights and wellbeing of those most affected by the risks associated with the delivery of sport, we welcome the German Human Rights Committee’s interest and commitment to advance human rights and sport.

We look forward to continuing our engagement with members of the Committee in the advancement of human rights and sports in Germany and beyond. We remain at your disposal if you have any questions or would like to meet with us. We can be contacted by email at [andrea@sportandrightsalliance.org](mailto:andrea@sportandrightsalliance.org).

Yours sincerely,

Andrea Florence  
Acting Director  
**Sport & Rights Alliance**





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# Statement to the Public Hearing on “Human Rights and Sport” by the German Bundestag’s Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid

Nyon, Switzerland, May 4, 2022

## I. Introduction

1. The [Sport & Rights Alliance \(SRA\)](#) is a global coalition of respected and experienced international human rights, anti-corruption and labor organizations, representing and standing for the people who are most impacted in and by sport. Our partners include Amnesty International, The Army of Survivors, Committee to Protect Journalists, Football Supporters Europe, Human Rights Watch, ILGA World (The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association), the International Trade Union Confederation, Transparency International Germany, and World Players Association, UNI Global Union.
2. Founded in 2015 in the wake of [mounting high-profile scandals involving the IOC and FIFA](#), we came together to act as a force multiplier for independent global organizations advocating for systemic change within global sport and to increase the cost of inaction. We engage with grassroots organizations, people and communities in struggle, including athletes, fans, children, women, LGBTIQ+ people, journalists, workers, survivors of abuse.

## II. The context

3. Sport has the potential to be a catalyst for human development, unity and freedom. Despite the financial impacts from COVID-19, [the global sport industry remains resilient](#), generating [\\$388.28 billion in 2020](#) and being expected to reach \$599.9 billion in 2025. As big businesses, sports organizations have the responsibility to respect, monitor and remedy human rights as established by the [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights \(UN Guiding Principles\)](#) — confirmed in 2016 to include the sports context in John G. Ruggie’s [“For the Game. For the World: FIFA and Human Rights”](#) and most recently in 2020 in the independent report written by Prince Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein and Rachel Davis to the International Olympic Committee (IOC), [“Recommendations for an IOC Human Rights Strategy”](#).
4. However, sport continues to resist change in governance, culture, diversity, standards and practice, and fails to abide by basic human rights and transparency standards. There is a dangerous accountability gap in sports. The consequences of this omission mean persistent abuses of human rights that bring lifelong harm to those impacted by and in sport. Sport certainly has the power to fulfill its promise of being a force for good — but for that to happen, the right policies and systems must be put in place.
5. A new wave of sport activism has emerged with the exposure of labor rights violations, repression of athlete’s freedom of expression and systemic abuse, press freedom restrictions and the worldwide realization of the so-called ‘sportswashing’ phenomenon, whereby governments use mega sporting events to rebrand their image on the global stage. This wave presents a new opportunity to further embed and activate human rights within sport and beyond.

### III. Advancing human rights in global sport

6. In the short period since its establishment, our alliance has been uniquely impactful in changing the global rules of sport in relation to human rights. In 2016, FIFA amended [article 3 of the FIFA Statutes](#) to provide that “FIFA is committed to respecting all internationally recognized human rights”. Shortly after, the IOC agreed to embed respect for human rights in the [2024 & 2028 Host City Contracts](#). Our work around exposing the endemic abuse in sports, from Haiti, Afghanistan, Mali to the US has led to the recent [commitment from FIFA to launch a global Safe Sport Entity](#).
7. We have also helped drive significant impact by bringing forward [solidarity cases](#). In 2018, the SRA supported a global campaign to [save Hakeem Al-Arabi from extradition](#), an Australian footballer of Bahraini descent arrested in Thailand. In 2020, we helped amplify the campaign to [save Iranian wrestler Navid Afkari from execution](#) – pressuring the IOC to make a public statement around the case and driving media attention. Most recently, we have collectively advocated for the respect and protection of [Chinese Olympian and top tennis player Peng Shuai](#), pushing the IOC to finally break with the Chinese government’s official narrative and publicly acknowledge Peng’s revelations of sexual assault.
8. These and other examples show that the world of sport is in the midst of a once-in-a-generation opportunity to make real, lasting reforms to live up to its responsibility to respect human rights and advance sport values of justice, equality and inclusion worldwide.

### IV. Recommendations

9. As a first step, it is important that any development within sport and human rights is clearly grounded in policies highlighting international human rights standards — moving away from merely protecting governmental and sport institutions to truly focusing on the needs of athletes, fans, journalists, children, LGBTIQ+ people and everyone impacted by sports. A review of governance structures and policy should be conducted to highlight the German government’s commitments to specific international standards and how they apply to sports. At the global level, Germany should use its diplomatic relations with other states, Switzerland in particular, and sport governing bodies, such as the IOC, FIFA and others, to advocate for human rights-based policy, governance and procedural reforms.
10. Secondly, as with any initiative that aims to have effective impact, meaningful engagement with diverse stakeholders should be planned and embedded from the outset, ensuring civil society, trade unions, affected groups and their representatives are included at the decision-making table and processes. This also means having a more active role within multi-stakeholder organizations dedicated to sport and human rights, such as the Centre for Sport & Human Rights and other global fora.
11. A third area of focus should be human rights monitoring and proactive data collection on rights compliance in sports. This includes setting up specific grievance and complaints mechanisms for sports and a survivor-centred, trauma informed and well-resourced national Safe Sport Centre (Zentrum für Safe Sport), as per the German government’s recent commitments, with a mandate to prevent, monitor, investigate and remedy harassment, discrimination and abuse in sports, in line with Principle 31 of the UN Guiding Principles.

12. In terms of prevention programmes, governmental institutions play an important role of disseminating promising practices and information regarding the promotion and protection of human rights in sports, educating and empowering all groups impacted by sports to know and realize their rights. This includes adopting requirements to conduct child wellbeing and safeguarding protection training and embedding the development of rights-based structures and programmes within sports federations.
13. Finally, ensuring support and remedy is promptly available to anyone having their rights violated within or around sports is absolutely crucial. To be effective, this requires a sensitive and supportive approach guided by individuals' preferences throughout and ensuring free, ongoing, professional, psychological, social, medical and legal support to athletes, fans and other stakeholders who have experienced negative impacts in sports.

## **V. Final considerations**

14. The Sport & Rights Alliance welcomes the German Bundestag's Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid interest and commitment to advance human rights and sport. We look forward to collaborating with the Committees' members around next steps and recommendations to advance human rights and sports in Germany and beyond.

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