

Sport & Rights Alliance

Annual Report

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RAISING THE BAR FOR
SPORT, HUMAN RIGHTS
AND TRANSPARENCY

Our Reflections

A New Era for Sport and Human Rights

After years of fighting for global sport to recognize its impact and responsibility toward human rights, the year 2023 ushered in a new era – an era where human rights can no longer be ignored by sport governing bodies.

With the Australia and New Zealand Women's World Cup, this past year featured the first-ever mega sporting event to have human rights criteria included its Host Country Contract. We will see the same with this year with the EURO 2024 and the Paris Summer Olympics. On the heels of the 2022 Qatar Men's World Cup, it's also clear that public awareness for sport's human rights problem has also never been higher. A YouGov opinion poll commissioned by our partner Amnesty International proves this with data – over 50% of people surveyed in 15 countries said they believe human rights should be a critical consideration in deciding who hosts major international sporting events.

However, what 2023 has also proved is that policies and bidding processes are not enough – and maintaining the public's faith that sport can and will be an authentic force for good is no small challenge. From the horrible, public sexual assault of Jenni Hermoso, to FIFA's artfully rushed bidding process for the 2030 and 2034 Men's World Cups, the spotlight has shifted to the glaring gaps in FIFA's ability to implement and uphold its human rights commitments. At the IOC, whereas we have seen promising developments with the long awaited human rights amendments in the Olympic Charter and the announcement of the \$10 million fund for athlete safeguarding, there are still challenges in their ability to respond to human rights abuse, as well as to recognize athletes' fundamental rights to organize and to freedom of expression.

Of course, the adoption of human rights policies and systems were, and are, critical to our ability to hold sport governing bodies accountable and push for implementation. But we are at a critical moment where the temptation to relent has never been more dangerous – and the costs of failing have never been higher. If we want to sustain these changes, as well as advance the many others we're still yet to achieve, we'll need to push beyond the echo chambers. We need to think outside the box, and radically change how sport governing bodies actually apply these policies and make them a reality for the communities and individuals being impacted by sport.



We believe that the best way to do this is to continue listening to and championing the voices of those who are most impacted by sport's ill effects. In 2023 we brought on board Olympic swimmer, survivor and researcher Joanna Maranhão and began the development of our Athletes Network for Safer Sports – pioneering a survivor-centered, trauma-informed and participatory approach that is already creating ripple effects throughout the sporting world. We have experimented with new modes of communication and tapped into the power of athletes' stories to make human rights real and compelling for new audiences.

We forge ahead because at the end of the day, we know that if pushed to be its best, sport can be powerful force for social change. We know that by uniting the voices of players, fans, workers and survivors, journalists, women, children and the LGBTI community, we present a formidable counter to the challenges ahead.

In 2024, we renew our commitment to fight for justice for the people most deeply affected by sport, and to shift the sport and human rights movement from policy to action.



Andrea Florence
Director
Sport & Rights Alliance

Our Governance



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The Sport & Rights Alliance, established in 2015, is a global coalition dedicated to leveraging the power of sport to advance rights into the very fabric of society. We exist to promote the rights and well-being of those most affected by sport, including athletes, fans, workers, journalists, activists, children, women and LGBTI+ people. Our partners are committed to a future where sports organizations respect human rights throughout all their events and operations, and are a genuine force for positive change.

Our governance structure consists of five main bodies: the Secretariat, the Core Partners, the Strategic Partners, the Steering Committee, and the Senior Leadership Committee. Having solidified this structure in 2022, we are dedicated to continuous evaluation to ensure effective and transparent decision-making, emphasizing efficiency and organizational effectiveness.

The Secretariat manages the day-to-day operations of the Alliance, coordinating joint advocacy and campaign actions, ensuring the combined strength, representation and expertise of our partners and people directly impacted by sports are harnessed, organized and amplified.

Our Core Partners meet at least monthly to address emerging issues and evaluate impact. Our Strategic Partners reach out to the Alliance on an ad hoc basis when there's a need for global support to a specific campaign. The Steering Committee provides management oversight and advice related to internal organizational matters. Active working groups coordinate communication, fundraising, and expansion efforts. Our Senior Leadership Committee, comprising executive representatives from our Core Partners, convenes annually to define strategy, review actions, approve annual plans, drive fundraising efforts, ensure accountability, and provide strategic guidance.

The Sport & Rights Alliance is hosted and operated by the World Players Association sector of UNI Global Union, registered in Switzerland with an office at 8-10 Avenue Reverdil, 1260 Nyon.



Secretariat

Director: Andrea Florence
Network Coordinator: Joanna Maranhão
Communications Coordinator: Rachel Causey
Graphic Designer: Victoria Andreoli

Core Partners

Amnesty International
The Army of Survivors
Committee to Protect Journalists
Football Supporters Europe
Human Rights Watch
ILGA World
International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)
Transparency International Germany
World Players Association, UNI Global Union

Strategic Partners

Athlete Ally
Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy
Belarusian Sport Solidarity Foundation
Center for Human Rights in Iran
Dignity 2026 Coalition
Girl Power Organization
Open Stadiums
Young Players Protection in Africa – Mali

Senior Leadership Committee

Chair: Jyrki Raina (Sport & Rights Alliance)
Agnes Callamard (Secretary General, Amnesty International)
Grace French (Board President, The Army of Survivors)
Jodie Ginsberg (President, Committee to Protect Journalists)
Julia Ehrt (Executive Director, ILGA World)
Martha Gens (Board Member, Football Supporters Europe)
Tirana Hassan (Executive Director, Human Rights Watch)
Luc Triangle (General Secretary, ITUC)
Daniel Eriksson (Chief Executive Officer, Transparency International)
Christy Hoffman (General Secretary, UNI Global Union)

Steering Committee

Matthew Graham (Interim Executive Director, World Players Association)
Minky Worden (Director of Global Initiatives, Human Rights Watch)
Tim Noonan (Director of Campaigns and Communications, ITUC)
Andrea Florence (Director, Sport & Rights Alliance)
Jyrki Raina (Chair, Sport & Rights Alliance)

Our Impact



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Goal #1

The Humanity of Sport

Policy

In 2023, the Sport & Rights Alliance engaged in multifaceted advocacy efforts, consultations, and direct engagements targeting three major sports governing bodies and the Swiss Federal Government. This included persistent advocacy discussions with FIFA and the IOC, in-person dialogues with all Core Partners at our Annual Summit in May 2023 and taking part in public UN-led events. Throughout the year, we were able to contribute to advancing the following good governance and policy changes:

International Olympic Committee (IOC)



After years of pressure and consultation from the Alliance, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) finally adopted [amendments to the Olympic Charter](#) that include references to internationally recognized human rights. We applauded this historic development but also called on the IOC to clarify the Olympic Movement's responsibilities to respect the fundamental rights and dignity of athletes as workers and human beings. We continued our regular engagement with the IOC human rights team to discuss urgent cases in sport, including related to Iran, Afghanistan, and the preparations for Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games. We also participated in the IOC Safeguarding Working Group created to negotiate the framework and establishment of regional hubs intended to provide guidance and remedy to athletes at the local level.

Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA)



The Sport & Rights Alliance's engagement in relation to FIFA's policy development centered around advocating for human rights protections and clear and binding commitments to improve human rights in countries likely to take part in the [2030 & 2034 Men's World Cup bidding processes – a call bolstered by Amnesty's research showing that a majority of fans want human rights standards to be a key consideration when selecting the host of major sports events such as the World Cup](#). We also engaged in the initial consultation process for FIFA's new Human Rights Strategy and continued advocating for transparency and progress on FIFA's strategy to address athlete abuse through the global [Independent Safe Sport Entity](#) (see more under Goal #2: People).

Union of European Football Associations (UEFA)



The Sport & Rights Alliance also built upon the momentum initiated in 2022 to rebuild stakeholder relations with UEFA after the breakdown in communications given its problematic [Football Sustainability Strategy 2030](#). We used our Annual Summit in Nyon to meet with representatives from the General Secretary's office and strategize about how best to proceed, especially considering the EURO 2024 in Germany. Starting in October, we then consulted with UEFA and EURO 2024 GmbH on the human rights strategy and grievance mechanism for this tournament.

Swiss Federal Government



In conjunction with Amnesty International's Swiss office, the Sport & Rights Alliance launched a [campaign](#) to urge the Swiss National Council to demonstrate how it will ensure sport governing bodies domiciled in Switzerland comply with their human rights responsibilities. We conducted meetings with key members of the Federal Parliament and Government, stressing the need for a Swiss strategy on human rights due diligence that incorporates sport. Though the [initial postulates](#) did not pass, the votes show clear momentum for improving sport governance in Switzerland.

Goal #2

Powerful Sporting Moments

Events

Throughout the year, the Sport & Rights Alliance harnessed, amplified and coordinated campaigns around the following powerful sporting moments:

FIFA Men's World Cup 2022



Throughout 2023, the Sport & Rights Alliance [remained at the forefront of championing](#) migrant workers' rights, particularly those who were involved in the preparations for the 2022 FIFA Men's World Cup in Qatar. We supported Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International in their campaign to ensure FIFA provides a remedy fund for migrant workers who experienced [severe human rights violations and harsh working conditions they endured](#), including lost wages, injuries and illness, and death. This fund, proposed to match the World Cup's prize money with USD \$440 million, gained monumental public backing with [over a million signatures](#) worldwide. UEFA Vice President and Norwegian FA President [Lise Klaveness even joined the call](#) by introducing a motion for an independent report, which is now expected to be released in March 2024.

FIFA Women's World Cup 2023



The Sport & Rights Alliance played a pivotal role in supporting and amplifying the campaigns of athletes and survivors during the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup held in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. Celebrating the [75th Anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration Human Rights](#), we launched a creative [social media campaign](#) highlighting stories about the women of the 2023 World Cup to promote gender equity and LGBTI+ rights. With a total of 16 posts, the campaign generated 265,000 impressions and 330 new followers, including on our newly launched [Instagram](#) account. The campaign included supporting the efforts of the former [Afghan Women's National Team](#), led by Khalida Popal and by FIFPRO, Professional Footballers Australia (PFA) and World Players, as they seek to be recognized by FIFA as representing Afghanistan in exile. We also magnified the [campaign of Baraya Louis](#) (pseudonym), chief whistleblower and survivor of abuse on the Haiti Women's Football team, which raised over 17,000 signatures demanding FIFA ensure pay equity, safety, protection & justice for players.

UEFA EURO 2024



As mentioned earlier in this report, the Sport & Rights Alliance engaged in the consultation process for the 2024 UEFA European Championship human rights approach, resulting in the publication of the [Human Rights Declaration for UEFA EURO 2024](#). This declaration, a collaborative effort between UEFA and the German Football Association (DFB), defines their commitment to identifying, monitoring, mitigating and providing access to remedy for the human rights risks associated with the 2024 tournament in Germany. We are now focused on monitoring the implementation of this approach, and the grievance mechanism in particular.

FIFA Men's World Cup 2030 & 2034



FIFA's [decision to concurrently](#) conduct the bidding processes for both the 2030 and 2034 Men's World Cups – and limit the 2034 bids to Asia and Oceania – resulted in single, non-competitive bids for both tournaments: Morocco, Portugal & Spain for 2030 and Saudi Arabia for 2034. The Sport & Rights Alliance [called on FIFA](#) to secure clear and binding commitments from bidding countries to improve human rights – and to stop the selection process if they do not. We will remain engaged in monitoring this process in 2024, which should include an independent human rights impact assessment and strategic plan to mitigate risks from each of the aspiring host countries.

2024 Paris Olympic & Paralympic Games



In partnership with Human Rights Watch and Athlete Ally, the Sport & Rights Alliance supported the production and coordination for a [1-year countdown to Paris 2024 video](#) on July 28, 2023 calling on the IOC to enact on its obligation to protect athletes from abuse in sport. Through Amnesty, we also met with and facilitated the participation of [Basket Pour Toutes](#) (Basketball for All) at the 2024 Sporting Chance Forum, hosted by the Centre for Sport and Human Rights at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. Through this meeting, we supported the coordination and amplification of a coalition-wide campaign for International Women’s Day calling on FIBA and the French federation to overturn the hijab ban in French basketball.

2026 FIFA Men’s World Cup in Canada, Mexico & United States



In 2023, we worked with the [Dignity 2026](#) coalition to develop a set of Minimum Standards for FIFA to apply across the planning and operations of the 2026 Men’s World Cup in Canada, Mexico & the United States. These standards – on safeguarding and non-discrimination, living wage guarantees, inclusive hiring requirements, protections for the right to organize, corporate accountability measures and more – are reflected in FIFA’s draft 2026 World Cup Host City Human Rights Framework. We also advocated for FIFA, local host committees and multinational corporations to engage with local networks through both the planning and implementation processes. Critically, we are focused on supporting these local coalitions to protect and advance these wins through enforceable agreements and local policies – Community Benefits Agreements, Responsible Contractor Policies, Labor Peace Agreements and more.

Goal #3

The People of Sport

People

The Sport & Rights Alliance has seen impact in bringing forward the following solidarity cases in order to test remedy systems and governance and bring about systemic change:

Mali U-19 Girls' Basketball Players



After investigations from [Human Rights Watch](#) and [The New York Times](#) in 2021 revealed decades-long systemic abuse of U-19 girl basketball players and subsequent cover-ups by officials and coaches in the Mali Basketball Federation (FMBB), the Sport & Rights Alliance coordinated an advocacy campaign together with Human Rights Watch, World Players and the Women's National Basketball Players Association (WNBPA) to hold the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) accountable and ensure legal and psychosocial support for affected players. Despite FIBA's immediate steps to commission an [independent investigation](#) and establish its "Safeguarding Council," we continued to exert pressure on FIBA and the IOC throughout 2023 as known abusers and enablers continued to work closely with and around the FMBB. This campaign included a [solidarity video from top WNBA players](#) Breanna Stewart, Elizabeth Williams, and Nneka Ogwumike in March 2023, expressing support for the whistleblowers and survivors in Mali and calling for urgent action and systemic reform from the IOC and FIBA. In July 2023, FIBA finally announced a [lifetime ban for the former coach and sanctions](#) on four other top officials, vindicating the survivors and whistleblowers. Our work remains ongoing as FIBA has still yet to provide compensation or access to effective remedy.

Iran Athletes Human Rights Defenders & Women Football Fans



After the increase in Iran's [targeting of athletes](#) who participated in and led protests, the Sport & Rights Alliance worked with the Centre for Human Rights in Iran (CSHRI) and OpenStadiums, to advocate for a firmer action by the IOC to condemn Iran's actions and issue a decision conditioning the IOC's support of the Iranian National Olympic Committee to criteria including guarantees of protection for athletes and inclusion of women in sport without discrimination.

Indian Wrestlers



In June 2023, the Sport & Rights Alliance worked with Human Rights Watch and Transparency International to [publish a statement in support of the Indian wrestlers](#) protesting the abuse of women and child athletes by President of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI), Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh. We called on the IOC, through the [media](#) and private advocacy meetings, to use its influence to ensure the reports were investigated fully and survivors and whistleblowers protected and supported.

A five-member [committee](#) has been appointed to investigate the allegations, but the report has not been made public. The wrestlers have continued their protests by [returning their medals](#) due to the WFI's recent election of the accused president's ally, Sanjay Singh, as his replacement. We remain in contact with the athletes and will continue to advocate for reforms in Indian wrestling and all sports throughout 2024.

Afghan Women's Footballers' Right to Play



The Sport & Rights Alliance supported advocacy from the first Afghanistan Women's National Football Team [to have FIFA recognize their team in exile](#), since they were forced to flee the country when the Taliban took over in 2020 and immediately banned women's participation in sport. Players in exile all over the world demand their right to organize themselves and play representing Afghanistan even in exile.

FIFA Independent Safe Sport Entity



After pushing for extensive negotiations with FIFA regarding the Independent Safe Sport Entity development process, given concerns around trauma-informed practices and transparency, the Sport & Rights Alliance finally secured the inclusion of survivors and people with lived experience. FIFA established an ad hoc Athlete Survivor Advisory Group (ASAG) with the support and guidance of The Army of Survivors – as well as an Interim Steering Group (ISG), which included the Alliance and other civil society and sport organization stakeholders.

These consultations culminated in a [final report](#) from the ISG and ASAG which provided 25 concrete recommendations for FIFA's best course of action delivered on 21 May, 2023. After receiving no communication on FIFA's next steps and fearing a lapse in political will, the Sport & Rights Alliance then published an [open letter](#) in July 2024 to request an update on FIFA's plans for the entity. We continue to engage with FIFA to ensure it follows through on its commitment to establish an independent, fit-for-purpose mechanism to investigate cases of abuse in football and support, protect and provide remedy to survivors and whistleblowers.

Goal #4

The Sport and Human Rights Movement

Movement

The Sport & Rights Alliance has dedicated resources and capacity to strengthen and serve as a force multiplier for the sport and human rights movement in the following areas:



Athletes Network for Safer Sports

In 2023, the Sport & Rights Alliance finalized and published its report, [“We Have to Empower Each Other.”](#) which presented the findings from its needs assessment study for a global network of athlete survivors and allies of abuse in sport. Based on the study’s findings that a network was needed, we secured support for the establishment and operations of the network, and hired Joanna Maranhão, Brazilian Olympian, survivor, advocate and researcher to facilitate and lead the network.

With Joanna’s leadership, we set up an Interim Advisory Council to guide the development and strategy of the network, with five athletes and allies impacted by abuse in sport – Ahmar Maiga (Mali), Jessica Shuran Yu (Singapore), Gabriela Garton (Argentina), Mary Cain (U.S.) and Kaiya McCullough (U.S.). We also engaged consultants [Strategy for Humanity](#) to develop the governance and operational model, and [Onlines](#) to develop new website resources for the Network, which will be launched in early 2024 with a mission to create and strengthen safe spaces for people affected by abuse in sport to further healing, amplify voice, and advocate for systemic change.

To Zero Initiative



In 2023, the Sport & Rights Alliance gathered with an exceptional group of leaders to explore what it will take to end childhood sexual violence. The [To Zero Initiative](#) was created to provide a safe space to allow the field to collectively work towards an end to sexual violence. As the only representative from the sports sector, our Network Coordinator Joanna Maranhão shared her experience with advocacy, campaigns, and strategies to hold sport governing bodies accountable and provide access to justice for children in sports.

World Players Association CARE Report & Roar Room



The Sport & Rights Alliance also supported and contributed to World Players' research and thought leadership initiatives in 2023 toward advancing child rights, gender equity, and decent work in sport. The next phase of Project CARE was launched with the [2023 CARE Mapping Report](#), which identifies emerging ideas and key recommendations to support World Players advancing its work in establishing effective support, representation, and remedy systems for both adult and child survivors of sexual violence. We also amplified World Players' [Roar Room for Gender Equity & Decent Work in Sport](#), a powerful series of capacity-building workshops featuring international experts and leading voices on player rights such as human rights lawyer Kat Craig, former athlete and FIFPRO's Director of Policy Sarah Gregorious, and WNBPA Executive Director [Terri Jackson](#).

Centre for Sport and Human Rights



Since supporting its launch in 2018, the Sport & Rights Alliance has remained an active participant in the Centre by contributing to its different multi-stakeholder activities, ensuring a focus on impact and reinforcing the close link between good governance, transparency, accountability and human rights. In December, Network Coordinator [Joanna Maranhão presented at the 2023 Sporting Chance Forum along with other Alliance partners](#), hosted by the Centre and the [UN's Human Rights 75 Initiative](#), on the need for a trauma-informed approach in global sport's responses to abuse in sport.

External Communications Development



In 2023, the Sport & Rights Alliance advanced the reach of its external communications with a strategic launch on Instagram around the 2023 Women's World Cup – resulting in significant engagement from sports fans and social justice advocates. Combined with our presence on X (Twitter) and LinkedIn, we now maintain over 3,000 followers and 115,000 monthly impressions/views. We have also developed a robust portfolio of media contacts, with our recent statement on the FIFA 2030 & 2034 Men's World Cup bidding process gaining placement in over 20 global media outlets including [BBC News](#), [CNN](#), [France 24](#), and [Reuters](#).

Our Financial Sustainability



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The Sport & Rights Alliance receives organizational, financial, and structural support from World Players Association, a structurally autonomous sector of UNI Global Union. **Through this partnership, we receive contributions from private organizations and foundations worldwide.** Our financial health in 2023 was marked by the expansion and diversification of our fundraising portfolio – including via partnerships with The Army of Survivors and Football Supporters Europe. Our other Core Partners also contribute in-kind support, amounting to an estimated USD 250,000 annually.


We continue to seek new financial partners to enhance the Alliance's sustainability and independence, and help expand and realize the full potential of the sport and human rights movement.




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