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## Human Rights Council

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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development**

**Joint written statement\* submitted by Terre Des Hommes  
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governmental organizations in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[30 May 2016]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

## **Recommendations for the use of sport and the Olympic ideal to promote human rights for all**

We welcome the convening of the panel discussion on the use of sport and the Olympic Ideal to promote human rights for all. The “Fundamental Principles of Olympism” as it is established in the Olympic Charter guarantees, amongst other values, the respect for “human dignity”, for “universal fundamental principles” and the “educational value of good example”.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, FIFA stresses the importance of “humanitarian values” in its Statutes and makes sure to publicise that their duty goes beyond football, stretching it “to improve the lives of young people and their surrounding communities, to reduce the negative impact of our activities and to make the most we can of the positives”.<sup>2</sup>

Despite these values, Mega Sporting Events, such as the Olympics and the World Cup, often cause human rights violations directly related to the event or exacerbate already existing ones, with children being particularly vulnerable. In recent years, sport governing bodies have faced increase criticism over forced evictions, increase of police and army violence, violation of workers rights, restrictions of the rights to freedom of expression and to protest, among others.

There have been some initial moves by some sports governing bodies to position human rights as part of their plans. The International Olympics Committee’s *Olympic Agenda 2020* reform package includes assurances to respect a limited number of human rights. FIFA is reviewing their governance and hosting requirements with a view to integrating human rights commitments. However, to date, human rights good practice has been minimal.

### **Patterns of abuse**

Massive infrastructure construction for Mega Sporting Events has paved the way for **forced evictions** without due process or compensation.<sup>3</sup> Before the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, hundreds of thousands of residents had their homes demolished without due process in terms of consultation.<sup>4</sup> The same was reported in Sochi in the run up to the 2014 Winter Olympic Games<sup>5</sup> and due to the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.<sup>6</sup> Children in Brazil subjected to forced eviction have reported physical violence during removal, including the use of pepper spray and tear gas, worsening health care, lack of places to study and psychological traumas due to intimidation.<sup>7</sup>

Increase of **police and army violence** both repressing peaceful protests and also targeting people in street situation during “clean up” operations have also been a trend in cities hosting Mega Sporting Events. Prior to the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, the police responded to the unprecedented scale of protests with violence and abuse. Arbitrary detention and indiscriminate use of tear gas, rubber bullets and hand-held batons against peaceful protesters was reported.<sup>8</sup> The placement of children in street situation in facilities meant for young offenders as part of street “clean-ups” connected with the 2014 World Cup, as well as in the run up to the 2016 Olympics in Rio was also reported. Many reported violence and humiliation and others disappeared.<sup>9</sup>

Mega Sporting Events have also been widely linked to the **violation of workers rights**. Migrant workers building stadiums for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar have suffered systematic abuses, including forced labour.<sup>10</sup> Human rights and labor groups have raised issues of displacement of local street workers around the 12 host cities of the 2014 World Cup in Brazil.

**Restrictions of the rights to freedom of expression and right to protest** have been a signature of the period leading up to a Mega Sporting Event. In Beijing, activists who criticized the Olympics were arrested. In Azerbaijan, prior to the 2015 European Games, human rights defenders, journalists, politicians and bloggers were arrested, detained and silenced.<sup>11</sup> In March 2016, an Antiterrorism Law (Law number 13.260/2016) was approved and sanctioned as part of the preparations

for the 2016 Rio Olympics. Its broad and overly vague language, leaving a margin for arbitrary application in cases of peaceful protest and assemblies, has been widely criticized by lawyers, academics, human rights organizations.<sup>12</sup>

Although, these are only some examples of the human rights, and specifically child rights, violations that happen around Mega Sporting Events, they demonstrate a clear pattern. Until now, sports organisations have declared themselves powerless to act while governments have promised whatever it took to win the bid to host Mega Sporting Events. But the momentum has shifted.

### Changing the game

As established in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, although governments have the primary responsibility to protect human rights, sport governing bodies also have the **responsibility to respect** these rights. Different initiatives are being put in place to translate what this means into practical terms. The report FIFA commissioned Harvard professor John Ruggie and his team, launched in April 2016, marked a ‘key milestone’ not only for FIFA, but for all sport governing bodies. We also welcome a wider multi-stakeholder initiative for an independent Centre on Learning, Legacy and Accountability for Mega Sporting Events, chaired by Mary Robinson and facilitated by the Institute for Human Rights and Business (IHRB).

We call sports governing bodies such as FIFA and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to align their practise to their ideals by putting in place all measures necessary to prevent human rights abuses connected to the events, including those that affect children, and support the advancement of their rights.

As a first step they should issue a **human rights commitment and policy**. In order to guarantee coherence and the full implementation of this commitment, the **evaluation** of future host candidates should include benchmarks, in compliance with international human rights norms and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Bid agreements should involve a **complete and thorough assessment** of all direct and indirect risks and opportunities to human rights and children before, during and after Mega Sporting Events. These standards should not be based on goodwill, but must be embedded in the **host contract** as non-negotiable and absolutely binding for all parties to the contract.

In order to guarantee regular and vigorous investigation, report and **remedy** violations, apart from conducting **internal monitoring** of the event, sports bodies should support **external independent monitoring board** from the very beginning. Comprising of expert organisations and stakeholders, the board would hold representatives from the local host state that would highlight any contextual variations of the different risks in that specific location and would be mandated specifically on risks related to children’s rights. This oversight would guarantee that there will be no unlawful forced evictions. Moreover, any displacement which paves the way for infrastructure of Mega Sporting Events would be done in accordance with international human rights norms, taking into account the right of children to be heard and their best interest. In case the external board reports a violation linked to the event, the sport governing body should ensure effective remedy to help individuals, communities or other groups.

Lastly, in the interest of transparency and to better monitor the enforcement of these assessments, the bid agreement and its monitoring should be made **public** and sport governing bodies need **in house human rights capacity** to conduct all these recommendations thoroughly.

While we strongly believe in the “use of sport as a tool to promote human rights, development, peace, dialogue and reconciliation”,<sup>13</sup> a global sporting event can only be truly successful and legitimate if it does not harm the local population – **including its children**. People being forced out of their homes, beaten by police for peacefully protesting or locked up

for questioning the legitimacy of a World Cup or Olympic event - none of this should be happening in the name of the sport we love.

Conclusively, the Human Rights Council should increase its leadership in speaking out objectively in the face of human rights violations related to Mega Sporting Events and provide support for identifying, highlighting and developing responses to the human rights challenges related to Mega Sporting Events.

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DKA Austria NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.

<sup>1</sup> International Olympic Committee. Olympic Charter (in force as from 8 December 2014), p. 11 to 12:  
[http://www.olympic.org/Documents/olympic\\_charter\\_en.pdf](http://www.olympic.org/Documents/olympic_charter_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> FIFA, "What we stand for": <http://www.fifa.com/about-fifa/who-we-are/explore-fifa.html>

<sup>3</sup> Terre des Hommes has documented the effects of police and army violence as well as forced removals due to the World Cup and the Olympics in the lives of children and adolescents of Rio de Janeiro. For more information, please see: [www.childrenwin.org](http://www.childrenwin.org)

<sup>4</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Demolished: Forced Evictions and the Tenants' Rights Movement in China" (2004).

<sup>5</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Russia: Forced Eviction Tramples Olympic Ideals" (2012).

<sup>6</sup> World Cup and Olympics Popular Committee of Rio de Janeiro, "Mega-Events and Human Rights Violations in Rio de Janeiro Dossier" (2015).

<sup>7</sup> Dundee University, 'Let's Win This Game Together' (2014).

<sup>8</sup> Amnesty International Brazil, "They use a strategy of fear: protecting the right to protest in Brazil" (2014).

<sup>9</sup> Dundee University, 'Let's Win This Game Together' (2014).

<sup>10</sup> Amnesty International, "Qatar: Abuse of World Cup workers exposed" (2016), ITUC Special Report, "The Case against Qatar: Host of the FIFA 2022 World Cup" (2014)

<sup>11</sup> Amnesty International, "Guilty of defending rights: Azerbaijan's human rights defenders and activists behind bars" (2015)

<sup>12</sup> Conectas Direitos Humanos, Amnesty International, Greenpeace, CUT (Central Única dos Trabalhadores), MTST (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Teto) and MST (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra) have signed a manifest against the law: <http://www.mst.org.br/2015/10/01/movimentos-e-intelectuais-escrevem-manifesto-de-repudio-a-lei-antiterror.html>

<sup>13</sup> Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/31/23 (24 March 2016).