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## Concerns Grow Over U.S. Readiness to Host 2026 World Cup

July 15, 2025

– Categories: Human Rights



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As the 2026 FIFA World Cup draws closer, questions are being raised about whether the United States remains a suitable host due to mounting concerns over immigration enforcement and its perceived impact on human rights. Critics argue that these policies stand in contrast to the inclusive values that the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) claims to uphold.

FIFA, the global governing body for soccer, has stated its commitment to international human rights standards. According to its policy, the organization pledges to conduct due diligence and ensure that its events do not contribute to human rights violations. However, recent developments in U.S. immigration enforcement under President Donald Trump's administration have prompted human rights advocates to call for accountability.

Over the weekend, a FIFA promotional event at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey featured exhibition matches and ceremonies as a showcase for the upcoming World Cup, but the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup final took place at Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, Georgia. FIFA President Gianni Infantino was seen celebrating with President Trump, even as news emerged of a detention facility in the Florida Everglades where undocumented immigrants were reportedly being held in harsh conditions. Lawmakers who visited the site described it as "inhumane," and critics have dubbed it "Alligator Alcatraz," a reference to both the swamp surroundings and the infamous former prison.

Additionally, federal judges have begun to intervene in response to aggressive immigration raids carried out across farms, parks, and businesses nationwide. These enforcement actions have led to clashes between National Guard personnel and demonstrators defending undocumented individuals. Human Rights Watch, a non-governmental organization, urged FIFA to address these issues openly. Minky Worden, the group's Director of Global Initiatives, stated that FIFA must ensure all participants and attendees of the 2026 World Cup are treated fairly and without discrimination based on nationality, religion, gender identity, or political views.

FIFA has faced similar scrutiny in the past. Leading up to the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, concerns were raised about the treatment of migrant workers. Likewise, the 2016 Olympic Games in Brazil saw health experts question the safety of the venue due to the Zika virus outbreak. These precedents demonstrate that global sporting bodies can and have reconsidered event locations under pressure.

Despite FIFA's expanded presence in New York City, there is no FIFA office inside Trump Tower. It is ultimately up to member federations, particularly from regions like the Confederation of African Football (CAF) and the Confederation of North, Central America and Caribbean Association Football (CONCACAF), to push for accountability. If FIFA intends to maintain credibility on its human rights commitments, it must reckon with the implications of current U.S. policy on the spirit of the tournament.

While the U.S. offers robust infrastructure and global visibility, hosting the World Cup is not just a logistical challenge; it is a moral one. If the event is to serve as a celebration of unity, transparency, and fair treatment for all must be non-negotiable.