

## US Border Rules Raise Concerns Ahead of 2026 World Cup

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– Categories: Human Rights



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OTTAWA – Political tensions and policy uncertainties in the United States are raising concerns ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup, which will be co-hosted by the U.S., Canada, and Mexico.

The upcoming tournament, scheduled between June 11 and July 19, will be the largest in FIFA history, featuring 48 teams playing 104 matches, most of them on U.S. soil. While

preparations are underway across all three countries, the impact of U.S. immigration and trade policies is drawing scrutiny from experts.

Victor Matheson, a sports economist at the College of the Holy Cross in Massachusetts, warned of potential complications for fans and players crossing borders. “You could have significant immigration problems with fans and players going across borders,” he said.

The U.S. currently enforces full travel bans on nationals of 12 countries—Afghanistan, Burma, Chad, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Haiti, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen and imposed partial restrictions on citizens of seven others (Burundi, Cuba, Laos, Sierra Leone, Togo, Turkmenistan, and Venezuela). A proposal to add 36 more countries to the list is under review. Though athletes, staff, and families are generally exempt, the unpredictability of future policy changes has created uncertainty.

Economist Andrew Zimbalist, who has studied World Cup economics, noted that while President Trump has the authority to restrict entry via executive proclamation, it is unclear whether exemptions would apply during the tournament period.

Labour and human rights groups raised concerns in early July, with some organizations warning FIFA officials that the U.S. travel restrictions could endanger non-citizen visitors to the tournament.

Canada anticipates up to one million international visitors during the tournament, according to Canadian Heritage, and continues coordinating with host cities, FIFA, and U.S. authorities on cross-border travel procedures.

Experts also raised logistical issues related to trade policies. Matheson noted that U.S. tariffs may complicate the transport of goods such as team merchandise, creating challenges for suppliers.

Despite the concerns, observers believe the tournament’s success will depend on ongoing cooperation among the host nations. “This is an American-centric competition,” said Tim Elcombe, a professor at Wilfrid Laurier University. “Canada will have to navigate these tensions carefully.”

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