

Football (Qatar): LGBTQ+ groups condemn Fifa over OneLove armband sanctions threat

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Campaigners hit out after teams including England and Wales say players will not wear armband at World Cup in Qatar

With about 35,000 delegates from almost 200 countries attending [COP27](#), navigating the sprawling poorly signposted conference centre in Sharm el-Sheikh has been a huge challenge for grassroots activists, and so has finding a way to participate meaningfully within the confines of the UN rules and a repressive state.

Days are long and intense, the negotiations full of legalese and acronyms, and on top of that a lack of affordable food and overzealous security presence has intensified the pressure. But with so much at stake, community leaders have fought hard to be heard and here COP first-timers from three of the countries most affected by climate disasters this year – Spain, [Pakistan](#), and Nigeria – share their highs and lows from Egypt.

LGBTQ+ rights activists and campaigners have condemned Fifa's threats to impose sanctions on players who wear OneLove armbands at the World Cup in Qatar.

England, Wales and five other European nations have confirmed their players will not wear the armband, saying the football governing body had made it clear their captains could be booked or forced to leave the pitch if they did so.

The move was criticised by LGBTQ+ groups, with mixed reaction as to who was to blame.

Stonewall, the LGBTQ+ charity, said on Twitter: "By threatening sporting sanctions & stopping players from wearing [#OneLove](#) armbands, Fifa are brushing criticism of human rights abuses under the carpet.

"LGBTQ+ people are criminalised in [Qatar](#) just for being themselves. No country which abuses the human rights of its people in this way should have been awarded with the honour of hosting a major sporting tournament in the first place.

"We appreciate all the [@England](#) and [@Cymru](#) players' efforts to draw attention to the appalling human rights abuses of LGBTQ+ people in Qatar, and we urge them to continue to speak out in Qatar as best and safely as they can."

Pride in Football, a network of LGBTQ+ fan groups in the UK, said on Twitter: "A token gesture from the start that has turned into another embarrassment from [Fifa](#). Fifa have had since September to sort this, and yet they wait until now to threaten sanction. Fifa is denying players their fundamental and most basic human right to freedom of speech.

"Countries, teams and players are happy to defend LGBTQ+ people until they themselves are at risk. LGBTQ+ Qataris face a bigger punishment than just a yellow card. The gestures and the activism ended quite easily at the thought of reprimand."

It added: "This [World Cup](#) is not for all, it has never been for all, and until it ends will not be for all."

The group noted the murders of five people at a gay bar in Colorado Springs over the weekend, adding: "Now was the perfect opportunity for people with a massive platform - that of the World Cup - to stand in solidarity with the community. But it's fallen apart. Actions speak louder than words, and these actions suggest the risk of a yellow card is more important than the rights of LGBTQ+ people in Qatar."

Peter Tatchell, the director of the human rights organisation Peter Tatchell Foundation, said: "The OneLove armband was the tiniest of gestures. It did not even specifically mention LGBTQ+ people. It was a weak campaign but even that was too much for Fifa, who have bullied the England team to not wear it."

"Two days ago Fifa's president spoke of inclusivity but this ruling shows his true colours. I urge the team captains at their post-match press conferences to spend just 30 seconds to speak out for the rights of women, LGBTs and migrant workers. That would have a huge impact, reaching a global audience of hundreds of millions of people."

A joint statement from 3 Lions Pride and The Rainbow Wall, LGBTQ+ supporters groups for their respective nations, England and [Wales](#), said: "All of us at 3 Lions Pride and The Rainbow Wall stand together in condemning the actions of Fifa today."

"In seeking to censor European FA's and players by forcing them to abandon using the OneLove armband aimed at tackling all forms of discrimination, Fifa are guilty of crushing the basic human rights to freedom of speech and of expression that every single one of us should have without question."

"In doing so, Fifa are also guilty of silencing anti-discrimination work within the game and of giving a platform to hatred. This abuse of power by those who have chosen to remain silent for so long is a gross betrayal of trust and cannot be allowed to stand. We have no faith in Fifa, no trust in this World Cup, there is #NoPrideWithoutAll #WeBelong."

Meanwhile, the comedian Joe Lycett has revealed that the £10,000 cash he [appeared to shred](#) as part of a protest against the treatment of LGBTQ+ peoples in Qatar was in fact not destroyed.

Lycett threatened to destroy the money unless the former England player David Beckham cut ties with Qatar and the World Cup, due to the country's laws banning homosexuality.

Beckham failed to respond, so Lycett appeared to follow through with the act. But on Monday he revealed while the cash going into the shredder was real, it was not destroyed and he had in fact donated the sum to LGBTQ+ charities in advance.

"I would never destroy real money, I would never be so irresponsible," Lycett said on Twitter. "It was an empty threat to get people talking. In many ways it was like your deal with Qatar, David. Total bullshit from the start."

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P.S.

* The Guardian. Mon 21 Nov 2022 13.11 GMT:

https://www.theguardian.com/football/2022/nov/21/lgbt-groups-condemn-fifa-over-onelove-armband-sanctions-threat?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

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