

**Stopp dem Rassismus im
Schweizer Fussball. Der
SFV muss Verantwortung
übernehmen.**

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Input for report on racism and sports

Submission to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human
Rights (OHCHR)

Call for input: Report on racism and sport

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I Introduction and contributor

This submission is provided by humanrights.ch, an independent Swiss human rights organization. It draws on documented cases, civil society expertise, and a [petition initiative](#) launched by affected individuals in cooperation with Campax, and further draws on data and findings from the [NGO parallel report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination \(CERD\) on racism in Switzerland](#).

The submission addresses manifestations of racism in sport in Switzerland, with a particular focus on football, while highlighting structural challenges affecting multiple sports disciplines and levels, including amateur and youth sport.

Sport in Switzerland is widely framed as a space of integration and equality. However, documented cases and civil society reports indicate that racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia persist in sporting contexts and reflect broader structural inequalities in society.

Sport is predominantly organized through private associations and federations with significant autonomy. This governance structure has important implications for the regulation, prevention and sanctioning of racist conduct, particularly in amateur and youth sport.

2 Manifestations of racism in sport

2.1. Documented incidents and recurring patterns

Racist incidents continue to occur across different levels of sport. A documented case concerns amateur football player Jasmine Imboden, who was subjected to racist abuse by spectators during a league match, including being called a monkey. Although the incident was recorded, the match was not interrupted and the perpetrators were not identified. The competent football authority sanctioned the club with a fine of CHF 500.

While existing regulations provide for significantly higher sanctions, the penalty imposed was widely perceived as insufficient and lacking deterrent effect. The case highlights broader challenges related to the identification of perpetrators, the consistency of sanctions, and the effective application of existing rules.

Additional accounts indicate that such incidents are not isolated. Players, including national team player Coumba Sow, have reported repeated experiences of racist abuse during their youth, including racial slurs and other forms of dehumanizing treatment.

A recent incident reported in the media further illustrates these patterns in youth sport. During a junior girls' match involving a player from Grasshopper Club Zürich, a young player was subjected to racist abuse by an assistant coach of the opposing team. According to reports, the incident

was not effectively addressed during the match, highlighting shortcomings in immediate intervention and protection mechanisms for minors.

While incidents in professional sport may receive greater visibility and, in some cases, stronger responses, significant gaps remain in prevention and response, particularly at the amateur and youth levels.

2.2. Structural and systemic dimensions

Racism in sport in Switzerland reflects structural gaps in governance, accountability, and access to remedies rather than isolated incidents.

- There is no unified, cross-sport system for reporting and documenting racist incidents.
- Reporting and complaint mechanisms are fragmented and often dependent on clubs and federations, creating barriers for affected individuals.
- Oversight remains largely internal to private sports associations, with limited independent accountability.
- Sanctions are applied inconsistently and with limited transparency, reducing their deterrent effect.
- Preventive and protective measures are unevenly implemented, particularly in amateur and youth sport.

These structural shortcomings contribute to underreporting, weak enforcement, and the persistence of racist behaviour across sporting contexts.

2.3. Racism in the digital environment

Racism linked to sport also manifests in digital spaces, including social media, where athletes are subjected to racist abuse, often anonymously.

As highlighted in civil society reporting¹, online environments are often perceived as spaces with limited accountability, where anonymity lowers inhibition and facilitates the spread of racist content. Such dynamics contribute to the normalization of racist discourse and may discourage affected individuals from participating in public and sporting life.

At the same time, responsibilities between sports federations, public authorities and platform operators remain unclear, and specific mechanisms to address online racism in sport are largely absent.

2.4 Cross-cutting observation

While this submission draws in part on examples from football, these patterns are indicative of broader structural challenges likely to affect other sports disciplines. In the absence of sport-wide standards, similar

¹ [NGO parallel report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination \(CERD\) on racism in Switzerland](#), Page 6..

gaps in prevention, reporting, and enforcement may arise across different sporting contexts.

3 Underlying causes

The persistence of racism in sport in Switzerland, particularly in football, is not limited to isolated incidents but reflects broader structural patterns of racial discrimination in Swiss society. Civil society reporting indicates that racism is often insufficiently recognized as a systemic issue, which affects how it is addressed in sport.

As the most visible and widely practiced sport, football makes these structural dynamics particularly evident, while similar patterns are likely to affect other disciplines.

The following underlying factors contribute to the persistence of racism in sport:

- Lack of binding procedures and weak institutional responses
There is no mandatory, sport-wide protocol for responding to racist incidents. In practice, responses often depend on individual officials, leading to inconsistent or absent intervention. Existing sanctioning frameworks are applied unevenly and frequently lack deterrent effect, while decisions are not always transparent or comprehensible.

- Limited accountability and oversight in privately governed structures
Football in Switzerland is largely organized through private associations with significant autonomy. Racist incidents are primarily handled within internal disciplinary systems with limited independent oversight, resulting in weak accountability, inconsistent responses, and limited transparency. These gaps are reinforced by weak anti-discrimination protections in private law. ²

- Barriers to reporting and insufficient protection, particularly for minors
Affected individuals face structural obstacles in reporting incidents, including dependence on clubs and federations. Independent and accessible complaint mechanisms are largely absent. Preventive measures are unevenly implemented and often do not reach amateur and youth sport, leaving children and adolescents insufficiently protected.

- Normalization of racism and insufficient prevention, including in digital spaces
Racist abuse in sport reflects broader societal patterns and is reinforced in online environments, where anonymity and weak enforcement facilitate racist expression. At the same time, training and awareness-raising among key actors such as referees, coaches and officials remain insufficient.

² [NGO parallel report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination \(CERD\) on racism in Switzerland](#), Chapter 3.

4 Existing initiatives

Certain preventive measures are in place, particularly within professional sport, including awareness-raising initiatives - such as the brochure published by BSC Young Boys as part of its “Gemeinsam gegen Rassismus” campaign - as well as various forms of fan engagement. However, these measures are not implemented consistently and often do not sufficiently reach amateur and youth sport. This gap becomes particularly evident when examining concrete cases of discrimination. In response to a documented racist incident, a petition was launched by an affected player in cooperation Campax and humanrights.ch. The initiative calls for structural improvements in the handling of racist incidents and reflects the perspectives of affected individuals. It highlights the need for clearer procedures, stronger protection mechanisms, and more consistent enforcement.

5 Recommendations

A comprehensive, human rights-based approach is required to address racism in sport. The following measures are recommended, drawing on the demands formulated in the Campax petition “Stopp dem Rassismus im Schweizer Fussball”.

A. Prevention

1. **Mandatory training**
Introduce compulsory, regular anti-racism training for referees, coaches, and officials.
2. **Prevention as a licensing requirement**
Require all clubs to implement anti-discrimination programmes, including training, codes of conduct, and clear reporting and intervention procedures, as a condition for licensing.

B. Protection and reporting

3. **Binding intervention protocols**
Establish uniform procedures requiring immediate and escalating responses to racist incidents, including match interruption and abandonment where necessary.
4. **Transparent handling of incidents**
Ensure all incidents are investigated promptly, independently, and based on available evidence, with outcomes communicated transparently.
5. **Accessible and independent reporting mechanisms**
Provide independent complaint bodies, protection for affected individuals, and safeguards against retaliation.

6. Protection of children and youth
Introduce targeted safeguards and support structures for minors.
7. Participation of affected individuals
Involve individuals with lived experience in policy development and evaluation.

C. Accountability and enforcement

8. Clear and dissuasive sanctions
Establish a uniform, publicly accessible sanctioning framework, including financial and sporting measures, applied consistently.
9. Reasoned and transparent decisions
Ensure sanctioning decisions are justified, documented, and publicly communicated.
10. Improved data collection
Introduce harmonized systems for documenting and analysing incidents.

D. Digital environment

11. Addressing online racism
Clarify responsibilities and establish mechanisms to report and address racist abuse in digital spaces.

6 Conclusion

Racism in sport in Switzerland reflects broader structural challenges and requires coordinated and systemic responses. Without binding standards, effective enforcement, and accessible remedies, racist behaviour risks remaining insufficiently addressed. A human rights-based approach - combining prevention, protection, accountability and participation - is essential to ensure that sport can function as a space of equality, dignity and respect for all.

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