

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

FIFA: Deep Concern Over Possible Candidacy of Bahrain's Shaik Salman

Brussels, 23 October 2015 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC has expressed deep concern over moves to install Bahrain's Shaik Salman as President of FIFA. Salman has been accused by Bahraini human rights defenders of complicity in the detention and torture of footballers and other athletes in the bloody crackdown launched by Bahrain's rulers in 2011. A possible Salman candidacy for FIFA President is rumoured to be gaining ground as support wanes for UEFA President Michel Platini who is currently suspended by FIFA over a \$2million payment made to him by suspended FIFA President Joseph Blatter.

Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary said "It's difficult to know how low FIFA politics can actually go. Football's governing body refused to investigate the allegations against Shaik Salman from 2011, and it is inconceivable that someone who is facing such grave allegations of human rights violations could step into the void at the top of FIFA resulting from Swiss and US corruption investigations."

In 2014, the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) wrote to FIFA's then Ethics Committee Investigatory Chamber Chair Michael Garcia. Their letter called for an investigation into the allegations concerning Shaik Salman, President of the Asian Football Confederation, stating that "At least six footballers from the Bahrain national football team were arrested, defamed and tortured following their public identification and humiliation by authorities, including the BFA [note: Bahrain Football Association]. More than 150 athletes, coaches and referees were jailed after a special committee, chaired by the former BFA president Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa, identified them from protest photos." Garcia responded to BIRD that the Chamber's jurisdiction was limited to investigating violations by football officials of applicable Code of Ethics provisions, and that the Chamber would take no action.

"FIFA's plan to forge ahead with electing a new President as crisis after crisis engulfs it at the highest levels is not credible. An independent and credible reform process, that guarantees the highest standards of governance and respect for human rights, is urgently needed," said Burrow.

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