INPUT ON REPORT OF THE UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON CULTURAL RIGHTS ON RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN SPORT



Input from the Centre for Sport and Human Rights (May 2024)

*The* [*Centre for Sport and Human Rights*](https://www.sporthumanrights.org/) *(CSHR) is a human rights organisation for the world of sport. Our mission is to advance a world of sport that fully respects and promotes human rights by generating awareness, building capacity, and delivering impact. We pursue our mission by upholding and promoting the* [*Sporting Chance Principles*](https://www.sporthumanrights.org/about-us/principles/)*, and applying the* [*UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights*](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/GuidingPrinciplesBusinessHR_EN.pdf) *(UNGPs) to the* [*sports ecosystem*](https://www.sporthumanrights.org/what-we-do/sports-ecosystem/)*. Given the specific scope of our work and the background of CSHR, we selected only relevant (parts of) questions to answer.*

**General**

**1. What are the benefits and potential shortcomings of the exercise of sport and play in developing one’s identity? In developing groups’ identities and cultural diversity? To which extent are these benefits and potential shortcomings reflected in the policies and programmes of your country?**

Sport and play can have positive and negative impacts on people’s lives and their identities, both individually and as a group. In this context, it is worth acknowledging that organised sport in many instances has its roots in the English private school system where it was developed with specific goals aligned to notions of Christian muscularity, eugenic theories, and the values encouraged by colonial powers. Some elements of this legacy remain unaddressed.

Assuming that one’s identity is among other things linked to the ability to enjoy freedoms and human rights, sport can on the one hand promote and strengthen human rights, and on the other lead to human rights harms. This is true both in mega-sporting events and day-to-day sporting contexts (including amateur and grassroots sports).

However, the way sport, culture, identity and human rights are linked can be quite different in these two contexts. Day-to-day sports can be part of a culture, and one of the ways that people use to identify themselves. There is a fine line between sport and play and what is considered ‘exercising sport’ or ‘play’ and what is considered rituals or traditions, considering for instance specific dances in certain cultures. A mega-sporting event in and of itself can bring about a very specific culture, depending on where the event takes place, depending on who is attending, who is competing. Focusing only on exercising sport and the impact of that on identity overlooks many other ways in which people can participate in sport with interlinkages to culture and identity. For instance, being part of a supporters or fan group can be considered a very important aspect of someone’s identity. The same is true for a group’s identity, considering how fan groups support their national teams during international tournaments (most recent [example](https://www.eurohandball.com/en/news/en/slovenia-spoil-the-faroese-party-in-berlin/) of 10 percent of the entire population of Faroe Islands supporting their national handball team at the European Championships). Equally, participating in sport as coach, official, volunteer, or in any other capacity can also have an important impact on one’s identity and one's service to one's community.

Many governments recognize the unique potential that sport has to be a force for good and as a tool for promoting development goals and human rights. Therefore, governments make funding available to sport bodies, for instance, the relevant National Olympic Committees, to implement measures that help promote the benefits and address the shortcomings of the exercise of sport. Many governments also support physical activity through their urban and infrastructure plans and their health and education policies. At the same time, physical education in schools is usually within the public domain. Finally, many governments also fund research into sports.

**Governance**

**2. What measures exist in national legislation or elsewhere to ensure that human rights obligations, particularly those relating to the human rights / cultural rights of athletes and sports players, referees, judges as well as spectators, apply to sports governing bodies, organizers of private sporting events or sports companies? How could these frameworks be strengthened?**

Under international human rights law, States are obliged to protect individuals within their territory from human rights violations, including violations committed by third parties, such as sport governing bodies, sport event organizers, or other actors involved in organizing and running sport. However, the extent to which this is implemented varies per country, and to a large extent depends on the way these organizations are registered and recognised legally. Many sport governing bodies, on national and international levels, are registered as associations or other analogous non-profit structures. Hence, national legislation concerning the duties of associations would apply. As many sport bodies are registered in Switzerland, Swiss law on associations can play a big role (articles 60 to 79 of the Swiss Civil Code).

In the rare instances where sport organizations or actors are registered as commercial entities, the current increase in business and human rights legislation, often referred to as mandatory human rights due diligence, can provide frameworks through which human rights obligations apply to those actors. However, it is often the case that sport bodies, including event organizing committees, fall outside the scope of relevant law. Voluntary initiatives from actors within the world of sport, in particular the increasing acceptance of the UNGPs, help to fill the gaps left by national legislation. On the international, regional and national level, sport bodies like federations and National Olympic Committees use the UNGPs to understand and commit to their human rights responsibilities. In the event context, human rights requirements and standards, as well as adherence to the UNGPs, have been integrated into major hosting contracts and agreements, making these binding obligations for the parties (local organisers and their partners) that sign the contract/agreement.

Considering that States are the primary duty-bearers of human rights, it is the role of States to play a stronger role in strengthening and supporting existing frameworks. State human rights obligations also apply in the area of sport, providing them with a basis to regulate actors across the sports ecosystem in terms of their potential impact on human rights and to promote the notion of responsible autonomy (see CSHR paper [here](https://link.springer.com/epdf/10.1007/s40318-022-00231-4?sharing_token=auMvN4gCYMDHbm2_PFht_fe4RwlQNchNByi7wbcMAY6D8bP-ixh-CUP6XMgL-t71S5HgjJUhkV32zByeVsBkC5EowxWf_hQE9CJheLxqbK6v6atmvbud8caBjJQE2T71kzb7ZHcBL2DBBMFS1D1Uj00MD_YM_Ehg5pIYhWrH0Oo=)). Therefore, States have a role to initiate explicit human rights obligations within the sports ecosystem. Concretely, if we accept that the right to participate in sport and physical activity is a facet of the human right to participate in cultural life, States will have a role to be proactive in living up to their obligations, which can help to promote and advance other human rights within the context of participation in sport. These include the right to freedom of expression, which is broadly accepted as part of cultural rights, but very often put at risk in some sporting contexts, or the right to an effective remedy, which is one of the largest challenges for ensuring the human rights of all are respected and protected in the ecosystem.

**3. What institutions or mechanisms exist for persons whose right to participate in sports have been violated to make a claim and obtain an effective remedy?**

The remedy landscape for sport-related human rights abuses varies greatly - is often costly and complicated and, in many instances, inadequate due to a lack of clarity in jurisdictions, remit, and responsibilities. According to the UNGPs, access to remedy should be provided through:

* judicial mechanisms,
* state-based non-judicial grievance mechanisms,
* and non-state-based grievance mechanisms.

Mechanisms that are (potentially) relevant for instigating investigations and resolving cases of (human rights) abuse in sport exist in all these categories. Arbitration is usually the most frequently used dispute resolution method in the world of sports, both on national and international levels. There are private national sport arbitration bodies, and there is the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) presiding at the top. Many of these arbitration bodies also enable mediation as a dispute resolution method, although it is used much less regularly. There has been in recent years, a rise in national safe sport centres and sport integrity bodies, some of which have competencies to solve disputes, investigate, and provide resolution in claims for remedial justice.

There are also institutionally-specific and operational-level grievance mechanisms in place in sports bodies, which in many cases are localised and would need to be exhausted first before cases are escalated or appealed to CAS and/or other arbitration mechanisms. The handling scenario is largely dependent on the nature of the issues/case in question, and the role of ethics or disciplinary committees, and integrity units.

These mechanisms usually present a form of adjudication, in the sense that a formal decision is made in a given case based on a set of predefined rules. An alternative mechanism that has been established by the World Players Association but not yet used is the ‘[Sport and Human Rights Dispute Resolution Mechanism](https://uniglobalunion.org/wp-content/uploads/WPA-SHR-DRM-FAQ-tool.pdf)’. This initiative is a mediation and arbitration mechanism, based on [The Hague Rules on Business and Human Rights Arbitration](https://docs.pca-cpa.org/2019/12/The-Hague-Rules-on-Business-and-Human-Rights-Arbitration.pdf), and cases would in theory be registered at and administered by the International Bureau of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA).

The way these mechanisms can be activated or accessed is usually through dispute resolution or specific (mandatory) arbitration clauses that are included in relevant agreements, such as those signed by athletes to compete, those signed by different actors involved in staging a sport event, or as a result of constitutional provisions and a condition of membership in a sport body. These mechanisms can often be inaccessible and costly. In addition, when it comes to human rights claims, the available mechanisms often lack clarity and human rights expertise. Often, affected people do not have formal standing in or access to the relevant procedures (see [paper](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40318-018-0129-8) by Heerdt going into detail on the example of mega-sporting event contracts).

In those cases where abuse constitutes a crime in a given legal system, national courts and public prosecution are responsible (for instance the Larry Nassar case). In other cases, where it is not about criminal acts but for instance discrimination, bodies and institutions that have the mandate to address equality and discrimination cases are relevant, such as National Human Rights Institutes, Ombuds-persons, or specialized tribunals and courts, such as human rights tribunals. In recent years, there have been several public inquiries in response to allegations of systemic rights violations in various sports ([Canadian Gymnastics](https://www.mclarenglobalsportsolutions.com/pdf/Gymnastics-Report-Jan-22-2023.pdf), [US Soccer](https://www.kslaw.com/attachments/000/009/931/original/King___Spalding_-_Full_Report_to_USSF.pdf?1664809048), [English Cricket](https://theicec.com/report/)).

The extent to which any of these mechanisms provide effective remedies and are equipped to deal with the range of human rights matters prevalent in sport is increasingly being challenged.

**4. What is the role and impact of sports governing bodies or associations on the rights of all persons to participate in sporting life? How can these structures be improved to strengthen participation, governance or accountability?**

Sports governing bodies or associations are usually responsible for establishing eligibility conditions for participation in competitive sport pathways. This is true for athletes on a performance pathway, but also for those who want to participate as technical officials/judges, volunteers, spectators, sponsors, broadcasters, journalists, or more. Sports governing bodies establish the rules for their competitions, including a threshold of rules based on ethical and moral grounds that establish who is eligible to compete under what conditions, how, and why, all of which establish the basis for a progression pathway within a sport. They also hire officials and coaches for elite levels. In addition, when it comes to access to mega-sporting events for journalists or broadcasters, it is the sport governing bodies who oversee and administer accreditation. On grass-roots levels, access is managed by relevant local clubs and associations which are often responsible for managing and making available playing facilities. In both cases, there is limited public oversight or intervention, resulting in a high degree of autonomy and self-regulation in sport.

Incorporating good governance standards based on the responsibility to respect human rights can strengthen participation and increase accountability. We have seen a rise in sports governing bodies accepting their human rights responsibilities in relation to their policies and practices. However, the implementation of these responsibilities has flaws and there currently are no enforcement mechanisms in place.

**Participation in sporting life**

 **5. What are main obstacles in ensuring participation of all in sports? You may wish to discuss general obstacles that affect all (such as corruption) or obstacles that are set for specific sections of the population, including any discrimination based on age, colour, sex and gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.**

The obstacles to ensuring participation in sport depend on how participation in sport is defined, in particular who is considered as participant. At CSHR we consider the entire [ecosystem of sport](https://www.sporthumanrights.org/media/gocfwmdn/ecosystem-for-website-medium.png) and their roles and responsibilities when it comes to respecting and promoting human rights in sport. This includes those that are impacted by sports and the rules and decisions made (athletes, local communities, fans, volunteers, and more), and the institutional actors that make those rules, take decisions, and shape sports more generally (sport governing bodies, sponsors, event organizers, broadcasters, and more).

General Comment 21 on the Right to Participate in Cultural Rights [E/C.12/GC/21] delineates in paragraph 15 under the heading: “To participate” or “to take part”, “three interrelated main components of the right to participate or take part in cultural life: (a) participation in, (b) access to, and (c) contribution to cultural life”. Applying these to sport, **a) participation** can more clearly be interpreted as “**the practice of”** sport (or an artistic endeavour, etc) “alone or in association with others” - i.e. taking part in organised, physical activity at various levels including:

* School sport (under 18s principally, in primary and secondary education)
* Recreational / community sport (at youth and adult level)
* Student sport - in some countries, e.g. USA, student sport is uniformly part of and on the pathway to elite sport.
* Elite level sport - a) Professional and b) Amateur (which while not financially compensated in most cases, may require a near full-time commitment and compensation in the form of sponsorship deals, PR activity etc.)

Self expression as an athlete or practitioner of sport varies by sport - e.g. figure skating, ballet, dance, rhythmic gymnastics, gymnastics, synchronised swimming and various other disciplines closely mirror expression in other cultural forms. But even within sports such as track and field, soccer / football, rugby, or cricket, athletes express themselves and their identity in unique ways in terms of style, finesse, agility, idiosyncratic technique or more. They do that either alone (individual sports - e.g. golf) or in team sports (e.g. football). In certain sports, the cultural rights dimension, including expression of self-determination, is more pronounced -e.g. Haka at the start of rugby matches performed by New Zealand and South Pacific island nations (including Fiji and Samoa).

In addition, there are multiple forms of expression open to players/practitioners freely demonstrated or curtailed in and around the moments of athletic performance, such as the build-up to play (e.g. playing and singing of anthems, including uniquely sporting anthems e.g. Flower of Scotland, which is sung as a de facto national anthem specifically in a sporting context - e.g Scotland Rugby, Football, Cricket and at the Commonwealth Games).

There are also questions surrounding free expression by athletes outside (but linked to) the realm of pure athletic or cultural expression, which are frequently denied or repressed. For instance, athletes wearing rainbow boot laces or rainbow armbands have been restricted in a range of contexts. This is often linked to restrictive rules that sport bodies have in place in relation to the right to protest or freedom of expression of athletes (see [book chapter](https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003302551-46/restricting-athletes-voices-mark-james) or [article](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40318-023-00254-5) by Prof Mark James).

The second category, identified in the General Comment 21, namely **b) ‘access'**, spells out the “*right of everyone — alone, in association with others or as a community — to know and understand his or her own culture and that of others through education and information”.* In the context of sports, this would mean that there exists a right to understand sport and physical activity - a [right to physical literacy](https://firebasestorage.googleapis.com/v0/b/slpc-website.appspot.com/o/Documents/Physical%20Literacy%20Report%20%28final%29.pdf?alt=media&token=880995fe-e370-4161-8a6d-d6dbb7f079a2) as part of the right to culture. This would translate into a right to access opportunities to play, understand movement, receive education about sporting cultures, and availability of coaching and training facilities. To realise this right, children from a young age as well as adults must be able to access knowledge about physical activity and have the opportunity to train under a qualified coach or team of coaches and entourage. The role of educators and coaches becomes particularly important in this regard. Individual educators and coaches for example may offer unique knowledge about sporting cultures, playing approaches, technical insight, stylistic elements that enable the athlete to perform etc. For disabled or para-athletes, access to movement education coaching is even more imperative.

c) The third category namely ***“Contribution to cultural life***” is described as being *“the right of everyone to be involved in creating the spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional expressions of the community. …supported by the right to take part in the development of the community to which a person belongs, and in the definition, elaboration and implementation of policies and decisions that have an impact on the exercise of a person’s cultural rights”.* This seems to indicate a right to understand sport and movement and create meaning in and through sports. In addition to athletes, this could be taken to think about the right to sport as part of cultural life to two groups in particular, **fans** and **volunteers**. **Fans** are at the core of sports as a cultural activity. Sport bodies sanction football clubs and teams for flouting codes of conduct or anti-hate speech rules in stadiums by requiring the offending teams (or its fans) to play matches “behind closed doors” in empty stadiums. This is both to punish abusive fans and the team/club that has a permissive attitude to hate-speech. This example highlights the symbiotic relationship that exists between athletes, teams and their fans.

Fans lend atmosphere in the form of cheering and clapping, sometimes rhythmically e.g. for the long-jump in track and field events to help give the athlete a sense of momentum as they run up the track before making their leap into the sandpit. A major part of the athletes' realisation of their cultural expression hinges on a form of emotional and energetic dialogue with fans.

The role of fans as participants, or contributors goes much further and builds on unique fan cultures. Across the world, countless national, city, local teams have their own unique chants. These displays of local community bonding in song and music (e.g. vuvuzelas in South Africa, drums in Senegalese football, the ‘barmy army’ brass bands in English national cricket), as well as costume are intrinsically cultural activities that exist, often exclusively within the sporting domain. Moreover, there are uniquely different forms of cultural expression between men’s and women’s football in the UK - where men’s football provides almost a tribal cultural experience, manifested in chants, song and team kits, while women’s football held in the very same stadiums, can offer a more family experience with different songs and chants. All countries and sports offer distinct variations in this regard.

This cultural experience is not always protected. For instance, at the FIFA World Cup in Qatar in 2022, where CSHR collaborated with FIFA on the [Human Rights Volunteer programme](https://www.sporthumanrights.org/volunteers) to provide small teams of human rights observers in and around stadiums and fan zones, volunteers witnessed barriers to cultural expression. Certain national or racial groups - in particular fans of African descent - were often denied access to stadiums by security guards for wearing national costumes, or bringing in instruments (e.g. drums, horns) and banners (including items permitted under FIFA regulations). In Iran, women have been prohibited from entering stadiums and participating in watching football for decades. While FIFA intervened, this only led to very marginal success (see coverage of the story [here](https://www.theguardian.com/football/2024/jan/25/iranian-women-allowed-into-football-stadiums-but-journey-is-far-from-over)).

**Volunteers** are another crucial contributing actor in sport. Many children participate in or contribute to sport as ball-boys or girls e.g. at football matches, tennis tournaments and many more, and sometimes this experience inspires them to become professional/elite athletes. Dina Asher Smith, a European champion sprinter, for example, started out at the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games as a volunteer. She was already a junior aspiring athlete, but her first exposure to the intensity of the track atmosphere was in a supporting volunteer capacity, in her case directly serving competing athletes on the track itself.

At MSEs such as the Olympic and Paralympic Games, FIFA World Cup and Commonwealth Games, volunteers provide a unique communal and cultural experience, acting sometimes as entertainers to boost the spirits of fans waiting in long queues (20,000 volunteers at FWC22 in Qatar, and 50,000 at Rio 2016 Olympics). Some are themselves performers - e.g. wearing national or in some instances indigenous dress at opening and/or closing ceremonies, others perform in and around fan experience zones within a stadium perimeter. However, the same environment can expose volunteers to verbal abuse, harassment and bullying, both from unruly fans and their own workforce managers. All volunteers require protection to fully realise this cultural right, role and form of expression within the sporting context.

More generally, it is important to acknowledge that it is not just horizontal discrimination in the form of certain individuals or groups discriminating against another that hinders participation. There is also a more structural issue in relation to discrimination being the result of rules issued by sports bodies, in particular those that exclude a certain group of people due to their gender identity, ethnicity or religion. There are numerous examples of sport bodies issuing rules that prevent intersex and/or transgender female athletes from competing in elite level sports. In addition, there are rules that prevent female Muslim athletes from competing with a hijab. While States have the obligation to protect individuals from this kind of discrimination, we have seen that some States even support these discriminatory practices by sports bodies (for example [France](https://edition.cnn.com/2023/09/26/europe/un-hijab-olympics-intl/) banning the hijab in sports).

The Climate crisis also presents a major obstacle to participating in sport as a cultural right. More than twenty national teams are expected to no longer be able to compete at the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games because of the impact on their ability to train or compete in their home countries. Several countries will no longer be able to stage or host the Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games because snow levels at slightly lower altitudes make that impossible and unsafe. Low-lying countries and particularly Global Majority populations are at the greatest risk of losing essential sporting infrastructure to floods, droughts, forest fires, and rising sea levels. The ability to play, train, and compete is also being impacted due to the increasing incidences of extreme heat events and air pollution.

**6. What measures has your government/organization taken to limit or to facilitate the participation of athletes as a result of recent or ongoing conflict?**

There are numerous recent and ongoing conflicts around the world and responses from sport are not always consistent. Recently, the sporting world has witnessed strong reactions and responses to two conflicts in particular. CSHR has closely followed deliberations around the participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes in international competitions and sporting events. CSHR has mapped the decisions taken by different sport bodies around the world and analyzed their impacts (see output [here](https://www.sporthumanrights.org/news/sport-ecosystem-responses-to-the-invasion-of-ukraine/) and blog [here](https://www.asser.nl/SportsLaw/Blog/post/reactions-of-international-sport-organisations-to-the-russian-invasion-of-ukraine-an-overview-by-daniela-heerdt-and-guido-battaglia)). In relation to the conflict in Israel and Palestine, CSHR joined the international community in calls for an immediate ceasefire and adherence to international law and offered our support for constructive dialogue and joint action with all actors in the sport community (see our statement [here](https://www.sporthumanrights.org/news/statement-on-the-conflict-in-israel-and-palestine)).

We have also led discussions internally and with our Advisory Council on responsible and human rights-compliant and ethical eligibility frameworks in sport to consistently govern participation in ways that protect athletes, fulfil sports bodies’ duties of care, and guard against the instrumentalisation of sports participation by governments.

**Indigenous peoples and sporting life**

**8. Please discuss any positive or negative use of indigenous symbols, imagery and names in sport? Are these used with consent and respect?**

There are a number of examples of athletes trying to use indigenous symbols, imagery or names and being prevented from doing so or even sanctioned. One very prominent example is Cathy Freeman, a 400m runner at the Sydney Olympics, who was almost banned from the national team for displaying the Aboriginal flag alongside the Australian national flag in her victory celebrations in 2000 (see more information [here](https://www.insidethegames.biz/articles/1062891/4-cathy-freeman-carries-the-aboriginal-and-australian-flags-on-victory-laps-at-victoria-1994)). In recent years, Australian athletes have worn uniforms with indigenous patterns in [Cricket](https://www.espncricinfo.com/story/australia-men-s-team-to-wear-indigenous-shirt-for-t20is-against-india-1239028) and [Olympic sports](https://www.espn.co.uk/olympics/story/_/id/31169287/historic-australian-olympic-team-uniform-given-tick-approval).

Like in other sectors of society, cultural appropriation can also be visible in the sports sector, in particular among fans that are dressing up, but also in the way sport clubs are designing logos and merchandise for instance. This has been an issue in North America’s sport, but also in South Africa, or South America, or Europe (see a CNN story on this [here](https://edition.cnn.com/2021/01/18/sport/indigenous-culture-in-global-sport-cmd-spt-intl/index.html)).

**9. Are traditional indigenous games and sports included in national and international sporting events? Are indigenous peoples included in planning, leadership or governance roles? Do they equally benefit from sporting events in which they participate?**

We have partially answered and addressed this in questions 8 and 10.

**Mega Sporting Events**

**10. Do you have any examples of positive and/or negative effect of large sporting events on cultural rights of local communities?**

There are numerous examples of mega-sporting events having negative impacts on local communities and their rights. Cases of forced evictions, exclusive economic zones, or excessive use of violence in relation to the World Cups and Olympic and Paralympic Games in [South Africa](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2010/06/human-rights-concerns-south-africa-during-world-cup/) or [Brazil](https://www.fundobrasil.org.br/en/projeto/popular-world-cup-and-olympics-committee-of-rio-de-janeiro-1/) for instance, have triggered further human rights harms, including negative impacts on cultural rights.

One positive example worth mentioning here is the Gold Coast 2018 [Commonwealth Games Reconciliation Action Plan,](https://www.publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/gold-coast-2018-commonwealth-games-reconciliation-action-plan-evaluation-report/resource/4b2dfd5d-3181-4510-a93d-44616f79929c) which has received an award from the Australian Human Rights Commission for good practice in consultation and benefit for local indigenous people and Torres Strait Islanders community. In 2023, the Commonwealth Games Federation General Assembly adopted the [Commonwealth Sport Declaration on Reconciliation and Partnership with Indigenous Peoples](https://www.commonwealthsport.com/news/3786113/commonwealth-games-federation-embraces-historic-declaration-on-reconciliation-and-partnership-with-indigenous-peoples).

**Commercialization of Sports**

**11. Please share any examples where commercial interests, marketing, or the pursuit of profit in sport has led to decisions or actions which are contrary to cultural rights.**

There are numerous examples of sporting events changing national legislation due to sponsorship deals or other agreements that sport bodies made. For instance, alcohol was formerly prohibited in Brazil’s football stadiums. In 2003, the Brazilian legislature introduced this law to ensure a peaceful and friendly culture during soccer matches and prevent violence between fans. However, when the 2014 FIFA Men’s World Cup was hosted in the country, these laws were changed following pressure from FIFA.

More relevant perhaps are examples mentioned above, relating to sporting rules that prohibit the display of any religious or political items or statements, during sporting events, applicable to both fans and athletes. Sports bodies claim that such rules are necessary to uphold sport’s neutrality, and to make sure it is enjoyed by as many people around the world as possible, without excluding people based on different religious or cultural beliefs.