



Controversy over pride flags planned for Egypt vs Iran Match

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FIFA

The anticipated match between the Egyptian and [Iranian](#) national teams at the 2026 World Cup has transformed from a long-awaited football event into a widespread controversy, after the FIFA insisted on allowing Pride flags inside stadiums. This comes as both the Egyptian and Iranian Football Associations have objected to linking the match with any events or promotional activities related to homosexuality.

The newspaper [The Athletic](#) revealed that the crisis stems from the decision of the local organizing committee in Seattle to assign a special designation to the match as part of events coinciding with the city's annual Pride Week. This occurred before the tournament draw placed Egypt and Iran in the confrontation scheduled for June 26 at Lumen Field.

From a local celebration to an international crisis

The organizing committee in Seattle began preparations for the associated events months ago, but the scene changed after the match schedule was announced, revealing a confrontation between two national teams representing countries that criminalize homosexual relations. This opened the door to formal objections regarding the nature of the events linked to the match.

The newspaper pointed out that most of the planned activities will take place outside the stadium perimeter and in areas not directly managed by FIFA.

The newspaper reported that the Iranian Football Federation informed FIFA of its objection to holding any ceremonies or promotional activities related to homosexuality inside the stadium or within the official atmosphere of the match, asserting that its position is consistent with the prevailing cultural and religious values in its country.

The Egyptian Football Association had previously announced its refusal to hold any pro-homosexuality events during the match, considering them to contradict the cultural, religious, and social values in Arab and Islamic societies.

FIFA Stands by its regulations

In contrast, FIFA asserted that the 2026 World Cup will be "an inclusive tournament that welcomes everyone," clarifying that Pride flags and other flags related to sexual orientation or gender identity are permitted under the tournament's code of conduct.

The international federation also stressed that messages related to human rights remain permissible inside stadiums as long as they are expressed in accordance with the tournament's regulating statutes.

FIFA President Gianni Infantino sought to separate the match from its associated events, clarifying that referring to it as a "Pride match" is not accurate, and that the other activities are organised by local entities in Seattle and are organisationally linked to the match itself.

As the match date approaches, it appears that the controversy will not be confined to the pitch but will extend to a broader discussion about the balance between cultural and religious values of the participating teams and FIFA's vision, which affirms that the World Cup is a space open to all.

Featured image via the Canary

By [Alaa Shamali](#)

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