



World Cup visa chaos shows the settler colonial US is a hostile environment

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world cup

Fans have found themselves facing rejections, restrictions, and [outright bans for short-term visa applications](#) to the US for this year's men's FIFA World Cup.

Of course, this is hardly a surprise, given the Trump administration's undisguised racism and Islamophobia. However, the news underscores existing criticisms of FIFA for awarding hosting responsibilities to the US in the first place.

World Cup chaos entirely expected

The states unveiled its bid to host the 2026 world cup back in 2017. [Under the banner "United 2026"](#), it was a joint endeavor between the US, Canada, and Mexico. The [latter two countries](#) will host 13 matches each, with the US taking the remaining 78.

The United 2026 [bid won out in June 2018](#) in the middle of Trump's first term. The US dictator had [instated his first ban](#) on seven Muslim-majority countries in January, just five months prior. Even at the time, FIFA president Gianni Infantino [stated that](#)

Teams who qualify for a World Cup need to have access to the country, otherwise there is no World Cup. That is obvious.

As the *Canary* [has previously reported](#) the US has now issued visas for the Iranian national team players and technical staff. However, it didn't do likewise for 15 members of the Iranian administrative and organizational staff. This, in turn, led the Iranian Football Federation to accuse Washington of:

discrimination and political interference in sports.

However, it's not just the players and their staff who have been affected by blatantly discriminatory US visa policies. [BBC analysis suggests that](#) fans from over a quarter of participating countries have faced high rates of visa rejections, travel restriction, or outright travel bans for the World Cup.

â??This World Cup is not oursâ??

The BBC analysed the US State Department's own data for October 2024 to the end of September 2025. The figures pertaining to any application for a B1 business and B2 tourist visa, rather than focusing on the World Cup.

It found that 11 of the 48 competing countries faced visa rejection rates above 40%. The 11 countries are Algeria, Cape Verde, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Egypt, Ghana, Haiti, Iran, Senegal and Uzbekistan. The average rejection rate for similar visas across all countries was 34%.

For Jordan, in particular, the US turned away 47% of visa applications over the October 2024-September 2025 period. Abu Kass, leader of Jordan's football fan association, was just one among many whom the US state department turned away without a stated reason. Kass said:

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This World Cup is not ours. It's not for Arabs this World Cup, it's for them. If the head of the fan association was refused, who will be accepted?

As of 21 January, the Trump administration [placed a visa freeze](#) on a further 75 countries. Added to existing bans, over 46% of the world's nations were barred from immigrating to the US. Of course, this included a high proportion of majority-Muslim nations, and an overwhelming number of Black/brown-majority populations.

These bans were nominally [limited to immigrant visas](#) rather than short-term visas (i.e. those needed for a World Cup visit). However, Trump has also [placed even greater restrictions](#) on fans from Iran, Ivory Coast, Haiti, and Senegal, barring fans from obtaining even a visiting visa.

â??Segregation that doesn't dare speak its nameâ??

Speaking on behalf of the National Committee for the Support of the Elephants, the Ivory Coast's fan association, [Julien Kouadio Adonis said](#)

It's a form of segregation that doesn't dare speak its name, but the proof is there.

No European country has faced this kind of restriction. Why Africa?

Adonis's comments strike at the very heart of the matter.

The US Department of Homeland Security made the feeble claim that it was concerned with the possibility that people might overstay their temporary visas. However, the counties it has chosen to single out – again, nations with majority Black, Brown and Muslim populations – clearly display the racism and Islamophobia at play.

The Trump administration is a white supremacist project. The US is a settler-colonial state dedicated to the creation of a hostile environment for immigrants, which Trump’s presidency has thrown that fact into sharp relief. Alongside Israel, it has spent recent months waging an illegal war against Iran.

FIFA president Gianni Infantino [claimed that](#)

FIFA’s social impact campaigns will showcase the FIFA World Cup 2026 as a powerful celebration of unity, diversity, and shared passion.

Through our Football Unites the World, No Racism, Unite for Peace, Unite for Education, and Be Active campaigns, FIFA is aiming to use football’s unique power to build bridges and convey a strong message to promote peace, education, anti-racism, and a healthy lifestyle.

However, the very fact that the US is hosting this year’s World Cup is proof that racism is alive and well at the heart of football’s international organising body. What are claims of unity, peace and diversity worth when a host country treats Black, Brown, and Muslim fans as nothing more than illegal-immigrants-in-waiting?

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By [Alex/Rose Cocker](#)

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