



**SPORT &
RIGHTS
ALLIANCE**

RAISING THE BAR FOR
SPORT, HUMAN RIGHTS
AND TRANSPARENCY

Professor Richard
H. McLaren,
FIBA Independent
Integrity Officer

McLaren Global
Sport Solutions

September 24, 2021

Re: Concerns regarding FIBA Mali basketball abuse investigation

Dear Professor Richard H. McLaren,

We are writing to you from the [Sport and Rights Alliance \(SRA\)](#), a global coalition of trade unions and non-governmental organizations committed to embedding human rights, including workers' rights, child wellbeing and safeguarding, LGBTIQ+ rights, and anti-corruption in world sport. We are independent global organizations with vast experience reporting and advocating for the human rights of everyone impacted by sport.

As you are aware, on [July 29, 2021, we wrote to the International Basketball Federation \(FIBA\)](#) about our concerns, and offered to share our expertise with regard to the systemic sexual abuse and the lasting trauma experienced by female basketball players of Mali's Under-19 team, [documented by Human Rights Watch](#), one of the coalition's founding partners.

The SRA welcomes the publication of the [149-page report by your firm, McLaren Global Sport Solutions](#), confirming the systemic abuse of teenage female basketball players in Mali dating back several years. The SRA is encouraged by the suspension of seven basketball officials, including the Mali Basketball Federation President Harouna Maiga for impeding the investigation and covering up sexual abuse, as well as the [arrest and indictment of Mali's Under-18 women's national basketball head coach Amadou Bamba](#) for pedophilia, attempted rape and molestation.

Among other findings, the McLaren Independent Investigation Team (MIIT) report highlights that 22 survivors were intimidated by basketball federation officials or others and decided not to give evidence. Those who agreed to be interviewed by your investigation team also reported they were afraid of retaliation. One player reported that the Mali federation directly retaliated by removing her from the World Cup national team roster after she and her family reported sexual abuse.

The Sport & Rights Alliance is concerned that there were critical gaps in the investigation's approach, notably with respect to witness protection, trauma support, and confidentiality.

In light of the report's findings, we would like to request your response to the following questions:

1. What did MIIT do to protect the witnesses and ensure that their testimonies were taken into account? What steps were taken to mitigate the risks of retaliation, intimidation and physical danger for players and their families? Were witnesses reassured that providing evidence would not harm their ability to play or progress on the team?
2. Given that MIIT confirmed that "an institutionalised acceptance of the abuse of players exists" at the Mali Basketball Federation, why has MIIT neglected to provide recommendations for remedy, compensation or reconciliation, including a public apology?
3. The MIIT was warned about the risks posed by the president of the Mali Basketball Federation, Harouna Maiga, in [a letter from Human Rights Watch dated June 12](#), which called for his suspension. Yet he was permitted to remain in his position until July 23. Why did it take so long to suspend Mr. Maiga and to what extent did this delay: (a) cause damage, fear and distress to victims and survivors; and (b) adversely impact the investigation and its findings?
4. Will MIIT recommend that FIBA commission any additional investigation, especially in light of the investigatory failings and limitations outlined above?

Please respond in writing by October 15 so that your answers can be incorporated into our reporting. We remain at your disposal to schedule an online meeting at your earliest convenience.

The Sport & Rights Alliance reiterates our commitment to end the widespread abuse of young athletes in sports.

We can be contacted by email at andrea@sportandrightsalliance.org.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

The Sport & Rights Alliance

The Army of Survivors

The Committee to Protect Journalists

Football Supporters Europe

Human Rights Watch

ILGA World (The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association)

The International Trade Union Confederation

Transparency International Germany

World Players Association, UNI Global Union

Additional Supporter

Women's National Basketball Players Association

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About the Sport & Rights Alliance

The Sport & Rights Alliance's mission is to promote the rights and wellbeing of those most affected by human rights risks associated with the delivery of sport. As part of this effort, this spring World Players Association launched the first global [Census of Athlete Rights Experiences](#) in sport, highlighting athletes' testimonies of lasting legacies of abuse. Over the last two years, Human Rights Watch has also documented the abuse of child athletes in [Haiti](#), [Japan](#) and [Afghanistan](#). [The Army of Survivors](#) goal is to end sexual assault against athletes by ensuring perpetrators and enablers are held accountable, creating transparency in reporting, building an environment in which athletes do not fear retaliation when reporting abuse, and advocating for change to protect survivors. The SRA Acting Director, Andrea Florence is based in São Paulo, Brazil, and can be reached at andrea@sportandrightsalliance.org.

About the Women's National Basketball Players Association

The [Women's National Basketball Players Association \(WNBPA\)](#) is the union for current women's professional basketball players in the WNBA. The WNBPA is the first labor union for professional women athletes. It was created in 1998 to protect the rights of players and assist them in achieving their full potential on and off the court. The WNBPA handles the negotiation of collective bargaining agreements, filing grievances on their behalf, and counseling players on benefits and post-WNBA career opportunities. The WNBPA also serves as a resource for current players, while they are competing internationally during the offseason.