

FIFA holds meeting on situation of player Al Araibi and calls for urgent solution

FIFA Secretary General Fatma Samoura welcomed yesterday at the Home of FIFA in Zurich the former Australian international Craig Foster and Mr Brendan Schwab from the World Players Association, who had requested an urgent meeting to discuss the situation of the player Hakeem al Araibi.

Mr. Al-Araibi is a football player and Bahrain national who is currently being detained in prison in Thailand since more than 60 days in contravention of his internationally recognised human rights.

This situation should not have arisen, in particular, since Mr Al-Araibi now lives, works and plays as a professional footballer in Australia, where he has been accorded refugee status.

All participants in yesterday's meeting expressed grave concern and agreed on the emergency of the situation.

"The meeting has been very productive and has allowed us to exchange very useful information on the case, especially after Mr Foster had met Hakeem Al-Araibi last week in Bangkok. We strongly urge the authorities in Thailand and Bahrain to do the right thing and ensure Mr Al-Araibi can go back safely to Australia as a matter of urgency", said Fatma Samoura.

FIFA has [called publicly](#) upon the relevant authorities in Bahrain, Thailand and Australia on several occasions to ensure that Mr Al-Araibi is allowed to return safely to Australia and last week [a letter](#) was addressed to the Thai Prime Minister requesting a meeting and urging him to solve this issue at the earliest possible moment, in accordance with the relevant international standards.

In yesterday's meeting, FIFA reiterated its will to escalate this issue to the highest levels of all authorities in both Bahrain and Thailand.

Mr. Foster added, "We are pleased to see that FIFA recognises the extreme gravity of the situation and their willingness to engage at the highest levels in both Bahrain and Thailand. I look forward to Hakeem's human rights being upheld and his safe return to Australia. Given the urgent nature of the situation, there is a strong desire to see a resolution this week".

Moreover, FIFA, Mr Foster and the World Players Association will continue to push with all possible stakeholders to find a positive conclusion to ensure Mr Al Araibi is allowed to return to his family in Australia as soon as possible.