

FIFA's Normalisation Committees – What Are They And How Do They Work?



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There has been great discussion in recent weeks about FIFA's powers of intervention following the decision to [suspend](#) all Russian teams (national representative and club) from FIFA competitions until further notice^[1]. FIFA's long-held powers of intervention in its member associations' governance has long flown under the radar however and has been rarely publicised outside of the member associations in whose matters FIFA has intervened, demonstrated most recently in the cases of Kenya and Zimbabwe which have been somewhat overshadowed by FIFA's suspension of all Russian teams. Such powers are exercised by imposing "*normalisation committees*" on member associations that FIFA determines are not complying with the [FIFA Statutes](#) (the "**Statutes**")^[2].

Out of FIFA's 211 members, a significant number of associations have recent or current experience of normalisation committee intervention – including in Kuwait, Guinea, Guatemala, Greece, Argentina, Thailand, Mali, Benin, [Madagascar](#)^[3], [Trinidad and Tobago](#)^[4], [Dominican Republic](#)^[5], [Egypt](#)^[6] and [Venezuela](#)^[7] to name a few. Recently normalisation committees have been established in [Guinea and Chad](#)^[8] following a "*series of irregularities that took place during the electoral process*" of the Guinean Football Association and the Chadian FA's "*inability... to carry out an electoral process*" in accordance with FIFA's requirements. Most recently, FIFA has announced the suspension of football in Kenya and Zimbabwe, the result of which being that the two nations' participation in qualifying for the men's 2023 Africa Cup of Nations is in serious doubt.

In light of this, this article analyses the role of FIFA's normalisation committees. Specifically, it looks at:

- When FIFA is entitled to intervene
- Circumstances in which FIFA has intervened
- How normalisation committees are constituted
- The scope of their powers
- What happens if there are disputes, including a case study on the Trinidad and Tobago Football Association
- Key examples of normalisation committees
- Comparisons with other sports
- Legitimacy of FIFA's interventions

When Is FIFA Entitled To Intervene?

FIFA's power to intervene is derived from the Statutes. Article 8 provides that:

1. *"All bodies and officials must observe the Statutes, regulations, decisions and Code of Ethics of FIFA in their activities.*
2. *Executive bodies of member associations may under exceptional circumstances be removed from office by the Council in consultation with the relevant confederation and replaced by a normalisation committee for a specific period of time.*
3. *Every person and organisation involved in the game of football is obliged to observe the Statutes and regulations of FIFA as well as the principles of fair play"^[9].*

The "exceptional circumstances" in which FIFA may intervene are not clearly defined, but tend to involve a member association's failure to "manage their affairs independently and ensure that their own affairs are not influenced by any third parties..."^[10] even where such influence is not the fault of the member association^[11]. Further, member associations are required to comply with the principles of good governance, including but not limited to political and religious neutrality, prohibition of discrimination, and judicial independence^[12].

The appointment of a normalisation committee is regarded as a last resort, when FIFA considers that the domestic governance of the game has irretrievably broken down. The constitution of a normalisation committee usually follows the suspension of a member association by the Council, where that member association is unable to confirm that it has demonstrated that it is able to comply with the requisite principles of good governance.

Whilst suspended, a member association loses all of its membership rights as defined in Article 13 of the Statutes, and national and affiliated club teams are not entitled to take part in international competitions until the suspension is lifted. Other member associations are also not permitted to have sporting contact with the member association during its suspension.

Circumstances In Which FIFA Has Intervened

Government Interference

FIFA appointed a normalisation committee for the Kuwait Football Association (KFA) on 18 January 2018 following a 2015 suspension for [alleged government interference](#) in the affairs of the KFA^[13].

Similarly, FIFA intervened in Mali's Football Association (**FEMAFOOT**) for [government interference](#) after the Mali Sports Minister dissolved the executive committee of FEMAFOOT^[14]. It has become clear in recent years that "government interference" also extends to inference by national courts (Pakistan) and even where governments or government agencies (Zimbabwe's Sport and Recreation Commission) intervene following serious allegations being made against a member association, as discussed further below.

Breaches of Ethics and Regulations

FIFA intervened in the governance of the Uruguayan Football Association after the sudden resignation of its president in July 2018. His resignation followed the release of compromising audio recordings, the content of which is unknown (although there are some suggestions that these recordings contained comments about sports administrators, a member of the government and sports journalists). FIFA's [intervention](#) was "based on the lack of guarantees for the electoral process"^[15]. The normalisation committee for the Ghanaian Football Association was appointed following similar concerns regarding breaches of ethics in the member association and government interference.

In the case of the Football Association of Thailand (**FAT**), the executive committee was removed following a ban to the FAT's president for a breach to FIFA's Code of Ethics. He was given a suspended 16 month sentence by a Thai court for falsifying documents to amend the FAT statutes ahead of the FAT's presidential election. A normalisation committee [was set up in 2015](#)^[16].

Power Vacuum

Some appointments of normalisation committees appear to have been motivated by the departure of presidents of football associations which has caused a 'power vacuum'.

For example, following the passing of the Venezuelan Football Association's (**FVF**) acting President, Jesús Berardinelli, 16 days after his arrest in July on charges of misusing public money, the FVF was left facing a "leadership vacuum" which FIFA [determined](#) would prevent the FVF "from taking key administrative and sporting decisions during these critical times, which could impact negatively on the development of Venezuelan football at all levels"^[17].

Financial Management

The high-profile appointment of (and legal dispute about) a normalisation committee in Trinidad and Tobago followed a 'fact-finding' mission to the Republic to assess the Trinidad and Tobago Football Association's (**TTFA**) financial situation. That mission found that the TTFA had poor financial management and a massive debt ([believed](#) to be around \$5.5 million^[18]), which resulted in the TTFA facing a "very real risk of insolvency and liquidity". FIFA stated that "such a situation is putting at risk the organisation and development of football in the country and corrective measures need to be applied urgently". This appears to be the first situation in which FIFA has intervened for reasons of financial management alone, with there usually being at least one other reason linked to government intervention, breaches of ethics or a power vacuum.

Recent Examples

The Pakistan Football Federation (**PFF**) has had a particularly difficult few years, facing challenges in respect of its governance since 2015, with FIFA first imposing a normalisation committee in in 2017. In the past year, it has had its previous normalisation committee replaced in January 2021 after resignation of its Chair; was suspended in April 2021 due to "third-party interference" and, having

already had its mandate extended in 2020 in the hope that the PFF's elections will have been held by the end of 2020, with one of the reasons given was the general disruption caused by the Covid-19 [pandemic](#) in Pakistan^[19], has had the mandate of its normalisation committee repeatedly extended, most recently in October 2021.

As mentioned above, FIFA has recently intervened in the Football Kenya Federation (**FKF**), following the country's sports ministry disbanding the FKF in November 2021 due to alleged misappropriation of funds, with the FKF president, Nick Mwendwa, resigning from his role after being charged with fraud (which he denies)^[20]. The caretaker committee the appointed by Kenya's sports ministry was deemed by FIFA to be governmental interference, despite ostensibly having the same scope of powers and role as a normalisation committee, although FIFA did state that it would cooperate with the ongoing investigation into the conduct of the former FKF officials.

Also in November 2021, the Zimbabwe Sports and Recreation Commission (**SRC**) suspended the board of the Zimbabwe FA (**Zifa**) following allegations of fraud and of sexual harassment of female referees by staff members. Again, FIFA [determined](#) that this form of interference ran contrary to its statutes. The SRC failed to meet a deadline set by FIFA to give control back to Zifa and openly criticised both FIFA and CAF for failing to respond to serious allegations of wrongdoing by the previous Zifa administration.

Both member nations have now been suspended by FIFA, with Gianni Infantino [quoted](#) as stating that "*they know what needs to be done for them to be re-admitted or for the suspensions to be lifted*"^[21]. As we have seen from the dispute between the TTFA and FIFA, with the very real consequences of suspension from football looming over each nation (including being prevented from participation in qualification for the African Cup of Nations) it appears overwhelmingly likely that normalisation committees will soon be appointed in both countries.

Constitution Of Normalisation Committees

Normalisation committees are composed of an adequate number of members identified by FIFA and the relevant confederation and stakeholders. What is viewed as an adequate number of members varies, and normalisation committees have been composed of four members in [Ghana](#)^[22], five in [Venezuela](#)^[23] and six in [Thailand](#)^[24] by way of some examples.

As to whether the imposition of a normalisation committee is compliant with national law, or how a national association would render a normalisation committee compliant with national law, this would depend on the specific laws to which a national association adheres. For example, if FIFA determined that The FA was unable to "*manage their affairs independently and ensure that their own affairs are not influenced by any third parties...*"^[25] even where such influence is not the fault of the member association^[26], for whatever reason, and decided to impose a normalisation committee, the existing directors would need to resign or be removed in accordance with The FA's articles of association and the relevant legislation. It is also worth noting that there is little way around this - a member association's statutes are required to include a provision to "*always comply with the Statutes, regulations and decisions of FIFA*"^[27]

Members of normalisation committees are not required to have any particular skill-sets, but it is usually the case that members hail from the country in which the national association is based. Normalisation committees tend to be made up of members from different backgrounds, albeit with some knowledge or experience of football and financial and legal affairs.

For example, in Uruguay, the normalisation committee's three members included a member of the FIFA Governance Committee, a former executive of one of Uruguay's [top clubs](#)^[28], and an economist (the former Secretary of Economic and Financial Affairs at the [Uruguayan Football Association](#)^[29]). The four members of the Ghanaian Football Association's normalisation committee included a well-connected businessman known for sponsorship deals for Ghanaian football clubs, a former CEO of a telecommunication network, a lawyer, and a former board member of a Ghanaian football club.

The members of the normalisation committee are then confirmed by FIFA's Bureau of the Council (which deals with all matters requiring immediate attention between [two meetings of the Council](#)^[30]). FIFA retains the right to add or remove any members of the normalisation committee as it sees fit.

All members of the normalisation committee are required to pass an eligibility test^[31] in accordance with the Statutes and the [FIFA Governance Regulations](#)^[32], which is conducted by the [FIFA Review Committee](#)^[33]. FIFA [describes](#) the content of such eligibility checks as "*open-ended and vague*"^[34] which require clarification on a case-by-case basis. FIFA aims to make their application as objective and certain as possible. In conducting these checks, the Review Committee has been mindful of the guidelines stemming from decisions taken by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (**CAS**) in a small number of cases relevant to the conducting of integrity checks. Standards vary depending on the position for which the eligibility checks are applied, as the CAS has held that the integrity check is an abstract test to assess whether a person is perceived to be a person of integrity for the function at stake^[35]. As such, a direct violation of the [FIFA Code of Ethics](#) is no prerequisite to a person not passing the integrity check. However, a history of financial impropriety and an involvement in national or local government are severely [frowned upon by FIFA](#)^[36].

It is worth noting that the Review Committee does not have any investigatory powers and makes a decision based on the information available to it at the time.

The constitution of normalisation committees is not without its criticism from stakeholders however. In Pakistan, a normalisation committee was appointed on 27 June 2019 on the basis that "*only free, fair and transparent elections of the PFF executive committee would reunite the football stakeholders in Pakistan*". Because of the inherently politicised nature of the PFF and its various stakeholders, there has been a great deal of criticism of the constitution of the normalisation committee – to the extent that the Balochistan Football Association (**BFA**) wrote to FIFA to claim that the appointed committee members were biased, are allegedly receiving "*huge salaries*" and are placing "*controversial figures*" in provincial committees, and the BFA requested that FIFA send a vigilance committee to Pakistan to examine the normalisation committee's performance^[37]. Pakistan's government wrote to FIFA in August 2020 to request FIFA's intervention, which was refused. FIFA responded to this request by asking for evidence of the allegations made. The normalisation committee chair, Humza Khan, has publicly stated "*there are only two factions, one is of Hayat, and the other is of Ashfaq Shah, and we have their representatives in the NC [normalisation committee]. Both factions are not happy with me, so I believe we must be doing something right, something good*", adding that "*my job is getting the elections done but not participate in it.*"^[38] Gianni Infantino welcomed the dialogue with Pakistan's government, but stated that FIFA "*obviously don't accept inference in sporting matters*"^[39]. The normalisation committee remains controversial, with a local Karachi football club petitioning the Sindh High Court in November 2021 to find the PFF's elections illegal^[40].

Scope Of Powers

The normalisation committee takes over the day-to-day running of the member association whilst drafting new statutes and policies for the association that adhere to the FIFA Statutes and the relevant national law. The new statutes must contain, at a minimum, provisions relating to neutrality in politics and religion, prohibition of discrimination, independence from any political interference, judicial independence and respect of the [Laws of the Game](#).

The normalisation committee also organises and conducts elections for a new executive committee. None of the members of the normalisation committee are able to run for any of the vacant positions in the elections. Members of the existing executive committee are required to vacate their posts whilst the normalisation committee undergoes its work. If they wish to take up positions in the new executive committee, they are expected to contest the positions in the elections organised by the normalisation committee. Potential candidates for the executive committee are required to undergo integrity checks as per the FIFA Code of Ethics, regardless of their previous position, which are carried out by the FIFA Review Committee using the same guidelines as set out above.

FIFA can continue to monitor the member association's progress by way of a monitoring committee, implemented on a case-by-case basis. The normalisation committee remains in place for a specified period of time and will disband when all the required tasks are complete. FIFA has the discretion to extend the relevant period of time for as long as it is required. This is particularly so given restrictions in place across the globe as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequential difficulty or delay in holding suitable elections – one of the reasons deployed in the cases of Pakistan and Trinidad and Tobago. There is no limit as to how many times FIFA can extend a normalisation committee's mandate, although it expects the normalisation committee to [provide a roadmap](#) so that the mandate can be fulfilled in the time provided to it.^[41]

What Happens If The Member Association Disputes The Appointment?

There are no easily available records of member associations challenging the appointment of a normalisation committee. The Statutes provide that confederations, member associations and leagues *"shall agree to comply fully with any decision passed by the relevant FIFA bodies which, according to these Statutes, are final and not subject to appeal"*^[42]. Further, member associations are obliged to *"comply fully with the... decisions of FIFA bodies at any time"*^[43].

Some member associations have attempted to challenge the appointment of a normalisation committee through local judicial means. FIFA tends to respond to these sorts of challenges by promptly suspending the member association until the election of a new executive committee is conducted, as was the case for the Benin Football Association (FBF) after a local judicial court [approved](#) an injunction to impede the holding of the 2016 presidential election, despite the FBF having been overseen by a normalisation committee since September 2015^[44].

Member associations have been willing to appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (**CAS**) on a number of matters involving FIFA, including audit orders (in the case of the [Ivory Coast Football Federation](#)^[45]) and [membership](#)^[46]. However, the outcome of such an appeal would be difficult to predict. Whilst the CAS has upheld appeals against FIFA in cases such as the Gibraltar Football Association's [application](#) for FIFA membership^[47], it has also shown a willingness to approve a sports governing body's intervention in governance matters where necessary – for example the [suspension](#) by the IAAF of the All Russia Athletics Federation from IAAF membership^[48]. This is likely to be the case in FIFA's suspension of Russian football. Any appeal to the CAS would most likely

turn on its facts. A representative of the Samoan Football Association appealed to the CAS in 2008 against the appointment of a normalisation committee, and was [unsuccessful](#) albeit without going into the merits of the case, on the basis that a decision of FIFA to establish a normalisation committee is final and binding.^[49]

Case Study: Trinidad And Tobago Football Association (“TTFA”)

On 17 March 2020, FIFA released a statement that the Bureau of the FIFA Council had decided to appoint a normalisation committee for the TTFA in accordance with the FIFA Statutes. As set out earlier in this article, this was on the [basis](#) of the TTFA’s “*low overall financial management*” and that the TTFA was facing a “*very real risk of insolvency and liquidity*”^[50]. This decision came after a fact-finding mission by FIFA delegates in February 2020. In a strange twist, it is alleged that the TTFA only learnt of FIFA’s decision through social media as the email had been sent to the wrong email address.

FIFA’s decision has been met with a great deal of [animosity](#), with a TTFA board member accusing FIFA of acting like a “*colonial absentee landlord*”, and with the former Premier League footballer Shaka Hislop calling the appointment a “*coup*”^[51].

The constitution of the three-person normalisation committee was [announced](#) on 27 March 2020^[52]. This initially included a [businessman](#) who is one of three Chief Executive Officers of the HADCO Group, a retired Director and Partner at Moore Trinidad and Tobago (a former chairman of the JMMB Bank) and an Attorney and Environmental Law specialist^[53].

The TTFA (through a medium named “United TTFA”) initially sought to challenge the decision through the CAS, however was not able to raise the funds to cover the advance of costs required and withdrew from the process.

On 19 May 2020, FIFA was notified that the TTFA had commenced proceedings against it in the Trinidad and Tobago High Court of Justice. In these proceedings, the TTFA claimed that FIFA’s Statutes cannot override the TTFA’s Constitution, the power of which is derived from an Act of the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and that no power exists that enables FIFA to remove the Board of the TTFA except as set out in the TTFA’s Constitution.

On 8 July 2020, FIFA released a [statement](#) that it “*does not, and will never, accept the jurisdiction of a local court in Trinidad & Tobago to decide on the legality of the appointment of the Normalisation Committee*”^[54]. The statement went on to say that FIFA only recognises the authority and jurisdiction of the CAS in these matters, and that any dispute regarding the appointment of a normalisation committee “*falls squarely*” within the jurisdiction of the CAS, and CAS alone.

The High Court decided against FIFA in August 2020, and FIFA formally appealed the decision on the basis that the only recognise path to resolve this sort of dispute is with the CAS, in accordance with FIFA’s Statutes. FIFA also issued a [press release](#) stating “*the insistence of the TTFA former leadership to bring this matter to a local court instead of the established dispute resolution forum at CAS greatly endangers the overall football structure in the country and endangers the position of Trinidad and Tobago football internationally*”^[55].

FIFA’s response has been swift and firm, indefinitely suspending the TTFA for “*grave violations*” of the FIFA Statutes (specifically article 59 which expressly prohibits recourse to ordinary course unless specifically provided for in the FIFA regulations). In its [statement](#), FIFA made clear that “*this suspension will only be lifted when the TTFA fully complies with its obligations as a member of FIFA,*

including recognising the legitimacy of the appointed normalisation committee and bringing its own statutes into line with the FIFA Statutes”^[56].

On Friday 24 October 2020, the Trinidad and Tobago Court of Appeal [overturned](#) the High Court decision and decided in FIFA’s favour that only the Court of Arbitration for Sport had jurisdiction to hear the dispute^[57]. In [response](#) to this decision, the TTFA held an extraordinary general meeting and voted overwhelmingly to comply with the normalisation committee – a decision the TTFA communicated to FIFA, and that FIFA is considering internally^[58]. If the TTFA does not comply with the normalisation committee, it will be excluded from the Qatar 2022 World Cup qualifying campaign, as well as the Concacaf 2021 Gold Cup tournament. It remains to be seen what the final outcome of this dispute will be, but it seems likely that the risks of not participating in these tournaments may prove too much for the TTFA to bear. For a [full case analysis](#) of the TTFA’s High Court claim and Appeal Court decision, and the legal implications, see Dr Despina Mavromati’s article^[59].

The TTFA remains subject to a normalisation committee, receiving [notice](#) on 21 December 2021 that the mandate of the normalisation committee would be extended until 31 March 2023 at the latest^[60] – far longer than the more commonly granted six-month extension.

Do They Work?

Whilst normalisation committees can achieve FIFA’s desired outcome, there are notable examples which open the process up to criticism for being largely ineffective and for preserving the status quo rather than revitalising the situation.

The case of the Hellenic Football Federation (**HFF**) is particularly dramatic. FIFA [intervened](#) in October 2016^[61] following extensive governance issues including the Greek Sports Ministry’s cancellation of the Greek Cup final in 2016 as well as the postponement of the 2016-17 season due to a dispute between Greece’s football clubs, the HFF and the government over the selection of referees. FIFA established a normalisation committee in October 2016. Elections were held in August 2017, despite threats and an alleged arson attack. The normalisation committee was criticised for its inclusion of some individuals who could be deemed to have a conflict of interest and links have also been drawn between those implicated in match-fixing cases and their potential influence over referee appointments. It has also been reported that as many as 75% of second tier games in Greece are [showing signs of match-fixing](#)^[62].

The Argentine Football Association was largely leaderless until Luis Segura became president after a suspicious 38-38 vote by a 75 person Congress^[63]. Segura was later charged by US authorities with [fraudulent administration](#)^[64] and FIFA set up a [normalisation committee](#) in July 2016^[65], which was plagued with issues including a players’ strike for non-payment and [postponement of the Argentinian league](#)^[66]. Many have criticised the new executive committee. The new President is a former president of a Third Division football club and is joined on the board by the [presidents of Boca Juniors and of Independiente](#)^[67]. People have, unsurprisingly, questioned the suitability of the new board members.

Arguably, the imposition of a normalisation committee in Egypt has been a success. FIFA installed a normalisation committee in August 2019 following the sudden resignation of the Egyptian Football Association’s (**EFA**) President, Hani Abou Rida, and other members of the EFA in the immediate aftermath of Egypt’s exit from the men’s 2019 Africa Cup of Nations^[68], with a mandate originally lasting until 31 July 2020. The normalisation committee was extended until 31 July 2021, partly

owing to [delays](#) caused by the Covid-19 pandemic^[69], with its responsibilities including running the daily affairs of the EFA, reviewing the EFA Statutes to ensure compliance with the FIFA Statutes and adoption by the EFA congress, and organising and conducting elections of a new EFA board. The EFA's new board was [announced](#) on 5 January 2022^[70] - fulfilling the normalisation committee's mandate. Arguably, the stabilising influence of the normalisation committee has had an impact on the pitch as well – with Egypt's national men's team performance improving dramatically from being knocked out in the Round of 16 during its home tournament to runners up in this year's tournament.

Comparisons With Other Sports

FIFA is not the only organisation in pursuit of good governance and it can be suggested that FIFA's actions compliment the wider change of attitude towards governance issues in sport.

Other sports governing bodies have taken steps to intervene where serious issues over governance have been raised – see for example the [unprecedented decision](#)^[71] in December 2017 by the IOC to withdraw funding from the Association of International Boxing Associations (**AIBA**).

Legitimacy Of Intervention

The protection of the integrity of the game is of utmost importance to FIFA^[72] particularly at a time of significant scrutiny (and reform) of its own governance. FIFA's own governance is still in the process of changing, but many have noted that the 2016 reforms did not go far enough - with standards [falling far short](#) of those expected of a UK listed company, for example^[73]. Whilst normalisation committees often have the desired effect of bringing a member association's governance in line with FIFA's expectations, the difficulties lie in the determination of what good governance is in the context of a truly global sport.

FIFA's statutes expressly provide that whilst "*FIFA remains neutral in matters of politics*", "*exceptions may be made with regard to matters affected by FIFA's statutory objectives*"^[74]. Such interventions are permitted by the FIFA Statutes, but given the integrity issues historically faced by FIFA, questions could be raised regarding the organisation's role as moral arbiter - perhaps an independent body would be more effective in decisions such as these.

The establishment of a global independent body as method of oversight of regulatory and governance affairs would be an admirable aim, however the hurdles of doing so are unlikely to be overcome any time soon. Any independent body would first face the challenge of obtaining sufficient funding to conduct such wide-ranging and extensive work. There would need to be agreement from FIFA's 211 affiliated associations as to the mandate of the independent body and people of sufficient expertise would have to be appointed to carry out that mandate. How these independent people would be chosen and the integrity standard to which they would be held is another area of contention – including the question of whether they would be subject to the same integrity checks as currently imposed by FIFA. As we have seen, global governing bodies such as WADA are not immune to criticism, despite broadly being seen as the legitimate and authoritative body for matters within their scope of expertise.

To FIFA's credit, its assertion of authority over the governance of its member associations cannot be questioned. FIFA has certainly not been afraid to flex its muscles in ensuring its authority is not undermined as has clearly been demonstrated in the case of Trinidad and Tobago and Kenya in particular.

Could FIFA Go Further?

Whilst it does seem, at first glance, that a significant number of national associations have been subject to FIFA intervention in the form of normalisation committees, the number of national associations affected from the 211 affiliated associations is relatively low.

Questions have been raised in respect of the scope of FIFA's powers in this regard. Arguably, FIFA could do more to take preventative action rather than simply reactive. This could be in the form of conducting audits over each national association's governance structures every few years. This would have the benefit of tackling issues of corruption and mismanagement head-on, however the reality is that this would be unlikely to be proportionate. Whilst FIFA does in fact conduct audits of member associations in respect of development funds received through the [FIFA Forward Development Programme](#)^[75], the audit of a member association's broader governance and financial structures is a different prospect. FIFA, like many sports governing bodies, simply does not have the resource to undertake such an enormous task. FIFA comes under a great deal of criticism for its current levels of intervention, so it is highly doubtful that an increased level of scrutiny would be well-received by member associations unless they are able to see a direct, and most likely a financial, benefit.

Conclusion

These examples of intervention should serve as a stark warning of the significant consequences of corruption within football. FIFA is willing to step in to member associations when it considers its position is being undermined, with suspension of (and subsequent imposition of a normalisation committee on) the member association a very likely consequence.

FIFA provides global rules which must be universally applied. These rules were not designed for the purpose of a single situation, which creates challenging situations when applying specific rules to hundreds of countries around the world, each with different ideas of standards of governance. The regulations put in place by FIFA are binding and must be observed at all times by every member association. The compulsory nature of the FIFA regulations flows from the need for FIFA to be able to achieve its objectives as set out in the Statutes.

Although individuals will have varying opinions on FIFA itself, normalisation committees have been effective in a number of cases and continue to work as a method of implementation of good governance. Whilst the use of an independent body would be desirable, the status quo is working and FIFA remain the only organisation with sufficient authority to enforce such action. FIFA must however be alive to criticism in acknowledging its failures to intervene at an earlier stage where serious allegations have been made, and be prepared to monitor member associations, scrutinise the appointments of committee members, and keep a watchful eye over the suitability of candidates for executive committee positions.

This article was originally published 26 October 2018 and has been completely revamped and updated for accuracy and comprehensiveness.

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