

WORLD CUP CAMPAIGN REPORT

Pride Match Protest – Seattle 26 June 2026

Location: *Lumen Field, Seattle, USA*

Date: *26 June 2026*

Target: *Iran v Egypt · FIFA World Cup 2026 “Pride Match”*



Executive Summary

On 26 June 2026, Peter Tatchell, human rights defender and CEO of the Peter Tatchell Foundation, staged a protest inside Lumen Field stadium in Seattle during the FIFA World Cup Group G match between Iran and Egypt, designated by as the tournament's first-ever 'Pride Match'.

Displaying a placard reading **'Iran & Egypt ban gay footballers. It's against FIFA rules!'**, Peter publicly challenged the contradiction at the heart of the Pride Match: both nations criminalise homosexuality and operate a de facto ban on gay players, which is in direct breach of FIFA Statute 4.1, prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation.

The protest, supported by a coordinated PR campaign managed by Kibbo Kift Agency, generated extraordinary global media coverage, reaching every major world region and placing LGBT+ rights in sport at the centre of international news coverage for several days.

This was the first phase of an on-going campaign to pressure FIFA to uphold its own anti-discrimination statutes. It will continue after the 2026 World Cup.

49 Pieces of Coverage	2.77 BILLION MUU Impressions
68 Avg Domain Authority	29 Avg AI Visibility Score

Background & Context

The Iran v Egypt World Cup Group G fixture, played on 26 June 2026 in Seattle during Seattle PrideFest, was designated as a 'Pride Match' – the first in World Cup history, coincising with Seattle Pride Weekend. While FIFA confirmed that rainbow flags were permitted inside the stadium, the Peter Tatchell Foundation identified a fundamental human rights failure: **11 of the 32 competing nations criminalise homosexuality and have a de facto ban on openly gay footballers being selected for the national squad at the World Cup.**

The 11 nations identified by PTF are:

Iran · Egypt · Saudi Arabia · Ghana · Senegal · Qatar · Tunisia · Morocco · Iraq · Uzbekistan · Algeria

Iran's head coach, Amir Ghalenoei, publicly admitted at a press conference on 25 June that LGBT+ matters are 'banned in our league' — an acknowledgement that gay players face exclusion, despite FIFA's own anti-discrimination statutes explicitly prohibiting such practices.

Key Campaign Actions

15 June · Letter to FIFA President

The Peter Tatchell Foundation wrote to FIFA President Gianni Infantino with three formal demands:

- ◆ Written assurances from all 11 anti-gay nations that no player would be excluded because he is gay.
- ◆ Confirmation that national football associations had not, and would not, bar gay players from selection.
- ◆ Consideration of whether any country refusing such assurance should continue to participate, given FIFA's own anti-discrimination statutes, which stipulate suspension or expulsion for such infractions.

23 June · FIFA's Response

FIFA's Human Rights Team replied but failed to address the central question: whether FIFA had asked the named associations to confirm gay player eligibility. Instead, FIFA shifted responsibility to the national associations, stating that 'the selection of players is the responsibility of the respective participating FIFA member associations.' FIFA did, however, confirm that rainbow flags were permitted under the Stadium Code of Conduct.

"FIFA's response is a flagrant abdication of responsibility. It cannot hide behind national associations when those same associations are bound by FIFA's own anti-discrimination rules."

— Peter Tatchell, CEO, Peter Tatchell Foundation

26 June · In-Stadium Protest

Shortly after kick-off, Peter Tatchell stood inside Lumen Field and displayed his protest placard. Stadium officials — apparently instructed by FIFA and/or the Seattle organising committee — intervened and initially demanded he surrender the sign, claiming it was prohibited. Tatchell refused, citing FIFA's own stated policies permitting LGBT+ messages. After officials consulted further, they withdrew the demand and allowed Tatchell to keep his placard, instructing him only to remain seated

"This is a Pride Match between two countries where homosexuality is criminalised. That is the glaring contradiction FIFA refuses to confront. FIFA's own rules prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. Yet FIFA is allowing countries that criminalise homosexuality to compete without requiring them to confirm that gay players are eligible for selection."

— Peter Tatchell

"LGBT+ fans may be welcome as spectators, but FIFA has failed to ensure gay players are welcome as footballers. Rainbow flags in the stands are not enough if gay players are excluded from the pitch."

— Peter Tatchell



Photo credits: JOSEPH PETERSON [@fohrm.studio](https://www.instagram.com/fohrm.studio)

Media & PR Impact

The campaign was managed in real time by Kibbo Kift Agency (KKA), who drafted five versions of press releases for different developing scenarios, produced a six-page Q&A to rebut hostile questions, developed and pitched one op-ed, and created tailored pitch notes for different media targets. KKA coordinated outreach to global, UK and US media across national news, LGBT+ titles, sports media, broadcast, picture desks and social platforms.

Coverage by Region

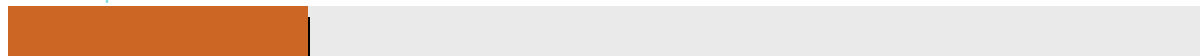
United Kingdom 20 pieces



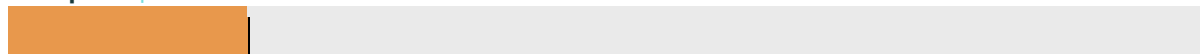
United States 16 pieces



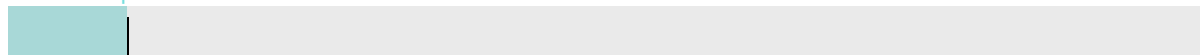
Asia 5 pieces



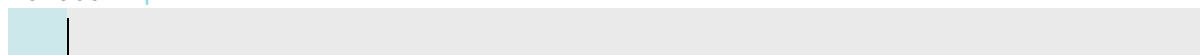
Europe 4 pieces



Brazil 2 pieces



Canada 1 piece



Two-thirds of total coverage was split almost evenly between the UK and the US, with the remaining third spanning Asia, Europe, the Americas and beyond — reflecting the global resonance of the campaign's message.

Coverage by Publication Type

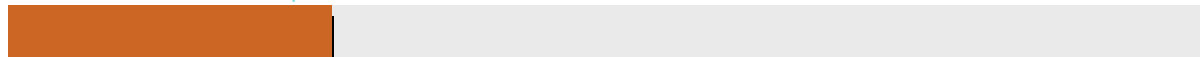
National Media 22 pieces



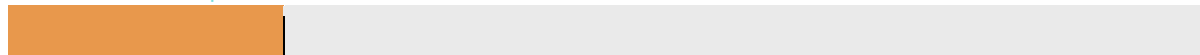
Other (sport, consumer, syndicated) 13 pieces



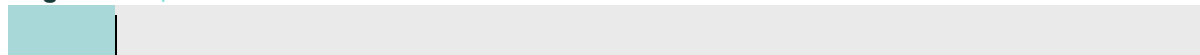
Queer Publications 6 pieces



Social Media 5 pieces



Regional 2 pieces



National media outlets — primarily UK and US — accounted for almost half of all coverage. British queer press, including Attitude and PinkNews, provided extensive coverage. Social media amplification included mentions from several established accounts, and a Reddit post in r/worldcup generated 82,000 views, 79 upvotes and 46 comments.

Notable Coverage Highlights

The following outlets provided significant coverage of the campaign, reflecting the story's reach across national news, sports media and LGBT+ press:

Publication	Territory	Story Focus	MUU	Dom. Auth.
The i Paper	UK	FIFA abandoned LGBT fans	6,702,000	56
Washington Post	US	Rainbow flags dot Iran & Egypt match	65,940,000	37
Daily Mail	UK	Pride Match late drama	209,900,000	81
Newsweek	US	FIFA refuses to stand by Pride	26,940,000	74
Associated Press	US	Rainbow flags dot Iran & Egypt	78,660,000	85
The Hindu	India	Seattle: LGBTQ+ feted except by Iran & Egypt	75,750,000	91
20 Minutes (FR)	France	Omerta en zone mixte — Tatchell in stands	32,570,000	76
HuffPost Italia	Italy	Egypt vs Iran: first Pride Match	7,318,000	57
ESPN	UK	Pride flags shown at Egypt-Iran match	—	—
Reddit r/worldcup	US	Anti-gay laws ahead of Pride Match	82,000 views	—

What the Media Said

"Fifa has abandoned LGBT fans — but one US city is fighting back"

— **The i Paper, 26 June 2026**

"Rainbow flags dot Iran and Egypt's match as Seattle celebrates Pride during the World Cup"

— **Washington Post / Associated Press, 26–27 June 2026**

"FIFA Refuses to Stand Firmly Behind Its Own Virtue Signaling"

— **Newsweek, 26 June 2026**



Photo credits: **JOSEPH PETERSON** [@fohrmstudio](https://twitter.com/fohrmstudio)

Social Media

In addition to the substantial amount of media work undertaken during the Seattle campaign action, our PTF Communications Officer pushed regular content on our social media platforms, including infographics we created to encourage resharing via hashtags like **#EndTheGayBan** **#KickItOut**, **#KickOutHomophobia**.

Our best performing Instagram post attracted **270 likes**, making it the single most liked post on our Instagram since August 2025.



Campaign Significance

This single-action protest, combined by the intense PR and media work around it achieved significant impact and confirmed the Peter Tatchell Foundation's ability to lead the conversation. Key markers of its significance include:

- ◆ **Global reach:** coverage spanned 7 territories across 4 continents, including the UK, US, France, India, Brazil, Canada and South Africa.
- ◆ **Mainstream penetration:** national media accounted for almost half of all coverage, with the AP wire story syndicated internationally and picked up across multiple platforms.
- ◆ **Rights legitimacy:** by anchoring the protest in FIFA's own Statute 4.1, PTF ensured the story was framed as an accountability issue rather than simply a political protest, making it harder to dismiss.
- ◆ **FIFA accountability:** PTF's direct correspondence with FIFA President Infantino, and FIFA's inadequate response, became a central news hook cited by multiple outlets.
- ◆ **Queer press amplification:** six dedicated LGBT+ publications, including Attitude and PinkNews, provided coverage that reached the primary at-risk audience.
- ◆ **AI Visibility:** an average AI visibility score of 29 means PTF's messaging now surfaces in AI-generated responses about the Pride Match and FIFA's human rights record, extending impact beyond the news cycle.



Conclusion

The Seattle Pride Match protest demonstrates the power of combining direct non-violent action with a precisely targeted PR strategy. By challenging FIFA publicly and on its own terms, citing its statutes, corresponding directly with its president, and staging a visible protest inside the stadium, the Peter Tatchell Foundation placed the question of LGBT+ inclusion in football at the heart of World Cup coverage globally.

The 2.77 billion impressions generated by this campaign represent one of the Foundation's largest-ever media footprints from a single protest action. The story reached audiences across the UK, US, Europe, Asia, and the Americas, in multiple languages, spanning national newspapers, broadcast, digital, queer press, sports media and social platforms.

This campaign forms part of the Foundation's ongoing work through its Sport campaign ('Boot It Out'), which challenges homophobia and discrimination in all sports at every level, from grassroots to global governing bodies.

Our campaign for FIFA to enforce its own ban on sexual orientation discrimination will continue until we end the de facto ban on gay footballers by any and every World Cup country.



Thank you to our delivery partners

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And a very special thank you to all our supporters

in particular those who chose to donate to our Seattle campaign, making this action possible.