
KOSOVO FOOTBALL CHIEFS CONDEMN UNAUTHORISED MATCH IN NORTH

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The Kosovo Football Federation, FFK, has condemned plans by its Serbian counterpart to organise a competitive match without its permission in the disputed Serb-dominated north of the country, calling it a serious provocation

On Tuesday, the FFK called on the top international football organisations, FIFA and UEFA to urgently react to the plan and not allow such violations of its statutes.

The anger follows the Serbian decision to schedule a match between the well-known Belgrade team Crvena Zvezda [Red Star] and Trepca, a team based in the Serb-run northern half of the Kosovo town of Mitrovica. The FFK claims the team is illegal.

No date has been set for the match, while the Serbian Football Association website lists the match as postponed.

We also call on Kosovos institutions and law enforcement organisations to address this issue with urgency and take necessary measures in order to protect the FFKs integrity, the football federation said.

The FFK considers itself as the sole authority to organise competitive matches in Kosovo, and says it has not given permission for the match □ while keeping the door open to Kosovo Serb sporting clubs to accept its authority.

We are open to include under our umbrella all football clubs which operate in Kosovo * no matter their ethnic background. So we call on [Kosovo] Serbian clubs to accept reality as soon as possible and play within FFK-organised regular competitions, the FFK said.

Sport often gets caught up in political disputes between Serbia and Kosovo.

The former Serbian province unilaterally proclaimed its independence with Western support in 2008, having de facto broken away in 1999 as a result of NATOs air war on Serbia.

Serbia has vowed never to recognise its statehood and is supported in this by powerful allies, including Russia and China.

In May 2018, the KFF rejected a request by Belgrade Red Star to play a humanitarian match in the mainly Kosovo Serb town of Gračanica, saying visiting fans had abused the countrys hospitality.

For two years, we gave permission for the match, but this year we will not because at the last

game things happened that do not belong to sport, the late FFK President, Fadil Vokrri, said at the time.

There were offensive messages and thats why we have rejected Red Stars request. We have also informed UEFA that there will be no match, he added.

He was referring to the May 2017 match, which saw the players also visiting the nearby Serbian Orthodox monastery at Gracanica. But Vokrri told the media that what riled the FKK was the sound of Serbian fans cheering Kosovo is Serbia! at the 2017 game.

In March, Belgrade cancelled a planned match between the womens junior handball teams from Serbia and Kosovo amid rising tensions and fears of clashes between Serbian fans and police.

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