



# THE SUNDAY TIMES

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Dear Mr Whittingdale,

In your call for evidence for the football governance inquiry you asked if the sport's ruling bodies are fit for purpose. The Sunday Times would like to submit evidence on FIFA, the governing body of the world game and, in particular, the way it governs the competition to host the finals of the world cup – a prize potentially worth billions of pounds to the winning nation. It is an issue with direct relevance to the UK as the English Football Association won only two votes out of 24 in its bid for the 2018 world cup competition last year, despite spending £19m campaigning for what most people agreed was one of the strongest bids in the competition. Our own inquiries uncovered allegations of irregularities in the voting process, both past and present. They included allegations that Qatar, the winning bidder for 2022, had been offering members of the Fifa Executive Committee large amounts of money for their votes. The allegations were and remain unproven, but we believe they were credible because they were made by people who held or had held official positions in Fifa (and later supported by a whistleblower from within the Qatar bid) and were so serious that you would have expected a responsible governing body to launch a proper investigation into them. We are not aware of any investigation into these allegations.

- 1) On October 17<sup>th</sup> last year The Sunday Times published a story entitled "World Cup Votes for Sale" which raised a number of concerns about the bidding process to host the competition. The headline news was that one Fifa Executive Committee (Exco) member had been filmed agreeing to sell his vote and a second member had asked for £1.5m for a sports academy from an undercover reporter seeking his vote. However, Fifa should have been equally, if not more, alarmed by our secret recordings of six further former or current Fifa officials who were offering to work as fixers for the World Cup bid. Each one of the six suggested paying huge bribes to Fifa executive committee members as part of a strategy to win the bid. Vote buying was clearly engrained in the bidding process.

- 2) Fifa held a short investigation which resulted in the suspension of six of the eight people we had named (the other two no longer worked for Fifa so could not be disciplined). Fifa has never published the precise reasons for the suspensions. For Fifa this was a quick end to the matter. The votes for 2018 and 2022 went ahead a few weeks later.
  
- 3) As far as we can see, there was no attempt to investigate why the six officials had all claimed that a successful bid appeared to need to buy votes. Furthermore, the tape-recordings we provided to Fifa contained clear allegations that attempts to buy votes had taken place in the current and past bid contest. As far as we can see, these allegations were not investigated either.
  
- 4) The activities of the Qatar bid had come to our attention a number of times during our investigation. In July 2010 we spoke to Ismail Bhamjee, who used to be one of the four African Fifa Exco members and was keen to work as a fixer for the undercover reporters. Bhamjee said his three fellow African members - Issa Hayatou of Cameroon, Slim Aloulou of Tunisia and Amadou Diakite of the Ivory Coast - had each been paid for their votes by Morocco when it was bidding against South Africa in the contest for the 2010 World Cup. He then offered to go away and find out what the current African Fifa Exco members were being offered by Qatar.

The following is an extract from the undercover meeting we had with Bhamjee.

**Reporter I: And we assume they're very rich, Qatar.**

**Ismail: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And I'm told the Africans will get.**

**Reporter II: Will get something.**

**Reporter I: From Qatar?**

**Ismail: Yeah. Anything from a quarter to half a million dollars.**

**Reporter I: A quarter to half a million dollars?**

**Reporter II: And is that quarter to half a million dollars, is that to invest in football? Or is that for them?**

**Ismail: No, no, no, no. This is on top. This is separate from the football.**

**Reporter II: That's for money, personal money?**

**Ismail: Yeah, they get.**

- 5) Our reporters then met Michel Zen Ruffinen, the former Secretary General of Fifa, who went through a list of Fifa Exco members who he said could be bought. In Cairo, Zen Ruffinen introduced the reporters to an acquaintance called Amadou Diallo. Over a series of conversations Zen Ruffinen claimed that Qatar was using Diallo to arrange financial deals with the African members in exchange for World Cup votes. Further inquiries established that Diallo had been employed by the Qatar bid and was also the “charge de mission” (chief assistant) to Issa Hayatou, the president of the Confederation of African Football.
- 6) Our reporters then spoke to Amadou Diakite who, like Bhamjee had been one of the African Fifa Exco members but had moved on to be a member of the Fifa’s Referees’ Committee. He said the African Fifa Exco members had been offered between \$1 to \$1.2 million US dollars for “projects” by Qatar in return for their 2022 vote. He claimed to be in contact with the members but it wasn’t clear whether this was directly or through an intermediary. Over six telephone conversations he was repeatedly asked by our reporters to check details about the financial deal being offered by Qatar to the Fifa Exco members and kept coming back with fresh information. He said it was normal for a third of such financial offer to be paid up front and then the member would collect the rest of the cash if the bid was successful.
- 7) The allegations regarding the Qatar bid and financial offers were highlighted in the letters sent to Fifa before and after publication of our original article. The conversations were also on the video and audio

recordings we sent to Fifa. However, Fifa does not appear to have pursued any of these matters.

- 8) The Qatar bid hired a firm of solicitors in London when we put the allegations to them. Its lawyers described the allegations as “entirely false”. It was a difficult story for The Sunday Times to publish as none of the three people who made the allegations against Qatar was ever likely to be willing to appear as a witness. However, in our view they had no reason to fabricate these allegations. Their allegations should, at least, have been examined by Fifa.
- 9) Last December we spoke to a whistleblower who had worked with the Qatar bid. The whistleblower claimed Qatar had paid \$1.5m to two Fifa Exco members - Hayatou and Jaques Anouma of the Ivory Coast – to secure their votes. It was further alleged that a similar deal had been struck with Amos Adamu, although he was prevented from voting because he was suspended following our original article. The whistleblower said that the cash was to go to the three members’ football federations but there would be no questions asked about how the money was used: “It was said in such a way that 'we are giving it to you'. It was going to their federation. Basically, if they took it into their pocket, we don't give a jack,” the whistleblower told us.
- 10) The whistleblower’s allegations raise questions about the validity of Qatar’s winning bid. Hayatou and Anouma are both reported to have voted for Qatar. We published the whistleblower’s claims in December in an article which did not name the bidder or the members involved. Ivan Lewis, the shadow culture secretary wrote to Fifa requesting an independent investigation. Fifa did not write back.
- 11) The original evidence that we sent to Fifa also contained other serious allegations which appear to have been ignored. Ahongalu Fusimalohi, the former Fifa Exco member from the Oceania, was recorded talking about how he had been offered bribes by the Morocco bid committee during the 2004 contest for the 2010 World Cup. He said he turned them down, although he was not against paying bribes as he advised our undercover reporter to offer money to Oceania’s current Fifa

Exco member. Fusimalohi also claimed that his friend Bhamjee had told him that he (Bhamjee) had taken Morocco's money in return for his vote. As mentioned previously (point 4), Bhamjee himself accused his three fellow African Fifa EXco members of accepting Morocco's money. Bhamjee also claimed that Jack Warner, the Fifa Exco member for Trinidad and Tobago, had been paid \$1m by Morocco for his vote. There are only 24 Exco members and they are effectively the ruling body of Fifa. It therefore seems extraordinary that such serious allegations by and about such senior officials were effectively swept under the carpet.

Jonathan Calvert and Claire Newell, The Sunday Times Insight team.