
Fifa report 'erroneous', says lawyer who investigated corruption claims

13/11/2014



Michael Garcia, who conducted a two-year inquiry, says the report "contains numerous materially incomplete and erroneous representations".

The report cleared World Cup hosts Russia and Qatar of wrongdoing.

It also accused the English Football Association of flouting bid rules.

British MP Clive Efford

"Fifa has no choice but to publish Michael Garcia's report in full if it expects anyone to believe their claims that that there has been no cover-up over allegations of corruption in the World Cup bidding process."

But Garcia's statement, issued less than four hours after the report was published, reopens the debate about the validity of the bidding process for both the 2018 and 2022 competitions.

It also raises concerns about the work of Hans-Joachim Eckert, Fifa's independent ethics adjudicator, who wrote the report.

Eckert, a German judge, based his findings on the work of Garcia, who had been appointed by Fifa to conduct an independent investigation into claims of corruption.

But Garcia, a former United States federal prosecutor, claims Eckert has erred and says he

intends to "appeal" to football's world governing body.

Fifa had hoped Eckert's report would bring closure to what has been a damaging episode, but there are now calls for Garcia's own report, which runs into hundreds of pages, to be published in full.

"Fifa has no choice but to publish Michael Garcia's report in full if it expects anyone to believe their claims that there has been no cover-up over allegations of corruption in the World Cup bidding process," said British MP Clive Efford, Labour's Shadow Minister for Sport.

Another British MP, Damien Collins, had already labelled Eckert's report "a whitewash" before Garcia's statement was issued.



David Beckham and Wayne Rooney backed England's bid

Collins has campaigned for Fifa reform and in 2011 used Parliamentary privilege to allege that bribes helped secure Qatar the 2022 tournament.

He said those allegations remained unanswered.

"It is a whitewash as it is an attempt to con people that there has been a full and independent investigation when there has not been," he said.

"The result is that allegations of bribery and serious wrongdoing remain unanswered and they are still suppressing the full report."

Qatar's bid team has always denied allegations of corruption, while Alexey Sorokin, the chief of Russia's 2018 World Cup organising committee, said the country had nothing to hide.

"We were always confident that there could be nothing which would come out from this investigation," Sorokin told Sky Sports News.

"It's something Fifa deemed important to do. It was done, we participated, we complied. What more can we do?"

Following the publication of the report, the English FA rejected the criticism levelled at it, insisting it had "conducted a transparent bid".

It was accused of trying to "curry favour" with former Fifa vice-president Jack Warner, who quit his role in 2011 amid bribery allegations.

An FA statement read: "We do not accept any criticism regarding the integrity of England's bid or any of the individuals involved."
