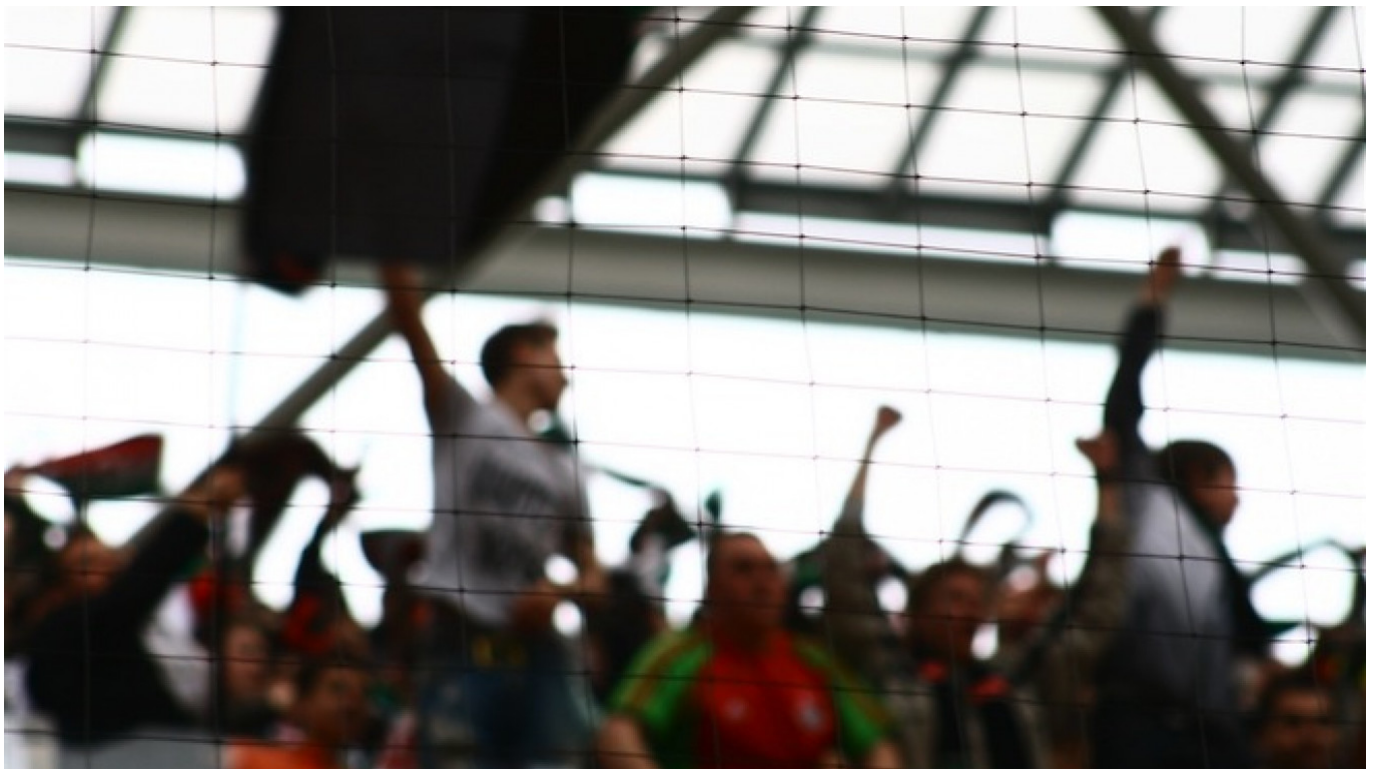


Anti-Racism Inspectors Set to Police Russian Football Matches

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Lokomotiv Moscow fans cheer for their team during their football match against Dinamo Moscow.

Anti-racism inspectors will patrol Russian Premier League matches by the end of the current football season, the TASS news agency reported Wednesday.

The Russian Football Union (RFU) created the position of anti-racism inspector last month in an effort to thwart xenophobia among some of its fans. Many Russian clubs have been fined or ordered to play matches behind closed doors as punishment for their supporters' racist behavior in recent years.

“We expect that changes to our regulations will be made by the end of the month and that we will be able to send [anti-racism] inspectors to the final matches of the season,” Alexei Tolkachev, the RFU's newly appointed anti-racism official, said in comments carried by TASS.

The regular season of the Russian Premier League ends in late May.

FIFA president Sepp Blatter wrote on Twitter on Wednesday that it was “good to see” that the

RFU had appointed an anti-racism inspector but that there remained a “lot of work to be done” in terms of fighting racism in Russian football.

Earlier this week, the RFU handed Torpedo Moscow a 900,000 ruble (\$17,000) fine after the club's supporters displayed Nazi symbols during Sunday's match against Arsenal Tula.

Torpedo Moscow will also be forced to play two home games behind closed doors and its fans will be barred from attending the club's next three away games for offensive chants directed at Arsenal Tula's supporters, Russian sports media reported.

The team was also ordered last month to play two home matches behind closed doors after its supporters directed racist chants at Zenit St. Petersburg striker Hulk, a star of the Brazilian national squad.

Russia is set to host the 2018 World Cup in 11 cities, including Moscow, St. Petersburg and Kazan.

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