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Amid Fears of Racism in Russia, FIFA Observers to Monitor World Cup Qualifiers

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An enormous banner, considered to be the largest in the world, unveiled by Russian fans before the EURO 2008 qualifying game against England in Luzhniki, Moscow (England lost 2:1).

FIFA is to use observers to watch out for racist incidents at some qualifying matches for the 2018 World Cup and at the 2017 Confederations Cup in Russia.

It is the latest step by FIFA in the last two years to strengthen the fight against racism in world football.

"I'm very satisfied to see that FIFA is taking this issue very seriously and putting in place concrete measures to stop behavior which goes against the spirit of our sport," Manchester City and Ivory Coast midfielder Yaya Toure said.

Toure, at the launch of the monitoring system on Tuesday, was abused with monkey chants by CSKA Moscow fans in a 2013 Champions League game in the Russian capital. He warned

last year that black players could boycott the World Cup if racism at matches was not reduced.

The anti-discrimination Fare network will decide, based on a risk assessment, which qualifying matches require monitoring for racism.

"There is more likely to be racism when England plays, when the French team plays, or when Germany plays," Fare executive director Piara Powar said.

FIFA president Sepp Blatter said last month in Moscow there was still a "lot of work to be done" to fight racism in Russia.

A recent report by Fare and another organization showed there had been more than 200 cases of discriminatory behavior linked to Russian football over two seasons.

"The new monitoring system is a very concrete measure in order to ensure that football sends a clear message for diversity, and against any form of discrimination," Blatter said in a statement.

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