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England Warned of Russian Racism Prior to Euro Cup Match

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Marcus Rashford of Manchester United

Organizers of the UEFA European Championship have warned English football players and fans about possible racism and taunts from Russian fans during the upcoming match between England and Russia on June 11, The Times reported Friday.

Pavel Klymenko, a member of the UEFA-backed Football Against Racism in Europe (FARE) network, warned that black players and fans, in particular, may experience racially-charged harassment at the match in Marseille from some of the estimated 10,000 Russian fans in attendance. Officials warned that some fans with ultra-right views might cause trouble.

Both Russian and international players have spoken out about Russian fans' racism — with non-white footballers frequently mocked at stadiums.

Klymenko has previously spoken out about racism in Russian football, saying that Russian officials often understate and deny the problem, Radio Free Europe reported in August 2015.

There has been mounting international pressure on Russia to address the problem of racism before the 2018 FIFA World Cup.

Officials from the United Nations, FARE, and the Sova Center, a Moscow-based racism-monitoring group, have all voiced their concerns about the almost 100 incidents of racism by Russian soccer fans during the 2014-15 season.

The United Nations Anti-Discrimination commissioner, Yury Boychenko, said Russia must do more to fight racism. "I don't think there is a total denial of racism in Russia but there is certainly a lack of understanding by officials in Russia of what racism is," he said July 2015.

"Too often, officials in Russia only see the problem from their point of view. They do not stand inside the shoes of the victim and see it from his point of view," Boychenko added.

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