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World Cup 'Diversity House' to Challenge Racism, Homophobia

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An international sports anti-discrimination network plans to offer a community center for ethnic and sexual minorities among football fans in Moscow and St. Petersburg during the FIFA World Cup this Thursday.

Russia has vowed to crack down on discrimination as it faces increased scrutiny ahead of the football tournament it will host from June 14 to July 15 in 11 Russian cities. Despite seeing a decrease in incidents of discrimination, the Football Against Racism in Europe (FARE) network has documented an overall trend toward racist and anti-gay chants in Russian football since 2017, and expressed concern that these could increase during the World Cup.

Embed:

Last finishing touches before the big day. We are opening our Diversity House in

> #Moscow on Thursday, 14 June. Visit us! #Russia2018 #WorldCup2018 pic.twitter.com/jUREw3EWEX
>
> — Fare (@farenet) 11 июня 2018 г.

The FARE network has launched an emergency hotline, a guide for the LGBT community and ethnic minorities headed to Russia, as well as a community center called Diversity House in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

"The Diversity House concept is a safe place to celebrate diversity and meet people using football to create awareness and change," FARE said in a press release announcing the initiatives last Friday.

Visitors will be able to meet Russian-based supporters, watch World Cup matches and take part in discussions.

Meanwhile, the global football governing body FIFA announced that a dedicated anti-discrimination monitoring system will be used at each match for the first time in the tournament's 88-year history.

Three FARE observers would watch the behavior of fans from both teams, as well as other spectators, and referees could suspend or abandon the match in case of discriminatory behavior.

"If issues arise, the observer system allows us to identify them early and have action taken during a match," the network's executive director Piara Power had said.

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

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