

FC Zenit St. Petersburg Fans Accused of Racism Over Reaction to Black Player's Signing

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Malcom FC Zenit

Fans of FC Zenit St. Petersburg have been accused of racism following the signing of black Brazilian winger Malcom, an allegation that the club has since denied.

FC Zenit signed Malcom from Spanish champions Barcelona for a reported fee of \$44.39 million last week. Days later, a banner spotted in the fan section during Zenit's Saturday match against FC Krasnodar expresses what has been described as a sarcastic "thank you" to the club's management "for staying true to tradition."

Related article: [Zenit Fans Demand All-White, Non-Gay Team](#)

Online sports outlets have [linked](#) the banner to the club fan movement's 2012 manifesto [calling for](#) Zenit to field an all-white heterosexual team, calling the absence of black players

“an important tradition that underlines the team’s identity.”

Facebook users took to Zenit’s page to [accuse](#) both the team and its fans of racism.

At least one user has called on the international football governing body FIFA to “[punish](#)” the club, while another [stressed](#) that “football is bigger than any prejudice.”

FC Zenit accused media outlets of “misrepresenting” the banner, [saying](#) in a statement Monday that the club has “long supported and instigated anti-racism, inclusivity and equality initiatives.”

The team invited critics to attend its games to “experience the hospitality that we so famously showed during the 2018 World Cup and at other international competitions and events.”

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