

FIFA suspends Spanish football president Rubiales for 90 days after forced kiss

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Geneva, August 26 (RHC)-- FIFA's Disciplinary Committee has provisionally suspended Royal Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) head Luis Rubiales for 90 days after he grabbed player Jenni Hermoso's head and kissed her on the lips after Spain's victory at the Women's World Cup.

Rubiales had been expected to announce his resignation on Friday but instead said he would not step down and the RFEF threatened legal action to defend him after Hermoso said she did not consent to the

kiss he gave her.

“The chairman of the FIFA Disciplinary Committee ... has decided today to provisionally suspend Mr Luis Rubiales from all football-related activities at national and international level,” FIFA said in a statement on Saturday.

FIFA’s move is the latest development in a deepening confrontation between Rubiales and the RFEF and Hermoso and her Spain teammates, which the players say has tarnished the glory of their World Cup win in Australia last Sunday.

The Spanish national team that won the World Cup, as well as several other players, have said they would not play international matches while Rubiales remains head of the federation. FIFA’s disciplinary committee also ordered Rubiales and RFEF officials and employees alike to refrain from contacting or attempting to contact Hermoso or those around her.

“The decision adopted by the chairman of the FIFA Disciplinary Committee has been communicated today to Mr Luis Rubiales, the RFEF and [European football body] UEFA for due compliance.”

Rubiales said he would defend himself.

A statement released by the Spanish football federation on Saturday said, “Luis Rubiales has stated he will legally defend himself in the competent bodies, he fully trusts FIFA and reiterates that, in this way, he is given the opportunity to begin his defence so that the truth prevails and his complete innocence is proven.

Rubiales is also a vice president of UEFA, holding the number-three-ranking elected position at the top of the European football body, which pays him 250,000 euros (\$270,000) annually plus expenses.

He was elected to the executive committee by UEFA member federations in 2019 and was within weeks promoted to the vice presidency by UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin. Neither UEFA nor Ceferin have commented on the Rubiales scandal this week.

In a complex situation, Spain’s government, via its Higher Council for Sports, filed a lawsuit on Friday alleging Rubiales violated the country’s sports laws through sexist acts. Spain’s secretary of state for sports, Víctor Francos, said the government would move to temporarily suspend Rubiales – pending the court ruling – if the court agreed to hear the case.

If found guilty by the Spanish court, Rubiales could be ruled unfit to hold office. Francos said he would ask the court to move its regular Thursday meeting up to Monday.

Messages of support for Hermoso poured in from the world of women’s football, and beyond. Real Madrid, Barcelona and other clubs issued statements criticizing Rubiales and backing the government’s move to remove him.

“I want to give my unconditional support to Jennifer Hermoso and the players. I condemn the behaviour of the president of the Spanish Football Federation. And I regret that people aren’t talking about the historic achievement of winning the World Cup,” said Xavi Hernandez, Barcelona’s manager.

Political parties from both the left and right in Spain said Rubiales was unfit to continue in his post. Iberia airlines and other sponsors for the federations said they were with the government as well. On Saturday, Spanish sports daily Marca summed up the previous day’s events with a front-page headline “Global Laughing Stock” over a photo of a smiling Rubiales walking between rows of the general assembly.



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