

Real Madrid's Vinicius Jr accuses Spanish league of racism

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Vinicius Jr of Real Madrid in action in a match against Valencia at Mestalla Stadium in Valencia, Spain [Francisco Macia/Quality Sport Images/Getty Images]

Madrid, May 22 (RHC)-- Real Madrid's Vinicius Jr says he has been subjected to racist abuse and the Spanish league "now belongs to racists." The latest incident against the Brazilian star came in Real Madrid's 1-0 loss at Valencia on Sunday, a match that had to be temporarily stopped after the forward said he was insulted by a fan behind one of the goals at Mestalla Stadium.

“It wasn’t the first time or the second or the third,” Vinícius said on Instagram and Twitter. “Racism is normal in La Liga. The competition thinks it’s normal, as does the federation, and the opponents encourage it.”

“The championship that once belonged to Ronaldinho, Ronaldo, Cristiano [Ronaldo] and [Lionel] Messi today belongs to the racists,” he posted. “A beautiful nation, which welcomed me and which I love but which accepted to export to the world the image of a racist country. I am sorry for those Spaniards who disagree, but today, in Brazil, Spain is known as a country of racists.”

“I am strong, and I will go all the way against the racists,” he said. “Even if it is far away from here.”

The 22-year-old, who is Black, has been subjected to racist abuse since moving to Spain five years ago.

Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti considered replacing the star forward after Vinicius said fans at Mestalla chanted “monkey” at him. He said Vinicius initially didn’t want to continue playing.

“What happened today shouldn’t happen,” Ancelotti said. “When a stadium yells ‘monkey’ to a player, and the coach considers taking him out of the field because of that, it means that there is something bad in this league.” The veteran coach refused to talk about the game after what happened, saying his team’s loss meant nothing.

“The game should have been stopped,” Ancelotti said. “This shouldn’t happen. It wasn’t only one person as it has happened in several stadiums. Here, it was a stadium racially insulting a player. The game had to stop. I would have said the same thing if it was 3-0 for us. You have to stop the game. There was no way around it.”

Ancelotti said he asked the referee to stop the match but was told that the protocol was to first make an announcement to fans and then take other action if the problem continued. “If any hate crime is identified, we will take the appropriate legal action,” it said in a statement.

La Liga President Javier Tebas responded to Vinicius Jr’s comments by asking him to be more informed about what can be done in cases of racism. “Since those who should explain to you what it is and what LaLiga can do in cases of racism, we have tried to explain it ourselves, but you have not shown up for either of the two agreed dates that you requested yourself,” he said on Twitter.

“Before you criticise and slander LaLiga, you need to inform yourself properly @Vinijr. Don’t let yourself be manipulated, and make sure you understand each other’s competences and the work we have been doing together,” he added.

The league has made nine formal complaints over racist abuse directed against Vinícius over the past two seasons. Many of the cases have been shelved. A Mallorca fan may end up going on trial after being accused of racially insulting the Brazilian during a game.

FIFA’s president has also Gianni Infantino expressed his support for the Real Madrid forward. “Full solidarity to Vinicius. There is no place for racism in football or in society and FIFA stands by all players who have found themselves in such a situation,” Infantino said in a statement.

“Events during the match between Valencia and Real Madrid show that this needs to be the case. That is why the three-step process exists in FIFA competitions and it is recommended at all levels of football.

“Firstly, you stop the match, you announce it. Secondly, the players leave the pitch and the speaker announces that if the attacks continue, the match will be suspended. The match restarts, and then, thirdly, if the attacks continue, the match will stop and the three points will go to the opponent.”

Infantino added that the steps to stop racism need to be supported through education.

President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva joined a wave of Brazilian politicians, players and clubs coming out to support Vinicius and criticise racism in the Spanish league. “I would like to express my solidarity with our Brazilian player, a poor boy who succeeded in life and is potentially becoming one of the best players in the world, certainly the best at Real Madrid, and he is attacked in every stadium he plays in,” Lula said at a news conference.

“I think it is important that FIFA, the Spanish league and leagues in other countries take real action because we cannot allow fascism and racism to dominate football stadiums,” the president said.

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