

Overview of the Judicial Bodies at the Saudi Arabian Football Federation

Bandar Al Hamidani - Partner - Corporate / Mergers and Acquisitions

b.alhamidani@tamimi.com - Riyadh

August 2017

The Saudi Arabian Football Federation (SAFF) was founded in 1956 and in the same year joined the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) and the Asian Football Confederation (AFC). The SAFF is the Saudi governing body for football in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. According to Article 49 of the Statutes of the SAFF judicial committees are composed of the following:

A. Disciplinary Committee;

B. Ethics Committee and

C. Appeal Committee.

The members of the judicial bodies of the SAFF may not be members of the Executive Board of the SAFF, the standing/ad-hoc committees of the SAFF or of any other SAFF bodies or clubs. The Disciplinary Committee, Ethics Committee and Appeal Committee consist of a Chairman, a Deputy Chairman and three members. The Chairman and Deputy Chairman are required to have legal qualifications with reliable knowledge, capabilities and experiences with the sport of football. The Executive Board of the SAFF appoints the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and members of the judicial bodies for a term of 4 years. This mandate is renewable.

The responsibilities and functions of the Disciplinary Committee and Appeal Committee are set out in the SAFF Disciplinary Regulation. The SAFF has not yet issued regulations for the Ethics Committee.

Disciplinary Committee

The Disciplinary Committee is empowered to pronounce the sanctions described in the SAFF Statutes and the SAFF Disciplinary Regulation. It has jurisdiction over persons including but not limited to members of the SAFF, officials, clubs, players, referees, intermediaries (formerly referred to as “agents”) and other parties set out in the Disciplinary Regulation. The Disciplinary Committee has a wide power to sanction any breach of the SAFF regulations. The statutes and Disciplinary Regulation of the SAFF regulate and specify sanctions, for both natural and legal persons including: warning, reprimand, fine and requiring the return of awards. For natural persons only: caution, expulsion, suspension for a match or for a number of matches, banning from the dressing rooms and/or the substitutes bench, banning from entering a stadium and banning on taking part in any football related activity. For legal persons only: transfer ban, registration ban, playing a match without spectators, playing a match on neutral territory, ban on playing in a particular stadium, annulment of the result of a match, match replay, forfeit, deduction of points and relegation to a lower division.

According to the Disciplinary Regulation, all decisions of the Disciplinary Committee are appealable before the Appeal Committee, except for those decisions where the sanction is: a warning, a reprimand, suspension for less than three (3) matches or of up to two (2) months, a fine of less than SAR 50,000.00 imposed on a club, or a fine of less than SAR 20,000.00 imposed on any other party.

Ethics Committee

The responsibilities and functions of the Ethics Committee include matters related to football ethics and conduct. Its purpose is to protect football from risks, methods and practices that are unacceptable on ethical, social and sporting grounds when committed by members or officials. In addition, the Ethics Committee has the power to investigate issues of corruption, fraud, bribery, forgery and cheating, manipulating match results, football integrity and reputation. The performance of this committee is subject to the SAFF Ethics Regulation as well as FIFA's and AFC's respective regulations. Decisions of the Ethics Committee can be appealed before the Appeal Committee.

Appeal Committee

The Appeal Committee has jurisdiction to hear appeals that are not affirmed as final in accordance with the relevant regulations.

The Appeal Committee is responsible for hearing appeals against decisions of the Disciplinary Committee and the Ethics Committee. From 1 November 2016 the Appeal Committee has no further jurisdiction to hear an appeal from any decision issued by the National Dispute Resolution Chamber (NDRC) because the Saudi Sport Arbitration Centre formally started to hear such cases from 1 November 2016.

National Disputes Resolution Chamber

In 2015 SAFF established a National Disputes Resolution Chamber (NDRC) to adjudicate in national disputes involving clubs, players and intermediaries. The NDRC is composed according to the provisions of the NDRC Regulations issued by SAFF and the NDRC Standard Regulations published by FIFA. The NDRC is empowered to deal with all national disputes that may involve clubs, players, coaches, intermediaries and disputes regarding the contracts of football professionals, training compensation, solidarity mechanisms and contracts of intermediaries. The decisions of the NDRC can be appealed before Saudi Sport Arbitration Centre within twenty-one days from notification.

Bandar Al Hamidani (b.alhamidani@tamimi.com) is a Senior Associate in Corporate Commercial and a key member of the firm's dedicated Sport's Law practice. Bandar has extensive experience with respect to the laws relating to international sports law and Saudi sports law. Bandar is appointed as an Arbitrator before Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) and Saudi Sport Arbitration Centre. Bandar is now the Chairman of the Disciplinary Committee of SAFF, Deputy Chairperson of the AFC Entry Control Body and a member of the Legal Committee at Arab Gulf Football Federation.