

## **“Ebola Spread Risk Too Serious’: Morocco Refuses to Host Africa Football Cup”. RT. 8 Nov. 2014.**



A fan of Ivory coast holds a sign with a message against Ebola during the 2015 African Nations Cup qualifying soccer match between Ivory Coast and Sierra Leone at the Felix Houphouët Boigny stadium in Abidjan September 6, 2014. (Reuters/Luc Gnago) / Reuters

Morocco has rejected an ultimatum and refused to host the 2015 Africa Cup of Nations in January over the fear that Ebola virus may find its way into the country with the crowds of football fans and easily spread among them during the mass sporting event.

*“The decision is dictated by health reasons because of the serious threat of Ebola and the risk of its spreading,”* said a statement from Morocco's sports ministry on Saturday, the last day when the country was supposed to confirm the hosting of the championship.

The Moroccan government is concerned that a flow of football fans from West Africa could bring the disease to the Ebola-free country and has been asking the confederation to postpone the event until June – and if the virus continues to spread, to January 2016.

The fate of the 16-team tournament, scheduled on January 17-February 8, 2015, will be decided next week when Confederation of African Football (CAF) executives meet in Cairo on Tuesday. CAF could either move the event to another country or cancel it, as so far no country has volunteered as an emergency host.

The Confederation accused Morocco of alarmism and exaggerating the Ebola threat, among other arguments, claiming that “there is unlikely to be a team from the worst affected area in the finals,” according to Reuters.

But besides the medical risks, the decision was also motivated “*by humanitarian reasons*” since it is the host’s responsibility “*to welcome all our guests and supporters in the best conditions,*” the Moroccan government statement added.

Meanwhile, African Union officials and business leaders met in the Ethiopian capital to launch the emergency response fund. So far it has managed to raise \$28.5 million to fight Ebola.

According to the latest official UN figures, the Ebola outbreak in West Africa has killed 4,950 people out of the 13,241 infected, mostly in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea.

## **Ebola Outbreak: Morocco Withdraws As Africa Cup of Nations Hosts over Crisis.” By Tom Sheen. *The Independent.*” 16 Oct. 2014.**



Morocco have reportedly withdrawn from hosting next year's Africa Cup of Nations because of fears over the outbreak of Ebola.

The Confederation of African Football (Caf) received a letter from the Moroccan government last week asking for the tournament to be called off but agreed to hold talks at the next executive committee meeting on 2 November.

Morocco asked to either postpone the tournament for a year or consider switching them to the 2017 tournament.

But African website supersport.com claimed a source from the ministry of sport had told them that that Morocco have already officially withdrawn to "preserve the safety of our citizens".

"Since Caf rejected all our requests and suggestions then we would be forced to withdraw from hosting Afcon 2015 to preserve the safety of our citizens and for that we are prepared to take any consequences that comes with our actions," the source is quoted as saying.

Earlier this week Moroccan sports minister Mohamed Ouzzine was quoted as saying they were considering what action to take if Caf refused to grant their postponement request.

"We've arranged to meet up and discuss the technical options connected to this demand for a postponement," he said. "This demand is motivated essentially by the last report from the World Health Organisation, which contained alarming numbers at the extent and spread of the virus.

"All that means we are facing a historic responsibility. We understand Caf's difficulty, but that said, never in history has there been such an Ebola epidemic."

South Africa have already been in early negotiations with Caf to take over the tournament, while Sudan and Egypt have also shown interest, while Ghana sports minister Mahama Ayariga says Caf have made a request to them.

Morocco's withdrawal is likely to lead to sanctions, with potential punishments including the suspension of their national teams and clubs from competition.