

## FIFA officially lifts ban on Iraqi stadiums for international friendlies



FIFA president Gianni Infantino officially announced ahead of the 67th FIFA Congress that the ban on Iraqi stadiums for international friendlies has been lifted.

It took four years, but finally Iraqi people will be able to watch their national team play on homeland. A friendly against Jordan has already been planned for June 2 in Basra and hopefully more will come.

The last international matches played on Iraqi soil were all the way back in 2013 when Iraq hosted Syria and Liberia at Al-Shaab Stadium in Baghdad, winning 2-1 and losing 1-0 respectively.

The lifting of the ban also means that Iraqi clubs Al-Quwa Al-Jawiya and Al-Zawraa will be able to play their AFC Cup tie in Iraq, most likely in Erbil as the stadiums in Basra and Karbala haven't been tested yet.

Now that we have overcome this hurdle, the next objective is to get the ban lifted for competitive games too. Home advantage in World Cup qualifiers would be a huge boost to Iraqi football as a whole - let's hope the upcoming friendlies run smoothly and successfully to allow that to happen!