

France Refuses To Pause Matches for Muslim Players to Break Ramadan Fast

Unlike in England where the EFL is bending over backwards to accommodate Muslim players. From [Morocco World News](#)

Rabat – Unlike English football leagues, France’s Football Federation (FFF) has refused to pause evening matches during the holy month of Ramadan to allow Muslim players to break their fast, saying that it is due to the principle of “football neutrality at the places of practice.”

In an [email](#) sent to French football officials, FFF’s Federal Commission of Referees (CFA) has forbidden any match “interruptions” to allow Muslim footballers to break their fast, saying that “these interruptions do not respect the provisions of the Statutes of the FFF.”

The federation and its bodies “defend the fundamental values of the French Republic and must implement means to prevent any discrimination or infringement of a person’s dignity due to their ... political and religious beliefs,” said the email, stressing that the FFF prohibits any “display of a political, ideological, religious, or trade union” affiliation during its tournaments.

“A football field, a stadium, a gymnasium, are not places of political or religious expression, they are places of neutrality where the values of sport, such as equality, fraternity, impartiality, learning to respect the referee, oneself and others, must prevail,”

The FFF has received widespread criticism for its decision, with many taking to social media to denounce the federation’s dismissal of Muslim players’ religious obligations and

physical well-being.

Not only has the FFF forbidden match stoppages at least one French manager has dropped a player who refused to break the fast on match days. From [French Football News](#)

Nantes' head coach Antoine Kombouaré has sparked controversy over his handling of Algeria international left-back Jaouen Hadjam (20). The latter has been pulled out of the squad due to host Reims on Sunday (2nd April) for Ligue 1 gameweek 29 because he had refused his coach's request to break his fast during Ramadan. Kombouaré has reminded that he had established a rule during his coaching career – he would not field a player fasting on a match day.

“It's his choice and I respect it. This is not a sanction, but I have a framework”, Kombouaré said to L'Equipe. “During the week, there are no problems with fasting players. I'm ready to support them if needed. We know it's not an easy time. But on gameday, you should not fast. And those who fast are not in the squad. I don't want them to pick an injury.”

The former PSG boss added that the other Muslim players in the Nantes' squad had accepted to break their Ramadan fast in order to play against Reims. Nantes [are doing well](#) under his *managership*.

I looked Antoine Kombouaré up. He is a Kanak from the French territory of New Caledonian in the Pacific. The Kanaks are a Melanesian people; I anticipated a relationship to the Aboriginal peoples of Australia but apparently not. But I digress.

This is a contrast to the attitude of the English Football League who are falling over themselves to encourage [halts to play for breaking the fast](#).

Upcoming Premier League matches will be paused to allow Muslim players to break their fast during Ramadan.

..a number of evening matches – such as Everton’s 1-1 draw against Tottenham on Monday – will be paused to allow players to break their fast. Monday’s game was paused in the 26th minute to allow those who are fasting to take on energy supplements and drink fluids.

Premier League games impacted by the pause will not be stopped at an exact time. There will be a pre-agreed target time and the referee will stop play at the earliest convenient moment, such as when the ball goes out of play.

Speaking to BBC Sport last month, Everton midfielder Doucoure explained the importance of Ramadan. The Mali international said, “I fast every day. I don’t miss any days. Sometimes playing football has been hard because Ramadan has been in the summer and during pre-season. But I have always been lucky to practise Ramadan and there have never been problems with my physical condition...”

There will be more than 13 hours of sunlight on Tuesday in the UK. Speaking to Mirror Football last month, Crystal Palace’s head of sports medicine Dr Zafar Iqbal said, “This poses certain challenges for footballers and professional athletes. . . I’ve heard of some players being concerned they may not have the support of their manager or the medical/science team, so they’ve hidden the fact they are fasting because they’ve been worried about being judged or not picked.”

Full list of Premier League games to take pause – *unless you are a fan of a Premier team (I’m not) there is no need to read on.*

And don’t get me started on formal Iftar meals in the [British Library](#) and English cathedrals (and during Lent as well) and [Sadiq Khan preening](#) himself while switching on Ramadan lights up London’s West End.