



EUROPE

Violent and antisocial behaviour at football matches in the Middle East and North Africa: Scoping the evidence

Case study

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Key messages for Qatar 2022

- Violent and antisocial behaviour at football events is a phenomenon that has been observed in many parts of the world. However, there is a lack of research summarising and evaluating the evidence in this area in relation to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.
- A lack of high-quality research makes it difficult to establish an evidence-based strategy for the 2022 World Cup. More specifically:
 - There is a lack of evidence relating to violent and antisocial behaviour at football events in Qatar. Without further research, it is unclear how far, if at all, the findings relating to other countries in the MENA region can be extended to Qatar.
 - The applicability of the existing evidence to the 2022 World Cup is also limited in the sense that the majority of sources identified as part of this review focused on domestic rather than international football matches.
 - There is a lack of evidence on the impact and effectiveness of strategies designed to prevent and reduce violent and antisocial behaviour at football matches in the MENA region.
- To strengthen the evidence base in the run-up to 2022, the review highlights the need for additional research in these areas. This presents an opportunity for researchers in Qatar to contribute to inform the organisation of the 2022 World Cup.

1. Introduction

This case study is part of a research project that RAND Europe has been commissioned to undertake by Qatar University, examining violent and antisocial behaviours at football events, the factors associated with these behaviours, and strategies to prevent and reduce their occurrence.

It sits alongside two literature reviews conducted as part of the wider study: the first examined violent and antisocial behaviour at football matches and the factors associated with such behaviour (Strang et al. 2018) and the second focused on interventions to reduce violent and antisocial behaviour at football matches (Taylor et al. 2018). The evidence presented in these two reviews was predominantly based on research conducted in European countries; relatively few studies were identified relating to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.¹

The objective of this case study is to gather and critically assess the evidence on violent and antisocial behaviour at football events (also referred to as football violence) in the MENA region, as well as strategies to prevent and reduce the occurrence of these behaviours. In the context of this study, we refer to any type of violent and antisocial behaviour associated with football events in the MENA region, including both verbal and physical aggression, and acts of violence involving players and referees as well as spectators. The review focuses on all football events, including professional, non-professional, domestic and international fixtures.

Three research questions are identified:

1. What violent and antisocial behaviour takes place at football events in the MENA region and what factors are associated with such behaviour?
2. What approaches have been taken to prevent and respond to violent and antisocial behaviour at football events in the MENA region and to what extent have these approaches proved effective?
3. What gaps are there in the literature and how might the evidence base be improved, particularly with regard to informing the organisation of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar?

This study is based on a review of the literature and other sources relevant to the topic of violent and antisocial behaviour and strategies designed to prevent and reduce their occurrence in the MENA region published since 2008. Reflecting the sparse evidence base relating to the MENA region, the work takes the form of an exploratory scoping exercise rather than a systematic analysis. A low threshold for inclusion was applied with regards to the quality of academic studies, and media sources were considered alongside the academic literature. Sources were excluded if they fell outside the specified geographical region or time window, or if they were not relevant to the topic.

Rather than searching for specific factors such as those identified in the other evidence reviews conducted as part of this study (Strang et al. 2018; Taylor et al. 2018), search terms were kept broad and open. They were applied to databases

¹ For the purposes of this review, the MENA region is defined as encompassing the following countries: Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Djibouti, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Yemen, Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia.

in both English and Arabic (see the back page of this case study for more information on the search strategy).² Sources were then examined in an analysis framework,³ and key findings were identified. The case study is also informed by an interview with an expert who has published widely on violence and disorder at football matches in the MENA region.

This case study starts by summarising and critically assessing the evidence on violent and antisocial behaviour at football matches

in the MENA region and the factors identified in the literature as potentially contributing to it, including political conflict, socio-economic pressure and media influence. The study then moves on to discuss and assess the evidence relating to strategies to prevent and reduce the occurrence of violent and antisocial behaviour. The following section reflects on gaps in the evidence base and identifies possible directions for future research, and finally a summary focuses on lessons for Qatar in the run-up to the 2022 World Cup.

2 Although it was anticipated that we would identify some sources pertaining to the topic of this review from Israel, we decided not to conduct any searches in Hebrew on the assumption these sources would be available in English. However, this should be recognised as a limitation of the study.

3 The analysis framework was set up in Excel and structured around key themes such as the nature of events referred to, the type of behaviour described, contributory or explanatory factors mentioned and the evidence for these, as well as any strategies mentioned to prevent or reduce events of this kind and the evidence for their effectiveness.

2. What violent and antisocial behaviour takes place at football events in the MENA region and what factors are associated with such behaviour?

The ability to draw conclusions about violent and antisocial behaviour at football matches in the MENA region is impeded by the lack of quality evidence

Overall, this case study identified a dearth of literature relating to violent and antisocial behaviour at football matches in the MENA region. The majority of identified observations were drawn from media sources, with little rigorous academic work on the subject, and both academic and media sources were predominantly focused on domestic rather than international football events.

Some instances of violence and disorder at football matches in the region have been linked to political issues

A number of sources identified as part of the review highlighted the political nature of football fandom in the region, and the way in which violent and antisocial behaviour is linked to political issues. An interview respondent with expertise in football fan behaviour in the region reported that:

Football is highly political throughout the region, and it has been political from the day it was introduced. It has played a political role in almost anything you want to mention, nation formation, nation-building, regime formation, regime stability, social, economic, political struggle, struggle for independence, and so on... the stadium essentially becomes a battlefield and a venue for protest.

Media reports generally focus on specific instances of violence or disorder, linking this to the wider political context (see Boxes 1 and 2). A small number of academic sources

were identified that focused on the political dimensions of football violence in the region, or in a specific country. Tuastad (2014) provides an overview of the political role of football in the region, focusing on recent events in Egypt and Jordan, Dorsey (2014a) examines the connection between football and the 2011 revolution in Egypt, and Porat (2016) offers a historical overview of the political implications of football in Israel since 1948. Porat bases his analysis on data drawn from historical archives,⁴ but the other two studies do not cite any primary or secondary data sources. Overall, there is a lack of robust evidence substantiating claims about the political drivers of violent and antisocial behaviour at football events in the region.

Furthermore, it is clear from the sources reviewed that there is no common political orientation or ideological stance shared by all football fans across the region; the nature of the political tensions behind disorder at football matches tends to depend on the context (Tuastad 2014). Rather than generalising about the nature of political tensions associated with violence and disorder at football matches, some illustrative examples are offered below. Instances of politically motivated violence identified as part of this review all related to domestic football matches. It is unclear from the evidence whether there is potential for political tension to spill over into violence at international fixtures, or whether this phenomenon is limited to domestic events.

According to commentators in the Egyptian media such as Dunbar & Leicester (2012) and a review article by Tuastad (2014) in *Soccer &*

4 Historical data from the Israel Football Association (IFA) archives and the Wingate (Institute of Physical Education) Archive, as well as reports from the police, the IFA and The New Israel Fund.

Society, the politicisation of football is linked to the limits placed on freedom of expression in certain countries in the region. According to Dunbar & Leicester, *'before the Arab Spring, attending football games was one of the few outlets people had to vent frustration about life under autocratic Arab leader.'* Tuastad (2014) attributes this behaviour to the anonymity offered by a large football crowd, observing that *'at the football stadium suppressed political identities and opinions might be openly*

expressed, although in a disguised form where the masses preserve anonymity.' However, these statements were based on conjecture rather than empirical evidence demonstrating a relationship between limits placed on freedom of expression and disorder at sporting events. There is also a danger in generalising across the region, since the situation with regards to political expression varies markedly across countries.⁵

Box 1: Football and the 2011 revolution in Egypt

In 2012, 79 football supporters were killed during disorder at the Port Said stadium, Egypt. Many commentators linked this event to the political situation in the country at the time. According to Dunbar & Leicester (2012), the disorder had less to do with event organisation and planning (the article claims *'it could have happened in any building'*) and more to do with political tensions stemming from the 2011 revolution. It was reported that 'ultra groups'⁶ of football fans were closely involved in the displacement of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in 2011 (Tuastad 2014; Raab 2012; Dorsey 2014a), with 'Ultras Ahlawi' (associated with the Al-Ahly football club) and the 'White Knights' (associated with the Zamalik football club) putting aside their historical differences to fight together against the government (Dorsey 2014a). According to Tuastad (2014), a view widely shared at the time was that the violence was perpetrated by pro-Mubarak groups as retaliation for the involvement of ultra groups in the revolution. However, we are not able to substantiate this, or any of the other claims made in the media reports. According to Dorsey (2014a) and Tuastad (2014), as well as media reports including Dunbar & Leicester (2012), police did not intervene to stop the violence. There were claims in the media that proper security checks had not been carried out, allowing spectators to bring weapons into the stadium (Dunbar & Leicester 2012), although this claim is not substantiated in any of the sources identified.

Implications for Qatar 2022: The 2011 events in Egypt demonstrate the potential for football to become highly politicised or linked with ultra groups in certain countries in the MENA region, as well as elsewhere in the world.⁷ However, given the close link between these events and the domestic political situation in Egypt, it is unclear what, if anything, this tells us about the potential for violence and disorder at international football matches in the region, including the 2022 World Cup.

5 According to the Freedom in the World 2018 rankings produced by Freedom House, there is a large degree of variation across the region in terms of political rights and civil liberties. Freedom in the World assesses countries on 25 indicators, with each indicator scored 0–4 (total maximum points 100). To offer examples, Israel is classed as 'free' (score 79/100), whereas Syria is classed as not free (score -1/100). See Freedom House (2018).

6 'Ultras' have been defined as 'groups of supporters, mostly of football teams, renowned for their fanatical support and elaborate displays.' Ultra groups may be peaceful and non-violent, but they have been associated with football violence in certain countries in the MENA region. (Rharib and Amara 2014).

7 The significance of political issues and affiliations in football hooliganism and disorder in Europe has been explored in the academic literature. See, for example, Kennedy (2013).

Box 2: Football and ethno-nationalist tension in Israel and Jordan

In Israel, instances of football violence have been linked to the political situation in the region and ongoing ethno-nationalist tensions. This has involved the chanting of racial slogans as well as acts of physical violence (Porat 2016). In 2012, approximately 300 Beitar Jerusalem fans were involved in disorder in a shopping mall following a soccer match and were reported to have attacked Arab workers while chanting racist fight songs. According to the mall's CCTV footage and eyewitness accounts cited in the *Jerusalem Post*, the disorder continued for approximately 40 minutes (Lidman 2012). The police were criticised in media reports for not making any arrests and not intervening earlier (Lidman 2012). Other reported incidences of racially charged football violence in Israel include fans attacking two Arab janitors in March 2010 (Lidman 2012) and reports of a Quran being burned during a football match after two Arab players were hired (Dorsey 2014b). It should be stressed that information on these events is as reported in the media and we have not been able to verify the reports.

Football violence has also been linked to anti-Palestinian movements in Jordan. Writing in *Soccer & Society*, an academic journal, Tuastad (2014) describes how nationalist and anti-Palestinian chants have entered mainstream discourse after first being expressed at football matches in Jordan. Fans are reported to have chanted anti-Palestinian slogans at matches involving the Wihdat team, which is historically associated with Palestine. As well as verbal aggression, this has reportedly spilled over into acts of physical violence such as throwing stones and setting cars on fire.

Implications for Qatar 2022: The events described above provide a further illustration of how football has in some MENA countries become a vehicle for political expression. However, the nature of the political sentiments being expressed is again highly context-specific. In terms of lessons for Qatar 2022 – an international tournament – it is unclear how much can be read into these events since they relate to the specific social and political contexts of the countries involved.

Academics working in this field have suggested that the perpetrators of football violence often share common life experiences, although little robust evidence could be identified to substantiate these claims

According to one media article, *'structural strains, experiences of deprivation or a low socio-economic background can at times be instrumental in the acceptance and reproduction of norms that tolerate great levels of [football] violence [in the MENA region]'* (Mahzar 2018). This article summarises opinions being expressed at a conference, and is not substantiated by any empirical evidence.

The following academic sources make claims as to the personal, socio-economic and demographic characteristics of individuals who are inclined to join ultra groups or to engage in violent or antisocial behaviour. Dorsey (2014a) suggests that *'Middle Eastern ultras are composed largely of young working class men who embrace a culture of confrontation – against opposing teams, against the state, and against expressions of weakness in society at large.'* Similarly, Raab (2012) finds that *'the ultras [in Egypt] were working and lower-middle class youth acutely affected by the economic disaster.'* However, these sources do not cite any concrete evidence to back up the claim

that young men, particularly those facing economic constraints, are the demographic most likely to be involved in football violence.

One study based on a survey of 447 football fans in Iran found that those who had experienced stressors such as low household income, feeling disrespected in general life and at work, and bullying in general life were more likely to engage in verbal and physical aggression at football matches (Shadmanfaat et al. 2018). In this survey, verbal and physical aggression were self-reported, and defined as, for example, having ever insulted a referee or rival players (verbal aggression) or having fought with fans of a rival team (physical aggression).⁸ However, this survey was conducted at a single football match in Iran and the findings may not be generalisable elsewhere.

The media have been identified as a catalyst for football violence in the region

The media were frequently cited in the identified literature as a catalyst for football violence, particularly in Arabic-language sources. There have been accusations of irresponsible reporting of football events across the region, for instance using violent language and framing football matches as 'war' (Mahzar 2018). Some commentators felt the media have not done enough to raise awareness about and discourage fans from engaging in football violence (Ananza & Khadam 2014). There were relatively

few mentions of social media, although the phenomenon was noted as a factor contributing to the growth of violent ultra groups in Morocco (Al Jazeera 2016).

Relatively little academic evidence could be identified to substantiate a link between media reporting and football violence in the region. There is a gap in the evidence base relating to the content of media reports, and potentially how this varies across the region. For instance, it was not possible to identify any academic sources in which content or discourse analysis of media reports had been conducted. There is also a lack of robust evidence demonstrating an association between media reporting and instances of violent and antisocial behaviour. One survey of football spectators in Iran found that fans who engaged with sports media were more likely to exhibit aggressive behaviour (Jelodar et al. 2016). However, there are methodological limitations to this study: the analysis presented simple correlations and did not attempt to control for other factors, there is a lack of transparency in the construction of variables⁹ and the sample was drawn from spectators at a single football match in Iran, limiting the generalisability of the findings.

There is some evidence to suggest that there is a perception from stakeholders that the media are a key factor contributing to football violence in the region. A 2017 survey of sports journalists identified media reporting as the single most important factor contributing to football violence in Algeria (Muhammed

8 Results from a structural equation model showed that a measure of general strain (i.e. strain summed across all dimensions) was predictive of self-reported aggression (P-value = 0.01). General strain also had a positive effect on self-reported anger (P-value = 0.01) and a negative effect on the use of coping strategies (P-value = 0.01), both of which mediated the effect on aggression (i.e. those who experience life stressors experience more anger and are less likely to employ strategies to cope with this, and this translates into increased aggression at football matches).

9 The article mentions that media influence is measured on a Likert scale, but does not state whether the dimensions cited (which include factors such as magazine and newspaper encouragement to chant slogans against opponents) are summed or averaged in the construction of the variable. The construction of the dependent variable is also unclear, but is based on factors such as using bad language against the other team during the match and verbal conflict with the other team.

2017). A 2013 survey of football coaches from the premier league in Yemen also highlighted media reporting as an important factor contributing to violent and antisocial behaviour (Hussein 2013). However, both of these surveys were based on a relatively small sample of individuals closely involved in the football industry, the views identified may not be shared by the wider population, and these perceptions are not supported by other empirical evidence.

Some sources linked violence and disorder at football matches in the region to sporting rivalries and results, but these were not always identified as important factors

Football in the MENA region was described to us by an interviewee with expertise in football fan behaviour in the region as evoking '*deep-seated emotions*.' Research involving football fans in Mashhad, Iran, found that those with high self-reported sport and team identification were more likely to exhibit aggressive behaviours (Kabiri et al. 2016). This pattern held true for both 'hostile aggression' (i.e. aggression for its own sake) and 'instrumental aggression' (i.e. aggression directed towards a specific goal). However, this study was limited in its generalisability since it was based on a survey undertaken at a single football match in Iran.

A survey of football fans in Iran found that aggressive behaviour was more likely to be demonstrated by those supporting the losing team (Kabiri et al. 2016). This effect was particularly pronounced for individuals with high team identification.¹⁰ However, this study was limited in its robustness (the analysis did not control for other factors) and

generalisability (it was based on a survey of spectators at a single football event in Iran). In the European context, fan reaction to play on the pitch and match results are explored more deeply in one of the other reviews conducted as part of this study (Strang et al. 2018).

Sporting rivalries and results were not always identified as factors contributing to violence and disorder at football events in the region. For instance, none of the sources identified relating to the 2012 Port Said stadium disaster in Egypt (see Box 1) mentioned the outcome of the match or cited team rivalries as a contributing factor. Sources that did highlight these influences often did not acknowledge the potential for sporting rivalries to be linked to other factors. It may be that close team identification and sporting rivalries are at least partly driven by socioeconomic and political factors, a possibility not considered by any of the studies identified as part of this review.

Some sources linked crowd behaviour to event organisation, in particular processes guiding how individuals enter and exit the football stadium

A small number of sources identified in the literature linked instances of violence or disorder to the venue facilities and event organisation. In relation to the 2012 Port Said stadium disaster in Egypt, some media sources suggested that lax security was a contributing factor, with spectators allowed to enter the stadium with knives and other weapons (Al Jazeera 2012; Tuastad 2014). There was also an incident at the 2011 Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Asian Cup in Qatar in which disorder was linked in some media sources to ticket-holding fans being denied entry to the stadium (see Box 3).

¹⁰ In this article, high team identification is based on the Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS), a composite indicator with seven dimensions (respondents are asked to describe themselves in relation to factors such as how strongly they support the team, and how important it is to them that the team wins).

Box 3: The 2011 AFC Asian Cup in Qatar

The 2011 Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Asian Cup may in many ways be seen as a precursor to the 2022 World Cup in that it was a large, international football event held in Qatar. The event drew a large number of international spectators, including those from other countries in the region. For the most part, the event appears to have run smoothly, with no major instances of violent or antisocial behaviour.

At the final (Japan vs Australia), a large number of ticket-holding fans (estimates range from 700 to 10,000) were not able to enter the stadium to watch the match, with some media sources reporting that this was because the stadium gates were closed early (ESPN 2011; Smithies 2011; Johnston 2011). One media article discussed how disappointed fans were not to be able to watch the match (Al Jazeera 2011), particularly those who had travelled long distances. For the most part, however, this did not spill over into acts of aggression or violence. This could have been because of the reportedly family-centric and non-violent disposition of the crowd (Rhys 2011). Al Jazeera commented that the outcome at the final could have been quite different with a more boisterous crowd (Rhys 2011). Media reports (Al Jazeera 2011) described that the police responded by sending riot-trained officers (Rhys 2011) armed with batons (ESPN 2011), but there are no grounds on which to evaluate the impact, if any, of this response. Ultimately, disorder at the AFC Asian Cup 2011 final appears to have been minimal, despite the frustration among a large numbers of fans who were not able to gain access to the stadium.

Implications for Qatar 2022: This is one of the few events relating to international football identified as part of the review that took place in Qatar. The conclusions that can be drawn about this event are limited by the lack of evidence. However, a lesson that may be drawn from this event relates to the importance of communication around and coordination of spectator arrival, taking into account security practices that might impede or delay access to the venue.

There is insufficient evidence to draw conclusions about the role of alcohol in influencing crowd behaviour at football events in the region

There is considerable variation across the region in the availability and consumption of alcohol at football events. This factor was not discussed as a driver of football violence in the region in the same way that it has been, for instance, in the literature focused on European countries (Strang et al. 2018). One interviewee went as far as to say that alcohol was irrelevant as a factor driving football violence

in the MENA region. However, there were some references to the role of alcohol and drugs in the Arabic-language sources identified. A 2014 survey of sports professionals in Jordan (Ananza & Khadam 2014) identified a perception that football violence in the country was linked to the consumption of alcohol. No studies were identified that measured the consumption of alcohol by football spectators in the region or explored associations between alcohol consumption and violent behaviour. There was therefore an insufficient evidence base from which to draw any firm conclusions.

3. What approaches have been taken to prevent and respond to violent and antisocial behaviour at football events in the MENA region and to what extent have these approaches proved effective?

The discussion around strategies to prevent and reduce football violence has been largely speculative, based on opinions rather than evidence

A number of sources identified as part of this review discuss various strategies to prevent and reduce the occurrence of violent and antisocial behaviour at football events in the MENA region. In most cases this discussion was highly speculative, with commentators offering their opinion on the best way to address this issue.

A media article in the publication *Al-Ahram Weekly* (Mahzar 2018) discussed the following strategies to address violence and disorder at football matches in the region:

- Banning spectators from watching football matches at stadiums
- Offering prizes or incentives to fans for good behaviour
- Introducing penalties for fans who engage in aggressive behaviour
- Fining clubs
- Monitoring and engaging with ultra groups
- Banning specific items from stadiums
- Moving to all-seated stadiums
- Segregating fans from opposing teams.

A report on football violence in Jordan (Al Zayoud 2013) recommended the following measures:

- Introducing a media code of conduct for football reporting
- Applying stricter punishments for violent fans
- Segregating fans

- Encouraging a more mixed crowd by allowing women and children to watch football matches for free.

Both of these sources discuss potential strategies to reduce and prevent football violence, but do not offer any evidence as to the impact or effectiveness of these strategies.

No evaluations of strategies to prevent and reduce violent and antisocial behaviour in the MENA region were identified

A small number of sources mentioned strategies that have been implemented to prevent and reduce football violence in the MENA region, but there is no evidence as to their effectiveness.

Some MENA countries have introduced security measures to identify and monitor football spectators. In Tunisia, electronic tickets have been introduced with the aim of making it easier to track and identify football spectators who commit violent acts (Habib 2016). In Morocco, where football violence has been associated with ultra groups, security forces meet with the leaders of fan groups before matches, and undercover security agents monitor groups of ultra fans within stadiums (Al Saraa 2015). Certain countries in the region have introduced or increased penalties for engaging in violent or antisocial behaviour. For instance, legislation introduced in the UAE in 2013 imposes a jail term of up to three months or a fine of up to Dh30,000 (approximately US\$8,100) for those convicted of offences relating to violence at football matches (Salama 2013). In Morocco in 2011, new legislation introduced penalties for violence, vandalism and incitement to hatred in

sport. However, the number of violent incidents reported in the media has increased rather than decreased since the legislation was introduced (Rharib and Amara 2014).

In Algeria, there has been a campaign to encourage more families to attend football events to create a less violent and more diverse crowd (Amara and Houaoura 2015). Strategies to prevent and reduce football violence have also focused on the monitoring and policing of football events. In countries such as the UAE, drones have been used to monitor football events (Gulf News 2013). In Algeria, security tactics have included assigning members of the military to patrol stadiums, installing CCTV cameras within stadiums and flying helicopters over them (Al Jazeera 2014). Some sources identified in the review point to aggressive or heavy-handed policing strategies in certain countries in the region (see Box 1). However, this discussion was largely speculative and/

or based on the testimony of a small number of witnesses. A number of MENA countries including Egypt (Dorsey 2015) and North African countries such as Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco (Mahzar 2018) have banned football matches for a limited period of time, or closed them off to the public.

No studies evaluating the effectiveness of strategies to prevent and reduce violent and antisocial behaviour at football events in the region were identified in this review. This represents a major gap and means that there is insufficient evidence to draw any conclusions about the impact or effectiveness of the measures listed above, or other strategies that might have been employed in the region. Another literature review conducted as part of this study found more evidence about the effectiveness of interventions to prevent or respond to violent and antisocial behaviour in the European context (Taylor et al. 2018).

4. What gaps are there in the literature and how can the evidence base be improved?

Reflecting the relatively weak evidence base on violent and antisocial behaviour at football events in the MENA region, a key focus of this case study is to identify gaps in the literature and consider how the evidence can be improved.

Overall, there is a need for independent, rigorous research on violent and antisocial behaviour at football events in the MENA region. More specifically, there is a lack of **robust data on the prevalence and type of violent and antisocial behaviour at football events in the region**. Focusing on media reports may give a misleading picture of the prevalence of disorder, since journalistic interest is piqued by problems and issues. Media reports are thus more likely to report on matches where there is crowd trouble than those that pass off peacefully. Independent research could offer a more balanced and reliable picture, as would the routine collection of statistics on violent and antisocial behaviour at football events in the region.

There is a need for further **research to examine who is involved in football violence and their motivations**. Reports often characterise certain groups as being more inclined to engage

in violent behaviour, but there is a lack of empirical evidence to support this. For instance, young men facing economic constraints are often singled out, but this demographic is likely to be over-represented among football supporters in general.¹¹ There is also relatively little research to support claims made in the identified literature about the drivers of violent and antisocial behaviour at football events. For instance, existing evidence points to a public perception that the media play an important role in inciting football violence in the region, but there has been no systematic analysis to critically assess this claim.

No evaluations were identified that could offer **evidence for the effectiveness of strategies to prevent and reduce the occurrence of violent and antisocial behaviour** in the MENA region. Opinions are often expressed in the media about the best way to approach this issue, but there is little rigorous information on which to build an evidence-based response. Without further research, it is unclear how far lessons from the wider literature on evaluations, for instance those outlined in the review produced by RAND Europe as part of this project (Taylor et al. 2018), are generalisable to this region.

11 It was not possible to identify comparative statistics on the composition of football crowds at countries in the region. However, some studies identified as part of the review included statistics on crowd composition. Shadmanfaat et al (2018) reported that a sample of spectators at a football match in Iran was 100 per cent male, predominantly (94.9 per cent) aged under 40 and that over a third (37.0 per cent) of respondents lived in disadvantaged areas. Jelodar et al. (2016) also reported that their sample of football spectators in Iran were predominantly (92.0 per cent) aged 40 or below. However, without comparable statistics for the population as a whole it is difficult to draw conclusions about the potential over-representation of these groups. In addition, these two studies were conducted in Iran, and there may be differences across the region in the composition of football crowds.

5. Conclusions and key lessons for Qatar

Some of the themes emerging from this review align with the wider evidence on violence and disorder at football events drawn predominantly from European countries captured in the two other literature reviews conducted as part of this study (Strang et al. 2018; Taylor et al. 2018).

As it has elsewhere in the world, violence and disorder at football events in the MENA region has been linked to factors such as socioeconomic pressure, political conflict, media influence and sporting rivalries. However, the ability to draw conclusions about football violence in the region is impeded by the paucity and quality of the available evidence.

There were limits to the generalisability of the studies that were identified, with implications for the lessons that can be drawn for Qatar in the run-up to 2022. Most of the identified sources related to a single country, or a specific incidence of violence or disorder within a country. Few sources were identified relating to Qatar specifically, and those that did related to a single event (the 2011 AFC Asian Cup). Further research may provide insight into how far, if at all, the findings relating to other countries in the MENA region may apply to Qatar. An area of interest for future research may relate to how the blockade on Qatar imposed by a number

of countries in the region may impact upon the presence and behaviour of fans from MENA countries during Qatar 2022.

There were also limits to the applicability of the findings in the sense that the majority of academic and media sources identified in the review focused on domestic football matches. The extent to which the findings extend to international events such as the 2022 World Cup remains an open question, and one which future research might also explore.

This case study, therefore, has identified a number of potential directions for future research, including generating data on the prevalence of violent and antisocial behaviour at football events in the region, strengthening the evidence base with regards to who is involved in football violence and the factors driving this behaviour, and conducting evaluations of strategies used to prevent and reduce the occurrence of football violence in the MENA region.

Such research activities could not only provide a valuable contribution to the evidence base in the run-up to the 2022 World Cup, but also shed light on the safety of football events in Qatar specifically and international football events in the region more generally.

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About this case study and the research project for Qatar University

Qatar has hosted a number of international sporting events and will host the World Athletics Championship in 2019 and the 2022 FIFA World Cup. In preparing for these events, there is an opportunity to learn from research into the prevalence, nature and causes of violence and disorder at other sporting events that have drawn together spectators from a range of countries with diverse cultural and religious characteristics, and to draw on promising practices to prevent and respond to these harms.

Qatar University commissioned RAND Europe to research the current available evidence on these topics to identify insights that may be relevant for Qatar's preparations.

Project aims

The goals of this project were to understand:

1. What has been the nature (types of behaviour, types of perpetrators, victims, location, etc.) and prevalence of antisocial, violent and destructive behaviours among populations watching and attending major sporting events, in particular international football matches?
2. What factors are associated with these behaviours (e.g. alcohol misuse, ethnicity and nationalism; group dynamics) and what is the nature of the association?
3. What approaches have been taken to prevent and respond to these behaviours?
4. To what extent have these approaches proved effective?
5. What specific recommendations follow from the findings that could be used in Qatar in planning for the World Cup in 2022, and where are the opportunities for further research?

Project methods and approach

The project drew mainly on the identification and critical assessment of international literature and media reports, as well as interviews with a wide range of stakeholders in Qatar and internationally.

Full details of the methodology for the research can be found in the final evaluation report available at <https://www.rand.org/randeurope/research/projects/violent-and-antisocial-behaviour-at-football-events.html>

About this case study

A total of six case studies were undertaken to investigate a range of issues relating to safety and security at international sporting events.

The objective of this case study is to gather and assess evidence on violent and antisocial behaviour at football events in the MENA region and strategies to prevent and reduce their occurrence. The research questions are as follows:

1. What violent and antisocial behaviour takes place at football events in the MENA region and what factors are associated with such behaviour?
2. What approaches have been taken to prevent and respond to violent and antisocial behaviour at football events in the MENA region and to what extent have these approaches proved effective?
3. What gaps are there in the literature and how might the evidence base be improved, particularly with regard to informing the organisation of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar?

Methods

This case study represents an exploratory scoping exercise rather than a systematic review.

The following databases were searched: Scopus (English), Google Scholar (English and Arabic), Social Science Abstracts (English), LexisNexis (English), OpenGrey (English), Web of Science (English), Google (English and Arabic), Lableb (Arabic) and institutional databases from universities in the region (Arabic). A low threshold for inclusion was applied in relation to the quality of academic

studies, and media sources were considered alongside the academic literature.

The following search terms were used: (football OR soccer) AND (crowd OR spectator OR fan) AND (behav* OR incident*) AND (antisocial OR violen* OR hooligan* OR abus*) AND (polic* OR security OR control) AND (arab* OR gulf OR middle east OR north africa). In addition to regional identifiers, country names were used as search terms in order to identify country-specific sources.

In addition to the literature review, an interview was conducted with an expert who has published widely on violence and disorder at football events in the region.

Project results and reports

Details of the other case studies and wider project results are available at <https://www.rand.org/randeurope/research/projects/violent-and-antisocial-behaviour-at-football-events.html>. These are of interest not only to those responsible for preparing for upcoming events in Qatar, but to anyone involved in the safety and management of international sports tournaments.

Contact information

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