



'HELP ME'

but Thailand keeps Hakeem jailed

Pascoe Vale footballer Hakeem Alaraibi pleaded for his life as he was led shackled into court before being ordered back to a Bangkok jail for another 10 weeks while his life hangs in the balance.

Kάτι η λογική ο Alaraibi was arrested by Thai authorities in November after they were alerted by a blunder by Australian Federal Police.

The former Bahraini international had been given refugee status and permanent residency in Australia to set up a new life in Melbourne after fleeing his homeland over political persecution.

He was also an outspoken critic of the President of the Asian Football Confederation, Shaikh Salman Al Khalifa, when he was running for President of FIFA in 2016.

But a mistake by Interpol allowed Bahrain to issue a red notice authorising his arrest, and another mistake by the AFP saw them tip off the Thais of his travel plans, despite Alaraibi being told it was safe for him to travel.

When he and his wife touched down in Bangkok on the first stage of their honeymoon, two years after they wed, he was immediately arrested.

Bahrainis claim he vandalised a police station in his home country - but at the time he is accused of doing that, he was live on television playing for his country in an international match.

But the Thais do not decide the extradition on the basis of guilt or innocence, just on the terms of the extradition order.

Today Alaraibi was brought into court in chains for his latest hearing, with Craig Foster and representatives of FIFPro on hand to offer support.

He pleaded for help to allow him to return to Australia, but the Australian government has so far failed to make any headway in securing his release from the Thai shackles.

"Please, please help me, Australia," he begged as he was led in leg irons past the media on his way into court, surrounded by tight security. "Don't send me to Bahrain. Bahrain won't defend me..."

Courtesy of Yahya Alhadid, Gulf Institute for Democracy

and Human Rights

Craig Foster tried to shout messages of support to Alaraibi as he was taken into court, and added afterwards: "He's a footballer and he's a refugee, and he should be let go."

"We continue to call on the Thai Prime Minister to show some mercy. He does have executive discretion."

"We know that's the law here in Thailand and via that discretion,



not to be pushed around by Bahrain and just let him go home."

Alaraibi's next court date was set down for April 22 and he will be held in jail until then unless freed.

"There is no more egregious example in world football of a young player being denied his rights under international human rights law and international conventions on refugee status than the image of Mr Hakeem Al-Araibi, an Australian refugee football player, being brought shackled into Court in

Bangkok today," said #NewFIFANow co-founder, Damian Collins MP.

"Let's be clear. Mr Al-Araibi has international refugee status. To return him to the country from which he has that refugee status would be nothing short of an abrogation of Thailand's international responsibilities to the rule of law."

He demanded FIFA step in and suspend both Bahrain and Thailand and added: "By keeping Mr Al-Araibi in detention, Bahrain and Thailand are responsible for unacceptable flaunting of human rights obligations."

"If FIFA does not do anything about it, then FIFA stand condemned also."

"This is a case where action speaks louder than words and the world football community wants action from its governing body. FIFA and football must step-up to help #SaveHakeem."

Professional Footballers Australia CEO John Didiluca added: "Hakeem's detention is a flagrant breach of his internationally accepted human rights as an Australian permanent resident and refugee."