

Tuesday, 25 August 2009

Fatwa sparks anger from religious hardliners Egypt fatwa exempts footballers from Ramadan



Top religious institution exempts footballers from fasting ahead of international tournament (File)

CAIRO (AFP)

Egypt's top religious institution has exempted the national football team from fasting during the holy month of Ramadan ahead of an international tournament, officials said, but the players have refused.

The fatwa or religious edict, which comes ahead of the World Youth Championship in Egypt due to kick off on September 24 just days after the end of Ramadan, has sparked the fury of the country's hardliners.

Dar al-Ifta, the country's institution which clarifies religious principles and issues edicts, "has allowed the players to break their fast," so that fasting does not interfere with training for the Under-20 tournament, Egyptian Football Association spokesman Alaa Abdel Aziz told AFP.

"But it is the players who have refused. They insist on fasting," he said.

Dar al-Ifta confirmed it had issued the edict explaining that "a player who is tied to a club by contract is obliged to perform his duties and if this work is his source of income and he has to participate in matches during Ramadan and fasting affects his performance then he is allowed to break the fast," Dar al-Ifta spokesman Ibrahim Nigm told AFP.

Religious opinion states that "those who work difficult jobs and can become weaker as a result of fasting can break the fast," Nigm said.

But the fatwa infuriated the Azhar Scholars Front, a group of religious scholars who issued a statement on their website denouncing the opinion.

"Playing is playing, it is not an essential part of life which justifies breaking the fast during Ramadan."

