



TAS / CAS

TRIBUNAL ARBITRAL DU SPORT
COURT OF ARBITRATION FOR SPORT
TRIBUNAL ARBITRAL DEL DEPORTE

CAS 2025/A/11678 Al Zamalek Club v. Confederation of African Football

ARBITRAL AWARD

delivered by the

COURT OF ARBITRATION FOR SPORT

sitting in the following composition:

President: Mr Espen Auberg, Attorney-at-law in Oslo, Norway

Arbitrators: Mr Wouter Lambrecht, Attorney-at-Law in Geneva, Switzerland

Mr Mark A. Hovell, Solicitor in Manchester, United Kingdom

in the arbitration between

Al Zamalek Club, Egypt

Represented by Mr Nasr Eldin Azzam, Attorney-at-law, Cairo, Egypt

- Appellant -

and

Confédération Africaine de Football, Egypt

Represented by Mr Cedrick Agheyand Mr Nadim Magdy, In-House Counsels

- Respondent -

I. THE PARTIES

1. Al Zamalek Club (the “Appellant” or “Zamalek”) is a professional football club which has its seat in Cairo, Egypt. It is registered with the Egyptian Football Association (“EFA”) which, in turn, is a member of the *Confédération Africaine de Football* (“CAF”).
2. CAF is the administrative and governing body of football in the African continent with its registered offices in 6th October City, Egypt. CAF *inter alia* exercises regulatory, supervisory and disciplinary functions over clubs that partake in its tournaments. CAF has been recognized by the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (“FIFA”) as football’s governing body in the African continent.
3. The Appellant and the Respondent are hereinafter jointly referred to as the “Parties”.

II. FACTUAL BACKGROUND

4. Below is a summary of the main relevant facts, as established on the basis of the written submissions of the Parties, the hearing and the evidence examined in the course of the proceedings. This background information is given for the sole purpose of providing a summary of the dispute. Additional facts may be set out, where relevant, in connection with the legal analysis.
5. On 27 September 2024, Zamalek participated in the TotalEnergies CAF Super Cup 2024 against the Egyptian club Al Ahly Sporting Club (“Al Ahly”), a match (the “Match”) organised by CAF and played in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, between the winners of the previous season’s two CAF club competitions, the CAF Champions League and the CAF Confederation Cup.
6. At the 35th minute of the Match, the Match Officials undertook a VAR check for possible penalty in favour Al Ahly. At the 38th minute of the Match, after the referee had reviewed the penalty situation, Al Ahly was awarded a penalty. The penalty was taken at the 43rd minute of the Match and was converted into a goal for Al Ahly.
7. The situation between the 35th and 43rd minute of the Match is not described in the report from the Match’s referee (the “Referee Report”) but is described in two separate reports, submitted by a General Coordinator and a Match Commissioner, both appointed by CAF. In the General Coordinator’s Report, written by Mr Imade El Fahouss, the situation is described as follows:

“in the 38th minute the referee whistled a penalty in favor of the team Al Ahly following this decision the players and the technical staff of the Zamalek club entered the field of play, causing a 5-minute stoppage of play following this incident the players and the staff threatened to leave the match following the referee’s decision but after a few

minutes they decided to resume the match. It should also be noted the unsportsmanlike behavior of the Zamalek team bench throughout the match.”

8. In the Match Commissioner’s Report, written by Mr Mokhosi Phillip Mohapi, the following is stated:

“The attitude of the Players and Officers of Team B (Zamalek) changed when the Match Officials undertook a VAR check for possible penalty, the players surrounded the Central Referee, this behaviour extended to the Bench Officials. This resulted in the game being stopped for 7 mins.”

9. On 27 October 2024, Mr Mohapi participated in an interview on Egyptian TV channel On Time Sport. In the interview, Mr Mohapi stated, *inter alia*, as follows:

“I submitted my report to CAF, and there is nothing wrong with my report. The report reflects what happened in this match. I did not know what Shikabala said; I do not understand Arabic, so I could not know whether he was telling them to enter or leave to the pitch. My report simply stated what took place during the match.”

III. PROCEEDINGS BEFORE THE DECISION-MAKING BODIES OF THE CAF

10. After the Match, CAF initiated disciplinary proceedings against Zamalek. On 24 October 2024, CAF notified Zamalek of CAF’s Disciplinary Board’s decision with grounds. The operative part of the decision reads as follows:

“1) To suspend Zamalek SC player No. 9, Mr Nasser Mansy, for the next three (3) CAF club inter-club competition matches for violation of article 147 of the CAF Disciplinary Code

2) To fine player No. 9, Mr Nasser Mansy, 10.000 USD

3) To suspend Zamalek player No. 10, Mr Mahmoud Abdelrazek Fadlala, for the next three (3) CAF inter-club competition matches for violation of article 82 of the CAF Disciplinary Code.

4) To fine Zamalek SC 300.000 USD for the improper conduct of its team and officials. USD 100.000 of the fine is suspended on condition that Zamalek SC is not found guilty of a similar offense during the 2024/2025 CAF Inter-Club Competition.

5) The fine is to be paid within 60 days of notification of the present decision.”

11. Zamalek appealed the decision of the CAF’s Disciplinary Board’s to the CAF Appeals Board.

12. On 4 August 2025, CAF notified Zamalek of the CAF Appeals Board’s decision (the “Appealed Decision”) with grounds. A summary of the CAF Appeals Board’s reasoning in the Appealed Decision is as follows:

- Several Zamalek players left their positions on the field, approached the sideline, and gestured towards the tunnel, and that these actions caused a suspension of play for approximately five minutes and created confusion as to whether the match would resume.
- The General Coordinator explicitly recorded in his official report that the team had “*threatened to leave the match*”, and that under Article 32 of the CAF Disciplinary Code, such reports are presumed to be accurate. The evidence provided by Zamalek was insufficient to contradict said report.
- The conduct of the players and officials of Zamalek, especially in the context of a Super Cup final match, severely undermined the authority of CAF officials and the image of CAF competitions.
- The Disciplinary Board was correct in finding that the incidents constituted a breach of Articles 82 and 83 of the CAF Disciplinary Code, which prohibits provocative conduct and behavior that damages the reputation of football.
- Regarding the fines imposed on Zamalek, the Appeals Board concurred with the findings of the CAF’s Disciplinary Board regarding the seriousness of the violation. The provocative behavior of Zamalek’s players during a premier CAF competition, in the presence of a continental and global audience, resulted in reputational harm. The gravity of the infractions committed by the players and officials of Zamalek during a flagship CAF event warranted an exemplary disciplinary response.
- Furthermore, CAF Appeals Board’s did not accept Zamalek’s argument that the penalties imposed in this case are disproportionate when compared to previous decisions, and found that the fine of USD 300,000, including a suspended amount of USD 100,000, was proportional.

13. The operative part of the Appealed Decision reads as follows:

- “1. The appeal lodged by Zamalek Sporting Club is declared admissible in form.*
- 2. The appeal is dismissed on the merits.*
- 3. The CAF Disciplinary Board decision dated 24 October 2024 is upheld in its entirety.*
- 4. All other motions or prayers for relief are dismissed.”*

IV. PROCEEDINGS BEFORE THE COURT OF ARBITRATION FOR SPORT

14. On 14 August 2025, the Appellant filed a Statement of Appeal with the Court of Arbitration for Sport (the “CAS”) against the Respondent with respect to the Appealed Decision in accordance with Article R48 of the CAS Code of Sports-related Arbitration (the “CAS Code”). In its Statement of Appeal, the Appellant nominated as arbitrator Mr Wouter Lambrecht, Attorney-at-Law, Geneva, Switzerland.
15. On 29 August 2025, the Respondent nominated Mr Mark A. Hovell, Solicitor in Manchester, United Kingdom, as arbitrator in this matter.
16. On 23 September 2025, the Appellant filed a request for production of evidence, i.e. the reasoned decision issued in the disciplinary case initiated against the Moroccan football club Wydad AC in 2019 and the complete case file from the Appealed Decision.
17. On 5 October 2025, further to granted extensions of time in accordance with Article R32 of the CAS Code, the Appellant submitted its Appeal Brief, pursuant to Article R51 of the CAS Code.
18. On 12 November 2025, the Respondent, further to granted extensions of time pursuant to Article R32 of the CAS Code, filed its Answer in accordance with Article R55 of the CAS Code.
19. On 13 November 2025, the CAS Court Office informed the Parties that, pursuant to Article R54 of the CAS Code and on behalf of the President of the CAS Appeals Arbitration Division, the Arbitral Tribunal appointed to decide the present case was constituted as follows:

President: Mr Espen Auberg, Attorney-at-Law in Oslo, Norway

Arbitrators: Mr Wouter Lambrecht, Attorney-at-Law, Geneva, Switzerland

Mr Mark A. Hovell, Solicitor in Manchester, United Kingdom
20. On 11 December 2025, the CAS Court Office invited the Respondent to produce the documents listed in the Appellant’s submission dated 23 September 2025.
21. On 16 December 2025 and 5 January 2026, the Respondent produced the documents listed in the Appellant’s submission dated 23 September 2025.
22. On 14 January 2026, following consultation with the Parties, on behalf of the Panel, the CAS Court Office confirmed that a hearing would be held on 23 February 2026 by videoconference, pursuant to Articles R44.2 and R57 of the CAS Code.
23. On 4 February 2026, the CAS Court Office issued an Order of Procedure, which was duly signed and returned by the Appellant on 9 February 2026 and by the Respondent on 10 February 2026.

24. On 19 February 2026, the CAS Court Office confirmed a tentative hearing schedule, proposed by the Parties.
25. On 23 February 2026, a hearing was held by videoconference. In addition to the Panel and CAS Managing Counsel Mr Fabien Cagneux, the following persons attended the hearing:

For the Appellant:

Mr Nasr Eldin Azzam, counsel;

Mr Abdelrahman Hashish, counsel;

Mr Mostafa Hani, counsel;

Mr Juan de Dios Crespo Pérez, counsel.

For the Respondent:

Ms Cedrick Aghey, counsel;

Mr Nadim Magdy, counsel;

26. During the hearing, the Parties were given full opportunity to present their cases, to submit their arguments and to answer the questions posed by the Panel.
27. Before the hearing was concluded, the Parties expressly stated that they had no objection to the procedure adopted by the Panel and that their right to be heard had been respected.

V. SUBMISSIONS OF THE PARTIES AND REQUESTS FOR RELIEF

28. This section of the Award does not contain an exhaustive list of the Parties' contentions. Its aim is to provide a summary of the substance of the Parties' main arguments. In considering and deciding upon the Parties' claims in this Award, the Panel has accounted for and carefully considered all of the submissions made and evidence adduced by the Parties, including allegations and arguments not mentioned in this section of the Award or in the discussion of the claims below.

A. Zamalek's Submissions

29. Zamalek's submissions may be summarized as follows:
 - The applicable standard of proof shall be "comfortable satisfaction".
 - Zamalek's representatives did not commit any violation as its representatives never threatened to withdraw from the Match. Such threat was never verbalized. When determining if Zamalek's representatives have threatened

to withdraw from the Match, one must seek to find the “*objective meaning of words or symbols*” rather than rely on subjective or emotional interpretations.

- The two teams’ players’ movement to the sideline did not occur directly after the referee’s decision to award a penalty to Al-Ahly. Al-Ahly was not immediately ready to take the penalty, as it changed its decision regarding which player that should take the penalty. Zamalek’s players did not entirely leave the pitch, but they merely stood around the substitution line. Zamalek’s goalkeeper was taking instructions from a coach about the technique of saving the penalty. The entire incident lasted for a short time, less than two minutes. A “*reasonable onlooker*” cannot assume that Zamalek’s players intended to withdraw from the Match.
- The Match resumed as normal. This demonstrates that the interruption was a standard pause following a penalty decision. Such situations frequently occur in high-stake matches, particularly in finals between two of Africa’s biggest rival teams.
- Furthermore, in the TV interview with the Match Commissioner, Mr Mokhosi Phillip Mohapi, he stated that the Match was played in excellent atmosphere and that Zamalek’s players “*didn’t do anything wrong*”.
- CAF’s conclusion that Zamalek threatened to withdraw from the Match must be rejected. Zamalek’s players moved to the sideline to take instructions, but any official’s conclusion that the players threatened to abandon the Match is not accurate, it is rather the official’s own presumption and interpretation and shall remain outside the scope of the applicable articles stating that the official’s narrated facts shall be deemed accurate unless proven otherwise.
- In all cases, the imposed sanction of USD 300,000 shall be annulled in its entirety. In the absence of any violation, no liability can be attributed against Zamalek, and similarly no sanction can be imposed.
- The players’ discussions with their coaches cannot be considered as a threat of withdrawal. Zamalek did not infringe any rule because walking to the substitution line to take instructions is not sanctionable in accordance with the CAF Disciplinary Code.
- Alternatively, even if the Panel believes that Zamalek’s players implicitly threatened to withdraw from the Match, it is still unsanctionable in accordance with the CAF Disciplinary Code.
- As such, even if the Panel accepts CAF’s findings that the players threatened to leave the Match the principle of predictability shall be applied and the sanction of USD 300,000 shall still be annulled.

- In the Appealed Decision, CAF deemed that Zamalek’s players’ alleged threat to leave the Match brought the “game into disrepute” in light of Article 83 of the CAS Code and thus stated in paragraph 32 of the Appealed Decision that Zamalek’s purported act “resulted in reputational harm”. However, CAF did not submit any single evidence on the alleged reputational harm by which CAF could have evidenced any alleged reputational harm.
- Consequently, even if the Panel accepts CAF’s claim that Zamalek actually threatened to leave the Match, this is not a sanctionable transgression itself because Article 83 of the CAF Disciplinary Code penalizes bringing “the game into disrepute” which is not the case here considering CAF’s failure to sufficiently evidence the purported reputational harm in order to apply Article 83.
- Alternatively, if any sanction shall be imposed on Zamalek, it must be significantly mitigated for being grossly disproportionate. The CAF Disciplinary Code specifies a minimum sanction of USD 20,000 only for the actual withdrawal, not the mere threat of withdrawal, and Zamalek’s prize money was only USD 500,000 for winning the Match, and thus the financial sanction is equivalent to 60% of the prize money. The Panel should take into account the geographical area where the incident took place, as the same incident in Africa shall be sanctioned with a much less financial sanction than similar situations in Europe in which financial prizes, sponsorships, transfer values, and revenues are starkly greater than the same in Africa.
- The principle of proportionality is the cornerstone of financial sanctions, applied consistently by the CAS. In the present case, and assuming that Zamalek’s players really threatened to leave the Match, it must be taken into account the incident did not last for longer than 100 seconds, which proves that the situation was never substantial, and even if deemed to be a threat of withdrawal, it was not a serious threat.
- Further, Zamalek’s players gave all implicit indications that they would not leave the Match, and it would be swiftly resumed. In particular, their presence during the whole incident on the touchline unequivocally shows to all onlookers and spectators that the Match would never be abandoned. Some players’ discussions with the referee shows that the intention was never to abandon the Match.
- Assuming that the players actually threatened to leave, the fact that it was not verbalized made the alleged threat unserious and unsubstantial to the extent that did not leave a room for any onlooker to believe that the Match would be eventually abandoned.

- The fact that the Referee Report as well as the Match Commissioner's Report did not include any assumption that the Match was about to be abandoned should serve as a serious mitigation factor.
- The fact that the Match was played in an excellent atmosphere and sportsmanship shall be taken into account as a mitigation factor while looking at the totality of the circumstances as well as CAF's alleged reputational damage.
- The absence of any single evidence that CAF suffered any reputational damage undeniably proves that the player's threat did not cause any subsequent harm.
- In the Appealed Decision it was taken into account that Zamalek was already sanctioned in a previous case and that it is not its first offence. The imposed sanction was appealed to the CAS and that case is still under the CAS examination. The subject matter of the two cases are entirely different.
- In order to assess the appropriate sanction, if any, one must first indicate the starting point from which all the mitigating and aggravating factors shall be applied to identify the most appropriate sanction accurately.
- Article 148 of the CAF Disciplinary Code sets the minimum financial sanction for the actual abandonment of a match as USD 20,000. Although a minimum sanction of USD 20,000 is set out for the actual abandonment, and not for the mere threat, USD 20,000 may serve as the starting point for a sanction before applying any mitigation and aggravating factors.
- In order to identify the most appropriate and fairest sanction, and before applying the abovementioned mitigating and aggravating factors, one must observe the relevant and comparable situations in which CAF's image as well as the African football's image was really brought into disrepute in a more severe way than in the present case, but they were followed with light sanctions. In comparable cases, the violators caused outrageous reputational damages to CAF as well as the entire African football's image, and still they were faced with very slight sanctions ranging between no sanction up to USD 50,000 only for the most severe cases that included severe violence and explicit withdrawals in high-stake matches.
- By assessing the case at hand with comparable cases, a proper financial sanction should be calculated taking into account that the starting point of USD 20,000 is subject to the aggravating factors which, hereunder that the Match was the final, and the sanctions pertaining to finals are usually bigger. Furthermore, this is the second sanction on Zamalek, not the first.
- There are also mitigating factors which must be taken into consideration. The incident was never substantial, and even if deemed to be a threat of

withdrawal, it was not a serious threat. The fact that the Match was played in an excellent atmosphere and sportsmanship shall be taken into account as a mitigation factor while looking at the totality of the circumstances as well as CAF's alleged reputational damage. The absence of evidence that CAF suffered any reputational damage undeniably proves that the players' alleged threat did not cause any subsequent harm.

- The many mitigating factors above strongly outweigh the aggravating factors which are of a very limited weight. Zamalek is content to assume that the aggravating circumstances would increase the fine of USD 20,000 up to USD 40,000 which shall be ultimately reduced from USD 40,000 to USD 10,000 based on the mitigating factors. The proposed sanction of USD 10,000 is not only proportional with the gravity of the incident and the absence of any harm and the other comparable incidents, but it is also proportional to relevant incidents outside Africa.
- The cases referred to in the Appealed Decision are incomparable and irrelevant to the present case as they involve totally different circumstances.
- CAS jurisprudence establishes that sanctions must comply with equal treatment, i.e. that members/clubs in similar situations must be treated similarly. If CAF has imposed lesser sanctions in comparable cases, treating Zamalek more harshly violates such principle.

30. On these grounds, Zamalek made the following requests for relief:

- “1. Rule that the Appellant did not commit any violation; and*
- 2. Annul the fine of USD 300,000 imposed on Zamalek SC in its entirety; and*
- 3. Alternatively, if the Panel ruled that a sanction shall be imposed, it shall be mitigated to USD 10,000 only; and*
- 4. Alternatively, if the Panel ruled that a financial sanction shall exceed USD 10,000, it shall be capped at USD 40,000 only.*
- 5. In all cases, 2/3 of any financial sanction shall be suspended; and*
- 6. The Appellant further requests that the costs of this proceeding be borne by the Respondent; and*
- 7. Order the Respondent to pay 20,000 CHF to the Appellant as legal fees; and*
- 8. Order any further remedies or relief or order that the Panel deems appropriate.”*

B. CAF's Submissions

31. CAF's submissions may be summarized as follows:

- Article 30 of the CAF Disciplinary Code states, *inter alia*, that any type of proof may be produced, hereunder reports from referees, match commissioners, general coordinators and audio or video recordings.
- Based on the General Coordinator's Report and video footage it is clear that the intention of Zamalek was to threaten to withdraw from the Match which brought CAF's image to disrepute.
- Zamalek violated Articles 82 and 83 of the CAF Disciplinary Code. Contrary to Zamalek's contention, it is well established that there was a clear and coordinated interruption following the penalty awarded in favour of Al Ahly SC.
- Several Zamalek players left their positions on the field, approached the sideline, and gestured toward the tunnel. These actions caused a suspension of play and created confusion as to whether the match would resume. Even if the threat was not verbalized, such collective conduct constitutes intimidation of the referee and disruption of play, which means that they were in infraction of Articles 82 and 83 of the CAF Disciplinary Code.
- The General Coordinator explicitly recorded in his official report that the team had "threatened to leave the match."
- The general conduct of the players as well as the officials of Zamalek, especially in the context of a Super Cup final match, severely undermined the authority of CAF officials and the image of CAF competitions.
- In the Match Commissioner's Report it is noted that the attitude of Zamalek's players and officers changed when the Match Officials undertook a VAR check for possible penalty, as the players surrounded the Referee, a behaviour that extended to the Bench Officials.
- The Match Commissioner sits in the stands and not in the field of play, unlike the General Coordinator that is closer to the field of play. The Match Commissioner mentioned in his interview that he did not understand what was being said by the Appellant's officials or players. However, the native language of the General Coordinator is Arabic.
- The evidence demonstrates that the acts made by Zamalek during the Match constitute violations of Articles 82 and 83 of the CAF Disciplinary Code.
- The imposed fine shall be confirmed in its entirety. It is clear that the acts of the players and officials of Zamalek did not respect the principles of loyalty, integrity, sportsmanship and ethics.
- Research on the internet reveals that the incident was covered worldwide. Following the incident, CAF could not renew its partnership with Riyadh

Season. CAF has organized the past six editions of its Super Cup outside of the continent.

- Accordingly, the actions of the players and officials of Zamalek, brought the game, CAF and African Football into disrepute and the fine shall be confirmed in its entirety.
- The fine imposed on Zamalek is proportionate and fully consistent with the principles of proportionality and fairness that guide disciplinary proceedings within CAF and international sports law. The penalty appropriately reflects the seriousness of the Club's conduct and the potential consequences that such behaviour could have had on CAF's competitions and reputation.
- The principle of proportionality requires that a sanction be adequate with the gravity of the offence, taking into account both aggravating and mitigating factors. In this case, the act of publicly threatening to withdraw from a continental final, broadcast globally and organized in collaboration with a host country, constitutes a grave disciplinary breach. Such conduct undermines the credibility of the competition and damages the image of CAF and African football as a whole.
- The seriousness of Zamalek's behaviour lies not only in the disruption it has caused during the Match but also in the reputational harm it inflicted upon CAF, its commercial partners, and the host nation. The CAF Super Cup is a flagship event, and any threat of withdrawal from one of the continent's leading clubs naturally attracts significant negative attention. It was therefore necessary for CAF to act firmly to safeguard the integrity and reputation of its competitions.
- The fine of USD 300,000, USD 100,000 of which is suspended, is proportionate when viewed against CAF's established disciplinary scale and prior decisions in comparable cases. CAF's disciplinary bodies have, on several occasions, imposed fines of similar magnitude for actions that jeopardized competitions or publicly discredited CAF. The amount therefore aligns with CAF's consistent jurisprudence and cannot be regarded as arbitrary or excessive.
- The fact that Zamalek has been sanctioned in other disciplinary proceedings, including a separate case resulting in a fine of USD 200,000, further reinforces the need for effective deterrence. Repeated disciplinary offences indicate a pattern of conduct inconsistent with the values of fair play and compliance. In such circumstances, the imposition of a firm sanction is not only proportionate but essential to uphold discipline and restore respect for CAF's authority.
- While the sanction is significant, it is not disproportionate in light of the prize money collected by Zamalek from winning the Match, which amounted to USD 2,000,000, considering a direct payment to the winner by Riyadh Season,

the organiser of the match, as well as the importance of the competition involved. CAF must ensure that its disciplinary measures are meaningful and impactful.

- The CAF Disciplinary Body also acted within its discretionary powers under the CAF Disciplinary Code, which authorizes the imposition of monetary sanctions for acts of misconduct, including threats of withdrawal or any action that harms the organization of a CAF competition. The Appealed Decision was reasoned, legally grounded, and proportionate to the damage caused to the institution's image and to the risks created by Zamalek's conduct.
- Accordingly, the fine imposed on Zamalek satisfies the principle of proportionality and is neither excessive nor arbitrary but reflects a balanced response to conduct that seriously threatened the smooth running and credibility of one of CAF's most prestigious competitions.

32. On these grounds, CAF made the following requests for relief:

“i) Dismisses all the requests of the Appellant;

ii) Confirms the Appealed Decision;

iii) Awards CAF an amount of CHF 10,000, related to the expenses of these proceedings

iv) Order the Appellant to bear any arbitration costs associated with these proceedings.”

VI. JURISDICTION

33. The Panel notes that the Appealed Decision was issued by the CAF Appeals Board. The jurisdiction of CAS derives from Article R47 of the CAS Code, which reads:

“An appeal against the decision of a federation, association or sports-related body may be filed with CAS if the statutes or regulations of the said body so provide or if the parties have concluded a specific arbitration agreement and if the Appellant has exhausted the legal remedies available to it prior to the appeal, in accordance with the statutes or regulations of that body.”

34. Furthermore, Article 48 (1) and (3) of CAF's Statutes (October 2024 Edition), determines as follows:

“1. CAF authorizes appeals to the Court of Arbitration for Sport; an independent arbitration tribunal based in Lausanne (Switzerland), to resolve any disputes between CAF, national associations, members, leagues, clubs, players, officials, and licensed match agents and licensed players' agents.

(...)

3. Only CAS shall be empowered to adjudicate on appeals against any decisions or disciplinary sanctions taken in the last instance by any legal body of CAF or FIFA, a national association, league, or club. Any appeal must be filed with CAS within ten (10) days following the notification of the decision.”

35. The jurisdiction of CAS is not contested by the Respondent and is further confirmed by the Order or Procedure duly signed by both Parties.
36. It follows that CAS has jurisdiction to adjudicate and decide on the present dispute.

VII. ADMISSIBILITY

37. Article R49 of the CAS Code provides, *inter alia*, as follows:

“In the absence of a time limit set in the statutes or regulations of the federation, association or sports-related body concerned, or in a previous agreement, the time limit for appeal shall be twenty-one days from the receipt of the decision appealed against.”

38. CAF’s Statutes Article 48 (3) provide that appeals must be made within 10 days of receipt of the decision being appealed.
39. The Appealed Decision was communicated to the Parties on 4 August 2025.
40. The Appellant filed its Statement of Appeal on 14 August 2025 and, therefore, within 10 days from the communication of the Appealed Decision. The Appellant completed its appeal per the terms of Article R48 and R51 of the CAS Code and within the deadline set by the CAS Court Office for it to do so. The appeal complied with all the requirements of Article R47 et seq. of the CAS Code, including the payment of the CAS Court Office fee.
41. It follows that the Appeal is admissible.

VIII. APPLICABLE LAW

42. Article R58 of the CAS Code provides as follows:

“Law Applicable to the merits. The Panel shall decide the dispute according to the applicable regulations and, subsidiarily, to the rules of law chosen by the parties or, in the absence of such a choice, according to the law of the country in which the federation, association or sports-related body which has issued the challenged decision is domiciled or according to the rules of law that the Panel deems appropriate. In the latter case, the Panel shall give reasons for its decision.”

43. Furthermore, the Appealed Decision was issued by the CAF's Appeals Board in accordance with Article 13 of the CAF Statutes. Article 48 (2) of the CAF Statutes provides as follows:

“The Code of Sports-related Arbitration shall govern the arbitration proceedings. With regard to substance, CAS shall apply the various regulations of CAF and FIFA or, if applicable, of national associations, members, leagues and clubs, and, as a last resort, Swiss Law.”

44. Applying these principles to the present matter, the dispute shall primarily be decided according to the applicable regulations, i.e. the various regulations of CAF and FIFA. In case of lacuna, the in various regulations of CAF and FIFA, Swiss law shall apply.

IX. MERITS

A. Preamble

45. The Panel notes that the operative part of the Appealed Decision imposed sanctions on Zamalek itself, and two of its registered players. However, the Appeal solely concerns the sanctions imposed on Zamalek, i.e. point 4 and 5 of the operative part of the decision rendered by CAF's Disciplinary Board on 24 October 2024. Furthermore, the sanctions imposed on Zamalek in the Appealed Decision concerned the conduct of Zamalek's players and officials during the Match. As such, CAF's reference to other forms of conduct by Zamalek's supporters, players and staff that allegedly happened before and after the Match, fall outside the scope of the Panel's review, as the *de novo* power of review of a panel cannot be construed as being wider than that of the appellate body, as held by the panels in cases CAS 2010/A/2090 paragraph 40, CAS 2007/A/1426 paragraph 22 et seq and CAS 2007/A/1396 & 1402 paragraph 45.
46. In the decision rendered by CAF's Disciplinary Board on 24 October 2024, and as confirmed in the Appealed Decision, Zamalek was found guilty of having violated Articles 82 and 83 of the CAF Disciplinary Code during the Match.
47. Zamalek contests to have violated Articles 82 and 83 of the CAF Disciplinary Code and subsidiarily claims that if a sanction shall be imposed on Zamalek, it must be significantly mitigated for being disproportionate.
48. Consequently, the main issues to be resolved by the Panel are:
- i. Has Zamalek violated Articles 82 and/or 83 of the CAF Disciplinary Code?
 - ii. If Zamalek has violated Articles 82 and/or 83 of the CAF Disciplinary Code, what are the consequences thereof?
49. Before turning to these issues, the Panel notes that the notion of burden of proof is regulated in the CAF Disciplinary Code Article 33 (1), which states that “[t]he *onus of proof regarding disciplinary infringements rests on CAF*”. Furthermore, Article 8 of the

Swiss Civil Code provides with respect to burden of proof that: *“Unless the law provides otherwise, each party shall prove the facts upon which it relies to claim its right.”*

50. The same principle has been applied in CAS jurisprudence, as illustrated in the case CAS 2020/A/6796 (paragraph 98) where the Panel stated as follows:

“[I]n CAS arbitration, any party wishing to prevail on a disputed issue must discharge its burden of proof, i.e. it must meet the onus to substantiate its allegations and to affirmatively prove the facts on which it relies with respect to that issue. In other words, the party which asserts facts to support its rights has the burden of establishing them (...). The Code sets forth an adversarial system of arbitral justice, rather than an inquisitorial one. Hence, if a party wishes to establish some fact and persuade the deciding body, it must actively substantiate its allegations with convincing evidence.”

51. With regards to the standard of proof to be applied in CAF disciplinary proceedings, the Panel notes that Article 31 of the CAF Disciplinary Code states as follows:

“Article 31 Absolute Discretion regarding proof

1. The legal bodies will:

- have absolute discretion regarding proof;*
- take account of the parties’ attitudes during proceedings, especially the manner in which they cooperate with the legal bodies and the secretariat;*
- decide on the basis of their personal circumstances.”*

52. As held by the panel in CAS 2016/A/4831 (paragraph 106) with further reference to CAS 2011/A/2426 (paragraphs 87 and 88), the term “personal circumstances” in Article 31 of the CAF Disciplinary Code coincides with the standard of “comfortable satisfaction”.

53. The Panel further notes that consistent CAS jurisprudence, including CAS 2012/A/2699 (paragraph 89) and CAS 2011/A/2625 (paragraph 36), has applied the standard of “comfortable satisfaction” in disciplinary proceedings.

54. Applying these principles to the case at hand, it is for CAF to establish, to the comfortable satisfaction of the Panel, that Zamalek has violated Articles 82 and/or 83 of the CAF Disciplinary Code.

B. Has Zamalek violated Articles 82 and/or 83 of the CAF Disciplinary Code

55. As noted above, the Appealed Decision confirmed the decision made by CAF’s Disciplinary Board on 24 October 2024, where Zamalek was found guilty of having violated Articles 82 and 83 of the CAF Disciplinary Code during the Match.

56. Thus, the primary matter to be resolved by the Panel is whether Zamalek, during the Match, violated Articles 82 and/or 83 of the CAF Disciplinary Code. The relevant articles read as follows:

“Article 82. Principles of Conduct

National associations, clubs, officials and members, as well as their players, shall respect the principles of loyalty, integrity, sportsmanship and ethics.

Article 83 Responsibility

1. National associations, clubs and officials are responsible for ensuring that the game is not brought into disrepute in anyway whatsoever by the conduct of their players, officials, members, supporters, spectators (especially using dangerous objects and/or lasers) and any other persons exercising a function at a match at the request of the association or club.

2. The host association or club is responsible for order and security both inside and around the stadium before, during and after the match. It is liable for incidents of any kind, and can be rendered subject to disciplinary measures.

3. The visiting association or visiting club is responsible for the conduct of its own group of supporters. Spectators occupying the away sector specifically or the demarcated sectors of a stadium are regarded as the visiting association’s supporters, unless proven to the contrary.”

57. Regarding Zamalek’s alleged violation of Article 82 of the CAF Disciplinary Code, the Panel finds that the wording of said article is general and vague, and expresses broad, general principles of conduct and ethics. Article 82 lacks the connection between the responsibilities of a club and the actions and/or behavior of its players, as is more clearly established in Article 83 of the CAF Disciplinary Code. CAS jurisprudence shows that provisions with similar wording have been used as a basis, in connection with other provisions, for imposing disciplinary sanctions in cases concerning doping violations (e.g. CAS 2004/A/593) and match fixing violations (CAS 2010/A/2172 and CAS 2010/A/2266). If isolated from other articles, the principles expressed in Article 82 of the CAF Disciplinary Code are unsuitable as an independent basis for a disciplinary sanction, including in the case at hand. As such, the Panel holds that the question of whether Zamalek’s conduct during the Match constituted a violation of CAF’s Disciplinary Code primarily must be assessed based on Article 83 of the CAF Disciplinary Code.
58. The Panel further notes that the fine, as noted in the operative part of the Appealed Decision, is based on Zamalek’s *“improper conduct of its team and officials”*. As such, solely Article 83 (1) is relevant to the case at hand, as 83 (2) regulates the responsibilities of the host association, whilst 83 (3) regulates the visiting club’s responsibility for its own supporters.

59. Furthermore, the wording of Article 83 (1) stipulates that, *inter alia*, a club's players and officials, are responsible for ensuring that "*the game is not brought into disrepute in anyway*".
60. Consequently, the issue to be assessed by the Panel is whether Zamalek violated Article 83 (1) of the CAF Disciplinary Code, in connection with Article 82, and in this regard if the conduct of Zamalek's players and officials brought "the game" into disrepute.
61. Paragraph 27 *et seq.* of the Appealed Decision demonstrates that the sanction imposed on Zamalek was solely based on the conduct of Zamalek's team and officials in relation to the penalty incident that occurred between the 35th and 43rd minute of the Match. In particular, the Appealed Decision stressed that this behaviour caused a suspension of play and created confusion as to whether the Match would resume; even if the threat was not verbalized, the conduct constituted intimidation of the referee and a disruption of play, in breach of Articles 82 and 83 of the CAF Disciplinary Code. As such, it is for the Panel to assess whether the conduct of Zamalek's team and officials in relation to the said penalty incident constitutes a violation of Article 83 (1), in connection with Article 82, of the CAF Disciplinary Code.
62. The Parties have different views on whether Zamalek's players and officials behaved as held by the CAF Appeal Board in the Appealed Decision, in particular if Zamalek's players and officials threatened to leave the Match. As such, the Panel finds it necessary to review the conduct of Zamalek's players and officials, and more specifically the alleged threat to leave the Match, based on the exhibits on file. These exhibits shed light on the conduct of Zamalek's players and officials when the Match Officials decided to undertake a VAR check for a possible penalty in the 38th minute of the Match, and on the referee's subsequent decision to award a penalty to Al Ahly.
63. After the Match, three reports were filed, the Referee Report, the General Coordinator's Report and the Match Commissioner's Report. As noted above, the situation between the 35th and 43rd minute of the Match is not described in the Referee Report.
64. In the General Coordinator's Report, it is stated that when the referee signaled for a penalty, Zamalek's players and staff entered the field of play and caused a 5-minute stoppage of play, and that Zamalek's players and staff threatened to leave the Match.
65. In the Match Commissioner's Report, it is stated that Zamalek's players surrounded the referee in connection with the VAR check, and that the Match was stopped for seven minutes. The Match Commissioner's Report does not mention that Zamalek's players and staff threatened to leave the Match. In a subsequent televised interview, the Match Commissioner stated that he does not understand Arabic and indicated that he therefore was unable to determine if the Zamalek's players and staff threatened to leave the Match.
66. With regards to the information in the two mentioned reports, the Panel notes that Article 32 of the CAF Disciplinary Regulations states, *inter alia*, as follows:

“1. Facts contained in match officials’ reports are presumed to be accurate.

2. Proof of the inaccuracy of the contents of these reports may be provided. (...)”

67. Article 32 of the CAF Disciplinary Regulations creates an assumption that the content of the official reports is presumed to be accurate. This assumption results in a shift of the burden of proof, in the sense that a party who disagrees with the information in the match officials’ reports bears the burden of proving that the information is incorrect.
68. The Panel took note of Zamalek’s contention that as the wording of Article 32 of the CAF Disciplinary Regulations solely states that *facts* in match officials’ reports shall be deemed accurate, whilst the General Coordinator’s conclusion that Zamalek’s players and officials threatened to leave the Match should not be considered as a fact, but rather as the General Coordinator’s own presumption and interpretation, which shall thus remain outside the scope of Article 32 of the CAF Disciplinary Regulations and the presumed accuracy.
69. Considering the above, whilst the Panel agrees that the accuracy presumption of official report would not extend to hearsay being reported in an official report nor to an official’s own interpretation of factual elements being contained therein, the Panel *in casu*, from the reading of report, does not consider the relevant statements contained therein to amount to “*the General Coordinator’s own presumption and interpretation*”. Be that as it may, this finding is irrelevant considering what follows.
70. Namely, the Panel notes that the General Coordinator’s Report does not provide information about how Zamalek’s players and staff threatened to leave the Match, nor if such a threat was verbalized.
71. Zamalek refutes the claim that its players and officials threatened to leave the Match. In this regard, Zamalek primarily relies on video footage and pictures of the Match.
72. Video footage of the Match reveals that, when Match Officials decided to undertake a VAR check for a possible penalty in the 35th minute of the Match and subsequently awarded Al Ahly a penalty, several of Zamalek’s players and officials clearly objected to the referee’s decision. During the VAR check, which was conducted near the halfway line, between the substitutes’ benches, several of Zamalek’s players gathered close to the referee, on or near the sideline, and observed the referee whilst he was conducting the VAR check. As the referee signaled for a penalty in the 37th minute of the Match, he was approached by a number of Zamalek’s players and officials. Whilst some players and officials clearly objected to the decision, others apparently tried to make the Zamalek players and officials move away from the referee. Following the objections from the Zamalek’s players and officials, two Zamalek players were shown a yellow card. Approximately two minutes after the referee signaled for a penalty, when Al-Ahly was ready to take the penalty, the majority of the Zamalek players walked towards their substitutes’ bench and gathered on or around the touchline. Zamalek’s goalkeeper walked to the substitutes’ bench and talked to what appeared to be a person from the

Zamalek organization. After about two more minutes, the Zamalek players returned to the pitch in front of the Zamalek goal, and shortly after the penalty was taken. Having reviewed the video footage of the Match, the Panel holds that there are no clear indications in the video footage that Zamalek's players or staff threatened to leave the Match.

73. The Panel further notes that information in the General Coordinator's Report that Zamalek's players and staff threatened to leave the Match is not described in the Referee Report, nor supported by other sources or evidence.
74. Having reviewed the evidence on file, and more precisely the lack of any such indications in the Referee Report nor any visible signs by the Players or coaching staff of Zamalek in the video fee presented, the Panel holds that Zamalek, pursuant to Article 32 of the CAF Disciplinary Regulations, has established, to the comfortable satisfaction of the Panel, that the information contained in the General Coordinator's Report as to Zamalek's players and staff having threatened to leave the Match, is inaccurate.
75. However, the Panel notes that the sanction imposed on Zamalek in the Appealed Decision is not solely based on an assumption that Zamalek's players and staff actually threatened to leave the Match, but rather on the conduct of the players and officials of Zamalek during and after the VAR check.
76. As such, the Panel must decide if the conduct of Zamalek's players and officials was sufficient to bring the game into disrepute.
77. Article 83 (1) of the CAF Disciplinary Code obliges clubs to ensure that *the game* is not brought into disrepute. The Panel notes that *the game* in the context of Article 83 (1) of the CAF Disciplinary Code obviously refers to the game of football. As such, it is not sufficient to establish that i.e. the referee or CAF has been brought into disrepute.
78. With regards to the issue of whether the conduct of Zamalek's players and officials brought the game into disrepute, the Panel notes that Article 4 paragraph 10 of the CAF Disciplinary Code defines disrepute as follows:

"Disrepute: any action or deed committed by a person referred to in article 2 para 2 which the CAF Secretariat may determine will bring the game or the body into disgrace. Such matter will be referred to the Disciplinary Board."
79. The Panel accepts that CAF, to some extent, must have discretion in determining which kind of conduct can be defined as bringing the game into disrepute, although CAF's assessment must be in line with the provision's regulatory purpose and applicable legal standards.
80. Previous CAS panels have defined the meaning of bringing something into disrepute. In CAS 2008/A/1539 the panel noted as follows (paragraph 8):

“Bringing a person into disrepute is to lower the reputation of the person in the eyes of ordinary members of the public to a significant extent.”

81. A similar definition was given by the panel in CAS OG 16/009 which stated that bringing a sport into disrepute *“refers to loss of reputation or dishonour”* (paragraph 7.13).
82. Consequently, for Article 83 (1) of the CAF Disciplinary Code to be applicable in the case at hand, there must be a direct link between the conduct of Zamalek’s players and officials and ordinary members of the public’s disrespect and the general loss of reputation for the game of football.
83. In CAS 2007/A/1291 (paragraph 18 *et seq.*), the panel concluded that disciplinary sanctions *“for bringing the sport into disrepute”* could only be applied if actual disrepute had occurred, and as such that potential disrepute was not covered. The Panel concurs with such considerations and notes that Article 83 (1) of the CAF Disciplinary Code obliges clubs to ensure that *“the game is not brought into disrepute”*. In other words, a sanction cannot be imposed on a club based on Article 83 (1) of the CAF Disciplinary Code unless the game of football is actually brought into disrepute. Further, the same panel stated as follows (paragraph 20):

“Section 12.1.3 speaks about “bringing the sport into disrepute”. The conduct in question must thus result in the sport of swimming – as opposed to, for example, individuals involved in the sport of swimming – being brought into disrepute. In other words: public opinion of the sport of swimming must be diminished as a result of the conduct in question.”

84. The threshold for bringing a game into disrepute is, in accordance with CAS jurisprudence, rather high. In CAS OG 16/009, the panel stated as follows (paragraph 7.13):

“The Panel finds that the IWF’s conclusion that the above facts bring the sport of weightlifting in disrepute is neither incompatible with the applicable provisions nor arbitrary. The findings in the McLaren Report constitute one of the biggest doping scandals in sports history. This scandal paired with the findings from the retesting of samples led the IWF to consider that the actions of the RWF and the Russian weightlifters brought the sport of weightlifting into disrepute, because it draws a picture of this sport as being doping infested. All of this clearly amounts to “conduct connected with or associated with doping” that can be attributed to Russian weightlifting. In the Panel’s view, the Applicant has failed to demonstrate that the IWF’s conclusion that, based on the evidence before it, the conduct of the RWF brought the sport of weightlifting in disrepute, was unreasonable.”

85. In the abovementioned case, the panel concluded that the threshold for bringing the sport into disrepute was met, because the conduct of a national weightlifting federation, which in short established a centrally dictated program cover up athletes’ use of doping, contributed to drawing a picture of the sport as being doping infested.

86. In CAS 2024/A/10384, which concerned a president of a national football association's kissing of a female player, the panel notes as follows (paragraphs 161 and 162):

“The Panel is comfortably satisfied that the Appellant kissed Ms Hermoso without her clear and voluntary consent. As the Panel sees it and on the perception of a reasonable and objective observer within the context in which it occurred, this constitutes offensive behaviour contrary to the principles of basic decency and integrity enshrined under Article 13 (1) and 13 (2) a) FDC.

Furthermore, taking into consideration the media coverage and the negative public opinion which followed as well as FIFA's submissions in this regard, the Panel is comfortably satisfied that the Appellant's behavior towards Ms Hermoso tarnished the Match, the medal ceremony, FIFA and football in general, thus bringing them all into disrepute pursuant to Article 13 (2) d) FDC.”

87. Whether the conduct of Zamalek's players and officials led to a decline in public opinion about the game of football should be assessed objectively and supported by evidence of decline in reputation. As noted above, the factual circumstances of the present matter, in particular based on video footage of the Match as well as the General Coordinator's Report and the Match Commissioner's Report, reveal, *inter alia*, that following the intervention of the Match Officials to conduct a VAR check for a possible penalty, they were surrounded by Zamalek players, a conduct that extended to Bench Officials, in a way that exceeded what is acceptable, and when approximately two minutes after the referee signaled for a penalty, the majority of the Zamalek players walked towards their substitutes' bench and gathered on or around the sideline. At this time, Zamalek's goalkeeper walked to the substitutes' bench and talked to what appeared to be a person from the Zamalek coaching staff.
88. While the Panel notes that protesting match officials' decisions has become, to a certain extent, part of the game, what occurred in this Match was well beyond what the Panel considers to be normal and acceptable protesting.
89. Moreover, the Panel notes that the Match was a flagship event that was played between the winners of the previous season's two most prestigious CAF club competitions, the CAF Champions League and the CAF Confederation Cup. The media coverage of the Match was comprehensive, and within this context, contributed to amplifying the negative effect of Zamalek's players and officials conduct and behavior during the Match. In this regard, articles from international news agencies indicate that the conduct of Zamalek's players and officials in relation to the penalty situation to some extent overshadowed the sporting aspects of the Match.
90. The General Coordinator and the Match Commissioner in their respective reports, both described how the conduct of Zamalek's players and officials resulted in a lengthy stoppage of play, and the General Coordinator stated that the players and the staff threatened to leave the Match. Although, as noted above, the Panel holds that it cannot be concluded that Zamalek's players or staff actually threatened to leave the Match, the

Panel agrees with CAF that the conduct of Zamalek's players and officials was unacceptable and demonstrated poor sportsmanship.

91. Having reviewed the evidence on file, in particular taking into consideration that the conduct of Zamalek's players and officials in relation to the penalty incident during the Match resulted in a lengthy stoppage of play, that the Match was a flagship event vastly covered by media, and that the conduct of Zamalek's players and officials in relation to the penalty situation to some extent overshadowed the sporting aspects of the Match, the Panel concludes that the threshold for bringing the game of football into disrepute is met. As such, the conduct of Zamalek's players and officials in relation to the penalty incident constituted a violation of Article 83 (1), seen in connection with Article 82, of the CAF Disciplinary Code.

C. If Zamalek has violated Articles 82 and/or 83 of the CAF Disciplinary Code, are the sanctions imposed on Zamalek proportionate?

92. The Panel notes that Zamalek requests on a subsidiary basis that the sanctions imposed on it in the Appealed Decision, i.e. a fine of USD 200,000 and a suspended fine of USD 100,000, be significantly mitigated for being grossly disproportionate. CAF, on the other hand, maintains that the sanctions are justified.

93. The Panel notes that the principle of proportionality is central in CAS jurisprudence concerning disciplinary cases. In CAS 2013/A/3358 the panel stated as follows (paragraph 58):

“In disciplinary matters, each situation must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and interests at stake have to be balanced in respect of the principle of proportionality. Account must be taken of the seriousness of the facts and other related circumstances as well as of the damage that the penalised conduct entails for the parties involved, for the federation in question and for its sport. In the same way, disciplinary bodies may evaluate any aggravating and/or extenuating circumstances that might be related to the infringement”.

94. In CAS 2020/A/6920, the panel stated (paragraph 82):

“Irrespective of whether the DC refers to the principle of proportionality, it is firmly enshrined in CAS jurisprudence that sanctions must comply with such principle. According thereto the severity of the sanction must relate to the gravity of the wrongdoing displayed.”

95. In CAS 2022/A/8651, the Panel stated as follows (paragraph 225):

“As recognised by the CAS in various precedents (see inter alia CAS 2005/A/976 & 986), the principle of proportionality under Swiss law implies that there must be a reasonable balance between the misconduct of the actor and the applicable sanction. More specifically, the principle of proportionality requires that: “(i) the measure taken by the disciplinary body is capable of achieving the envisaged goal; (ii) the

measure is necessary to reach the envisaged goal; and (iii) the constraints which the affected person will suffer as a consequence of the measure are justified by the overall interest to achieve the envisaged goal” (CAS 2019/A/6219; CAS 2019/A/6489). In other words, to be proportionate a measure must not exceed what is reasonably required in the search of a justifiable aim.”

96. On the other hand, the Panel notes that in accordance with CAS jurisprudence international sports federations enjoy a wide margin of discretion in disciplinary matters. In CAS 2009/A/1817 & 1844, the panel stated as follows (paragraph 68):

“In this latter respect, this Panel agrees with the CAS jurisprudence under which the measure of the sanction imposed by a disciplinary body in the exercise of the discretion allowed by the relevant rules can be reviewed only when the sanction is evidently and grossly disproportionate to the offence (see, e.g. the awards of: 24 March 2005, CAS 2004/A/690, § 86; 15 July 2007, CAS 2005/A/830, § 10.26; 26 June 2007, 2006/A/1175, § 90; and the advisory opinion of 21 April 2006, CAS 2005/C/976 & 986, § 143).”

97. Consequently, the Panel must assess if the sanctions imposed on Zamalek in the Appealed Decision shall be regarded as grossly disproportionate, taking into consideration, *inter alia*, the discretion of the governing body and the established fork of fines in the governing bodies’ regulations, comparable cases, the seriousness of the facts and other related circumstances such as prize money, the damage that the sanctioned conduct caused, and any aggravating and mitigating circumstances that might be relevant.
98. For what concerns comparable cases, the Panel notes that CAF, in 2019, imposed a fine of USD 20,000 on Wydad Athletic Club from Morocco, for abandoning the second leg of the CAF Champions League Final, this following a disagreement with the use of the VAR. The decision was later confirmed by CAS in the case CAS 2019/A/6483. The Panel holds that the sanction imposed on Wydad Athletic Club relates to factual elements that are comparable to the case at hand. Namely, although the match involving Wydad Athletic Club was played approximately five years before the case at hand, and the level of prize money and sanctions may have increased in the meantime, the sanction imposed on Wydad Athletic Club is significantly more lenient than the sanction imposed on Zamalek, taken into consideration that the sanction imposed on Wydad Athletic Club concerned a match that was as high profile, if not more, than the match which involved Zamalek, and related to a more serious offence, as Wydad Athletic Club actually and effectively abandoned the match whereas in this case there is an alleged but no proven threat to withdraw, with the Match continuing after its interruption. Considering these factual elements and comparing the fine imposed in the Wydad Athletic Club case, with the fine imposed in this case, the Panel concludes that the fine imposed on Zamalek, at least from the point of view of comparable cases, was indeed disproportionate.
99. The Panel reaches the above finding, knowing that Zamalek referred to a number of other cases in which clubs were either not sanctioned or imposed sanctions significantly more lenient than the sanction imposed on Zamalek in the Appealed Decision, while

CAF referred to three decisions from the CAF Disciplinary Board in which clubs allegedly have been imposed fines of between USD 200,000 and USD 300,000. However, neither Zamalek nor CAF have, in the proceedings before CAS, provided copies of CAF's decisions in these cases. In disciplinary matters, each case must be evaluated on its own facts, and for sanctions to be compared meaningfully, the grounds of the relevant decisions must be examined. As such, based on the evidence provided by the Parties, it is not possible for the Panel to evaluate whether the sanction imposed on Zamalek in the Appealed Decision is comparable to the other decisions the Parties have relied upon.

100. The Wydad Athletic Club case is therefore the most appropriate reference point for assessing the proportionality of the fine from the point of view of comparable cases.
101. In continuing its analysis, the Panel notes that pursuant to Articles 87 and 91 of the CAF Disciplinary Code, a fine between USD 1,000 and USD 300,000 may be imposed on, *inter alia*, clubs that violate CAF Statutes and regulations. Accordingly, the fine imposed on Zamalek in the Appealed Decision constitutes two-thirds of the maximum fine that CAF may impose in accordance with the CAF Disciplinary Code and reaches the maximum if the suspended fine is included. A fine at or near the upper limit of the permissible range implies that the CAF Disciplinary Board and the CAF Appeals Committee considered Zamalek's conduct to be among the most serious that a club under CAF's jurisdiction may be responsible for. In this regard, the Panel holds that although the conduct of Zamalek's players and officials was reprehensible, it was not sufficiently serious to justify a fine close to the upper limit of fines that may be imposed pursuant to the CAF Disciplinary Code. So, also from this point of view, the fine imposed appears to be disproportionate.
102. Finally, the Panel also holds that the prize money awarded to the participants of the Match, seen in relation to the imposed fine, is of some relevance to the proportionality of the fine. In this regard, the Panel notes that the total prize money for the winner of the Match was USD 500,000, whilst the prize money for the runner up was USD 250,000. The Panel disregards CAF's argument that the payment of USD 1,500,000 to the Club by the Match's organizer Riyadh Season should also be considered in this equation, as this payment was not part of CAF's nor Riyadh Season's official commitments. As such, the Panel observes that the imposed fine of USD 200,000 and a suspended fine of USD 100,000 constitutes a substantial part of the total prize money awarded to the participants of the Match and therefore considers that the fine imposed on Zamalek can also be considered disproportionate from this point of view.
103. In light of the foregoing and having regard to the relief sought by the Appellant, the Panel considers the imposed fine disproportionate and will mitigate said fine and determine a new proportionate fine.
104. In establishing a new mitigated fine, the Panel notes that the Match was, as noted above, a flagship event vastly covered by media, which contributed to spreading the negative effect of Zamalek's players and officials' conduct to a large number of viewers. At the

same time, the Panel holds that the conduct of the Zamalek players and officials in the Match suggests that the sanction imposed on Wydad Athletic Club does not seem to have had a sufficient deterrent effect, and as such, that the level of fines where a club is sanctioned for bringing the game of football into disrepute should be increased.

105. Besides, the Panel disagrees with Zamalek that there are further mitigating circumstances that should be taken into account when determining the appropriate fine. In this context, the Panel notes that, as stated in General Coordinator's Report and the Match Commissioner's Report, the conduct of Zamalek's players and officials caused a 5-to-7-minute stoppage of play, which cannot be considered as relatively short time. Furthermore, the Panel neither agrees with Zamalek that its players gave implicit indications that they were not leaving the Match, nor that it should be considered as a mitigating circumstance that they never verbalized a threat to abandon the Match. As noted above, the conduct of Zamalek's players and officials in relation to the penalty incident during the Match resulted in a lengthy stoppage of play and could have created confusion as to whether the Match would be resumed, regardless of whether a threat was verbalized.
106. Furthermore, while the Panel notes that article 148 of the CAF Disciplinary Code specifies a minimum sanction of USD 20,000 for the actual withdrawal from a match, the Panel holds that the relevant provisions of the CAF Disciplinary Code does not constitute a cap for what concerns the fine that can be imposed in cases where no actual withdrawal takes place. As mentioned before, a sanction must, in general, be determined on a case-to-case basis, where all relevant factors are taken into consideration. While a club found to have withdrawn from a match that falls under the scope of the CAF Disciplinary Code shall, in accordance with the CAF Disciplinary Code, be imposed a fine between USD 20,000 and USD 300,000, any other offence, including one that does not involve an actual withdrawal is still sanctionable with a fine of up to USD 300,000.
107. Having taken into consideration the factual and legal circumstances of the case, as elaborated above, the Panel finds that a fine of USD 75,000, of which USD 25,000 is suspended, would be proportionate. This fine serves as an effective deterrent and represents a sufficiently strong sanction for the conduct of Zamalek's players and officials, while it at the same satisfies CAF's interest in protecting the credibility of its competitions and discourages similar conduct by other clubs, players and officials. As such, this sanction is proportionate to the offence, as it does not exceed what is reasonably required in the search of the envisaged goal.
108. Against this background, the Panel concludes that the fine imposed on Zamalek in the Appealed Decision should be reduced, and that Zamalek shall be imposed a fine of USD 75,000 of which USD 25,000 is suspended with the same conditions as in the operative part of the Appealed Decision.

D. Conclusion

109. On this background, the Panel concludes that the conduct of Zamalek's players and officials in relation to the penalty incident constituted a violation of Article 83 (1), seen in connection with Article 82, of the CAF Disciplinary Code, and that the sanction imposed on Zamalek in the Appealed Decision is grossly disproportionate and should be reduced to a fine of USD 75,000 of which USD 25,000 is suspended.

X. COSTS

(...)

ON THESE GROUNDS

The Court of Arbitration for Sport rules that:

1. The appeal filed by Al Zamalek Club on 14 August 2025 against the decision of the Appeals Committee of the Confederation of African Football issued on 4 August 2025 is partially upheld.
2. The decision of the Appeal Board of the Confederation of African Football issued on 4 August 2025 is set aside and item n. 4 of the decision of the Disciplinary Board of the Confederation of African Football issued on 24 October 2024 is amended as follows:

“4. To fine Zamalek SC USD 75,000 for the improper conduct of its team and officials. USD 25,000 of the fine is suspended on condition that Zamalek SC is not found guilty of a similar offense during the 2024/2025 CAF Inter-Club Competition.”
3. (...).
4. (...).
5. All other and further motions or requests for relief are dismissed.

Seat of arbitration: Lausanne, Switzerland
Date: 1 July 2026

THE COURT OF ARBITRATION FOR SPORT

Espen Auberg
President of the Panel

Wouter Lambrecht
Arbitrator

Mark A. Hovell
Arbitrator