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## ConIFA World Football Cup: In Conversation with Barawa FA's Haji Munye

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You may be wondering why this summer's ConIFA World Football Cup is based in London. The tournament is being hosted by the Barawa FA, [a team](#) made up of members of the Somali diaspora in the United Kingdom.





Barawa FA were not even members of ConIFA during the last WFC in Abkhazia back in 2016, having joined in July that year. We spoke to Haji Munye, one of the key organisers of the team about why it was set up: "Initially it was set up to just create awareness, trying to use football as a tool of bringing people together, uniting people and at the same time use football to play games to raise some money and send it back home. The power football has to create cha...  
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The team gets its name from a port town in Somalia. The town has a population of 32,800 people and is primarily populated by the Chiminni speaking Bravanaese and Af-Tunni speaking Tunni people. The Barawa FA has strong links back to Barawa, but the area does not have the infrastructure to host the tournament: "We would love to have hosted it in Barawa. It would've been near enough impossible to do it in Barawa. We are based in London and for that reason, we decided 'look, let's put this bid together', and try to get it in London. There's no better place than London to host such an unbelievable event."

Munye confesses the tournament is somewhat of a "logistical nightmare" with Barawa having to be responsible for stadia, transport, training facilities and hotels for the tournament. "But we've overcome all of these things", he adds. The main hurdle has come in financing the week and a half long spectacle, though Paddy Power's sponsorship has helped ease this, the organisers are "relying a lot on ticket sales."

Indeed if money was not so much of an issue, the final could have been held at Charlton Athletic's The Valley or Queens Park Rangers' Loftus Road instead of Enfield's Queen Elizabeth II Stadium: "In all honesty, the prices were just too high to host the finals there. But we did try."

Indeed, running the team also comes with a severe financial burden, Munye confesses to "something we didn't anticipate initially."



"We assumed we would raise funds from our games. It's costing quite a bit of money but it's something we believe in and something we want to put our money into. If we had the finances, everything else would sort itself out."

This will be the side's first ever ConIFA appearance. They have previously played Unity Cup in August 2016 in Sutton, losing 0-5 to this years group stage opponents Tamil Eelam, before a 2-3 loss to Chagos Islands before beating Tamil Eelam by the same scoreline.

In April, they beat Chagos Islands 4-1 and have played warm-up matches with Yorkshire, Surrey and a Carlton Cole Select XI in the previous free weeks.

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As well as facing Tamil Eelam in the group stage, Barawa will face Cascadia and Eilan Vannin. Munye asserts "we've put together a decent team for the World Cup", but adds: "We're in a very, very strong group, if we can come out of the group stages, we'd be happy and then see how it goes. But every day we're living the dream as far as I'm concerned. This isn't where we expected to be two years on from the moment we set up Barawa Football Association.

"We want to deliver attractive, attacking football and show what Barawa is about."

Most of the Barawa squad are Muslim and the tournament takes place during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan where Muslims are who able to, fast from sunrise to sunset, it is one of the five pillars of the religion. This has implications for the Barawa squad: "It's quite difficult for a lot of our players to fast. But I still think that a majority of the team will be fasting and obviously, that ruins your energy levels. But we have to do it, we knew this from the get-go when the dates were set, we knew this was going to be during Ramadan."





Munye has big plans to continue to grow the organisation after the tournament: "We want to build on from this World Cup, we want to further develop football back in Barawa, build the football infrastructure out there."

Plans to set up a league system in the region are in motion and Munye hopes this will become a reality in the coming years, he also hopes to "try to build a stadium out there" with a view to hosting a tournament within the next decade and to "do a little bit more humanitarian work, because that's what's needed out there."

A 2012 Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board report found that groups in Somalia such as the Bravanese are "reported to suffer daily violence and persecution", with "their languages and cultures neither accepted nor respected".

Somalia has had years of instability since the collapse of central government in 1991 and faces challenges from insurgents in the region but continues to edge further on the road to recovery under a new federal government formed in August 2012 and recognised internationally.

*Barawa's final group game against Ellan Vannin in Haringey at 1500 on the 3rd June will be featured on The National Student with live twitter coverage and a full match report after the game.*

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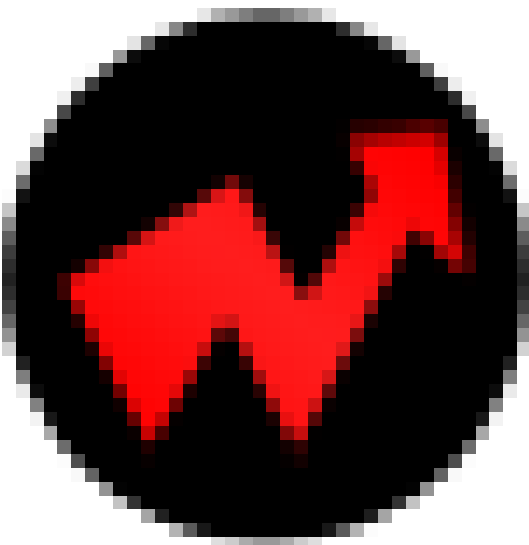


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