

The president of the Rwanda Football Federation (FERWAFA), Shema Ngoga Fabrice, is to remain in custody after a court in Kigali denied him bail.

The Nyarugenge Primary Court ruled on 2 September 2026 that Mr Shema must be remanded for 30 days as prosecutors prepare a fraud case against him.

He is accused of issuing two bounced cheques and fraudulently acquiring property worth \$600,000 (£450,000; Rwf 884m).

Mr Shema denies the charges.

The allegations from a commercial contract signed in January 2024 between Mr Shema's firm, Africa Medical Supplier, and UAE-based Company ABZL International General Trading LLC. The deal was valued at roughly €1.9m (£1.6m), with payment due within 60 days.

Prosecutors told the court that when payments stalled, Mr Shema issued two cheques drawn on an I&M Bank account. However, financial investigators found the account contained just over \$1,000 at the time.

Under Rwandan law updated in 2021, knowingly issuing a bounced cheque is a criminal offence punishable by two to five years in prison, alongside fines up to 10 times the value on the cheque.

Requesting provisional detention, state attorneys argued Mr Shema posed a flight risk and could interfere with witnesses if released.

“Willing to pay”

Appearing at his bail hearing, Mr Shema rejected claims of fraud, insisting his company acted in good faith.

He told the court that Africa Medical Supplier had already made a \$400,000 payment in May 2024 via First Abu Dhabi Bank, but a second \$400,000 transfer in December failed because ABZL's receiving account encountered technical issues.

Mr Shema said he issued an undated cheque as a guarantee while the two parties negotiated an alternative bank account. He alleged that internal shareholder disputes at ABZL led to unauthorised alterations on the document, which caused I&M Bank to reject it.

“The willingness to pay is there; it can be done in one hour,” Mr Shema told the judge.

What happens to Rwandan football leadership?

The detention of its president leaves the local football governing body facing administrative uncertainty.

Under FERWAFA statutes and standard FIFA governance frameworks, clear rules govern what happens when a sitting president is unable to perform their duties:

In the event of a temporary absence or incapacity of the president, executive authority automatically passes to the First Vice-President, who acts as interim head to manage daily operations.

Additionally, should the president remain unavailable for an extended period or step down, the Vice-President and the Executive Committee continue running affairs on a temporary mandate.

Under the federation’s electoral code, an interim head cannot serve out a full term. FERWAFA would be required to convene an Extraordinary General Assembly to elect a substantive president to complete the remainder of the mandate.

FERWAFA has not yet issued an official statement regarding its immediate leadership plans.