

Argentina's dramatic 3-2 comeback victory over Egypt in the FIFA World Cup 2026 Round of 16 was overshadowed by controversy over two key Video Assistant Referee (VAR) decisions that sparked anger from Egypt's players, coaching staff and supporters.

Egypt looked set for a place in the quarter-finals after taking a 2-0 lead and remaining in control until the 78th minute. But Argentina staged a remarkable fightback, scoring three unanswered goals, including Enzo Fernandez's stoppage-time winner.

The defeat triggered an emotional reaction from Egypt head coach Hossam Hassan, who accused the match officials of inconsistency and questioned several decisions that he believed favoured the South Americans.

The first major flashpoint came when Mostafa Ziko had a goal ruled out after a VAR review.

With Egypt leading 1-0, Ziko finished off a swift counterattack to seemingly double his side's advantage. But referee Francois Letexier was called to the pitchside monitor and overturned the goal after ruling that midfielder Marwan Attia had fouled Argentina defender Lisandro Martinez earlier in the move by pulling him back and stepping on his foot.

The decision immediately divided opinion.

Critics argued that the challenge occurred deep inside Egypt's own half while Argentina were still in possession, with Egypt winning the ball before launching a counterattack that ended in Ziko's goal about 10 seconds later. They questioned whether the incident was too far removed from the goal for VAR to intervene.

Although Ziko scored again minutes later to restore Egypt's two-goal advantage, commentators argued that allowing the earlier goal would have given the Pharaohs a commanding 3-0 lead and made Argentina's comeback significantly more difficult.

The second major controversy came late in the match when Egypt appealed for a penalty after Mohamed Salah went down inside the Argentina penalty area.

Egypt claimed Salah was first subjected to a shirt pull before appearing to receive contact from Julian Alvarez. Referee Letexier allowed play to continue, and VAR did not advise an on-field review.

The decision infuriated the Egyptian bench.

Critics questioned why VAR had intervened to disallow Egypt's earlier goal after reviewing play from deep inside their own half, yet did not recommend a review for what they considered a stronger penalty claim involving Salah.

Several pundits and supporters also pointed to other incidents during the match in which Argentina players avoided bookings for fouls, adding to accusations of inconsistent officiating.

Argentina completed their comeback in stoppage time when Fernandez scored the winner to send the defending champions into the quarter-finals.

For many Egyptian fans, however, the final whistle did little to end the debate. Instead, attention shifted from one of the tournament's greatest comebacks to renewed questions over the consistency of VAR decisions on football's biggest stage.

"Egypt's goal against Argentina should never have been ruled out, but talk of a 'conspiracy' is nonsense," analysts have said.

Meanwhile, the Egyptian FA has filed a complaint to FIFA for an investigation in what they called 'Double Standard'



VAR controversy overshadows Argentina's stunning comeback as Egypt crash out of World Cup