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## Unfinished Business – Justice for the Migrant Workers of Qatar

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### AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL IS CALLING ON:

- The Qatari authorities to re-commit to fully delivering on promised labour reforms now and beyond the World Cup.
- FIFA and Qatar to work together with trade unions, the International Labour Organisation and civil society to put in place a comprehensive and participatory programme to provide remedy for all abuses related to the 2022 World Cup.

### SUGGESTED PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS:

1. Will the Foreign Secretary commit to pressing their counterpart in Qatar to provide full compensation and other remedies to migrant workers and their families who suffered death or injury, wage theft or debt from illegal recruitment fees while preparing the tournament?
2. Will the UK Government call on the national football associations of the UK to use their leverage and call for FIFA and Qatari authorities to publicly commit to a compensation fund to remedy serious abuses against migrant workers who made the World Cup possible?
3. Following the World Cup, will the UK Government commit to working with the international community to ensure Qatar continues to build on the progress it has made for workers' rights?
4. What steps will the UK Government take to ensure that FIFA enhances and strictly implements its human rights criteria for future events and strengthens its human rights due diligence processes?

### BACKGROUND

Since 2010, when FIFA awarded the 2022 men's World Cup to Qatar, hundreds of thousands of migrant workers have faced systemic abuse and exploitation while constructing the infrastructure and providing the services necessary to host the world's most watched sporting event. The spotlight and scrutiny around the tournament's preparations further revealed the conditions faced by workers toiling right across the country.

On sites both connected and unconnected to the World Cup, migrant workers have encountered:

- recruitment fees, wage theft, debilitating debt and broken dreams, including for impoverished families back home;
- abuse by employers emboldened by excessive powers and impunity for their actions, sometimes trapping workers in conditions that amount to forced labour; and
- unbearable and dangerous working and living conditions, with thousands of workers' deaths remaining unexplained, and at least hundreds likely to have been linked to exposure to the country's extreme heat.

For many years, the government – like FIFA – met the mounting international pressure about these abuses with denial and inaction. During this period, [Amnesty produced research](#) and [called on World Cup Sponsors](#), FIFA and the Qatari Authorities for change.

In 2017, the Qatari government finally embarked on a journey to reform its labour system. Under a three-year agreement with the International Labour Organization (ILO), Qatar committed to dismantle the toxic kafala sponsorship system, tackle wage abuse, enhance health and safety measures, prevent and prosecute forced labour, and promote workers' voices. This marked a welcome shift in Qatar's approach and important legal reforms ensued in the years that followed.

Despite the positive evolution of Qatar's labour system, which has improved the living and working conditions for hundreds of thousands of Qatar's migrant workers and has the potential to transform the lives of many more, substantial work remains to effectively implement and enforce these. As outlined below, **human rights abuses ultimately persist on a significant scale today.**

### **ONGOING VIOLATIONS OF WORKERS' RIGHTS**

In Qatar, thousands of workers are still facing issues such as delayed or unpaid wages, denial of rest days, unsafe working conditions, barriers to changing jobs, and limited access to justice, while the deaths of thousands of workers remain un-investigated.

**Forced labour.** Migrant workers on both World Cup and non-World Cup related projects continue to face abuses on a significant scale in Qatar. Many workers, particularly in the domestic and security sectors, continue to be subjected to conditions that amount to forced labour, with domestic workers still typically working between 14 and 18 hours a day without a weekly day off, isolated in private homes. Security guards are often also repeatedly denied their rest days and forced to work under the threat of penalties, such as having their salaries arbitrarily deducted or sometimes their passports confiscated, despite such practices being in violation of Qatari law.

**Unexplained deaths.** The deaths of thousands of migrant workers over the past decade and beyond—on World Cup-related projects or otherwise—remain unexplained. At least hundreds of these fatalities were likely a consequence of working in the extreme heat. New heat legislation is an improvement but must be strengthened to bring it into line with international standards and adequately protect outdoor workers.

Despite clear evidence that heat stress poses a huge risk to health, the Qatari authorities have done little to investigate, certify or remedy migrant workers' deaths, contrary to international best practice. It is not just the devastating emotional impact on victims' families but also the loss of a family's main breadwinner coupled with the lack of financial compensation that leaves many in even deeper poverty.

*"Now everything is shattered... Life itself has become like a broken mirror...I have cried many times in emotion. Being alone is very difficult...I feel like I'm burning in oil."*

Bhumisara\*, whose husband's death in Qatar remains unexplained, said to Amnesty

**Trade union limitations.** Migrant workers remain unable to form or join trade unions in Qatar, contrary to their fundamental right under international law to do so. Instead, Joint Committees formed and led by employers, cover only 2% of the workforce. These committees provide workers with some representation, yet remain beset with serious flaws, as they lack mechanisms for collective bargaining and fail to provide workers with crucial legal protections.

**Extortionate recruitment fees.** The payment by prospective migrant worker of extortionate recruitment fees to secure jobs in Qatar remains rampant. Fees of between US\$1,000-\$3,000 leave many workers needing months or even years to repay the debt, trapping them in cycles of exploitation. While workers on some World Cup projects under the purview of the Supreme

Committee, Qatar's tournament organizers, are able to claim some reimbursement of these fees, this option is unavailable to the vast majority of workers in the country.

**Elements of kafala remain.** Crucial changes to the kafala system—which made workers entirely dependent on their employer—mean the vast majority of migrant workers are now legally able to leave the country and change jobs without permission. Migrant workers, however, still risk being arrested or deported if their employers cancel their visas, fail to renew their residence permit or report them as having 'absconded' from their job. Amnesty International has documented several cases over recent months in which unscrupulous employers used their powers to cancel visas, ensure residence permits were not renewed and reported workers for 'absconding' to exploit and punish those who complained about working conditions or wanted to change jobs.

## COMPENSATION PROGRAMME

*"With less than 3 weeks until kick off, the clock is ticking. But there is still time for FIFA to do the right thing. **Supporters don't want a World Cup that's indelibly tainted by human rights abuses.** The past cannot be undone, but a compensation programme is a clear and simple way that FIFA and Qatar can provide at least some measure of redress to the hundreds of thousands of workers who made this tournament possible."*

Steve Cockburn, Head of Economic and Social Justice at Amnesty International

In the extensive research report '[Predictable and Preventable: Why FIFA and Qatar should remedy abuses behind the 2022 World Cup](#)' Amnesty has stated that when FIFA awarded the tournament to Qatar, it knew or should have known the risks this would pose to migrant workers' rights given the country's poor human rights record and the ban on trade unions. In awarding the 2022 World Cup without imposing any conditions to avoid foreseeable labour rights abuses and subsequently failing to take timely and effective preventive measures, FIFA contributed to the widespread abuse of migrant workers on World Cup-related projects that followed.

- **FIFA and Qatar should therefore work together with trade unions, the ILO and civil society to put in place a comprehensive and participatory programme to provide remedy for all abuses related to the 2022 World Cup.** Qatar is obligated under international human rights law to prevent such widespread human rights violations, and to ensure remedy for every abuse on its territory, whether linked to the World Cup or not. FIFA too has its own clear human rights responsibilities under the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. And as recognized by FIFA's own policies, to remedy abuses to which it has contributed. However, to date, neither FIFA nor Qatar have fulfilled their respective responsibilities and obligations in this regard.
- **FIFA should reserve an amount not less than the US\$440 million prize money offered to teams participating in the World Cup, to be invested in funds to support remediation.** This would represent just a small percentage of FIFA's anticipated US\$6 billion revenues from the tournament and the US\$1.6 billion it holds in reserves. [Amnesty International's #PayUpFifa survey](#), highlights an overwhelming demand for FIFA to compensate World Cup migrant workers in this way. Four of the World Cup Sponsors [AB InBev/Budweiser](#), [Adidas](#), [Coca-Cola](#), and [McDonald's](#) — have also stated their support.

## NEXT STEPS FOR QATAR

While the road to the 2022 FIFA World Cup is soon to reach its destination, Qatar's journey to full and effective protection of migrant workers' rights still has a great distance to go. To this end, [Amnesty International provides a ten-point plan for action](#), urging the authorities to enforce and strengthen labour protections, empower workers, make work pay and guarantee access to justice for all.