

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 29, 2022

Gianni Infantino  
Fédération Internationale de Football Association  
FIFA Strasse 20  
PO Box 8044  
Zürich, Switzerland

Dear Mr. Infantino,

With just two months before the kickoff of the 2022 World Cup, we are writing to express our dismay regarding FIFA's inaction and heel-dragging on human rights abuses in Qatar.

While worker abuses in Qatar existed well before FIFA's 2010 announcement of Qatar as the host of the upcoming World Cup, FIFA bears a responsibility for the direct and indirect harms to hundreds of thousands of migrant workers. Despite your recent statements to the contrary, for years FIFA has publicly acknowledged its responsibility to do more to protect and compensate migrant workers in Qatar. **We stand with workers and join labor and human rights advocates across the world in calling upon FIFA to establish a workers' compensation fund, supported by a migrant workers' center, prior to the tournament's first whistle.**

FIFA has made clear commitments—through its own statutes, its sustainability strategy, and its adoption of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights in 2016—to rectify the pervasive abuses that workers have suffered in the pursuit of readying Qatar for the 2022 World Cup.<sup>1</sup> However, for years FIFA adopted a hands-off approach and relied heavily on the Supreme Committee to fulfill its due diligence responsibilities. We are horrified by your callous and brazen remarks that seek to distance FIFA from its obvious responsibility toward migrant workers in Qatar. At a recent conference, you remarked to the audience, “When you give work to somebody, even in hard conditions, you give him dignity and pride... Now 6,000 might have died in other works and so on ... [but] FIFA is not the police of the world.”<sup>2</sup>

Hundreds of thousands of migrant workers, largely from Asia and Africa, have poured into Qatar since FIFA's 2010 announcement. Starting nearly from scratch, these workers have built up the infrastructure necessary for the 2022 World Cup, including stadiums, hotels, and the transportation system, enabling Qatar to add up to \$17B to its economy.<sup>3</sup> Countless more workers have been contracted as security guards, food service and hospitality staff, and transportation operators. Many of these workers are paid just 1,000 Qatari riyals (roughly \$275) per month, which one report found “is barely enough for many workers to pay back recruitment debts, support families back home, and afford basic needs while in Qatar.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “FIFA/Qatar: Commit to Compensate Abused Migrant Workers.” *Human Rights Watch*. August 12, 2022. <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/08/12/fifa/qatar-commit-compensate-abused-migrant-workers>>.

<sup>2</sup> Kunti, Samindra. “Should FIFA And Qatar Pay Migrant Workers Compensation?” *Forbes*. June 30, 2022. <<https://www.forbes.com/sites/samindrakunti/2022/06/30/should-fifa-and-qatar-pay-migrant-workers-compensation/?sh=32a8a6552c9b>>.

<sup>3</sup> Foxman, Simone and Netty Idayu Ismail. “Football World Cup to Add Up to \$17 Billion to Qatari Economy.” *Bloomberg*. June 22, 2022. <<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-06-22/soccer-world-cup-to-add-up-to-17-billion-to-qatari-economy>>.

<sup>4</sup> Holmes, John. “‘How can we work without wages?’ Salary Abuses Facing Migrant Workers Ahead of Qatar’s FIFA World Cup 2022.” *Human Rights Watch*. August 24, 2020. <<https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/08/24/how-can-we-work-without-wages/salary-abuses-facing-migrant-workers-ahead-qatars>>.

Beyond receiving a pittance for their labor, these workers have faced a barrage of abuses:

- **Workers face mounting debts due to the payment of recruitment fees**, collected illegally by contracting firms that are not held accountable.
- **Workers have been subjected to unsafe and hazardous working conditions (e.g., acute heat stress), resulting in serious injury and death.** More than 6,500 migrant workers have died in Qatar since 2010, and watchdog groups have noted that it is “likely many workers who have died were employed on... World Cup infrastructure projects.”<sup>5</sup> At least 33 workers on projects managed directly by FIFA’s Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy have died.<sup>6</sup> In general, these deaths were not investigated, and their families were deprived of their right to compensation.
- **Workers are systematically treated unfairly and without dignity.** For example, workers reported strenuous conditions, including working more than 80 hours per week without a day of rest, for weeks on end.<sup>7</sup> Some employers have imposed penalties for illnesses and bathroom breaks.
- **There is rampant wage theft**, including “unpaid overtime, arbitrary deductions, delayed wages, withholding of wages, unpaid wages, or inaccurate wages.”<sup>8</sup>
- **Racism is embedded in the employment and compensation system**, with some employers explicitly discriminating on the basis of race, national origin, or language.<sup>9</sup> Racism is also used as a common justification for harsh treatment of employees, with reports of employers giving more strenuous work to certain ethnicities deemed stronger or more resilient.<sup>10</sup>
- **Workers are often housed in inhumane accommodations** that are overcrowded, unsanitary, and unsafe from extreme heat.<sup>11</sup>
- **Workers have little recourse** due to insufficient legal protection, poor enforcement and implementation of reforms, and challenges in seeking justice (e.g., barriers to accessing legal resources).
- **Taken as a whole, these conditions often amount to forced labor and human trafficking.**<sup>12</sup> While subjected to these abhorrent conditions, many workers have been trapped in jobs by employers who use deceit, intimidation, and retaliation against employees when they have attempted to leave employment or raise concerns. Human rights watch groups have documented illegal docking of wages, threat of visa cancellation and deportation, confiscation of passports and other documentation, and physical or verbal abuse by employers.

Reports published in recent weeks confirm that these abuses remain rife in Qatari workplaces over a decade after the nation’s selection as host and just two months before the games begin.<sup>13</sup> And yet, these abuses were entirely foreseeable and preventable. Amnesty International found the following:

<sup>5</sup> Pattison, Pete and Niamh McIntyre. “Revealed: 6,500 migrant workers have died in Qatar since World Cup awarded.” *The Guardian*. February 23, 2021. <<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/feb/23/revealed-migrant-worker-deaths-qatar-fifa-world-cup-2022>>.

<sup>6</sup> “10 Questions Journalists Should Ask FIFA and Qatari Authorities About Rights Abuses.” *Human Rights Watch*. March 29, 2022. <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/03/29/10-questions-journalists-should-ask-fifa-and-qatari-authorities-about-rights-abuses>>.

<sup>7</sup> “Qatar: Security guards subjected to forced labour.” *Amnesty International*. April 7, 2022. <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/04/qatar-security-guards-subjected-to-forced-labour/>>.

<sup>8</sup> Holmes, John. “‘How can we work without wages?’ Salary Abuses Facing Migrant Workers Ahead of Qatar’s FIFA World Cup 2022.”

<sup>9</sup> “Checked Out: Migrant Worker Abuse in Qatar’s World Cup Luxury Hotels.” *Business & Human Rights Resource Centre*. July 2021. <[https://www.equidem.org/assets/downloads/2021\\_Qatar\\_Hotels\\_v5\\_1.pdf](https://www.equidem.org/assets/downloads/2021_Qatar_Hotels_v5_1.pdf)>.

<sup>10</sup> “Qatar: Security guards subjected to forced labour.” *Amnesty International*. April 7, 2022.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> “Reality Check: Migrant Workers Rights with Four Years to Qatar 2022 World Cup.” *Amnesty International*. February 2019. <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2019/02/reality-check-migrant-workers-rights-with-four-years-to-qatar-2022-world-cup/>>.

<sup>13</sup> Equidem and Global Labor Justice-International Labor Rights Forum, “We Work Like Robots: Discrimination and Exploitation of Migrant Workers in FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Hotels.” July 28, 2022. <<https://laborrights.org/publications/we-work-robots-discrimination-and-exploitation-migrant-workers-fifa-world-cup-qatar>>.

“Qatar’s dependence on migrant workers, and the severe labour abuse and exploitation in the country, were well documented before FIFA’s decision to award the tournament to Qatar. NGOs, the International Labour Organization (ILO), UN Special Procedures, the US Department of State and even Qatar’s own National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) had for years highlighted the grim situation of migrant workers in Qatar. Consequently, the years of labour abuses associated with preparing the World Cup that followed... were entirely foreseeable.”<sup>14</sup>

Despite the overwhelming evidence of widespread human rights violations, FIFA proceeded without thorough consideration of human rights impact and mitigation planning. Human Rights Watch noted that “FIFA neither imposed labor rights conditions nor undertook effective human rights due diligence.”<sup>15</sup>

It bears mentioning that the Qatari government has introduced several labor reforms in recent years, including to create the Wage Protection System (WPS), formally abolish the *kafala* visa system, impose new restrictions on outdoor labor during the hottest months, establish Labour Dispute Resolution Committees, and implement the Workers' Support and Insurance Fund. Over the past decade, the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy has also pursued independent audits and monitoring, established new due diligence protocols for procurement, and created the Universal Reimbursement Scheme.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, human rights groups have provided substantial evidence that these reforms and initiatives are demonstrably insufficient and have been plagued by poor implementation, insufficient transparency, lacking enforcement, and inadequate funding.<sup>17</sup> The continued prohibition on the right of migrant workers to form or join unions, to bargain collectively or to strike is of course a significant contributing factor in their continued exploitation.

We urge you in the strongest terms possible to denounce these remarks and to take concrete action to mitigate the human rights abuses that FIFA has contributed to by establishing a new fund for worker compensation. This fund should serve as a “comprehensive remedy program for workers who suffered serious harms, including deaths, injuries, and wage theft.”<sup>18</sup> We stand in solidarity with the hundreds of thousands of migrant workers who may be entitled to such compensation by demanding that no less than \$440M should be made available for this fund. This amount is equal to the prize money to be dispersed through the tournament, and it represents a small percentage of the nearly \$7B in revenues that FIFA expects to bring in from the World Cup.<sup>19</sup> With an estimated \$1.9B in cash reserves at the end of 2022, FIFA could establish such a fund in the near-term.<sup>20</sup>

To ensure that the workers’ compensation fund is both equitable and accessible, we urge you to pursue the creation of a migrant workers’ center in Qatar. A migrant workers’ center would offer workers a safe space to

<sup>14</sup> “Predictable and Preventable: Why FIFA and Qatar Should Remedy Abuses Behind the 2022 World Cup.” *Amnesty International*. May 2022. <<https://www.amnesty.de/sites/default/files/2022-05/Amnesty-Bericht-Katar-Fussball-WM-Fifa-Arbeitsmigrant-innen-entschaedigen-Mai-2022.pdf>>.

<sup>15</sup> “FIFA: Pay for Harm to Qatar’s Migrant Workers.” *Human Rights Watch*. May 18, 2022. <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/05/18/fifa-pay-harm-qatars-migrant-workers>>.

<sup>16</sup> “FIFA response to Amnesty International about private security companies in Qatar.” *FIFA*. February 22, 2022. <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde22/5437/2022/en/>>; “Access to Effective Remedy: Reimbursement of Recruitment Fees.” *FIFA*. Accessed August 24, 2022. <<https://publications.fifa.com/en/sustainability-report/human-pillar/access-to-effective-remedy/reimbursement-of-recruitment-fees/>>.

<sup>17</sup> “FIFA/Qatar: Commit to Compensate Abused Migrant Workers.” *Human Rights Watch*. August 12, 2022. <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/08/12/fifa/qatar-commit-compensate-abused-migrant-workers>>.

<sup>18</sup> “Rights group urges FIFA, Qatar to compensate WCup workers.” *Associated Press*. August 12, 2022. <[https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/soccer/rights-group-urges-fifa-qatar-to-compensate-wcup-workers/2022/08/12/3446ada2-1a31-11ed-b998-b2ab68f58468\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/soccer/rights-group-urges-fifa-qatar-to-compensate-wcup-workers/2022/08/12/3446ada2-1a31-11ed-b998-b2ab68f58468_story.html)>.

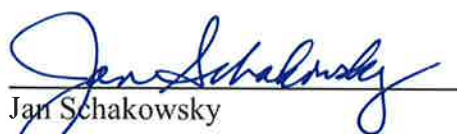
<sup>19</sup> “FIFA budgets \$6.56BN income for 2022 World Cup in Qatar.” *Associated Press*. March 17, 2018. <<https://soccer.nbcsports.com/2018/03/17/fifa-budgets-6-56bn-income-for-2022-world-cup-in-qatar/>>.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

share information, identify common problems, and exercise collective voice, including on the fund's administration and other crucial matters. Absent such measures to shelter collective worker action from surveillance and lift up workers' voices, compensation funds and labor reforms will falter.

With less than two months before World Cup gameplay begins, we request a written response to the issues raised above, including FIFA's commitment to concrete steps for migrant worker compensation and empowerment, within one month. Thank you for your attention to FIFA's role in addressing egregious human rights violations.

Sincerely,



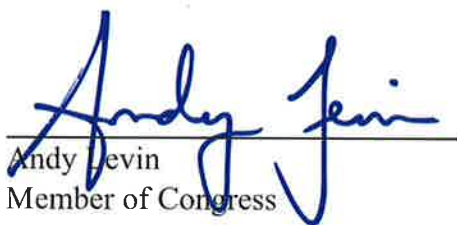
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Raúl M. Grijalva  
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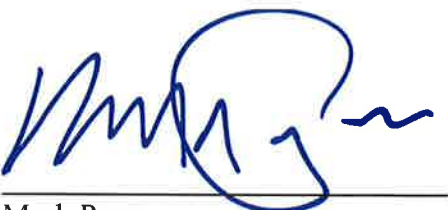
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Member of Congress



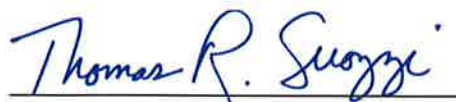
Susan Wild  
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Member of Congress

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Thomas R. Suozzi  
Member of Congress

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Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress

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Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress