



# A LEGACY IN JEOPARDY

CONTINUING ABUSES OF MIGRANT WORKERS IN  
QATAR ONE YEAR AFTER THE WORLD CUP

RESEARCH  
BRIEFING

AMNESTY  
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A year after Qatar hosted the FIFA World Cup 2022, this briefing looks at the legacy the tournament has left for the rights of migrant workers in the country. It finds that just as the glare of the world's media spotlight dimmed, so too did the government's push for fair conditions and decent work for the hundreds of thousands of men and women who helped realize Qatar's World Cup dream and will continue to keep the country moving for many years to come. The briefing ends with a call on Qatar to implement a 10-point plan to better protect workers' rights and urges FIFA to finally fulfil its human rights responsibilities by remedying abuses connected to the tournament.

Front cover illustration by Cesare Davolio. © Amnesty International

# 1. SUMMARY

## **“Employers still have workers in a head lock.”**

Representative of an origin country embassy in Qatar, July 2023.

Ever since Qatar was selected by FIFA in 2010 to host the men’s 2022 World Cup, the violation and abuse of the rights of migrant workers who built the tournament’s infrastructure and provided its services has come under intense scrutiny. After years of denial, Qatar belatedly committed to improving conditions for workers, agreed a series of labour reforms with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and - together with FIFA - promised that the World Cup would leave a lasting legacy for the workers that made it happen.

Under this spotlight and following these commitments, some improvements were indeed made in the years leading up to the World Cup. Elements of the abusive Kafala sponsorship system were reformed, while other measures including a new minimum wage and health and safety legislation offered better conditions for a significant number of workers. However, as the tournament kick-off approached, many promises remained unfulfilled, laws went unenforced and widespread abuses persisted.

In response to evidence of continued abuses, the Qatari authorities often stated that labour reform was a “long term” process that would not end with the World Cup. This briefing explores whether this has indeed been the case, and whether – one year on – we are any closer to a lasting World Cup legacy for migrant workers in Qatar.

This briefing builds upon 13 years of research by Amnesty International and draws on interviews with a range of stakeholders, including current and former migrant workers, representatives of worker communities and the states from which they originate. It is also based on correspondence with the Government of Qatar, and reporting by the International Labour Organization, civil society organizations and journalists. It finds that just as the glare of the world’s media spotlight dimmed, so too did the government’s push for fair conditions and decent work for the hundreds of thousands of men and women who helped realize Qatar’s World Cup dream and will continue to keep the country moving for many years to come.

For much of 2023 the government made far too little progress on better implementing and enforcing many of its labour reforms, albeit with some limited exceptions. Stakeholders cited stronger ongoing enforcement of restrictions on summer working hours among construction workers as one positive development, while two new labour courts became operational to increase the Ministry of Labour’s capacity to hear the tens of thousands of complaints lodged by workers each year.

More broadly however, in the context of the squeeze on job opportunities in various sectors following the end of the tournament, the overall picture is one of stalled progress, lost momentum and an urgent need to redouble efforts to preserve gains achieved and push ahead with further changes.

Focusing on the impact of the last year’s shortcomings, this briefing highlights serious labour abuses that remain unabated in Qatar and pose a serious threat to the World Cup legacy. These include:

- Continued restrictions on workers’ ability to change jobs, seriously undermining reforms of the Kafala system.
- Persistently high rates of wage theft and a failure to increase the already-low minimum wage since it was introduced in 2021.
- The common payment of illegal recruitment fees, despite the establishment since 2019 of 14 visa centres in six countries of origin.
- No progress in improving the investigation and recording of workers’ deaths and a need to further strengthen protections against extreme heat.
- The ongoing harsh treatment of domestic workers and the weak enforcement of the law aiming at protecting their rights.
- Barriers to accessing justice and long waits for remedy, often leaving workers having to accept far less than their entitlements.

- Migrant workers still banned from joining or forming trade unions.

Further, there has been no tangible progress in ensuring remedy for the vast number of migrant workers who faced abuses in the 12 years leading up to the World Cup, despite being called for by an unprecedented coalition of human rights and civil society organizations, trade unions, players' representatives, fans groups, Football Associations and sponsors. This must change. FIFA is currently conducting a review on options for remedy that is expected to be published in the near future and should ensure this delivers real compensation for all those that suffered. Qatar, too, must fulfil its human rights obligations and provide victims with access to remedy including by opening up its compensation fund to historic claims and make it easily accessible to those who have already left the country.

Further, the current state of workers' rights in Qatar provides important lessons about future mega-sporting events and demonstrates the high human cost that can come when sporting bodies fail to implement effective safeguards to protect human rights when awarding and delivering their tournaments. Many of the serious human rights violations and abuses that took place in Qatar could have been prevented and/or remedied if from the onset FIFA took its human rights responsibilities seriously, used its leverage accordingly, and subsequently supported the victims instead of abandoning them.

The briefing ends by reiterating the recommendations made by Amnesty International in November 2022 and the previous decade, calling on Qatar to finally ensure full protection of workers' rights and timely and effective access to justice and reparation for all victims.

## METHODOLOGY

This briefing updates and should be read in conjunction with Amnesty International's 2022 publication *Unfinished Business: What Qatar must do to fulfil promises on migrant workers' rights*,<sup>1</sup> which itself built on the organization's three previous yearly reports assessing the state of migrant workers' rights in Qatar in the lead up to the 2022 World Cup.<sup>2</sup> The briefing draws on both Amnesty International's past work and new research conducted in 2023, as well as the work of other organizations and journalists. Amnesty International's earlier reports covered extensively the relevant national and international laws and standards, so are not repeated here.

Amnesty International delegates visited Qatar in July 2023. They spoke in person and remotely to current and former migrant workers, representatives of workers' origin country embassies, migrants' rights organizations, workers' representatives, and leaders of migrant worker communities in Qatar. Amnesty International also met with representatives of the ILO and engaged in correspondence and meetings with Qatari government officials. Finally, the organization reviewed and drew on secondary sources, including reports by human rights organizations, the ILO, and journalists.

Like in previous years, Qatari authorities did not respond to requests by Amnesty International to access Qatar's immigration detention centre, "search and follow up" facilities, or the government's Human Care Centre for victims of human trafficking.

As with previous reports, pseudonyms are used for all (with one exception) workers who are quoted or whose cases are mentioned to protect them from possible reprisals.

## 2. BACKGROUND: THE ROAD TO THE WORLD CUP

In bidding to stage the 2022 World Cup Qatar committed to developing a multitude of infrastructure and other projects vital for it to hold the world's most watched sporting event. So, soon after FIFA announced it had won, work began on building and renovating stadiums, developing hundreds of hotels and other accommodation and creating an extensive new metro and road network in Qatar. Given the country's huge

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<sup>1</sup> Amnesty International, *Qatar: Unfinished Business: What Qatar must do to fulfil promises on migrant workers' rights* (Index: MDE 22/6106/2022), 20 October 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde22/6106/2022/en/>

<sup>2</sup> Amnesty International, *Reality Check 2021: A year to the 2022 World Cup – The State of Migrant Workers' Rights in Qatar* (Index: 22/4966/2021), 16 November 2021; *Reality Check 2020: Countdown to the 2022 World Cup – Migrant Workers' Rights in Qatar* (Index: MDE 22/3297/2020), 18 November 2020; *Reality Check: The state of migrant workers' rights with four years to go until the Qatar 2022 World Cup* (Index: MDE 22/9758/2019), 5 February 2019.

oil and gas wealth, but relatively small population and reliance on foreign workers who make up around 90% of the workforce, it was never in doubt who would be behind this development: low paid migrants.

Indeed, hailing primarily from South and South-East Asia, and parts of Africa, hundreds of thousands of people were drawn to Qatar in the 13 years leading up to the tournament. Most sought economic empowerment, a chance to fulfil dreams for themselves and their families. But as their work began, Amnesty International uncovered the serious labour abuse and exploitation many were suffering in order to ready the country, revealing the failure of the Qatar government and FIFA – the World Cup organizer – to protect their rights.

After years of evidence of labour abuses were met with denial, there were signs of hope in October 2017, when Qatar finally signed an agreement with the International Labour Organization promising to reform its labour system. This agreement was Qatar’s most significant commitment to date and indicated a serious shift in its approach. In the years that followed, the government introduced important legal reforms, though kept insisting that this process was for the “long-term”.<sup>3</sup> These reforms included:

- a law for domestic workers;
- repealing the ‘exit permit’ requirements for migrant workers wanting to leave the country;
- establishing a minimum wage;
- removing the ‘no-objection certificate’ (NOC) requirement, thus enabling workers to change employers without their sponsor’s permission;
- setting up new labour courts to expedite access to justice;
- establishing a fund to ensure payment of migrant workers’ wages and benefits; and
- legislation to protect workers from heat stress.

While welcoming Qatar’s reforms and noting their potential to improve the lives of migrant workers, Amnesty International and many others repeatedly highlighted the urgent need for them to be turned from ink on paper to practical changes in workers’ lives and shed light on shortcomings and delays in this process. Some workers have undoubtedly benefited from these changes, but along the way the government’s struggle with implementation and enforcement means that many have not.<sup>4</sup>

As the tournament kick-off drew nearer and the construction work came to a head, it was evident that labour abuses persisted. For instance, in September, Gulf-based advocacy organization Migrant-Rights.org reported how hundreds of migrant workers from major companies were forced to return home before the end of their contract without any of their benefits,<sup>5</sup> having also previously documented how workers from some of these same companies were being underpaid and overworked.<sup>6</sup> In October, an investigation by a French TV crew uncovered labour abuses suffered by security guards working at the hotel where the French Football Federation was due to stay during the World Cup. It found that guards were housed in cramped and unsanitary accommodation and kitchens, were not paid overtime, and “hardly ever” had a day off.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, as the World Cup approached, the public narrative around workers’ rights became increasingly polarized at the expense of real progress on the ground for workers. The government dismissed all calls,

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<sup>3</sup> Doha News, “2022 World Cup ‘a catalyst’ for labour reform in Qatar: official”, 6 May 2021, <https://dohanews.co/2022-world-cup-a-catalyst-for-labour-reform-in-qatar-official/>

<sup>4</sup> Amnesty International, *Qatar: Unfinished Business*. (previously cited)

<sup>5</sup> Migrant-Rights.org, “Months before World Cup, workers forced to return home early and with pending dues”, 4 September 2022, <https://www.migrant-rights.org/2022/09/months-before-world-cup-workers-forced-to-return-home-early-and-with-pending-dues/>. See also: The Guardian, “Migrant workers in Qatar left in debt after being ordered home before World Cup starts”, 22 September 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/sep/22/migrant-workers-in-qatar-left-in-debt-after-being-ordered-home-before-world-cup-starts>

<sup>6</sup> Migrant-Rights.org, “Qatar: Misuse of project visas, workers overworked, and underpaid”, 9 March 2023, <https://www.migrant-rights.org/2022/03/qatar-misuse-of-project-visas-workers-overworked-and-underpaid/>

<sup>7</sup> Business and Human Rights Resource Centre (BHRRC), “Qatar 2022: French team hotel terminates contract with security provider as guards allege poor living & working conditions; FFF, Marriott & USS respond, Katara did not”, 24 October 2022, <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/qatar-2022-french-team-hotel-terminates-contract-with-security-provider-whose-guards-allege-poor-living-conditions-lack-of-overtime-or-holiday-at-marriott-property-fff-marriott-respond-uss-katara-did-not/>

including from Nepali civil society groups,<sup>8</sup> for compensation for workers' deaths or injuries related to their jobs, or for the theft of wages and benefits by their employers, labelling such demands a "publicity stunt".<sup>9</sup>

FIFA too appeared to turn a blind eye to the evident abuses. On the eve of the tournament, FIFA President Gianni Infantino dismissed allegations of abuse and waved away claims for compensation.<sup>11</sup> This, despite the fact that FIFA had awarded the World Cup to Qatar without imposing any conditions on or requiring guarantees from Qatar to protect migrant workers despite serious and foreseeable risks to their human rights. Moreover, the football body subsequently failed to prevent and mitigate these risks, opting to rely heavily on the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy (Supreme Committee)<sup>12</sup> to fulfil its due diligence responsibilities on its behalf.<sup>13</sup>

## ABUSES DURING THE WORLD CUP

On 20 November 2022, the month-long World Cup finally kicked off. While the tournament was enjoyed by millions of people – the "best ever" according to FIFA President Gianni Infantino<sup>14</sup> – it was also stained by the continued exploitation of migrant workers servicing teams, officials and fans, as human rights organizations and journalists found.

For instance, the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre (BHRRC) documented the experience of 73 migrant workers who worked in various sectors in Qatar between October 2022 and January 2023. According to its findings, all the workers had paid recruitment fees ranging between USD184 and USD4,670 to secure their jobs in Qatar, with almost two-thirds taking out loans to do so. Once in Qatar, most found that their jobs were not what they had been promised, were subjected to wage theft including of overtime pay, and were unable to raise grievances without fear of reprisal.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, an investigation by The Guardian found employers continuing to withhold wages from migrant workers and housing them in overcrowded and inadequate conditions in December 2022.<sup>16</sup>

Similar issues were echoed in the final compliance report of the Supreme Committee. The report, conducted by consultancy firm Impactt which annually audited Supreme

### TEYSEER: WORLD CUP WORKERS WITH NO ACCESS TO REMEDY

Hundreds of migrant security guards and marshals employed by Teyseer Security Services on short term contracts were subject to labour exploitation during the 2022 Qatar World Cup while deployed to tournament-related sites, including stadiums and fan zones.<sup>10</sup>

Workers told Amnesty International they suffered a range of labour abuses, including paying up to USD 600 in recruitment costs, being lied to about the terms and conditions of their employment, and working excessively long hours without adequate time off. A third of those interviewed said they had to work 12 hours a day and for up to 38 consecutive days without a day off or adequate pay to reflect this extra work. Such abuses prompted the workers to stage multiple protests, which resulted in no effective action.

At the end of their temporary contracts, workers said they had no option but to return home, effectively denying them recourse to any remedy or compensation given restrictions on workers' ability to access justice after leaving the country (see section 3.6). Despite Amnesty International raising their plight with both FIFA and the Qatar authorities, the organization is not aware of any action taken to ensure they finally receive compensation.

Marcus, 33, from Ghana, who works to support his siblings and paid nearly USD 400 in recruitment costs, told Amnesty International:

**"I had to take out a loan to pay for the expenses to travel to work in Qatar during the World Cup. I am still paying it, what I earned was not enough."**

<sup>8</sup> Amnesty International, "Qatar: Nepali civil society groups denounce FIFA's continued dismissal of migrant workers' compensation claims", 15 December 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/12/qatar-nepali-civil-society-groups-denounce-fifas-continued-dismissal-of-migrant-workers-compensation-claims/>

<sup>9</sup> Amnesty International, "Qatar: Labour Minister's dismissal of compensation campaign 'hugely disappointing'", 2 November 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/11/qatar-labour-ministers-dismissal-of-compensation-campaign-hugely-disappointing/>

<sup>10</sup> Amnesty International, "Qatar: Hundreds of migrant workers employed as security guards at FIFA World Cup denied justice for abuses", 15 June 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/06/qatar-hundreds-of-migrant-workers-employed-as-security-guards-at-fifa-world-cup-denied-justice-for-abuses/>

<sup>11</sup> Amnesty International, "Infantino's call to 'focus on the football' a crass abdication of FIFA's accountability for migrant worker abuses", 14 November 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/11/infantinos-call-to-focus-on-the-football-a-crass-abdication-of-fifas-accountability-for-migrant-worker-abuses/>

<sup>12</sup> The Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy is the Qatari body which was responsible for delivering the required infrastructure and host country planning and operations for the 2022 World Cup.

<sup>13</sup> Amnesty International, *Predictable and Preventable: Why FIFA and Qatar should remedy past abuses behind the 2022 World Cup* (Index: MDE 22/5586/2022), 19 May 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde22/5586/2022/en>. In the months ahead of the World Cup, FIFA established its Qatar 2022 Human Rights Grievance Mechanism through which anyone could report any type of suspected human rights violation related to the tournament. At the time of writing FIFA has yet to publish its assessment of its Qatar 2022 grievance mechanism or indicate when it plans to do so.

<sup>14</sup> Aljazeera, "FIFA chief praises Qatar 2022 as 'best World Cup ever'", 16 December 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/sports/2022/12/16/infantino-qatar-2022-best-world-cup-ever>

<sup>15</sup> BHRRC, "After the final whistle: Migrant workers speak out on exploitation during Qatar World Cup 2022", June 2023, [https://media.business-humanrights.org/media/documents/2023\\_World\\_Cup\\_report.pdf](https://media.business-humanrights.org/media/documents/2023_World_Cup_report.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> The Guardian, "Qatar's forgotten migrant workers stuck in a 'prison where you can work'", 21 December 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2022/dec/21/qatar-forgotten-migrant-workers-world-cup-2022>

Committee projects, acknowledged some improvements in contractors' compliance with the Workers' Welfare Standards<sup>17</sup> but highlighted ongoing issues such as unpaid wages and overtime pay, excessive working hours and days with lack of rest time and no day off, and poor compliance with outdoor working hours restrictions for hospitality workers. While these issues have always been challenging for construction workers, Impactt noted that they became more acute when the work shifted towards the hospitality sector ahead of and during the tournament.<sup>18</sup> For example, the report noted that short-term hiring of workers during the tournament year gave less time for contractors to ensure adequate compliance with the Workers' Welfare Standards and meant that workers were not eligible for end of service benefits, annual leave salaries and annual air-tickets.<sup>19</sup>

Impactt's audits also reported severe instances of "scolding, racism, sexual harassment, and favouritism, based on both nationality and gender" of World Cup workers. This was particularly true in the hospitality sector, which has a higher proportion of women and a greater diversity of nationalities in the workforce.<sup>20</sup>

Not all of those who worked during the World Cup in Qatar faced labour abuses and exploitation. For example, Nepali workers from a company that served food and beverages in a World Cup stadium told Amnesty International they had not incurred recruitment fees to go to Qatar, were paid on time and in full during the tournament and were housed in decent accommodation.<sup>21</sup> They spoke highly about their time in Qatar and returned home at the end of their three-month contracts feeling content about their experience. These cases suggest that when standards are enforced and workers treated with dignity, labour abuses can be prevented.

### **SAME OLD STORY FOR TOURNAMENT HOTEL GUARDS**

In 2022, Amnesty International's research found that practices amounting to forced labour were rampant in the private security sector, which employs tens of thousands of people in Qatar.<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, excessive working hours, denial of weekly rest days and underpayment of overtime have persisted on a significant scale since then, and the government appears to have taken very little action to address this particularly problematic sector and better protect those that service it, including during the World Cup.

During the tournament, Amnesty International documented how one company providing guards to an international hotel chain in Doha was permitting workers only one day off each month, threatening salary cuts if they took more rest time, failing to provide pay slips and housing them in dirty and overcrowded accommodation with six people per room in bunkbeds. After Amnesty International raised the abuses with World Cup organizers, the staff were moved to accommodation of a better standard, however denial of days off in the company remains an issue today, according to workers.

## **3. A YEAR ON**

Almost a year after Argentina lifted the World Cup trophy and FIFA disbursed USD 440 million to teams in prize money, the legacy for workers of this World Cup remains in jeopardy.

There were early signs that the tournament might not be the springboard for further progress that some had hoped, with global trade unions quickly raising the alarm. In March 2023 a group of global federations warned that "rather than accelerating reforms and preparing for the future, progress on implementing labour law changes slowed down, employer lawlessness increased" and denounced "the threats, arrests, and sudden halt of meaningful cooperation with the Global Union Federations".<sup>23</sup> In the same month, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), which had previously spoken positively about Qatar's reforms, warned that "there will be no positive and lasting legacy of the FIFA World Cup" if the reforms are not fully

<sup>17</sup> These standards, which are included in contracts awarded to companies working on World Cup sites, cover issues including ethical recruitment, timely payment of salaries, and a complete prohibition of forced labour. See: <https://www.qatar2022.qa/sites/default/files/docs/Workers-Welfare-Standards-Qatar-2022-v2.pdf>. For more detail see: Amnesty International, "Unfinished Business", Pp. 21-23. (previously cited)

<sup>18</sup> Impactt, "Annual External Compliance Report of the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy's Workers' Welfare Standards (2023)", March 2023 <https://impacttlimited.com/reports/>.

<sup>19</sup> Impactt's 2023 report, p. 23. (previously cited)

<sup>20</sup> Also see: The Guardian, "Female migrant workers speak out about harassment in Qatar's World Cup hotels", 17 November 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/nov/17/female-migrant-workers-speak-out-about-harassment-in-qatar-world-cup-hotels>

<sup>21</sup> Interviews conducted in person in Nepal in February 2023.

<sup>22</sup> Amnesty International, "They think that we're machines": Forced labour and other abuse of migrant workers in Qatar's private security sector (Index: MDE 22/5388/2022), 7 April 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde22/5388/2022/en/>;

<sup>23</sup> International Federation of Journalists, "FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022: No legacy without trade union rights", 15 March 2023, <https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/press-releases/article/fifa-world-cup-qatar-2022-no-legacy-without-trade-union-rights>

implemented, particularly for construction, security and domestic work sectors as “many rogue employers have been able to evade their legal responsibilities on wages, job transfers, working conditions, residency, and other provisions.”<sup>24</sup>

Today, organizations including Amnesty International continue to document cases of serious abuse in Qatar, while there appears to have been very limited progress in strengthening implementation of recent reforms, better enforcing long-standing labour laws or introducing much-needed new initiatives. Similarly, remedy for past abuses remains out of sight for so many victims and their families.

Against the backdrop of a slower post-World Cup economy and labour market, the serious deceleration of progress on the ground means that old patterns of labour abuses have continued on a significant scale.

The following sections provide an update on progress and remaining barriers in various areas of labour reforms and their impact on migrant workers’ enjoyment of rights since the World Cup ended.

### 3.1 ABUSIVE KAFALA SPONSORSHIP SYSTEM

**“[C]hanging jobs is still a problem, workers can’t change without the NOC, it is impossible to change without it. It is like a silent requirement. New employers still require NOC mostly, and old companies don’t want to give it.”**

[Representative of a workers’ origin country embassy in Qatar, July 2023]

Until 2020, Qatar’s inherently abusive *kafala* sponsorship system imposed tight restrictions on migrant workers’ freedom of movement, prohibiting them from leaving the country or changing jobs without the permission of their employer. Between 2018 and 2020, the government took important steps towards tackling two central pillars of this system by repealing for most migrant workers the requirement to obtain from their employer an ‘exit permit’ to leave the country, and a ‘no-objection certificate’ (NOC) to change jobs.<sup>25</sup>



Pay Up FIFA Billboard outside Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu, Nepal, December 2022. @ NagarLachhu

<sup>24</sup> ITUC, “Qatar must move forward on labour rights”, 17 March 2023, <https://www.ituc-csi.org/qatar-statement-march-2023>

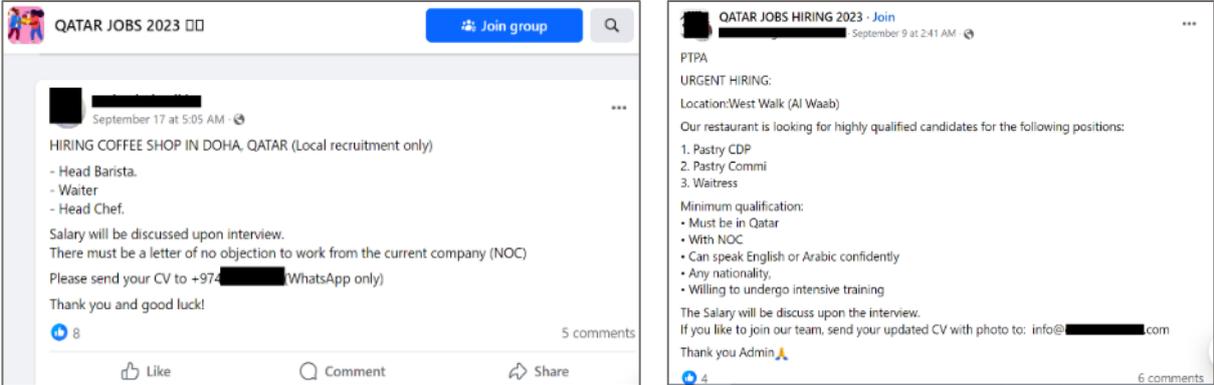
<sup>25</sup> Employers can still request exit permits for up to 5% of their workforce, and domestic workers still need to “inform” their employer in person 72 hours before their departure. See Amnesty International, “Qatar: Partial abolition of ‘exit permit’ lifts travel restrictions for most migrant workers”, 5 September 2018, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/09/qatar-exit-system-reform-first-step/>

Indeed, today the vast majority of migrant workers are able to leave the country freely and according to the government (see below), hundreds of thousands are now changing jobs each year. Nonetheless, virtually all of the stakeholders Amnesty International spoke to for this briefing raised serious ongoing concerns about the government’s implementation of the job transfer process – concerns that are supported by the individual cases Amnesty International has itself documented. Even the government’s own data shows that tens of thousands of workers are still being denied job transfers each year, without providing much clarity as to the reasons. When coupled with an ongoing culture of impunity, this failure to enforce the law means practices that keep the sponsorship system alive are still flourishing, and major barriers continue to hinder the freedom of movement of migrant workers.<sup>26</sup>

According to data shared by the government with Amnesty International, in the first eight months of 2023 more than a third of workers’ applications to change jobs were not approved by the Ministry of Labour. Of a total of 238,922 workers’ job transfer requests received between January and August 2023, the government stated it had approved 153,446 and “either declined or was unable to approve for administrative reasons” 82,266. A further 3,210 applications were outstanding as of September 2023.<sup>27</sup>

While positive for those that have managed to move employer, this data does not tell the full story, nor adequately reflect the struggles that so many continue to face when seeking to change jobs in Qatar.

Some of these struggles stem from structural issues with elements of the sponsorship system that remain today – in particular migrant workers’ dependency on their employer to regulate their entry into and presence in the country, and issue or renew their residence permit (or Qatar ID). Such reliance means abusive employers can – and still do – depend on an array of tools to control their workforce. This includes cancelling or refraining from renewing workers’ residence permits, or falsely reporting employees as having “absconded” from their job (when they could be trying to escape abuse) - all of which can lead to workers being arrested and deported. A range of stakeholders interviewed in 2023 for this briefing told Amnesty International that employers often use these measures in retaliation for employees requesting to change jobs or submitting a labour complaint.<sup>28</sup>



Screenshots of job adverts posted on Facebook, September 2023.

Other barriers to workers changing jobs freely have emerged over the last few years, limiting the impact of the reforms and maintaining the status quo. These include the unwritten – but often spoken – need for workers to secure “release papers”, a resignation letter, or any equivalent of an NOC, from their current employers in order to successfully move jobs, and the malicious use by employers of the Labour Law’s non-compete clause to effectively ban workers from changing jobs under the guise that they are going to work for direct competitors.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> According to migrant workers, migrant community leaders and organizations supporting workers, as well as representatives of labour origin country embassies.  
<sup>27</sup> Information sent by Qatar International Media Office (IMO) to Amnesty International, 9 September 2023. On file with Amnesty International.  
<sup>28</sup> See, for example, Doha News, “‘We are still suffering:’ Kenyan migrant workers in Qatar locked in job change limbo”, 6 February 2023, <https://dohanews.co/we-are-still-suffering-kenyan-migrant-workers-in-qatar-locked-in-job-change-limbo/>  
<sup>29</sup> This was also identified by the ILO in late 2022 as a tool used by employers. See para 14. [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/---ilo-qatar/documents/publication/wcms\\_859839.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/---ilo-qatar/documents/publication/wcms_859839.pdf)

According to stakeholders interviewed for this briefing, many companies continue to require some form of permission from a worker's current employer before they will even start the process of transferring their sponsorship. Indeed, online job advertisements still routinely specify that applicants need an NOC or equivalent waiver if they are to be considered. In some cases, workers told Amnesty International that officials from the Ministry of Labour had even advised them to get an NOC from their current employer to facilitate their job transfer. As one Ugandan worker explained, **"They [officials at the Ministry of Labour] just said to me, 'if you don't have NOC you can't change employer', yet they are the same people who said before that NOC is no longer needed to change employer – it was a lie!"**<sup>30</sup>

Embassy representatives also described to Amnesty International how some employers block workers from changing jobs by refusing to cancel their employees' visas once they stop working for them, thereby preventing them from transferring to a new employer.

As part of the data provided to Amnesty International regarding workers' applications to change jobs, the government provided Amnesty International with a list of reasons as to why it declined such requests, including, because new employers failed to comply with laws and permits needed to hire workers; the employer already had complaints lodged against it; or because the correct documents had not been uploaded with the application.<sup>31</sup>



*Migrant builders take a break while working at a construction site by the Corniche, in Doha, (Photo by CHANDAN KHANNA / AFP) © AFP via Getty Images*

Nonetheless, the process continues to be opaque. Despite Amnesty International's request, the government did not provide any information on how many of those whose applications were approved had some form of permission from their current employer; how many had an ongoing complaint against their current employer; and how many succeed in changing jobs despite their employer's objections. Additionally, the data provided by the government does not account for any migrant workers who may wish to change jobs but whose new

<sup>30</sup> Interview conducted remotely, May 2023.

<sup>31</sup> Information sent by Qatar IMO to Amnesty International, 9 September 2023. (previously cited)

company will not even start the transfer application process without the consent of the current employer, as described above.

Further, workers are still not routinely informed of the reasons behind their rejections, as the Ministry of Labour continues to send workers SMS messages stating their job transfer request has been rejected without offering any explanation. This compounds their difficulty in navigating the job transfer process as it leaves workers in the dark about how to correct the problem to ensure their next application is approved. This not only results in some facing repeated rejections, but also fuels suspicions amongst workers about the power of their employers to block their move to other companies.

The government told Amnesty International in September 2023 that an electronic system linking the Ministry of Labour to the Ministry of Interior had been introduced to “prevent employers from taking retaliatory steps after a worker submits a request to change employer”, including in relation to employers cancelling their workers’ residency cards (Qatar ID) or making false allegations against them in retaliation.<sup>33</sup> However, this initiative was reported in 2022,<sup>34</sup> and since then the government has provide no further information as to whether the system was operationalized and what impact it has had.

In light of the barriers migrant workers still face in navigating the labour market freely, some feel the only way they can escape abusive situations, pursue the best job opportunities or gain some control over their work and life in the country is to make use of what is often called the ‘free visa’ model. This is an arrangement – illegal in Qatar - whereby sponsors ‘sell’ visas they have to migrant workers, usually for annual fees. The workers may be considered ‘free’ because while the sponsor provides the visa, they usually have to find employment themselves - ‘freelancing’ - and are not expected to work for the sponsor, although they remain legally dependent on them for their residence status in the country.<sup>35</sup> While those using free visas are vulnerable to arrest and deportation, it is nonetheless popular amongst some workers who are unable to find alternative ways to change jobs – a symptom of the ever-present sponsorship system.

## THE STRUGGLE OF CHANGING JOBS

After seven years of overwork and underpayment, Kabiito, a father of two and supervisor for a prominent security company in Qatar, was tired of being at the mercy of his abusive employer and decided to look for better opportunities. Wanting to be the master of his own destiny, he first sought to move to a ‘free visa’ arrangement in his quest to change jobs before seeking a move to legitimate employer. His requests to transfer were denied three times.

Between January and May 2023, Kabiito made two requests through the Ministry of Labour’s portal to transfer jobs, but on both occasions, he received a rejection notification. With no explanation given by the Ministry as to why he was not successful, Kabiito suspected his current company had interfered to block his transfer – though acknowledged that the fact he was seeking a ‘free visa’ could also be the issue.

Determined to find a way forward nonetheless, he managed to secure himself another new job offer, this time with a contracting company offering him legitimate employment, decent terms and conditions and a salary double what he had been earning in the security sector. But once again in June, his application to change to this new employer was rejected by the government, and again no reason was provided. When he went to the Ministry of Labour to enquire in person, he says he was told only to bring a representative of the security company to discuss the issue.

Feeling like there was no other option and fearing losing the job opportunity, Kabiito decided the only way to hold on to it and move jobs was to leave Qatar and return on a new visa, which he finally succeeded in doing in September 2023. However, this choice came at a high price for Kabiito, the security company paid him only a fraction of his seven years’ worth of end-of service benefits they owed, and he says he has incurred even more debt to enable him to return to Qatar for the new job.

Kabiito told Amnesty International: **“I am free at last. I still have a lot of debts to pay, but it’s fine so long as I am working, I will clear them.”**<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Interview conducted remotely, September 2023.

<sup>33</sup> Information sent by Qatar IMO to Amnesty International, 9 September 2023. (previously cited)

<sup>34</sup> Amnesty International, “Unfinished Business” p. 26. (previously cited)

<sup>35</sup> For further description, see: ILO, Background Paper, “In the Shadow of the State: Recruitment and Migration of South Indian Women as Domestic Workers to the Middle East”, July 2020, Pp.49 [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms\\_751402.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_751402.pdf) and, ILO, White Paper, “Employer-Migrant Worker Relationship in the Middle East: Exploring scope for internal labour market mobility and fair migration, March 2017, p.9, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms\\_552697.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_552697.pdf)

## HAYYA CARD – A NEW TOOL FOR EXPLOITATION?

In January 2023, Qatar extended the validity of its Hayya card – the visa needed to enter the country during the World Cup – for a further year, allowing holders to enter and stay in the country until January 2024 if they met some basic requirements and did not work.<sup>36</sup> While touted as an initiative to boost post-World Cup tourism levels, journalists and representatives of origin country embassies have highlighted how this visa has been used to bring in foreign nationals – often fraudulently - to work in the informal sector in Qatar (since legally they do not have the right to work in Qatar under this visa), putting them in a highly vulnerable position where their irregular status and lack of a valid employment contract excludes them from the protections offered by the Labour Law and other regulations.

The Guardian documented how such practices left workers “deep in debt, unable to legally work and struggling to return home”.<sup>37</sup>

One embassy official said it particularly seemed to affect domestic workers who were brought to the country on a Hayya card only to be put to work in private households.<sup>38</sup>

## 3.2 RECRUITMENT FEES: PAYING FOR A JOB

Lacking direct access to foreign employers and job opportunities, aspiring migrant workers largely from South and South East Asia and East Africa rely on private recruitment agents and agencies to secure jobs abroad. Exploiting the desperation of jobseekers and enabled by poor government oversight, recruiters find themselves able to ask for high and illegal recruitment fees and send abroad only those who can pay. Most migrant workers have to pay between USD 1,000 and USD 3,000 in recruitment fees and are forced to borrow money from family or take out loans, often with high-interest rates. These fees continue to drive migrant workers’ vulnerability to debt bondage, forced labour and labour trafficking and force many to stay in abusive working conditions to repay the loans incurred during the recruitment process.<sup>39</sup>

Qatar’s main response to recruitment-related abuses has been to open 14 ‘Qatar Visa Centres’ (QVC) in six countries of origin to “ensure quick and transparent processing of applications... while ensuring that workers are not charged any recruitment fees”.<sup>40</sup> In September 2023 the government told Amnesty International it provided training on labour laws to QVC staff, set “a ceiling on the recruitment fees that recruitment agencies can impose on employers”, adding that “it is illegal for these fees to be passed on to workers”, and that the Ministry of Labour has “tightened control over recruitment offices [in Qatar], imposing penalties on violating offices, and closing many of them”. However, it stated that it lacks jurisdiction to act against violations that take place ahead of workers’ arrival in Qatar, and therefore “encourages labour-sending countries to clamp down on such practices and take steps to protect their citizens from exploitation before they depart”.<sup>41</sup>

Regardless, it is clear from workers’ experiences and the cases documented by Amnesty International that the payment of illegal recruitment fees remains a common practice and the government’s efforts to date have failed to effectively tackle this issue. Indeed, the final compliance report auditing World Cup contractors for the Supreme Committee found that 90% of audited workers on World Cup sites reported having paid fees – despite these sites supposedly having higher standards than many other projects in Qatar. Previous compliance reports had shown a reduction in payment of fees (from 97% to 68% between 2017 and 2021), before increasing again in 2023. According to Impactt, this reflected the fact that their “sample has shifted

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<sup>36</sup> The Peninsula, “Qatar extends Hayya Card validity for visitors until January 2024”, 30 January 2023,

<https://thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/30/01/2023/qatar-extends-hayya-card-validity-for-visitors-until-january-2024>

<sup>37</sup> The Guardian, “‘I haven’t earned a single rial’: Qatar migrant labourers left stranded and jobless after the World Cup”, 27 March 2023,

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/mar/27/qatar-world-cup-migrant-workers-stranded-jobless>

<sup>38</sup> Interview conducted in person, July 2023. Amnesty International was not able to look into this issue in detail or speak to workers who used this visa to enter and work in Qatar to analyse the extent of this practice.

<sup>39</sup> For an in-depth look at the recruitment process, see Amnesty International, *Nepal: Turning people into Profits: Abusive recruitment, trafficking and forced labour of Nepali migrant workers* (Index: ASA 31/6206/2017), 6 June 2017,

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa31/6206/2017/en/> See also: The Guardian, “Revealed: migrant workers in Qatar forced to pay billions in recruitment fees”, 31 March 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/mar/31/migrant-workers-in-qatar-forced-to-pay-billions-in-recruitment-fees-world-cup>; and UNIGlobal Union, “Diligence is Due: The exploitation of migrant workers through G4S Qatar’s unfair recruitment practices”, December 2021, p. 6, [https://media.businesshumanrights.org/media/documents/Diligence\\_is\\_Due\\_-\\_Final\\_Report\\_December\\_2021\\_mDSkVvK.pdf](https://media.businesshumanrights.org/media/documents/Diligence_is_Due_-_Final_Report_December_2021_mDSkVvK.pdf); and Human Rights Watch, “How Can We Work Without Wages? Salary Abuses Facing Migrant Workers Ahead of Qatar’s FIFA World Cup 2022”, 24 August 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/08/24/how-can-we-work-without-wages/salaryabuses-facing-migrantworkers-aheadqatars>.

<sup>40</sup> Information sent by the Qatar Government Communications Office to Amnesty International, 8 February 2022. On file with Amnesty International.

<sup>41</sup> Information sent by Qatar IMO to Amnesty International, 9 September 2023. (previously cited)

away from construction to the hospitality sector”, a sector with which it says the Supreme Committee had less time to work on ethical recruitment practices.<sup>42</sup>

In 2018 the Supreme Committee introduced the Universal Reimbursement Scheme, which it says by December 2022 had reimbursed approximately USD 23.4 million in recruitment fees paid by tens of thousands of workers employed by Supreme Committee contractors.<sup>43</sup> While not without flaws and impacting only a limited portion of those who delivered the tournament, the scheme undoubtedly went some way to remedying some of the abuses faced by World Cup workers. Impactt now recommends the Qatar government should “adopt a national approach to the repayment of recruitment fees and related costs”, and make it a legal requirement for employers to “repay recruitment fees and related costs according to international best practice”<sup>44</sup>

### 3.3 LOW AND STOLEN WAGES

**“It feels like we are in a theatre, going through the motions.”**

[Representative of a workers’ origin country embassy in Qatar, July 2023]

To combat low wages the government introduced a monthly minimum wage in 2021 which, albeit still very low, increased salaries for tens of thousands of workers. It also took steps in recent years to tackle persistent cases of wage theft by strengthening its Wage Protection System (WPS) to better monitor payment of salaries and deter businesses from late and non-payment of their employees. Nonetheless, wage theft remains the most common form of exploitation facing migrant workers in Qatar according to stakeholders interviewed by Amnesty International for this briefing.



*Migrant workers waiting outside Hazrat Shahjalal International airport in Dhaka, Bangladesh on Tuesday, September 26, 2021. © Syed Mahamudur Rahman/NurPhoto via Getty Images.*

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<sup>42</sup> Impactt’s 2023 report, p. 9 and 31. (previously cited)  
<sup>43</sup> Impactt’s 2023 report, p. 33. (previously cited)  
<sup>44</sup> Impactt’s 2023 report, p. 15. (previously cited)

The government told Amnesty International in September 2023 that it had improved the WPS' ability to identify payments less than the minimum wage by requiring employers to provide data on the amounts paid to workers for food and housing allowances, and overtime hours worked each month. It also said it is considering introducing a WPS compliance certification scheme for public procurement bids and reiterated that employers who breach the WPS can face a QAR 10,000 (USD 2,747) fine and a year in prison.<sup>46</sup>

Despite this, the system is still unable to sufficiently detect and respond to delayed and unpaid salaries and benefits, meaning employers continue to steal wages on a significant scale. According to the ILO, "there are still too many workers who wait months to see their salaries paid",<sup>47</sup> a reality confirmed by cases documented by Amnesty International and other NGOs and journalists, as well as by representatives of origin country embassies. One such representative told Amnesty International that around half of the complaints the embassy receives are related to wage issues, including unpaid salaries and end-of-service benefits.

Several stakeholders interviewed by Amnesty International said a key factor behind such issues is the serious cash-flow problem in Qatar, where the government – who is often the main client for contracts – fails to pay primary contractors on time. These contractors subsequently delay payments to their subcontractors, which in turn do not pay their workers in full and/or on time.<sup>48</sup> This issue is common across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and is often referred to as "back-to-back" or "pay when paid" and is known to impact the ability of subcontractors to keep up to date on salary payments.<sup>49</sup>

### **DETENTIONS, DEPORTATIONS AND IMPRISONMENT OF PROTESTING MIGRANT WORKERS**

After the end of the tournament, in January 2023 around 400 workers employed by a private security company working at FIFA's media hub and other World Cup venues, staged protests over the early termination of their six-month contracts, living conditions, unpaid wages and bonuses. Workers were reportedly made to sign a declaration stating they were not owed wages after receiving a small amount of compensation.<sup>45</sup>

According to multiple media reports, three men – two from Pakistan and one from India – who took part in the protests were eventually arrested after being accused of "participating in unauthorized meetings and marches" – a charge in breach of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Qatar is a state party. A Criminal Court in Qatar sentenced them on 30 April to six months in prison and a fine of QAR 10,000 (USD 2,747) each, which they served and paid off.

A representative from Equidem, a human rights organization that documented their cases, told Amnesty International that after some delays, two of the men were eventually released on 8 August and 27 September respectively. The third man was not released until 1 November 2023, more than three months after the expiry of his sentence. The exact reason for their delayed release remains unclear.

Another factor exacerbating wage theft by employers has been the significant slowdown of construction work and the reduced need for hospitality services since the surge in visitors during the World Cup.<sup>50</sup> According to Human Rights Watch, this led to major financial challenges for businesses, especially labour supply companies and construction subcontractors, resulting in unpaid salaries and denial of end-of-service benefits for migrant workers. In many cases, employers offered workers food and accommodation to wait without pay for new jobs, and some prohibited them from changing jobs. Consequently, many workers have faced the difficult choice of returning home before the end of their contract, or waiting in Qatar without pay in the hope that their labour supply company wins a new contract.<sup>51</sup>

Such challenges are not limited to workers in construction, however, and cut across various sectors, including private security and, increasingly, the growing food delivery industry. For example, both human rights organization FairSquare, and Migrant-Rights.org, have

<sup>45</sup> Equidem, "The legacy of Qatar FIFA World Cup 2022", 2 July 2023 <https://www.equidem.org/blogs/the-legacy-of-qatar-fifa-world-cup-2022>; and BHRRC, "Qatar 2022: Ex-Stark Security guards allegedly detained & deported following protests over terminations, wage theft & lack of accommodation; incl. FIFA response", 11 August 2023, <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/qatar-2022-ex-stark-security-guards-allegedly-detained-deported-following-protests-over-terminations-wage-theft-lack-of-accommodation-incl-fifa-response/>; and Reuters, "Jailed, deported and blacklisted: Qatar's outspoken World Cup guards", 5 May 2023 <https://www.reuters.com/sports/jailed-deported-blacklisted-qatars-outspoken-world-cup-guards-2023-05-05/>

<sup>46</sup> Information sent by Qatar IMO to Amnesty International, 9 September 2023. (previously cited)

<sup>47</sup> ILO, InfoStories, "What has changed for migrant workers in Qatar?", first published in November 2022, updated in February 2023, <https://www.ilo.org/infostories/en-GB/Stories/Country-Focus/world-cup-qatar#wages-challenges>

<sup>48</sup> Cashflow was also reported as an issue by some World Cup contractors. See: Impactt's 2023 report, p. 11. (previously cited) .

<sup>49</sup> ILO, "Exploratory study of good policies in the protection of construction workers in the Middle East", Pp. 15-16. [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms\\_618158.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_618158.pdf), pp. 15-16.

<sup>50</sup> BNN Bloomberg, "Qatar's Economy Stalls After Last Year's World Cup and Gas Boom", 31 August 2023, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-08-31/qatar-s-economy-stalls-after-last-year-s-world-cup-and-gas-boom>

<sup>51</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Qatar: Six Months Post-World Cup, Migrant Workers Suffer", 16 June 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/06/16/qatar-six-months-post-world-cup-migrant-workers-suffer>

documented how people working as drivers for the main food delivery companies in Qatar toiled for months without pay, surviving only on tips and charity food.<sup>52</sup> Amnesty International has received similar complaints in the last year, and workers' representatives highlighted to the organization the precarity of this sector given how drivers are often employed via subcontracted labour supply companies, who give them a "fake employment contract" stating they'll be paid a minimum wage, but in reality pay them on a commission-only basis with no basic monthly salary.<sup>53</sup> Sometimes the commission workers earn does not reach the minimum wage.

Even when migrant workers are paid on time and in full, many remain on very low pay, surviving on Qatar's monthly minimum basic salary of USD 275 plus USD 82 food allowance and USD 137 housing allowance if accommodation is not otherwise provided. Indeed, this rate was deemed too low even when it was introduced in March 2021,<sup>56</sup> and since then the costs of living have risen sharply, with inflation increasing prices by around 7.5% between 2021 and 2023 making it even less acceptable.<sup>57</sup> Even though Qatari law requires a yearly review of the rate, it remains the same today and Qatar's Minimum Wage Committee has not announced whether or not the rate will be revised in the future.<sup>58</sup>

### 3.4 DOMESTIC WORKERS: LEFT OUT AND FORGOTTEN

For years the plight of domestic workers has been highlighted by Amnesty International and other organizations as they remain one of the most at-risk and ignored group of workers in Qatar.<sup>59</sup> Hidden in private households, often shut away from public sight, domestic migrant workers, most of whom are women, continue to be heavily dependent on their employers and often face some of the most severe forms of labour abuses and exploitation. This is despite the introduction of the 2017 Domestic Workers' Law, which offers them only partial protections and even these are denied to many of them due to lack of proper implementation.

The continued abuses faced by domestic workers are unsurprising given the lack of inspections in private homes and the government's failure to hold to account employers who violate the law. According to origin country embassies and workers' representatives, the abuses include wage theft, passport confiscation, denial of weekly days off, excessive over-work and false accusations of theft or "absconding" if they complain about their conditions. Some also face verbal, physical and sexual assaults at the hands of their employers.<sup>60</sup> Domestic workers continue to be excluded from the Wage

#### JUDITH – IN PURSUIT OF JUSTICE AGAINST THE ODDS

Kenyan national Judith Nyakangi was severely abused and beaten by her employer – a member of the police force – soon after she began working as a domestic worker in Qatar in February 2021, as documented by Migrant-Rights.org. The abuse left her with severe spinal and leg injuries that required multiple surgeries.<sup>54</sup>

She fled and took refuge at the Kenyan embassy and, determined to get justice, lodged a criminal complaint against her abusive employer. But the odds were stacked against Judith, and despite her presenting evidence of medical reports and visible injuries her case was dismissed. After more than a year of waiting for her employer to be held to account, she returned home in February 2023 with life-changing injuries but without justice and without compensation.<sup>55</sup>

Judith told Amnesty International in November 2023: **"The government of Qatar is not doing enough to hold abusive employers to account because if it did, I would not have been through what I have been through. It is also not doing enough to support domestic workers because if it did, I could have found justice... it needs to take rigorous action against employers, they need to face the law, to be jailed if need be, so they can improve and know how to treat domestic workers."**

<sup>52</sup> Fairsquare, "Talabat food delivery riders in Qatar unpaid for 8 months then deported", 23 February 2023, <https://fairsq.org/2023/02/23/talabat-food-delivery-riders-in-qatar-unpaid-for-8-months-then-deported/>; and Migrant-Rights.org, "Rafeeq and Snoonu food delivery app riders stranded in Qatar", 8 April 2023, <https://www.migrant-rights.org/2023/04/rafeeq-and-snoonu-food-delivery-app-riders-stranded-in-qatar/>

<sup>53</sup> Interview conducted remotely, October 2023.

<sup>54</sup> Migrant-Rights.org, "Kenyan domestic worker with debilitating injuries due to abuse awaits justice in Qatar", 14 September 2022, <https://www.migrant-rights.org/2022/09/kenyan-domestic-worker-with-debilitating-injuries-awaits-justice-in-qatar/>

<sup>55</sup> Migrant-Rights.org, "Hostile Qatar judicial system forces Judith to give up her fight and return home", <https://www.migrant-rights.org/2023/05/hostile-qatar-judicial-system-forces-judith-to-give-up-her-fight-and-return-home/>

<sup>56</sup> In 2019, the ILO conducted a study to advise on setting a revised minimum wage level in Qatar to fairly reflect living costs. The study has not been made public, but media reports the same year suggest it recommended a minimum basic wage of at least QAR 1,250 (US\$344).

<sup>57</sup> WorldData.info, <https://www.worlddata.info/asia/qatar/inflation-rates.php#:~:text=The%20inflation%20rate%20for%20consumer,rate%20was%203.4%25%20per%20year>

<sup>58</sup> Law No. 17 of 2020 on national minimum wage, 8 September 2020, [https://www.ilo.org/beirut/projects/qataroffice/WCMS\\_754880/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/beirut/projects/qataroffice/WCMS_754880/lang-en/index.htm)

<sup>59</sup> Amnesty International, "My sleep is my break": Exploitation of migrant domestic workers in Qatar (Index: MDE 22/004/2014), 23 April 2014, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE22/004/2014/en/>

<sup>60</sup> See also, for example, Doha News, "We are still suffering: Kenyan migrant workers in Qatar locked in job change limbo", 6 February 2023, and ILO, InfoStory, "What has changed for migrant workers in Qatar?" (previously cited).

Protection System and still have to “inform” their employer in person 72 hours before their departure from Qatar. This provision breaches their right to freedom of movement and provides time in which abusive employers can retaliate and block their exit from the country.

Further, one embassy representative reiterated how the 2022 extension of the probation period for domestic workers from three to nine months continues to be particularly problematic noting that employers are **“returning [domestic] workers to the agency like returning your clothes when shopping”** because they get a percentage of their money back by doing so.<sup>61</sup> For domestic workers themselves this means they are deprived of any end-of-service benefits and face the risk of reprisals from their recruitment agents who have to reimburse employers for the costs they incurred during hiring.<sup>62</sup>

In response to questions from Amnesty International about efforts taken in the last 12 months to protect domestic workers and penalize their abusers, the government repeated initiatives reported in previous years, such as introducing standardized employment contracts and holding awareness-raising workshops. It did not provide any information on sanctions taken against abusive employers or steps to better implement the 2017 law.<sup>63</sup>

### 3.5 HEAT STRESS AND UNEXPLAINED DEATHS

The serious health risks posed by working in extreme temperatures have been well documented over many years, yet for too long Qatar took little notice, failing to adequately protect migrant workers from exposure to heat stress. Amnesty International’s own research showed that as a result, hundreds of migrant workers are likely to have died because of a lack of protection from extreme heat in the decade up to 2021. Thousands more deaths remain unexplained due to the government’s failure to investigate the underlying causes when people have died unexpectedly, despite having passed mandatory medical tests.<sup>64</sup>

In 2021, the government took some steps to address the risks of heat stress, introducing new legislation which included an extension on its existing ban on working in direct sun during the summer months. The legislation also assigned workers the right to stop working if they think there is a threat to their safety or health, including because of climate conditions.

Although the new legislation was an improvement, it did not go far enough to protect workers. At a minimum, and in line with recommendations made to Amnesty International by heat stress experts, it should be strengthened to oblige employers to provide outdoor workers with mandatory breaks of an appropriate duration, in cooled, shaded areas, when there is an occupational risk of heat stress.<sup>65</sup>

Nonetheless, many of the stakeholders Amnesty International spoke to for this briefing said that the implementation of this ban amongst construction workers and food delivery drivers continues to be one of the few positive developments in the field of labour rights in the last year. **“I will give it to the government,”** one origin country embassy said, **“between 9am and 4pm you do not see workers [outside], even Talabat [food delivery] drivers are in cars.”**<sup>66</sup>

Security guards and others, however, continue to be left outside to struggle with the searing heat in addition to other abuses they usually endure.<sup>67</sup> In a case documented by Amnesty International, for example, a Kenyan guard reported that some of his colleagues were not provided with cabins to shelter from the midday sun, and even those who did have access to a cabin were prohibited from using them by supervisors. He added that in mid-summer, even at 8am working outside is “like hell”.<sup>68</sup> A guard from another company similarly reported to Amnesty International that he had to sit outside all day, with no cabin only the passing shade of a building to protect him from the searing heat.

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<sup>61</sup> Embassy representative interviewed, July 2023. See Migrant-Rights.org for further information of the probationary period, “Qatar’s extended probation period increases domestic workers’ vulnerability”, 19 January 2022, <https://www.migrant-rights.org/2022/01/qatar-increases-domestic-workers-vulnerability-through-extended-probation-period/>

<sup>62</sup> See: Amnesty International, *Unfinished Business* (previously cited), p. 16.

<sup>63</sup> Information sent by Qatar IMO to Amnesty International, 9 September 2023. (previously cited)

<sup>64</sup> Amnesty International, *‘In the prime of their lives’: Qatar’s failure to investigate, remedy and prevent migrant workers’ deaths* (Index: MDE 22/4614/2021), 26 August 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde22/4614/2021/en/>

<sup>65</sup> Amnesty International, *‘In the prime of their lives’*, Pp. 27 – 30. (previously cited)

<sup>66</sup> Interview conducted in person, July 2023.

<sup>67</sup> See for example, Doha News, “Qatar’s valet workers struggle to battle humidity despite outdoor air conditioners”, 3 August 2023, <https://dohanews.co/qatars-valet-workers-struggle-to-battle-humidity-despite-outdoor-air-conditioners/>

<sup>68</sup> Interview conducted remotely, August 2023.



*A cleaner sweeps the path near to the England team hotel, 10 miles south of Doha on November 12, 2022 (Photo by Paul ELLIS / AFP) © AFP via Getty Images*

The government told Amnesty International that in 2022 it had recorded a decrease in the number of people reporting to clinics with heat stress-related conditions and said that it would release data for 2023 in due course.<sup>69</sup> This had not been published at the time of writing so Amnesty International is unable to independently assess this. The government also highlighted that private security companies are obliged to implement strategies to protect their workers, but did not provide any detail on measures taken by the Ministry of Labour to ensure that outdoor security guards are adequately protected from the risks of heat stress. Further, several organizations including Human Rights Watch<sup>70</sup> and Amnesty International have long raised serious concerns about the large number of unexplained deaths in Qatar and the need for better investigation of these, while the ILO has also acknowledged the need to review the approach to collection of data around possible work-place deaths and injuries.<sup>71</sup> In late 2021, the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Public Health, signed a memorandum to cooperate on data collection.<sup>72</sup> However, Amnesty International is unaware of any steps yet to have been taken to improve the investigation of worker deaths, which could help prevent avoidable deaths and enable families who lost loved ones to understand what happened and claim compensation for their loss.

### **3.6 JUSTICE DENIED**

Given the scale and severity of abuses faced by workers in Qatar, access to an effective justice system in order to seek timely remedy is essential. This has long been a challenge for workers in Qatar, and in 2018 the government overhauled its labour courts and established new Committees for the Settlement of Labour

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<sup>69</sup> Information sent by Qatar IMO to Amnesty International, 9 September 2023. (previously cited)

<sup>70</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Qatar: Take Urgent Action to Protect Construction Workers”, 27 September 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/09/27/qatar-take-urgent-action-protect-construction-workers>

<sup>71</sup> ILO, “One is too many: The collection and analysis of data on occupational injuries in Qatar”, November 2021, P.24, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/---ilo-qatar/documents/publication/wcms\\_828395.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/---ilo-qatar/documents/publication/wcms_828395.pdf)

<sup>72</sup> Doha News, “Qatar to improve data collection on workers’ deaths after Amnesty report”, 24 November 2023, <https://dohanews.co/qatar-to-improve-data-collection-on-workers-deaths-after-amnesty-report/>

Disputes (Committees) and a Workers' Support and Insurance Fund (the Fund) to pay workers who won their cases when their companies fail to do so. While these measures brought some improvements, huge problems persist and navigating the system remains a lengthy and challenging process for migrant workers who continue to find employers maintaining the upper hand. As a result, many workers have no option but to negotiate for their basic rights and accept less than their entitlements. Simultaneously, employers still abuse the rights of migrant workers with impunity. As one embassy representative told Amnesty International, **“The same offences are repeated. We don’t see any employer held to account, jailed or fined.”**<sup>73</sup>

## COMMITTEES FOR THE SETTLEMENT OF LABOUR DISPUTES

In late 2022, after years of the Committees being overwhelmed with cases, the government established two additional Committees to increase the capacity to hear labour grievances.<sup>75</sup> But so far, while more decisions now appear to be issued each month, cases nonetheless often continue to drag on for many months, even up to a year, according to representatives of both origin country embassies and migrant workers.<sup>76</sup>

In response to a letter from Amnesty International, the government says that from June 2021 to August 2023, the Ministry of Labour received nearly 67,000 complaints, of which around 80% (53,218) were “settled in mediation”. Of the remainder, around 1,500 were said to have been “voluntarily dropped” by the complainant and 11,406 were referred to the Committees for a final decision. A further 800 complaints remain under review at the Ministry by September 2023, according to the government.<sup>77</sup>

According to monthly data published by the Ministry of Labour, 20,202 complaints were submitted by workers between January and September 2023 alone. While the first three months saw an average of around 1,170 cases being referred to the Committees by the Ministry each month, this number appears to have dropped dramatically to 72 cases per month from April onwards, leaving thousands of cases under review at the Ministry’s Labour Relations Department and a growing backlog.<sup>78</sup> Amnesty International does not know the reason for this decline.

Navigating the Committees remains a challenge for workers, as information is scarce and proceedings and court documents are in Arabic, so complainants rely on whatever interpretation is made available to them. One embassy representative told Amnesty International they believe this advantages employers or sponsors, many of whom are Arabic speakers, and workers Amnesty International has spoken to have said they did not fully understand what happened during their hearings. Further, while the government states

### FORCED TO SETTLE FOR LESS

Namil, a tuk-tuk driver in Sri Lanka, travelled to Qatar in February 2023 due to the dire economic situation in his country. Having paid around USD 900 in recruitment fees, he learned on arrival in Doha that his employer was not who he had signed a contract with, but rather a labour supply company. From the moment he started to work, the company did not pay his salary or provide food or a food allowance, forcing him and others like him to survive on handouts from friends and preventing them from sending money home.

In late May, Namil filed a complaint with the Committees for the Settlement of Labour Disputes, but his sponsor did not attend the mediation session. In early August, having been kicked out of their labour accommodation, Namil and five other colleagues were moved into the government’s shelter for victims of trafficking. At the end of the month, they were again called for mediation and this time, a representative of the sponsor did appear. However, he denied that the men worked for him and refused to pay their wages, offering only to provide them with Qatar IDs that would allow them to work legally in the country.

Fed up with being in limbo, afraid of remaining in the country without an ID, and feeling no hope about the progress of their case, in September, four of Namil’s colleagues decided to accept a flight ticket home and 250 riyals (USD 68) stipend for their journey, a tiny fraction of what they were owed. Namil and another colleague however remained in Qatar for weeks longer, awaiting their dues and promised IDs. In mid-October, Namil’s sponsor eventually paid him two of the three months’ salary owed. He did not provide the Qatar ID that would allow Namil to stay and work, but instead bought him a flight ticket home. He returned to his wife and mother in Sri Lanka, who are struggling to meet their basic needs having received no remittances for eight months.

**Namil told Amnesty International in November 2023: “I need to pay off my loans now. I feel that I would have been better off if I had never left Sri Lanka”**<sup>74</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Interview conducted in person, July 2023.

<sup>74</sup> Interview conducted remotely, November 2023.

<sup>75</sup> Council of Minister Decision No. 17 of 2022 amending some provisions of Resolution No. 6 of 2018 of the Labour Dispute Settlement Committees, the rules and procedures to be followed before them, the mechanism for implementing their decisions, and determining their rewards, published on 12 September 2022, <https://www.almeezan.qa/LawPage.aspx?id=8996&language=ar>

<sup>76</sup> The ILO says the process takes “several months”, see ILO, InfoStories. (previously cited).

<sup>77</sup> Information sent by Qatar IMO to Amnesty International, 9 September 2023. (previously cited)

<sup>78</sup> Numbers calculated from data published monthly by the Ministry of Labour on social media platforms.



A worker pushes a wheelbarrow past a mural in Doha on November 8, 2022, ahead of the Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup football tournament. Photo by Gabriel BOUYIS / AFP © AFP via Getty Images.

that the vast majority of labour complaints are ‘settled in mediation’, it does not provide further information about what this means in practice and what proportion of these result in migrant workers receiving their full dues.

Indeed, in some instances recorded by Amnesty International and other organizations, employers were able to coerce workers to drop their financial claims during mediation, or to settle for less than they are owed, including by promising them their ID or an NOC to allow them to change jobs.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, in cases documented by Amnesty International the organization is not aware of employers having faced consequences for such behaviour, or for failing to engage in the Committee process altogether. The government did not provide the organization with details of sanctions taken against abusive employers when asked by Amnesty International, except regarding breaches of the WPS as stated above.

Importantly, the scope of the claims considered by the Committees remains limited to unpaid wages, end-of-service benefits and annual leave compensation. It seems to exclude broader labour abuses such as payment of recruitment fees or work-related deaths and injuries, for example, and the government did not respond to questions from Amnesty International around its plans to include these.

Workers’ representatives and embassy officials noted that even when workers do eventually receive positive judgments at the final tribunal (in around 84% of cases, according to the ILO),<sup>80</sup> the path to receiving their dues remains long and slow, particularly when employers fail to engage in the legal proceedings. As a result, workers pursuing their cases often find themselves struggling with no income or food while waiting to be paid.

Finally, to have any hope of receiving justice migrant workers must submit cases to the Labour Committees within a year of facing the abuse. They must also do so while still in the country or assign power of attorney to someone in Qatar to pursue the case on their behalf before they leave. The latter scenario is unrealistic

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<sup>79</sup> Interviews conducted remotely, September – November 2023. See also: Equidem, “The Legacy of Qatar FIFA World Cup 2022”, 2 July 2023, <https://www.equidem.org/blogs/the-legacy-of-qatar-fifa-world-cup-2022>

<sup>80</sup> ILO, InfoStories. (previously cited).

and impractical for most low-paid migrant workers, given the transient nature of their presence in Qatar impedes the possibility of finding someone willing and able to follow up on their case, and the logistical hurdle of sorting out a power of attorney and its associated costs. Over the course of its decade-long research on the situation of migrant workers in Qatar, Amnesty International is aware of only one case where a group of migrant workers were able to receive their compensation after leaving Qatar. This only happened after extensive work from Amnesty International and other organizations as well as considerable efforts on behalf of the government to pay workers their dues after their company went bust.<sup>81</sup>

## **A MUCH-NEEDED REFUGE – BUT PROTECTION GAPS REMAIN**

In October 2022, the government's much-touted Human Care Centre – a government-run shelter for victims of human trafficking - finally became operational, having officially opened in 2019 and then swiftly closing when Covid-19 hit. The government says the shelter provides “legal and physiological supports and other necessary services until their problem is solved ensuring safe repatriation if they want or change their legal status in the country [sic].”<sup>82</sup> Crucially however, while the shelter does offer much-needed refuge to some, it is still not accessible on a walk-in basis and cases documented by Amnesty International raise questions about the extent of support it provides beyond a place to stay.

Amnesty International has documented the cases of a number of workers who were staying in the shelter while taking their complaints through the labour courts. Their experiences suggest that while the facility offers decent living conditions, it does not provide adequate legal support to help workers navigate the system and claim full and effective remedy – including in cases where individuals are likely to be victims of human trafficking and could pursue criminal cases. It also appears not to effectively support them to find new jobs in order to stay in the country – rather than return home - when they want to.

## **WORKERS' SUPPORT AND INSURANCE FUND**

The government established the Workers' Support and Insurance Fund (the Fund) in 2018 as an important safety net to ensure that workers would receive a pay-out after winning their case at the Committees, even if their employer failed to comply with an order to compensate.

After several years, the Fund eventually started to operate, and between October 2020 and August 2022 disbursed QAR 634,336,937 (USD 174,220,576) according to the government.<sup>83</sup> When asked in August 2023 for the total paid out so far this year, the government simply told Amnesty International that the Fund had “increased its payments” but at the time of writing had provided no further information.

Crucially, since April 2022 the Fund has capped the amount it will pay to workers at USD 5,500 – even less for workers whose employer has gone bust, or for domestic workers<sup>84</sup> - which is particularly problematic for those whose unpaid salaries and end-of-service benefits exceed this amount.

## **THE LONG WAIT TO BE PAID**

In a case documented by Equidem and journalists,<sup>85</sup> three Gambian teenagers who worked as security guards during the World Cup were left jobless days after the tournament. Two of them were also made homeless.

All three were likely to have been victims of human trafficking, having paid huge recruitment fees of almost USD 2,500 each on the promise of jobs that turned out not to exist. For up to six months after their arrival in Qatar in early 2022 their original sponsors failed to provide them work or accommodation and did not pay their salaries, leaving them struggling to survive. Eventually, in late 2022, they each secured six-month contracts with a private security company. They remained under the sponsorship of their first employers while they worked as guards at World Cup sites during the tournament. But when it ended, the workers say the security company promptly and

<sup>81</sup> Amnesty International, “Migrant workers unpaid for months of work by company linked to World Cup host city”, 26 September 2018, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/09/qatar-migrant-workers-unpaid-for-months-of-work-bycompany-linked-to-world-cup/>

<sup>82</sup> The Peninsula, “Humanitarian Care House provides safe shelter, services”, 3 April 2023, <https://thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/03/04/2023/humanitarian-care-house-provides-safe-shelter-services>

<sup>83</sup> Information sent by Qatar IMO to Amnesty International, 9 September 2023. (previously cited).

<sup>84</sup> According to Article 3 of the decision regarding the controls and procedures for disbursing workers' dues, workers in solvent companies can be paid three months' gross salary or a maximum of QAR 20,000 (USD 5,500); workers in insolvent companies can be paid two months' gross salary or a maximum of QAR 12,000 (USD 3,300); and domestic workers can receive three months' gross salary or a maximum of QAR 8,000 (USD 2,200).

<sup>85</sup> See: The Guardian, “‘Like a prison’: teenage security guards stuck in Qatar after World Cup”, 29 June 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jun/29/like-a-prison-teenage-security-guards-stuck-in-qatar-after-world-cup>; and Josimar, “Teenage World Cup workers trapped in Doha”, 11 October 2023, <https://josimarfootball.com/2023/10/11/teenage-world-cup-workers-trapped-in-doha/>

prematurely sacked them, without paying their final month salary or a notice period. Having nowhere to live, they sought refuge in the government's shelter for victims of trafficking while they pursued cases in the Labour Committees.

After coming under pressure from his sponsor, in mid-July one of the workers accepted the sponsor's offer to settle for QAR 9,000 (USD 2470) and returned home soon after. The other two men continued to pursue their cases and at the end of the same month the Committees eventually ruled in their favour, awarding them around QAR 21,000 (USD 5,700) and 28,000 (USD 7,700) each, including reimbursements for unpaid wages and benefits, flight tickets home, and compensation for harms suffered.

Unfortunately, however, despite winning their cases, at the time of writing they both remain in the shelter, still waiting to be compensated as per the Committee's ruling— nearly four months later.

### 3.7 HISTORIC ABUSES: REMEDY OUT OF SIGHT

While the labour abuses inflicted on migrant workers since FIFA awarded Qatar right to host the World Cup cannot be undone, they can – and must – be remedied. Amnesty International has documented extensively Qatar and FIFA's respective obligations and responsibilities to remedy labour abuses connected to the tournament,<sup>86</sup> but today, justice and reparation for these remains intangible. As such, vast numbers of those whose rights were abused while working on projects related to the World Cup have still not received full and timely compensation.

Despite widespread calls on the World Cup hosts and organizers to compensate historic abuses,<sup>87</sup> both Qatar<sup>88</sup> and FIFA<sup>89</sup> initially met them with dismissal and indifference, failing to make any meaningful commitments to fulfil their respective obligations and responsibilities towards the rights of migrant workers.

In mid-2023, Ministry of Labour officials told Amnesty International that they are considering ways to improve access to remedy for workers, but to date no specific commitments have been made. Meanwhile, despite earning a record USD 7.5 billion in revenue from the tournament, details of FIFA's much-publicized Legacy Fund remain elusive.<sup>90</sup> Following concerted pressure from several football associations led by the Norwegian federation, in March 2023 FIFA announced the launch of a review into whether existing remedies for the abuses suffered by workers who helped deliver the World Cup in Qatar are sufficient.<sup>91</sup> While the announcement of the review signalled an acknowledgement from FIFA of its own responsibility to remedy past abuses, its outcome remains unclear at the time of writing, though it is expected to be published in the near future.

One workers' representative summed up their assessment of FIFA's legacy in Qatar: **"FIFA talked a lot before the World Cup about workers' welfare, but now, a year after, nothing has happened - it was all talk"**.<sup>92</sup> If FIFA is to prove its critics wrong, it should publish the findings of its review and commit to take urgent and concrete action to ensure access to remedy for victims.

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<sup>86</sup> Amnesty International, Predictable and Preventable: Why FIFA and Qatar should remedy past abuses behind the 2022 World Cup (Index: MDE 22/5586/2022), 19 May 2022, pp. 25-26, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde22/5586/2022/en/>;

<sup>87</sup> Amnesty International, "FIFA receives open letter backed by a million signatures demanding justice for abused World Cup workers", 13 March 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/03/fifa-receives-open-letter-backed-by-a-million-signatures-demanding-justice-for-abused-world-cup-workers/>

<sup>88</sup> Amnesty International, "Qatar: Labour Minister's dismissal of compensation campaign 'hugely disappointing'". (previously cited)

<sup>89</sup> Amnesty International, "Qatar: Infantino must tackle human rights issues if word is to 'focus on football'", 4 November 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/11/qatar-infantino-must-tackle-human-rights-issues-if-world-is-to-focus-on-the-football/> and Amnesty International, "Qatar: Gianni Infantino says World Cup made \$1bn more than expected but still ignores migrant workers' compensation claims", 16 December 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/12/fifa-press-conference-headline-here/>

<sup>90</sup> On 19 November 2022, FIFA announced that its Legacy Fund for the Qatar World Cup would be allocated to "support the education of children, particularly girls and women" and establish a "labour excellence hub in partnership with the International Labour Organisation" but did not stipulate inclusion of any provision for workers' compensation. Since then, FIFA has not published any further clarity on how the funds will be used. See: <https://www.fifa.com/tournaments/mens/worldcup/qatar2022/media-releases/fifa-world-cup-qatar-2022-tm-legacy-fund-to-benefit-people-most-in-need>

<sup>91</sup> Amnesty International, "FIFA review of Qatar World Cup abuse claims must not delay compensation for workers", 16 March 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/03/global-fifa-review-of-qatar-world-cup-abuse-claims-must-not-delay-compensation-for-workers/>

<sup>92</sup> Interview conducted remotely, October 2023.



*A security guard walks at the West Bay in Doha on November 30, 2022, during the Qatar 2022 World Cup football tournament. © AFP via Getty Images*

## 4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One year on from the 2022 World Cup, the need to protect workers in Qatar from continued exploitation and abuse remains as urgent as when the tournament kicked off. The limited areas where progress has been made over the last eleven months, such as the enforcement of the extended summer working hours ban for construction workers, continue to be overshadowed by the lack of substantive progress in strengthening, and implementing Qatar's much-heralded pre-World Cup labour reforms, enforcing its labour law and penalizing those who breach it. Despite significant changes in legal frameworks, abuses persist on a significant scale, while remedy from both Qatar and FIFA remains out of reach for so many workers.

Amnesty International's research has shown that the well-documented exploitation faced by hundreds of thousands of workers in the twelve years leading up to the World Cup was predictable and could have been prevented if all relevant parties had acted responsibly and in a timely manner. But for years, both FIFA and Qatar preferred to deflect and deny their responsibility for human rights abuses, before belatedly changing course when FIFA published its human rights policy and Qatar signed the ILO agreement. However, even then, their actions were too little too late to prevent widespread abuses as the tournament kicked off, and the same can be said one year on.

To meet its obligations under international human rights law, Qatar must accelerate and strengthen the implementation and enforcements of its labour laws and ensure remedy for violations and abuses, past and present. This should include the full dismantlement of the kafala system, an increased minimum wage, a more robust wage protection system, strengthening of its laws on heat stress, investigations into the causes of workers' deaths, much stronger action to protect domestic workers and improving access to justice. Workers must also have a stronger voice, including the right to join and form trade unions.

While the human rights toll of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar is grim and remains a stain on its legacy, the past 12 years provides key lessons and should serve as a reminder for FIFA and other sporting bodies that human rights must be at the centre of any awarding decisions. To meet its responsibilities under international human rights law and standards, and to avoid history repeating itself, FIFA should demand clear and binding

human rights commitments as a condition for all countries wanting to host the World Cup or any of its tournaments. This should be based on genuinely independent human rights risk assessments and clear plans on how potential hosts would protect workers' rights, guarantee freedom of expression and prevent discrimination in both the preparation for and delivery of the tournament. FIFA should also move away from the 'hands-off' approach taken for the 2022 World Cup, where it over-relied on local parties to fulfil its own due diligence responsibilities, and be much better prepared to use its leverage to prevent and address any risk of abuse linked to its flagship tournament.

Finally, both Qatar and FIFA should work together with stakeholders to provide long-overdue remedy including compensation for workers who suffered so much to transform the country and make the 2022 World Cup happen. An unprecedented coalition of civil society organizations, trade unions, migrant workers' groups, fans and players groups, football associations and sponsors came together before the World Cup to call for justice, and workers should not be made to wait any longer to receive what they are due.

In light of its findings in the year since the 2022 FIFA World Cup ended, Amnesty International is reiterating its 10-point plan for addressing the serious gaps and remaining weaknesses in Qatar's labour reform process, including the lack of remedy for migrant workers and their families who suffered as a result of labour abuses in Qatar.<sup>93</sup>

- 1. Fully dismantle the *kafala* sponsorship system.**
- 2. End forced labour.**
- 3. Tackle recruitment abuse.**
- 4. Increase the minimum wage and strengthen wage protections.**
- 5. Protect domestic workers.**
- 6. Investigate workers' deaths and strengthen heat protections.**
- 7. Allow trade unions.**
- 8. Strengthen and expand the scope of the Workers' Welfare Standards.**
- 9. Strengthen remedy mechanisms.**
- 10. Compensate historic abuses.**

**For full details of the 10-point plan, see Amnesty International's 2022 briefing, [Unfinished Business](#).**

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<sup>93</sup> For full details of the 10-point plan, see Amnesty International, *Unfinished Business* (previously cited), Pp. 5-6.

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