

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

Unless Qatar improves its treatment of workers, the World Cup vote must be re-run

Brussels, 24 May 2013 (ITUC OnLine): Delegates attending the UEFA Congress in London on 24th May will be lobbied by unions as part of the campaign to secure better treatment for migrant workers employed on the construction of stadiums for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar and for foreign footballers currently playing in the Gulf state.

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) is calling on UEFA to address the appalling treatment of workers and players in Qatar and back calls for FIFA to re-run the vote for the 2022 tournament should the Qatari government fail to take any action.

Harsh treatment of migrant workers in Qatar and its government's failure to improve employment rights are the unions' main concerns. Low rates of pay, excessive working hours, a ban on joining unions, poor safety standards and numerous abuses under the country's strict visa sponsorship system have led to accusations that Qatar is acting like a 21st century slave state.

Campaigners from the ITUC and TUC will be handing over a petition today detailing abuses of players' and workers' rights in Qatar, which has been signed by thousands of football fans from around the globe. The union organisations have also written to UEFA President Michel Platini, urging him to use the London Congress to:

- Elect members to the FIFA Executive Committee who will be committed to reform and to upholding human and union rights.
- Brief UEFA delegates attending the FIFA Congress in Mauritius next week about the difficult working conditions in Qatar – both for footballers currently signed to clubs and for construction workers tasked with building the World Cup infrastructure.
- Receive a petition from the ITUC and TUC calling on FIFA to re-run the vote for the 2022 World Cup unless Qatar reforms its ways.

Trade unions are campaigning for FIFA to re-run the vote for the Qatar 2022 World Cup because of serious abuses of workers' rights, increasing fatalities amongst construction workers and failure of FIFA to put any serious pressure on Qatar to reform its labour laws.

ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow said, "Calls for FIFA to re-run the vote for the 2022 World Cup come after years of broken promises from FIFA and Qatar to reform. This is not a decision that unions have taken lightly.

"There is still time to re-run the vote, as the 2022 World Cup was awarded seven years ahead of schedule. More workers will die building World Cup infrastructure than players will take to the football pitch unless steps are taken to reform working conditions in Qatar."

TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady said, "The number of workers killed in the construction industry in Qatar each year is up to eight times higher than in the UK and other developed countries. With the UEFA Congress here in London, we cannot let delegates ignore workers' deaths and injuries.

“Football fans everywhere will be shocked to learn of the way in which workers are treated – conditions akin to a modern form of slavery – and will want UEFA’s support to put pressure on Qatar to reform or risk having FIFA re-run the vote for the 2022 World Cup.”

The ITUC has produced a spoof football fanzine Workers United which features the cases of two professional footballers recruited to play in Qatar after playing in France:

- French/Algerian striker Zahir Belounis is trapped in Qatar after being recruited to play for a national team. He is owed wages and is threatening hunger strike unless the conditions of his contract are met and his exit papers are signed so he can leave the country.
- Moroccan International Abdeslam Ouaddou, who has played for AS Nancy-Lorraine and Fulham, is owed wages after his contract to 2015 was not honoured by his Qatari club. Ouaddou was isolated from his team mates and forced to train in the summer heat.

Football fans and trade union members are being encouraged to join the campaign at www.rerunthevote.org in one of the largest global campaigns embarked upon by international unions in recent years.

For more information on the ITUC campaign check out the Workers United fanzine http://www.rerunthevote.org/IMG/pdf/fanzine_web_final.pdf

The ITUC represents 175 million workers in 156 countries and territories and has 315 national affiliates.

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