

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

Qatar threatens to use powerful hold over FIFA to delay French-Moroccan footballers case

Brussels, 29 May 2013 (ITUC OnLine): Abdes Ouaddou, who has played 57 times for Morocco but was treated as slave in Qatar has warned other footballers of the dangers of being lured to play in the gulf state.

Qatar controversially won the bid to host the 2022 World Cup and is recruiting foreign players to improve their players' performance and ultimately boost their FIFA ranking of 101 out of 207

Speaking in an exclusive video interview for the ITUC / Equal Times Re-run the vote campaign Abdes Ouaddou said,

"I am going to open the eyes of the players in the French and European leagues. You need to know that even if you sign for three or four years, you have no guarantee of lasting until the end. They will want to break your contract with no respect for the terms."

Abdeslam Ouaddou made it to the top ranks of European and international football playing for AS Nancy and Fulham as well as playing for Morocco. He was recruited to play in Qatar, but his club refused to honour the terms of his contract.

When Ouaddou attempted to lodge a complaint he came up against similar intimidation tactics the ITUC has seen used against construction workers in Qatar.

"It was very difficult to leave the country, because through my lawyer we had filed a complaint with FIFA to have my rights respected and my contract terms respected.

"First I was refused an exit visa and was then asked to withdraw my complaint to FIFA because it could prejudice Qatar's image. I refused to do this.

"I was finally granted the right to leave the country but with a threat hanging over my head – you can leave but be aware you case will take four or five years to be heard, because we are very powerful in FIFA – the Qatars warned," said Abdes Ouaddou.

The ITUC, the Mauritius Labour Congress (MLC), Mauritius Trade Union Congress (MTUC), and National Trade Unions Confederation (NTUC) have written to FIFA President Sepp Blatter at the FIFA Congress in Mauritius this week demanding immediate action on the cases of Abdes Ouaddou and Zahir Belounis.

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 with his wife and two young daughters.

"Qatar is trying to buy the respect and credibility of the international community. Yet they take no responsibility for the treatment of players or migrant workers in their country. Unless Qatar respects human and trade union rights, FIFA must rerun the vote for the 2022 World Cup," said Sharan Burrow.

The ITUC, Mauritius unions and football fans will take part in a rally outside the FIFA Congress on Friday 31st May as delegates enter the convention centre in Mauritius for the official opening of the congress.

Watch the interview with Abdes Ouaddou: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=99sD4BIH2wA>

Read the ITUC letter to FIFA President Stepp Blatter: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/letter-to-stepp-blatter>

For interviews with ITUC representatives in Mauritius contact Gemma Swart on +32 479 06 41 63, gemma.swart@ituc-csi.org

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