

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)
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FIFA to discuss moving Qatar 2022 World Cup to winter months but remain silent on workers' rights

Brussels, 24 September 2013 (ITUC OnLine): Concerns for the welfare of players and spectators at the Qatar 2022 World Cup have led to deliberations within FIFA to move the tournament from the searing heat of the summer months to winter.

FIFA's Executive Committee will meet in Zurich 3-4 October to discuss the timing of the 2022 World Cup.

Sharan Burrow, General Secretary of the ITUC, said the union movement fully shares the concerns over the health and safety of players and spectators, but is deeply disappointed that the vastly more serious situation of the workers building the infrastructure for the Qatar World Cup is not being considered by FIFA.

"People should not have to pay with their lives for the World Cup to be a sporting and commercial success. 1.2 million migrant workers in Qatar are forced to work in extremely high temperatures. The lack of protection and rights causes an average of at least one death every day," said Sharan Burrow, General Secretary, ITUC.

A record number of Nepalese workers died in the searing heat of July this year. Thirty-two workers died, many of them young men in their twenties. Nepal accounts for less than half the migrant workers in Qatar, and reports from other countries-of-origin indicate that similar numbers of workers from these countries are losing their lives in Qatar.

"Qatar has said that between 500,000 and 1 million additional workers will be required for world cup infrastructure - this is a workforce increase of more than 30% and if there is no reform, we would expect a similar percentage increase in fatalities," said Sharan Burrow. Despite more than two years dialogue, no substantive steps have been taken to guarantee the fundamental rights of workers enshrined in international law.

"FIFA needs to send a very strong and clear message to Qatar that it will not allow the World Cup to be delivered on the back of a system of modern slavery that is the reality for hundreds of thousands of migrant workers there today.

"Without the necessary changes, more workers will die building the World Cup facilities than players will take to the field in the 2022 World Cup," said Sharan Burrow.

The ITUC is calling on FIFA President Sepp Blatter to:

- Revisit the conditions of the Qatar 2022 World Cup to ensure respect for human rights of migrant workers in line with the International Labour Organisation's Fundamental principles and rights at work;
- Use their influence to free Zahir Belounis, the French Moroccan footballer trapped in Qatar.

ENDS

Read the ITUC letter to FIFA President Sepp Blatter: http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/fifa_exco_blatter_letter200913.pdf

ITUC affiliates can send a letter to the national football federations in their countries, download the model letter here: http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/docx/model_football_federation_letter_prfd.docx

Read Observer Journalists Nick Cohen's article "How many more must die for Qatar's World Cup ?": <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/sep/21/qatar-human-rights-sport-cohen>

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