

Trade unions offer FIFA joint inspections in Qatar to address abuses of workers

Brussels, 2 October 2013 (ITUC OnLine): The International Trade Union Confederation is putting together a team of experienced inspectors for workplaces and labour camps in Qatar to assess and report on conditions in Qatar ahead of the 2022 World Cup.

The offer to FIFA, made on the eve of their Executive Committee meeting in Zurich, aims to put in place the conditions for workplace laws and protections to stop the high death rates of workers in Qatar, where 4,000 people could die before a ball is kicked at the 2022 World Cup.

“Labour inspection in Qatar has failed miserably, and the government’s announcement that would put new staff into a system that doesn’t work is futile. FIFA should make it clear to Qatar that the 2022 World Cup cannot take place there if workers’ rights and working standards are not respected. Unions save workers’ lives every day, and FIFA should welcome that expertise being used to good effect in Qatar,” said Sharan Burrow, General Secretary, International Trade Union Confederation.

Workers from South Asia including India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and the Philippines and increasingly Africa are recruited to provide labour to build the billion dollar infrastructure and facilities needed for Qatar to host the 2022 World Cup. Another 500,000 workers are expected to join the 1.2 million currently working and living in hazardous conditions.

“The restrictive visa sponsorship system for all migrant workers in Qatar ties workers to their employers giving them no freedom or independence to speak out about their working conditions without fear. Only by offering workers an independent voice to raise their concerns will we be able to tackle the widespread abuses of workers in Qatar,” said Sharan Burrow.

The ITUC is calling on the FIFA Executive Committee to:

- Make workers’ rights a condition of Qatar hosting the World Cup in 2022;
- Put labour rights and working conditions in Qatar as a standing agenda item on their Executive Committee meeting;
- Agree to joint investigation of the abuses of labour rights and deaths of workers in Qatar, and reporting the full findings to football fans, public and families of those who died;
- Monitor the treatment and rights of workers in Qatar and make sure responsible recruitment companies are used to hire workers needed for World Cup jobs.

Building Wood Workers International (BWI), the global union federation representing construction workers, is sending an investigation mission to Qatar on 7 October. The mission will reiterate to the Qatari authorities, construction companies and their sub-contractors their obligations in following international norms and principles of decent work.

“The revelations of working conditions in Qatar over the past week represent only a fraction of abuses facing workers in Qatar. Footballers, construction workers and domestic workers are not able to speak out because their employers hold their passports, work visas and they are not allowed to leave the country without their employers permission,” said Sharan Burrow.

Media Opportunity:

What: BWI together with its Swiss affiliate UNIA will send the message of “Red Card for FIFA, No World Cup without Workers Rights”.

When: 13:30 to 14:00, Thursday October 3 2013

Where: FIFA-Strasse 20 8044 Zurich, Switzerland

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