

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

Qatar Arrests 100 Striking Workers for Deportation

Brussels, 26 November 2014 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC has condemned Qatar's arrest and planned deportation of around 100 striking migrant workers today as a gross violation of the most fundamental workers' rights. According to local news website Doha News, "The men, who hail from Nepal, India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, are construction workers employed by two subcontracting companies – Qatar Freelance Trading and Contracting as well as Qatar Middle East Co. They worked on construction sites that included the recently renovated Sheraton Doha hotel."

Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary, said, "Qatar's brutal disregard for migrant workers is on display once again. The 'labour reforms' promised by the authorities add up to nothing, and FIFA, the athletics body IAAF, multinationals and others which are getting a free ride on the back of modern slavery in Qatar should be ashamed to be in league with a dictatorship like this."

Around 800 workers in total have been on strike over the past few days, in protest at breaches of employment contracts and poverty wages. Having signed contracts before leaving their home countries for Qatar, on arrival in Doha their passports were confiscated and contracts torn up. They were then forced to work for wages one-third lower than promised. Witnesses have reported that a supervisor attacked workers with a plastic pipe when police arrived to start the arrests, and those arrested are believed to be heading for the notorious Doha Detention Centre where migrant workers are often held incommunicado for long periods before eventual deportation.

"This is what life without the right to strike looks like. It is deeply troubling that employer groups are now trying to undermine that very right at the International Labour Organisation. The world needs to uphold rights, and not put every worker at the mercy of their employer with no right to strike against exploitation and abuse, like in Qatar," said Burrow.

The ITUC represents 176 million workers in 161 countries and territories and has 324 national affiliates.

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