

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

Barcelona Football Club: ITUC Appeals to Voting Members and Fans to Reject Qatar Airways Deal

Brussels, 2 July 2015 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC has called on FC Barcelona “socios” (voting members) and fans to end the club’s Qatar Airways sponsorship, saying that the airline is the very worst sponsor for a club with a 100-year tradition of democracy and universality. The appeal comes as an election contest for the club’s Presidency hinges on candidates’ opposition to or support for renewing its controversial sponsorship deal with Qatar Airways.

In a video address, Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary, said: “Sports fans around the world have always admired FC Barcelona for its founding values of respect, democracy and universality, and its long history of avoiding corporate sponsorship on its playing shirt. In 2010, the club unfortunately broke more than 100 years of tradition by striking a deal with Qatar (Qatar Foundation then Qatar Airways).

“When the sponsorship deal was signed with Qatar Airways, its CEO Akbar Al-Baker said that the airline shares the same values as Barcelona. The fact is, Qatar is the very worst sponsor for Barcelona.”

Describing Qatar Airways as one of the worst companies in the world, with no respect for workers’ rights and no respect for women, Burrow condemned Qatar’s record of severe exploitation of migrant workers in conditions of slavery.

Burrow added: “These are definitely not the values of FC Barcelona. Your club is more than a club and deserves better. As one of the richest sports team in the world, Barcelona does not need Qatar’s blood money tainting its shirt.

“We would ask all of you to call on all the Barcelona Presidential election candidates to do what is right for the club and its fans and stand up against slavery.”

The International Transport Workers’ Federation ITF has strongly criticised Qatar Airways following an International Labour Organisation finding on workplace sex discrimination

<http://www.itfglobal.org/en/news-events/press-releases/2015/june/ilo-finds-qatar-guilty/>

Qatar Airways CEO Akbar Al Baker responded by saying “I don’t’ give a damn about the ILO...”
<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/business/aviation-and-transport/2015/06/17/Qatar-Airways-boss-I-don-t-give-a-damn-about-ILO-discrimination-report.html>

Surrounded by controversy over its medieval labour laws, including the “kafala” system of modern slavery, Qatar’s government was called upon by the ILO under two separate cases in 2014 to make fundamental labour law reforms. A set of cosmetic changes to the kafala system was rejected by Qatar’s advisory Shura Council last week.

Watch the video message from Sharan Burrow: <https://youtu.be/UY90khCqHFY>

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