

# The Human Cost of the FIFA World Cup

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*As the world watches the 2014 FIFA World Cup, people are protesting the cost and the human rights violations being committed by police and security forces to protect this corporate investment.*

Working people in Brazil are understandably frustrated with the public cost of the World Cup, an estimated \$14 billion. When compared to spending on social services, the cost of the World Cup is the equivalent of 61% of funding for education, or 30% of the funding for healthcare. Private companies, including those in the services and construction industries, will be the main beneficiaries of this public money. Adding to this cost is the forced evictions of the poor living in the favelas (slums) and the dispossession of indigenous people from their lands to build stadiums and parking lots. [1]

Over one million people in Brazil have protested the cost of the World Cup, the cutbacks and increased costs of social services, forced evictions, and other human rights violations.

The state security services have cracked down viciously on all anti-FIFA demonstrations across the country. At least a dozen or more people have been killed and hundreds have been arrested. On the first day of the World Cup, 47 people were arrested, and police shot rubber bullets at medics helping the wounded. The state security services have been accused of killing of the poor and homeless, including children, to “clean up” the favelas prior to the start of the World Cup. To justify this violent response, the federal government has pushed to pass legislation that would criminalize all anti-FIFA protests as “terrorism”, with 12 to 30 year prison sentences for those convicted. [2]

The state has deployed more than 200,000 troops, armed with such weapons as Israeli drones, German anti-aircraft tanks, and rooftop missile defense systems, to protect the World Cup from protestors. The infamous American mercenary company, Blackwater, known for its role in the U.S. occupation of Iraq, is allegedly in Brazil helping with security for the World Cup.

The financial and social cost of events like the World Cup and the Olympics to working people are enormous.

During the London 2012 Olympics, 10,000 police officers and 13,000 troops, more than all British forces in Afghanistan, along with ships in the Thames, fighter jets, and surface-to-air missile defense systems, were deployed to protect the \$11 billion event. At a time when 2 million are unemployed, 27% of children live in poverty, and austerity budgets are being forced on working people, \$11 billion came at a significant cost to working people. [3]

The Sochi Winter Olympics cost a staggering \$51 billion, even though 18 million Russians live in poverty and migrant workers were paid less than \$2/hour to build the necessary

infrastructure.

In 2022 Qatar will host the FIFA World Cup, and already hundreds of migrant workers have died working on the World Cup infrastructure. Over 400 Nepalese and 700 Indian workers have been have are already among the casualties. The conditions migrant workers are forced to work in have been compared to slavery. Robert Booth for the Guardian explains: “Workers described forced labour in 50C (122F) heat, employers who retain salaries for several months and passports making it impossible for them to leave and being denied free drinking water. The investigation found sickness is endemic among workers living in overcrowded and insanitary conditions and hunger has been reported. Thirty Nepalese construction workers took refuge in the their country’s embassy and subsequently left the country, after they claimed they received no pay.” The International Trade Union Confederation estimates that 12 workers will die each week and around 4,000 will have died before the event starts. [4]

The social and financial cost of these international corporate events should be fought by working people around the world at a time where millions are being forced into unemployment and are denied their basic needs, democracy is being eroded, the environment is being destroyed, and the threat of war is increasing.

#### **Note**

[1] <http://www.forbes.com/sites/kenrapoza/2014/06/11/bringing-fifa-to-brazil-equal-to-roughly-61-of-education-budget/>

[2] <http://revolution-news.com/the-story-of-resistance-to-fifas-war-on-brazilian-people-video-blog/>

[3] <http://www.theguardian.com/sport/2012/mar/12/london-olympics-security-lockdown-london>

[4] <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2013/sep/26/qatar-world-cup-migrant-workers-dead>

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