

# The World Cup Soccer in Qatar (2022), Controversy over Appalling Migrant Worker Conditions

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

*Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani is Qatar's Emir [image left]. He heads a despotic monarchical rogue state.*

*He maintains supreme power. What he says goes. Ordinary Qataris have no say.*

*State terror defines official policy. Qatar has one of the world's worst human and civil rights record.*

*Torture and other forms of repression are commonplace. So is brutal worker exploitation. Foreign nationals suffer most.*

According to the [State Department's 2012 human rights](#) report:

*"The principal human rights problems were the inability of citizens to change their government peacefully, restriction of fundamental civil liberties, and pervasive denial of expatriate workers' rights."*

*"The monarch-appointed government prohibited organized political parties and restricted civil liberties, including freedoms of speech, press, and assembly and access to a fair trial for persons held under the Protection of Society Law and Combating Terrorism Law."*

*"Other continuing human rights concerns included restrictions on the freedoms of religion and movement, as foreign laborers could not freely travel abroad."*

*"Trafficking in persons, primarily in the labor and domestic worker sectors, was a problem."*

*"Legal, institutional, and cultural discrimination against women limited their participation in society."*

*"The noncitizen "Bidoon" (stateless persons) who resided in the country with an unresolved legal status experienced social discrimination."*

Migrants comprise the vast majority of Qatar's two million population. London's Guardian ran a series of articles explaining more.

The International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) chose Qatar to host the 2022 World Cup games.

FIFA president Sepp Blatter did so disgracefully. He ignored outrageous exploitation foreign construction workers face. More on that below.

Qatar is a key US regional ally. Doha hosts America's forward CENTCOM (US Central Command) headquarters. It's based at Al Udeid Air Base. It's home for 5,000 US forces.

It's a hub for US Afghanistan and Iraq operations. Qatar was instrumental in Obama's Libya war. Its special forces armed and trained extremist Islamist militants.

They included the CIA affiliated Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG). They're ideologically allied with Al Qaeda.

In December 2004, the State Department designated it a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). If doesn't matter. America uses Al Qaeda and likeminded organizations as enemies and allies.

Qatar supports Obama's war on Syria. It helps recruit extremist fighters. It provides funding, weapons and training. It's part of Washington's plan to oust Assad.

London's [Guardian headlined](#) "Qatar: one migrant worker's story."

Nepalese worker Bhupendra Malla Thakuri "borrowed money to afford a recruitment agent's fees (for) a job as a truck driver in Qatar"

It pays 1,200 riyals monthly (about \$330). In June 2011, Bhupendra was severely injured. His leg was crushed on the job. He was hospitalized for months.

"When I was discharged," he said, "the company only paid me for the 20-odd days I had worked that month, but nothing more."

"They didn't give me my salary. They didn't give me anything. It was a very critical situation. I was injured and my leg had become septic."

His company gave him a document in English to sign. It asked him to agree to return to Nepal. It declared all his benefits paid.

He refused to sign, saying:

"I had to return to the hospital frequently for checkups, but I didn't have money for that. I needed money for transportation and medicine. There was no money for food."

His indebtedness rose to about \$4,400. He had no way repay. He sued. He was lucky. He got significant compensation. On July 29, he went home.

According to Amnesty International Gulf migrant researcher James Lynch:

"Bhupendra's case illustrates both the callousness with which so many companies treat migrant workers in Qatar, but also the laborious and confusing processes which migrant workers are expected to navigate in order to get their rights."

"It took him more than two years, and enormous stamina and courage, to get the compensation he deserved, during which time he was penniless."

On September 25, the [Guardian headlined](#) “Revealed: Qatar’s World Cup ‘slaves.’ Exclusive: Abuse and exploitation of migrant workers preparing emirate for 2022.”

They endure outrageous human rights abuses. In recent weeks, dozens of Nepalese migrant workers died.

“(T)housands more (endure) appalling labour abuses, a Guardian investigation has found, raising serious questions about Qatar’s preparations to host the 2022 World Cup.”

During summer 2013, “Nepalese workers died at a rate of almost one a day.”

Many were young men. Sudden heart attacks killed them. Others died from accidents. Human life in Qatar is cheap.

Guardian investigators “found evidence to suggest that thousands of Nepalese, who make up the single largest group of labourers in Qatar, face exploitation and abuses that amount to modern-day slavery.”

From June 4 - August 8, at least 44 workers died. Heart attacks or workplace accidents took most of them.

Other damning evidence uncovered included:

- forced labor on World Cup infrastructure;
- withholding pay for some Nepalese workers for months; allegedly it’s to prevent them from running away;
- confiscating worker passports; doing so reduces their status to illegal aliens; and
- denying workers access to free drinking water in summer heat.

“About 30 Nepalese sought refuge at their embassy in Doha to escape the brutal conditions of their employment,” said the Guardian.

Rogue Qatari officials are very much involved in ruthless migrant worker exploitation.

“The overall picture is of one of the richest nations exploiting one of the poorest to get ready for the world’s most popular sporting tournament,” the Guardian added.

It shows FIFA’s complicity with brutal police state repression. It doesn’t surprise. Formula One’s governing body includes Bahrain on its calendar.

It does so despite the Gulf monarchy’s appalling human rights record.

Murder, torture, other forms of abuse, lawless arrests, kangaroo court trials, and longterm imprisonments don’t matter.

Bahrain Grand Prix races are held as scheduled. Formula One’s Bernie Ecclestone operates like FIFA’s Sepp Blatter. Money, lots of it, prestige, and self-interest alone matter.

State terror is a small price to pay. Welcome to Qatar and Bahrain. They're two of the world's most repressive dictatorships. They're valued US allies. They're complicit in America's imperial wars.

One migrant Qatari worker told Guardian investigators:

"We'd like to leave, but the company won't let us. I'm angry about how this company is treating us, but we're helpless."

"I regret coming here, but what to do? We were compelled to come just to make a living, but we've had no luck."

Guardian investigators found migrant workers sleeping 12 to a room. Filthy conditions made many sick.

Some were forced to work without pay. They were left begging for food and clean water. Ran Kuman Mahara said:

"We were working on an empty stomach for 24 hours; 12 hours' work and then no food all night."

"When I complained, my manager assaulted me, kicked me out of the labour camp I lived in and refused to pay me anything. I had to beg for food from other workers."

Nearly all Nepalese migrant workers have huge debts. They accrued them to pay recruitment agents for their jobs.

They're obligated to repay. They have no way to do so. They had no idea how brutally they'd be exploited.

They held against their will in forced bondage. They're treated callously. Dozens are worked to death.

Nepalese ambassador to Qatar, Maya Kumari Sharma, called the emirate an "open jail" for foreign workers. It's that and much more.

According to Anti-Slavery International director Aidan McQuade:

"The evidence uncovered by the Guardian is clear proof of the use of systematic forced labour in Qatar."

"In fact, these working conditions and the astonishing number of deaths of vulnerable workers go beyond forced labour to the slavery of old where human beings were treated as objects."

"There is no longer a risk that the World Cup might be built on forced labour. It is already happening."

Qatar has the world's highest ratio of migrant workers to domestic population. Over 90% of its workforce are aliens. From now until 2022, another 1.5 million will be recruited.

Based on current conditions, they'll be held in forced bondage. They'll be brutalized against their will.

They'll be lawlessly held to build stadiums, roads, ports, and hotels, as well as other infrastructure and facilities in time for FIFA's 2022 World Cup games.

Nepal supplies about 40% of Qatar's migrant workers. In 2012, over 100,000 were recruited. They had no idea how brutally they'd be treated.

On the one hand, FIFA officials insist on acceptable labor standards conditions and practices. On the other, they turn a blind eye to appalling abuses.

It bears repeating. Money, lots of it, prestige, and self-interest alone matter. It doesn't surprise. Olympism operates the same way.

It's more about profiteering, exploitation, and cynicism than sport. In modern times, it's always been that way.

It's dark side excludes good will and fair play. Scandalous wheeling, dealing, collusion, and bribery turns sport into a commercial grab bag free-for-all.

Marginalized populations are exploited. Thousands are evicted and displaced. Disadvantaged residents are left high and dry.

Cozy relationships among government officials, corporate sponsors, universities, and IOC bosses facilitate exploiting communities, people, and athletes unfairly. It's standard practice.

FIFA operates the same way. Denial of fundamental rights and freedoms is ignored. Ready venues for scheduled events come first.

Repression and worker abuses don't matter. High-minded hyperbole conceals what demands condemnation.

CH2M Hill is a leading consulting, engineering, construction, program management firm. It "was recently appointed the official programme management consultant to the supreme committee," said the Guardian.

It claims a "zero tolerance policy for the use of forced labour and other human trafficking practices."

According to its engineering subsidiary Halcrow:

"Our supervision role of specific construction packages ensures adherence to site contract regulation for health, safety and environment."

"The terms of employment of a contractor's labour force is not under our direct purview."

Nepalese worker explain otherwise. They're virtual slaves. They want to leave but can't. According to one unnamed migrant:

“We’d like to leave, but the company won’t let us. If we run away, we become illegal and that makes it hard to find another job.”

Qatar’s labor ministry lied claiming it enforces strict standards and practices. According to the Guardian:

“The workers’ plight makes a mockery of concerns for the 2022 footballers.”

General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions head Umesh Upadhyaya said:

“Everyone is talking about the effect of Qatar’s extreme heat on a few hundred footballers.”

“But they are ignoring the hardships, blood and sweat of thousands of migrant workers, who will be building the World Cup stadiums in shifts that can last eight times the length of a football match.”

They turn a blind eye to the appalling human rights abuses they endure. They’re held in forced bondage for Qatari/FIFA profits, self-interest and prestige.

Doing so makes a mockery of sport. Illusion substitutes for reality. Dark side truth explains best.

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