



Gianni Infantino
President

Cc: Federico Addiechi
Head of Sustainability
FIFA

June 25, 2020

Dear Mr Infantino,

SUBJECT: QATAR 2022 AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

We are writing to you to request that FIFA take a public and proactive stance on migrant workers' rights in Qatar, and call immediately on the Qatari authorities to enact reforms to protect the lives and fundamental rights of migrant workers, many of whom are in the country as a direct result of FIFA's decision to award the 2022 World Cup to Qatar. The presentation this month of a new UN report on racial discrimination in Qatar only increases the salience of this matter.

FairSquare Projects is a non-profit organization that works with a range of partners to help prevent human rights abuses. Its team has worked on human rights in the Gulf region for over a decade, with a focus on Qatar and migrant workers' rights.

In the coming weeks, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Professor Tendayi Achiume, will present a highly significant report during the 44th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, based on her country visit to Qatar in December 2019.¹ We would encourage FIFA to study the report in full, but we have highlighted some key passages here.

The Special Rapporteur's report describes how, in Qatar "nationality and national origin entrench de facto castes among non-nationals according to which European, North American, Australian and Arab nationalities systematically enjoy greater human rights protections than South Asian and sub-Saharan African nationalities." She finds that there is a "stratification of quality of life according to nationality and national origin" on a scale that "raises serious concerns of structural racial discrimination against non-nationals in Qatar."

¹ A/HRC/44/57/Add.1 Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance: Visit to Qatar

In relation to low-paid migrant workers specifically her report states that the “the indentured or coercive labour conditions” for many migrant workers and language referring to workers who have ‘absconded’ from their employers “recalls the historical reliance on enslaved and coerced labour in the region.”

It is vital that FIFA engages with the findings of this report, as the concerns highlighted by the Special Rapporteur are key to driving the abuses which have been so widely documented in recent years and with which your organization is familiar. On June 17, 2019, we wrote to FIFA to draw the organisation’s attention to the issue of migrant worker deaths. We urged FIFA to publicly call on the Qatari government to publish detailed data on worker deaths since 2013 and commission an independent investigation into these deaths. Based on the limited data that the authorities have made available, we believe it is highly probable that there have been more than 3000 unexplained migrant worker deaths since Qatar won the right to host the World Cup in December 2010. As noted by the Special Rapporteur, the Qatari authorities have failed to act on very clear recommendations in this regard (see para 47 of the report).

The Special Rapporteur’s report also notes with concern the government’s failure to abolish its kafala system, despite pledges that it would do so (see para 42). An Amnesty International report, published on June 10, 2020, details how 100 migrant workers employed on the construction of the Al-Bayt Stadium went unpaid for seven months and were unable to change jobs in that time due to Qatar’s maintenance of its deeply abusive kafala system.² Such abuses are not new. They have been repeatedly documented since 2012 and despite some welcome reforms, migrant workers in Qatar are not significantly better protected in 2020 than they were in 2010, when FIFA awarded the right to host the 2022 World Cup.

However the finding that such abuses take place within a context of systematic racial discrimination in Qatar –“a quasi-caste system based on national origin”, as the Special Rapporteur describes it, with south Asians and sub-Saharan Africans at the bottom of the racial pecking order - is significant and timely. This report arrives at a critical juncture, when individuals and organisations across the world, including figures and organisations from the football community, are speaking out against racial discrimination. FIFA has been part of this, issuing a positive statement on June 2, 2020- “say no to racism and any form of discrimination.” There are many issues where FIFA can demonstrate that its commitment to this stance is genuine, and Qatar is where its influence and responsibilities converge, and where its intervention is particularly urgent.

Many of the workers being subjected to discriminatory practices in Qatar are there as a direct result of FIFA’s decision to award the tournament to Qatar, whether working on stadium or infrastructure construction, or in the hospitality sector. It is unconscionable that FIFA does not know how many migrant workers have died in the ten years since it awarded the World Cup to Qatar, and that thousands of families still do not know how their loved ones died, and have received no compensation. FIFA has said that it is “profoundly saddened by the loss of life of every worker who is in Qatar to help prepare the infrastructure of the FIFA World Cup,” yet it has so far been unwilling to call for basic steps to prevent further unnecessary deaths.³

We urge FIFA to engage with the Special Rapporteur’s report in detail and to make a public call on the Qatari authorities to address the issues in Professor Achiume’s report. In particular, the continuing tragedy of unexplained migrant worker deaths deserves FIFA’s full and public attention.

² Qatar: Migrant workers unpaid for months of work on FIFA World Cup stadium, 11 June 2020, Amnesty International: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/06/qatar-migrant-workers-unpaid-for-months-fifa-world-cup-stadium/>

³ FIFA’s statement on articles published following the publication of the Supreme Committee’s Fifth Workers’ Welfare Progress Report, 24 March 2020, available at https://www.business-humanrights.org/sites/default/files/documents/FIFA%20statement%20on%20SC%20WW%20Progress%20report_20200326.pdf

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Nicholas McGeehan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Nicholas McGeehan
Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'James Lynch', with a large, stylized initial 'J' and 'L'.

James Lynch
Director