



STRONGER TOGETHER

CONGRESS

Irish Congress of Trade Unions

25 May 2015

Mr John Delaney
Football Association of Ireland
National Sports Campus
Abbotstown
Dublin 15

Dear Mr Delaney

The continuing plight of workers in Qatar is shining a light on the role of football in promoting and defending human rights like nothing before. Despite the President of FIFA's words that "football is all about freedom, equality and respect," Qatar's migrant workforce instead faces slavery, discrimination and contempt.

Since the World Cup was awarded to Qatar, workers have been dying there at a rate of around 40 per month. If this rate continues, the International Trade Union Confederation's prediction of 4,000 fatalities will prove tragically conservative. A combination of appalling living conditions and woefully inadequate health & safety on construction sites, coupled with poverty pay and the desperation that comes from being unable to go home, has led to a shocking litany of workplace deaths, heart attacks and suicides.

Qatar's promises to fix the legal basis for this misery, particularly the *kafala* system which traps workers in the country until their employers – often the root cause of abuse and exploitation – grant permission to leave, have thus far failed to deliver change. It is almost a year since the Qatar Government promised the abolition of *kafala*, but it is still in force and no official time table has been attached to its implementation. Since that promise was made – based on current death rates – 440 more workers from India and Nepal alone will have lost their lives.

Qatar's current time-wasting, when it has confessed to the truth of the fatalities and admitted the need for reform, is negligent in the extreme. Their recent moves to prevent a high level independent investigation by the International Labour Organisation from assessing the situation on the ground suggest that the regime is perfectly aware that their response has been inadequate and that people are dying as a result.

It is clearly the desire of Qatar that the 2022 World Cup should be a showpiece to boost the nation's reputation. So far the spotlight has revealed only the harsh realities of modern slavery. Qatar will one day realise that the only way to protect its reputation is to fulfil its international and moral obligations and protect the lives of those in its care. The sooner it comes to this conclusion, the more lives will be saved.

That is why we are asking that FIFA takes a firmer stance on workers' rights in Qatar and that Football Associations raise their own concerns publicly. The voices of those in football, from the fans backing the Playfair Qatar campaign to the sponsors of FIFA, are those with the greatest power to make a difference and end this moral stain on the game.

I urge you to speak out and call on Qatar, through whatever channels are available to you, including but not solely via FIFA, to address urgently the plight of the workers preparing the country to host the World Cup. Of particular concern are:

- The *kafala* system, which traps workers in Qatar through the necessity for an exit visa, provided at the whim of their employer.
- The racist wage system that pays workers according to their country of origin.
- Inadequate health & safety laws and insufficient labour inspectors to enforce what laws there are, resulting in appalling death rates.
- Low pay, in some cases as low as 45p per hour.
- Little access to justice for abused and unpaid workers, with labour courts costly and complicated, and trade unions illegal.

As we understand it, only two of the 4 original candidates for the FIFA presidency made workers' rights an issue in their campaigns, and only one made specific reference in his manifesto. It is important that FIFA understands how important this is, not only for the workers in Qatar but also for football's reputation as a force for positive change and we urge you to use whatever channels you have to send a strong message of concern to FIFA in advance of this week's meetings.

We look forward to hearing what you intend to do to help persuade Qatar to make speedy changes to its laws and practises to end the misery of workers and put a stop to the steady flow of coffins back to their homelands.

Yours sincerely


Patricia King
General Secretary

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