

**We hear and see reports on workers in Qatar being treated badly. Long hours, unbearable working conditions, even deaths. What is the workers situation on construction sites that are linked to the worldcup? (what safety and health measures are taken, how long are the working-hours?)**

First of all, it is important to clarify one point: there have been no fatalities on any FIFA World Cup projects. In fact, on our Al Wakrah stadium site, we just reached an important safety milestone, completing 1.2 million man-hours with without lost time injury. The Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy (the SC), the organization tasked with both the legacy and the delivery of proposed tournament venues and projects for the FIFA World Cup in Qatar, requires contractors put in place comprehensive safety plans. In addition, the SC technical team conducts site inspections regularly to monitor safety conditions on each site and the SC workers' welfare compliance team conducts inspections to ensure welfare site facilities are provided and maintained.

The conditions of workers on FIFA World Cup projects is quite high, a reality that has been written about extensively in the international media. All contractors on World Cup projects are contractually obliged to adhere to the SC Workers' Welfare Standards which set clear standards for working conditions, employment practices and living conditions.

**Can you guarantee, that your welfare-demands for the workers are put into action everywhere on the wc-construction sites?**

There are two ways for us to ensure that a high standard is being upheld—a strong compliance framework and clear, consistent engagement with contractors. In terms of compliance, we have put in place a four-tiered auditing system that allows the SC to monitor compliance with the Standards. In the event a contractor is not up to standard, the compliance team will develop a rectification plan and work with the contractor to make sure that corrective action is taken. Engagement is another approach that helps us maintain a high standard on our site. By working closely with contractors to help them understand the value of these standards, over time, they internalize them, and adopt them as their own polices. We have three contractors that, since starting work on SC projects, have committed to building new accommodation facilities to the housing specifications outlined in the SC standards. Yes, compliance plays a major role in making sure contractors are upholding the standards, but the most sustainable way to bring about change in the market is by creating an environment that will encourage companies to adopt and uphold the standards on their own.

**A report issued by amnesty international a month ago says: “Despite making repeated promises to clean up its act ahead of the World Cup, the government of Qatar still appears to be dragging its feet over some of the most fundamental changes needed, such as abolishing the exit permit and overhauling its abusive sponsorship system,” - your comment on this?**

The government has indicated very clearly that it intends to introduce reforms to improve the conditions of workers in Qatar. Some of the changes have already been put in place, such as: the wage protection system; a 25 percent increase in labour inspectors; an increase in fines from USD 2,746 to USD 13,730 for employers who illegally hold employee passports per offence; multi-lingual electronic complaint kiosks through which workers can lodge complaints; and the construction of new housing facilities for expatriate workers. Others will take a bit more time because they have to go through the legislative process, which includes the involvement of several stakeholders in the country to ensure sustainable change.

**How much influence do you have on the authorities in charge (ministry of labour), in case your demands disagree with their practice?**

The SC has an excellent working relationship with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. While we were in the process of drafting the standards, we consulted them to learn about current challenges in the labour market and how private regulation could help reinforce their work. Since we began implementing the standards this working relationship has continued and expanded—we periodically

share information about how our standards are being implemented, the challenges we face, and what works in our particular context.

**Is western criticism hypocrite, since they, whilst criticising social standards, at the same time don't mind enjoying Qatar's hospitality and economical efforts?**

There is no question that Qatar's economic ties to countries in the West are strong and will remain strong as the economy expands. As we have indicated on many occasions in the past, we welcome criticism as long as it is constructive and accompanied by a genuine orientation towards progress. It isn't fair or accurate to say that the situation in Qatar is 'all bad'—there are people, institutions, and companies in Qatar that are making significant strides in relation to workers' welfare. Companies that work in the country have the freedom to determine what their approach to worker welfare will be. If a foreign company comes to a project in Qatar with a positive outlook, and it truly believes in the principles outlined in the SC Workers Welfare Standards, then working here is an opportunity to be a part of making progress on a very important issue.

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