



## PRESS RELEASE

**Under strict embargo 00:01GMT 12 November 2014**

### **Qatar: Steps to end migrants' exploitation ahead of World Cup 'woefully insufficient'**

Qatar's authorities are lagging severely behind on efforts to address the rampant abuse of migrant workers' rights, Amnesty International said in a briefing published six months after the government announced a series of reforms to tackle exploitation ahead of the 2022 World Cup.

*No Extra Time: How Qatar is still failing on workers' rights ahead of the World Cup* sets out how the Qatari government has failed to reform the systems that facilitate the abuse of migrant workers and has made only minimal progress on a number of plans it announced in May 2014.

"Time is running out fast. It has been four years since Qatar won the bid to host the World Cup, putting itself in the global spotlight, so far its response to migrant labour abuses has not been much more than promises of action and draft laws," said Sherif Elsayed-Ali, Head of Refugee and Migrants' Rights at Amnesty International.

"Urgent action is needed to ensure we do not end up with a World Cup tournament that is built on forced labour and exploitation."

The briefing analyzes the response of the authorities to nine key issues critical to the rights of migrant workers in Qatar. On five of these issues, there has been no progress, and only limited or partial progress was achieved in the other four areas.

"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," said Sherif Elsayed-Ali.

Amnesty International has repeatedly urged Qatar to cancel the exit-permit, a blatant violation of migrants' rights that gives employers control over migrant workers' movements and can lead to exploited migrants being trapped and unable to leave the country.

It has also consistently called for reform of the sponsorship or "kafala" system- which ties workers to their employers and encourages forced labour.

Amnesty International has highlighted exploitative practices in Qatar such as delays in

payments of migrants' wages, harsh and dangerous working conditions, poor living conditions and shocking details of forced labour and physical and sexual violence against domestic workers in two reports it issued last year.

Following an international outcry spurred by critical media reports and pressure from Amnesty International and other rights groups, the Qatari government appointed the law firm DLA Piper to investigate allegations of abuse.

In May 2014 DLA Piper made a series of recommendations to the government in a wide ranging report that also criticized the sponsorship system.

Shortly afterwards the Qatari government announced a series of reforms including proposals to amend the sponsorship system and the exit permit and to abolish a rule that prevents workers from returning to Qatar for two years after they have ended a contract. In Amnesty International's view, the announced reforms were a missed opportunity as they would not address the crux of the issues contributing to widespread abuse of migrant workers. Even these limited proposed reforms remain unfulfilled.

Additionally, the government's moves since May to remove the major obstacles to workers trying to get justice and to address grave concerns regarding health and safety for construction workers have been inadequate.

"Six months later, only a handful of the limited measures announced in May have even been partially implemented. Overall the steps taken so far are woefully insufficient," said Sherif Elsayed-Ali.

"By failing to act quickly to address the gaping holes in its human rights record, Qatar risks seriously damaging its credibility and calling into question its commitment to human rights."

As part of comprehensive reforms needed to make the sponsorship system and labour law compliant with Qatar's human rights obligations, Amnesty International is calling on Qatar to take concrete, initial steps, including:

- unambiguously abolish the exit permit;
- launch an independent investigation into the causes of migrant workers' deaths;
- drop prohibitive fees for workers to raise court cases against employers;
- publish the names of exploitative recruiters and employers;
- grant domestic workers the legal protection of labour rights afforded to other workers.

The organization will continue to monitor the steps undertaken by Qatar to address these and other issues over the coming six months.

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