

Migrant Workers and Human Rights in the Context of the Football World Cup in Qatar

① Tasks:

- What is labor migration? Provide a brief definition.
- Explain the working conditions that migrant workers in Qatar were subjected to and how these conditions may have violated human rights.
- Imagine you were an advisor to FIFA. What recommendations would you make to ensure that future Football World Cups respect and protect human rights?

Qatar, like many other Gulf states, uses a labor control system called Kafala, which ties the legal conditions of migrant workers in the country to their employers. Workers often arrive in Qatar and are then presented with contracts that pay less than they were promised. In addition, the workers are often coerced into handing over their passports to their employers and paying high recruitment fees to secure jobs in the Gulf, which can put them in debt for years.

Some of the most common grievances that workers report are non-payment or delayed payment of wages, overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions, and excessive working hours. Construction workers and migrant workers in the service industry, including cleaners and security personnel, are essential for the success of major events such as the World Cup, but are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

Under pressure from human rights organizations and media, Qatar has initiated some reforms to reduce the exploitation and abuse of migrant workers. These include the abolition of the exit permit requirement for most workers, allowing migrant workers to change their jobs before the end of their contracts, and the introduction of a general minimum wage. Nevertheless, many migrant workers remain vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, as the implementation and oversight of legal provisions is often inadequate. Another problem in all six GCC countries, specifically affecting construction workers and other outdoor workers, is the lack of adequate heat protection regulations to protect the millions of migrant workers who often work under unbearably hot and humid weather conditions.

It is important to note that Qatar is not the only country that uses the Kafala system. Other Gulf states such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Bahrain, and Kuwait also have significant migrant worker populations and use various forms of this system.

(source: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/08/02/migrant-workers-and-qatar-world-cup>)



Explanations

1. **Gulf states/GCC countries:** The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is a regional intergovernmental political and economic union consisting of all Arab states of the Persian Gulf, except for Iraq. Its member states are Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.