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Novice Scrimmage

TH, as a soccer fan, would boycott the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar.

Should We Boycott the 2022 World Cup?

Public Ethics, by Jake Wojtowicz, May 3, 2021

Nobody really knows how many workers in Qatar have died wrongful deaths in constructing the infrastructure to host the 2022 World Cup. But people have died for our entertainment. How should we, as fans and players, react to this?

Before getting into my question, I have to make two preliminary points.

Firstly, I say 'wrongful deaths' because people die all the time, and people sometimes die on construction sites. Not all of these are wrongful: accidents happen, and that is a risk of any major construction project. But if - as in Qatar - working conditions are poor, if workers must work in the 50 degree heat of the midday sun, if workers must live in awful labour camps, then we are in the realm of wrongful deaths. And it is pretty obvious why these deaths (and the exploitation that goes alongside) are morally wrongful: workers aren't given the protection that they deserve, they're treated as fungible things not people, and they're sacrificed in pursuit of profit and glory.

Secondly, you might see statistics that say 6,500 workers died. But that is both over- and under-inclusive. It includes all deaths of migrant workers, whether or not they were wrongful. They could have died from heart disease or a car crash. But this number is under-inclusive, too; Qatar does not keep detailed records of worker deaths or the cause of worker deaths, so estimates are based on statistics provided by the home-countries of these migrant workers. This number only includes statistics from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, yet several other countries send large numbers of workers to Qatar. Further, there is the fact that some of this infrastructure would have been constructed regardless of the World Cup, so it isn't clear how many deaths are linked directly to the World Cup.

FIFA have wronged us because by watching (or playing in) the World Cup, we fans (and players) are implicated in these deaths.

Despite the uncertainty over the numbers, it nonetheless is clear that too many people have died to bring us this World Cup and these deaths are a moral horror. But my aim is not to probe the moral horror itself, but to try to explain why this might affect fans and players, how FIFA have wronged us, suggest why a boycott might be worthwhile, and end with a reflection on a broader problem: sportswashing.

FIFA have wronged us because by watching (or playing in) the World Cup, we fans (and players) are implicated in these deaths. But the way we fans will be implicated, and the way that players will be implicated, is very indirect. We aren't the ones who awarded the World Cup to Qatar, nor are we the ones who pursue policies that mean that so many people died in pursuit of this goal. It's not like we kill people by watching. Rather, the worry is that we somehow condone this: we will watch, players will play and try to win, despite what happened. The deaths were, to us, worth it for there to be a World Cup for us to enjoy.

And that's what makes the fact that FIFA awarded Qatar the World Cup so galling. We knew five years ago that people were dying for this World Cup, yet FIFA would not take it away from Qatar. FIFA's actions haven't just implicated FIFA in Qatar's wrongdoing, they have implicated us in wrongdoing. For a normal World Cup (though there are exceptions: Italy in 1934 and even Russia in 2018 might trouble us), we could watch (or play) without even worrying that we were somehow condoning evil. But it also leaves fans in a slightly hopeless position: they could boycott it, but what's the point in that if the competition will go ahead anyway?

Players are in a different situation to the fans. Without players, the tournament cannot go ahead. They, either as individuals or as a larger group, could boycott the tournament: nobody is obligated to play football. At the level of entire teams, Norway may well boycott the World Cup. It's clear already that some Norwegian clubs, and many fans, are opposed to competing in the World Cup. Because of the way that the fans have an influence over the running of clubs and the running of the football federation, there is a small but realistic chance of a boycott. Given the fact Norway have several very strong players, and one world-class one in Erling Haaland, this would be no empty statement: Norway are by no means favourites, but they have a realistic chance of doing well in the tournament, so by boycotting they would also be cutting themselves off of the chance of sporting success.

There are arguments against a players' boycott: football associations will lose out on income, could be expelled from future competitions, and, allegedly, a boycott could have bad consequences for the migrant workers involved (not that things can get much worse for the dead). Perhaps the attention already drawn to Qatari working conditions will make

things safer in future. Further, many of the harms involved here have happened already: people have died in constructing this infrastructure, and given that construction will likely slow, fewer people will die in future. And does it just render these deaths for nothing? If there is no World Cup, these people seemed to die for no reason at all. Many of these seem to me to be weak and self-serving justifications for indulging in the World Cup, especially when compared with the idea that by watching or playing in it, we condone the evil that happened.

I want to finish by focussing on a broader problem in football. The considerations I have paid attention to have concerned Qatar hosting the World Cup in 2022. But it is also worth thinking about the phenomenon that sits behind why Qatar would want to host the World Cup: sportswashing. Thinking about this might give us one further reason to protest - or boycott - this World Cup.

Sportswashing is when vicious regimes use sports to 'prop up their image by investing in clubs and getting major events and championships to their country.' States, or prominent individuals (often tied to the state), purchase clubs or provide sponsorship - or host a World Cup - and in doing so endear themselves to fans, who are more likely to ignore or accept their human rights abuses. By hosting the World Cup, Qatar can wash away some of its human rights abuses. Of course, their aim isn't to get rid of these abuses, rather it is to make us ignore those abuses while growing to like the abusers.

We are often happy to overlook the moral failings of those we like, especially when the moral wrongdoers benefit us in other ways (see: Newcastle takeover 'sportswashing, plain and simple', says Amnesty).

If the World Cup doesn't happen, or if it is drastically less prominent because half of the teams boycott it or millions of fans ignore it, Qatar's efforts to sportswash just fail. And this sends a message: if your aim is to endear yourself to fans so that they overlook your human rights abuses, then you had better make sure that your human rights abuses aren't so egregious that they lead to you losing out on, say, hosting the competition (or owning the club) that lets you sportswash, and thus losing the opportunity to endear yourself to the fans. More fundamentally, if we fans refuse to be lured in by those who try to seduce us, we neuter their efforts to launder their reputations.

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This means there is more of a case for a fan boycott: it's not that it will help those who have died already, but that it will thwart future attempts to justify bad regimes. There is a self-interested reason to hope for that: we will no longer be implicated in evil. But there is also a humanitarian consideration, a hope that a boycott could help thwart these human rights abuses in the first place: if you can't whitewash your reputation for egregious human rights abuses, you might just have to start treating people better in order to become involved in prestigious sporting events and have that rub off on your reputation.

The considerations I've offered in favour of boycotting the World Cup are not exactly precise or irrefutable. Certainly, something depends on the factual details - just how egregious are the working conditions, just how many people died? Then there is the moral issue: we'd be somehow condoning this suffering, but I haven't said to what extent we'd be doing this, or specified exactly why that would be bad. Part of the reason why I haven't done that is because I do not know: there is no doubting that these workers' deaths were horrifying and unnecessary, but really how important is our role here as fans? I think it is worth thinking about the World Cup, and thinking about the extent to which we would be implicated in wrongdoing by watching it, but I don't have answers. I'll have done something if I've just managed to persuade you that we need to think much more about our own role here.

No doubt there is an element of self-interest to my wavering on whether to ignore the World Cup. As Barry Glendenning put it in *The Guardian*, writing about playing rather than watching: 'Following our moral compass and railing against obvious discrimination is all very well until it threatens to derail the possibility of travelling to and winning the World Cup.' So, too, with watching it. Researching and writing this piece affected me much more than I expected. I deeply want England to win the World Cup, but I'm not sure I want them to win this World Cup, because I'm not sure I even want them to play. And I can't shake a nagging sense that I shouldn't watch the World Cup. But I also think I probably will watch it, and I'm concerned that if I do watch the World Cup, it's because I'll be ignoring these moral wrongs for my own entertainment.

The Tragic Absurdity of Qatar's World Cup Sportswashing

Labor abuses, homophobia, corruption? Qatar and FIFA will use the men's World Cup to put a happy gloss on it all.
The Nation, by Dave Zirin and Jules Boykoff, June 21, 2022

Were there not so much suffering involved, the Qatar 2022 World Cup would be an absurdist parody of sportswashing. The extraordinarily popular event is meant to put a happy gloss on both the brutal kingdom of Qatar and soccer's governing body—that infamous organization of finely tuned corruption: FIFA.

Normally, the men's World Cup would be kicking off this month, but FIFA honchos changed the World Cup schedule to accommodate the fact that Qatar is scorching in the summer, with temperatures in Doha regularly reaching 109 degrees Fahrenheit (43 Celsius). When they bid for the Cup, Qatar boasted of hosting it over the summer with a state-of-the-art indoor air-conditioned stadium, but that proved to be a lie. Instead, FIFA moved the tournament to November and December, and in the process wreaked havoc on the calendars of domestic soccer leagues around the globe. The fact that the most powerful leagues in the world were willing to reshuffle their plans to accommodate FIFA and their Qatari collaborators is a monument to the brass-knuckle financial power of the men's World Cup. The 2018 World Cup in Russia raked in \$5.36 billion in revenues on the road to more than \$3.5 billion in profit. FIFA expects similar profits from the spectacle in Qatar.

For nearly a decade, journalists have been trumpeting allegations that FIFA never would have selected Qatar were it not for brazen bribery. The US Department of Justice has indicted numerous FIFA officials on a range of crimes including racketeering, wire fraud, and money laundering, some of these charges related to the Qatari bid. Investigators assert that Qatar forked over at least \$1 million—and perhaps as much as \$15 million—to three soccer officials from South America for their votes. Many more voting members of FIFA have been implicated in various bribery schemes.

These alleged bribes flung open the gate for human rights abuses. The government in Qatar is a constitutional monarchy in which Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani reigns supreme. It clamps down on free expression and assembly and exerts significant prohibitions against labor organizing. Last year, a Guardian investigation learned that more than 6,500 migrant workers—from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and elsewhere—have died in Qatar since 2010. Approximately three dozen people have passed away while working directly on World Cup construction.

Jaw-dropping as that is, the exploitation goes further. Human Rights Watch asserts that thousands upon thousands of migrant workers experienced grave labor abuses while helping Qatar prepare for the World Cup, and they have not yet received financial compensation. When FIFA President Gianni Infantino was asked whether he was doing anything to help the families of exploited migrant workers, he chose to minimize their misery, stating, “When you give work to somebody, even in hard conditions, you give him dignity and pride. It's not charity.”

Then there is LGBTQ safety and security. This month FIFA festooned its Twitter avatar in the colors of the rainbow to mark Pride, congratulating itself for its “celebration for the LGBTQIA+ community.” But platitudes can't erase the fact that the two most recent hosts of the men's World Cup—Russia and Qatar—have horrific human-rights records when it comes to LGBTQ issues.

Qatar's stance on LGBTQ rights is appalling. It's a country where same-sex relations are punishable by a three-year prison term. No one's fears were assuaged when a senior Qatari security official for the World Cup suggested recently that LGBTQ fans would be welcome to attend the event, but that any unfurled rainbow flags in Qatar could be confiscated in order to protect those waving them from being physically attacked. Sometimes warnings sound a lot more like threats.

The Independent Supporters Council of North America, a group of ardent soccer fans, issued a statement that read in part, “We cannot, in good faith, tell our members, LGBT+ people or allies that this is a World Cup for all.” After Wales qualified for the World Cup, members of the Welsh team's staff announced they will forgo attending the event because of Qatar's position on LGBTQ rights. We should expect additional global pressure on Qatar as the World Cup nears. Lastly, on top of the labor abuses, corruption, death, and anti-gay bigotry, there is the greenwashing. When FIFA claimed that Qatar would host the first-ever carbon-neutral World Cup, the global guffaw nearly registered on the Richter scale. The environmental group Carbon Market Watch responded that only “creative accounting” that ignored massive sources of carbon—like the energy required to cool the stadiums—could lead to that misleading conclusion. Soccer scholar Brenda Elsey joked on the feminist sports podcast Burn It All Down that soccer barons must have been using their “magical FIFA abacus” to arrive at their carbon-neutrality claim.

Yet, despite all of this, the World Cup will be watched by billions and provide oodles of positive coverage for the Qatari state. That is the nefarious part of sportswashing. It's a force whose mission is to gaslight the consumer and use something as beautiful and universal as sports to do it.

There are forces not content to let this happen. In England, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the country's two largest unions, Unite and Unison, are calling for both the funding and creation of a migrant workers center in Qatar and compensation for families of those workers who died in order to bring the World Cup to life. Efforts such as these can take the rhetoric of sportswashing and use it against FIFA and the Qatari royal family. These undertakings should be supported not only because they are just but also because they chip away at sportswashing's edifice so we can see the brutal truth beneath.

Minimum wage, no NOC: Qatar announces changes to labour law

Al Jazeera, by Faras Ghani, August 30, 2020

Country scraps need for employers' permission before changing jobs, minimum wage set at 1,000 Qatari riyals.

Doha, Qatar – Qatar has scrapped a rule requiring employers’ consent to change jobs and said it will also implement a basic monthly minimum wage of 1,000 Qatari riyals (\$274).

Sunday’s landmark announcement by the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs (MADLSA) is the latest in a series of labour reforms by the country whose treatment of migrant workers and its human rights record have been under the spotlight since it was awarded the hosting of football’s 2022 FIFA World Cup. Under Qatar’s “kafala” (Arabic word for sponsorship) system, migrant workers needed to obtain their employer’s permission – a no-objection certificate (NOC) – before changing jobs, a law that rights activists said tied their presence in the country to their employers and led to abuse and exploitation.

With the announcement, migrant workers can now change jobs before the end of their contract subject to a notice period.

“Either party must provide one month written notice in the first two years of the contract or two months’ notice beyond the second year of the contract,” the MADLSA said in a statement.

It added that the ministry will be “working with employers to update all employment contracts where workers earn less than the amount established by the new law [minimum wage], which will come into force after 6 months of its publication in the official gazette”.

Earlier this month, Al Jazeera reported how migrant workers said they were [struggling to survive in Qatar](#) due to salary delays, non-payment of dues and NOC restrictions.

A report released by Human Rights Watch (HRW) said the country’s “efforts to protect migrant workers’ right to accurate and timely wages have largely proven unsuccessful”.

Addressing these issues, the MADLSA statement added: “As part of our efforts to boost the effectiveness of the Wage Protection System, the new amendments ... prescribe stricter penalties for employers who fail to pay their workers’ wages and introduce penalties for employers who fail to provide adequate accommodation for their workers.”

In addition to the minimum wage, the ministry has also announced the provision of 500 riyals (\$137) for accommodation and 300 riyals (\$82.2) for food if those expenses are not provided as part of the contract.

The new laws have been welcomed by the International Labour Organization (ILO) which described the announcement as a “huge milestone in labour reform agenda for the state of Qatar”.

“The NOC was the last problematic part of the kafala system, this power imbalance that was created between an employee and the sponsor will no longer be there,” Houtan Homayounpour, head of the ILO project office for Qatar, told Al Jazeera.

“This will benefit workers, employer and the country. Employers will be able to look for workers that really match the job they have to offer and workers will be able to look for jobs that are more appropriate for them. This really dismantles the kafala system.

“The minimum wage law change really ensures a minimum standard of living and working for all workers from all over the world in all sectors.”

Sharan Burrow, general secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation, described the development as “a new dawn for migrant workers in Qatar to have a fair system, to end the kafala system and normalise contracts with appropriate provisions”.

“It has been a long journey,” she added. “Frankly it will make the World Cup a much more secure environment for workers knowing that they have secured an industrialised work relations system.”

Revealed: 6,500 migrant workers have died in Qatar since World Cup awarded

The Guardian, by Pete Pattison and Niamh McIntyre Feb. 23, 2021

Guardian analysis indicates shocking figure over the past decade likely to be an underestimate

More than **6,500 migrant workers** from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have died in Qatar since it won the right to host the World Cup 10 years ago, the Guardian can reveal.

The findings, compiled from government sources, mean an average of 12 migrant workers from these five south Asian nations have died each week since the night in December 2010 when the streets of Doha were filled with ecstatic crowds celebrating Qatar’s victory.

Data from India, **Bangladesh**, Nepal and Sri Lanka revealed there were 5,927 deaths of migrant workers in the period 2011–2020. Separately, data from Pakistan’s embassy in Qatar reported a further 824 deaths of Pakistani workers, between 2010 and 2020.

The total death toll is significantly higher, as these figures do not include deaths from a number of countries which send large numbers of workers to Qatar, including the Philippines and Kenya. Deaths that occurred in the final months of 2020 are also not included.

In the past 10 years, Qatar has embarked on an unprecedented building programme, largely in preparation for the football tournament in 2022. In addition to seven new stadiums, dozens of major projects have been completed or are under way, including a new airport, roads, public transport systems, hotels and a new city, which will host the **World Cup** final.

While death records are not categorised by occupation or place of work, it is likely many workers who have died were employed on these World Cup infrastructure projects, says Nick McGeehan, a director at FairSquare Projects, an advocacy group specialising in labour rights in the Gulf. “A very significant proportion of the migrant workers who have died since 2011 were only in the country because Qatar won the right to host the World Cup,” he said.

There have been 37 deaths among workers directly linked to construction of World Cup stadiums, of which 34 are classified as “non-work related” by the event’s organising committee. Experts have questioned the use of the term because in some cases it has been used to describe deaths which have occurred on the job, including a number of workers who have collapsed and died on stadium construction sites.

The findings expose Qatar’s failure to protect its 2 million-strong migrant workforce, or even investigate the causes of the apparently high rate of death among the largely young workers.

Behind the statistics lie countless stories of devastated families who have been left without their main breadwinner, struggling to gain compensation and confused about the circumstances of their loved one’s death.

Ghal Singh Rai from Nepal paid nearly £1,000 in recruitment fees for his job as a cleaner in a camp for workers building the Education City World Cup stadium. Within a week of arriving, he killed himself.

Another worker, Mohammad Shahid Miah, from Bangladesh, was electrocuted in his worker accommodation after water came into contact with exposed electricity cables.

In India, the family of Madhu Bollapally have never understood how the healthy 43-year old died of “natural causes” while working in Qatar. His body was found lying on his dorm room floor.

Qatar’s grim death toll is revealed in long spreadsheets of official data listing the causes of death: multiple blunt injuries due to a fall from height; asphyxia due to hanging; undetermined cause of death due to decomposition.

But among the causes, the most common by far is so-called “natural deaths”, often attributed to acute heart or respiratory failure.

Based on the data obtained by the Guardian, 69% of deaths among Indian, Nepali and Bangladeshi workers are categorised as natural. Among Indians alone, the figure is 80%.

The Guardian has previously reported that such classifications, which are usually made without an autopsy, often fail to provide a legitimate medical explanation for the underlying cause of these deaths.

In 2019 it found that Qatar’s intense summer heat is likely to be a significant factor in many worker deaths. The Guardian’s findings were supported by research commissioned by the UN’s International Labour Organization which revealed that for at least four months of the year workers faced significant heat stress when working outside.

A report from Qatar government’s own lawyers in 2014 recommended that it commission a study into the deaths of migrant workers from cardiac arrest, and amend the law to “allow for autopsies ... in all cases of unexpected or sudden death”. The government has done neither.

Qatar continues to “drag its feet on this critical and urgent issue in apparent disregard for workers’ lives”, said Hiba Zayadin, Gulf researcher for Human Rights Watch. “We have called on Qatar to amend its law on autopsies to require forensic investigations into all sudden or unexplained deaths, and pass legislation to require that all death certificates include reference to a medically meaningful cause of death,” she said.

The Qatar government says that the number of deaths – which it does not dispute – is proportionate to the size of the migrant workforce and that the figures include white-collar workers who have died naturally after living in Qatar for many years. It also says that only 20 per cent of expatriates from the countries in question are employed in construction, and that work-related deaths in this sector accounted for fewer than 10 percent of fatalities within this group.

“The mortality rate among these communities is within the expected range for the size and demographics of the population. However, every lost life is a tragedy, and no effort is spared in trying to prevent every death in our country,” the Qatari government said in a statement by a spokesperson.

The official added that all citizens and foreign nationals have access to free first-class healthcare, and that there has been a steady decline in the mortality rate among “guest workers” over the past decade due to health and safety reforms to the labour system.

Other significant causes of deaths among Indians, Nepalis and Bangladeshis are road accidents (12%), workplace accidents (7%) and suicide (7%).

Covid-related deaths, which have remained extremely low in Qatar, have not significantly affected the figures, with just over 250 fatalities among all nationalities.

The Guardian’s research has also highlighted the lack of transparency, rigour and detail in recording deaths in Qatar. Embassies in Doha and governments in labour-sending countries are reluctant to share the data, possibly for political reasons. Where statistics have been provided, there are inconsistencies between the figures held by different government agencies, and there is no standard format for recording the causes of death. One south-Asian embassy said they could

not share data on the causes of death because they were only recorded by hand in a notebook.

“There is a real lack of clarity and transparency surrounding these deaths,” said May Romanos, Gulf researcher for Amnesty International. “There is a need for Qatar to strengthen its occupational health and safety standards.”

The committee organising the World Cup in Qatar, when asked about the deaths on stadium projects, said: “We deeply regret all of these tragedies and investigated each incident to ensure lessons were learned. We have always maintained transparency around this issue and dispute inaccurate claims around the number of workers who have died on our projects.”

In a statement, a spokesperson for Fifa, football’s world governing body, said it is fully committed to protecting the rights of workers on Fifa projects. “With the very stringent health and safety measures on site ... the frequency of accidents on Fifa World Cup construction sites has been low when compared to other major construction projects around the world,” they said, without providing evidence.

The heading and sub-heading on this article were amended on 2 March 2021 to clarify that the figure for 6,500 deaths covers the 10-year period since Qatar was awarded the World Cup. The article text was amended on 8 and 18 March 2021 to include further comments from the Qatar government relating to the percentage of expatriates employed in construction and work-related deaths in this sector.

Why the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar Should not be Boycotted

Georgetown University Qatar Center for International and Regional Studies, By Danyel Reiche March 18, 2021

There are growing calls for a boycott of the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar. Human rights groups have long criticized Qatar for the abuse and exploitation of its migrant workforce, and Danish football fans have, more recently, initiated a petition against the 2022 World Cup. I argue that such demands are hypocritical and ignore recent policy changes in the country. In fact, they actually serve to undermine Qatar’s ongoing reform process in the labor market.

Western critics often compare labor policies in Qatar with the situations in their own home countries, but it would make more sense to compare Qatar to its neighbors for a proper assessment of its policies in a regional context. In such a more balanced comparison, Qatar comes out ahead as a regional reformer. The U.S. Embassy in Qatar, for example, has announced its support by tweeting about “Qatar’s new minimum wage legislation,” and emphasizing that it is “the first of its kind in the region.”

The head of the International Labor Organization (ILO) Project Office for the State of Qatar, Houtan Homayounpour, called the recent labor market reforms “revolutionary” and “historic achievements” in a CIRS World Cup 2022 podcast. He stated that “the power imbalance between worker and employer has been addressed to a large extent” through reforms such as the abolishment of the exit permit requirement to leave the country; the abolishment of employer approval for an employee to change jobs; the institution of elected worker representatives; and the introduction of a minimum wage.

While Danish fans protest against human rights violations in Qatar, they are silent about Denmark’s upcoming matches against Israel, the first being played on March 25, 2021, in Tel Aviv. Israel promotes illegal settlements on occupied Palestinian land and recently made headlines after the International Criminal Court launched an investigation into the country’s war crimes. Also, Israel’s COVID-19 vaccination apartheid was a much reported topic in the international media: while Israel is a world leader in vaccinating its population, it excluded Palestinians even though the occupied West Bank is an Israeli responsibility according to international law.

I do not support a boycott against Israel, as I have argued in previous research, and my remarks mainly serve the purpose of exposing the double standards in the global discourse. The upcoming Winter Olympic Games in China in February 2022 did not result in a global movement for the boycott of China, for example, in protest of its abuses of its Muslim minority, the Uighurs. Only pointing the finger at Qatar, the first Arab or Muslim host of a World Cup, indicates that Islamophobia plays a major role in the different responses to mega sporting events in non-democratic countries.

There are generally two camps regarding the issue: one side argues that mega sporting events give legitimacy to authoritarian rulers, while the other stresses the potential for social change in light of the FIFA World Cup or the Olympics. Just as life is complicated, so is this argument and depends on who is involved. China (Summer Olympics 2008 and Winter Olympics 2022) and Russia (World Cup 2018) were mainly targeting domestic audiences at these great sporting events. As I argued in a publication about the 2018 World Cup, Russia aimed to prove to its own population that it had restored its greatness. No social changes have occurred in China and Russia in light of hosting the Olympics and the World Cup.

For Qatar, however, the World Cup is more of a foreign policy tool. By becoming a global sports center, the country aims to gain reputation and soft power influence in international affairs, which in turn contributes to its national

security. Whether Qatar’s continuous commitment to labor policy reforms is done through firm conviction or just to please international onlookers does not really matter as long as the conditions for migrant workers are improving. I conclude by arguing that Qatar’s labor reforms should be supported and encouraged rather than disparaged. A widely circulated story in the Guardian recently reported that 6,500 migrant workers from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal have died in Qatar since the World Cup was awarded to the country in 2010. The article—which has been slightly revised after being discredited for its sensationalism—falsely gave the impression that people from those five countries only work as manual labor on World Cup infrastructure. However, there are also many nurses, engineers, teachers, and doctors, amongst many other professions, from those countries working in Qatar. The report did not bother to compare the number of deaths from the same age groups and professions within those five countries. Such misleading reports and calls for a boycott only serve to strengthen local Qatari hardliner opposition to change and to weaken those who work hard for reforms. A very promising sign is that local media have started to monitor the proper implementation of the labor market reforms.

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Read more about the Building a Legacy: Qatar FIFA World Cup 2022 project [here](#).

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