



BWI • Building and Wood Workers' International
BHI • Bau- und Holzarbeiter Internationale
BTI • Byggnads- och Träarbetar-Internationalen
IBB • Internationale des Travailleurs du Bâtiment et du Bois
ICM • Internacional de Trabajadores de la Construcción y la Madera

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May 20, 2019
Geneva, Switzerland

Open Letter to
Mr. Gianni Infantino
President, FIFA
FIFA-Strasse 20
8044 Zürich

Will FIFA escape its human rights obligations through the back door?

Dear President Infantino:

We understand that FIFA is considering expanding the hosting of the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar to neighbouring countries in the Gulf region; Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

As you know, the Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI) represents workers in the construction industry globally. In the prospective co-host countries, it is widely known in the international community that there are daily violations of labour and human rights of migrant construction workers. The kafala system remains largely intact and there are dangerous, unhealthy, and unsafe working and living conditions.

Through many years of work and cooperation by global trade unions including BWI and other international organizations such as the ILO, rights and conditions have considerably improved in Qatar, but that is not the case in surrounding countries. They are far from meeting the human rights standards that should apply to host countries.

The FIFA World Cup Tournaments are typically awarded by FIFA six to eight years before the tournament and are based on bidding documents. In the case of Qatar, the time was even longer, 12 years, with a decision in December of 2010 for a World Cup that was only to take place in 2022.

The prospect of expanding the co-hosts at the last moment to human rights rogue countries is shocking and deplorable. It would use a legal loophole in FIFA rules to renounce the spirit of FIFA human rights reforms and issue an invitation to a wide range of human rights risks.

Those risks, in addition to the systematic violation of workers' rights cited earlier, could include banning or arresting journalists or even cutting their throats, not allowing or separating or harassing women, and attacking LGBTQI persons.

FIFA has made considerable progress in recent years taking into consideration human rights. It commissioned an independent human rights report by Professor John Ruggie, "For the Game, For the World" that made 25 recommendations for all aspects of FIFA activities that affect human rights. To your credit, those recommendations have influenced FIFA statutes, policies, rules, and procedures.



FIFA also created a small, independent Human Rights Advisory Board. That board has done excellent work, made several reports, and productively engaged with the FIFA Secretariat and leadership on fundamental human rights issues to provide advice and guidance. Although specific new provisions related to bidding could not, technically, be implemented retroactively, before the 2026 FIFA World Cup as the 2018 and 2022 FIFA World Cup Games had already been awarded, FIFA, nevertheless, played a positive, if too limited, role in the promotion of human rights in the run-up to the Russia games. It has been supportive of the progress on human rights in Qatar, especially in the respect for the labour and human rights of migrant workers.

A sudden proliferation of hosting countries without due diligence and without any serious examination of countries' human and labour rights policies and practices would abandon that commitment while hiding behind the fig leaf of a technical argument. If the FIFA Congress receives and approves such a proposition on 5 June, it will betray the essence of its own human rights policies.

In the conclusion of "For the Game; For the World", Professor Ruggie wrote:

"The foundational challenge for FIFA now is to go beyond putting words on paper and adding new administrative functions. What is required is a cultural shift that must affect everything FIFA does and how it does it. The result must be good governance, not merely 'good-looking governance.'"

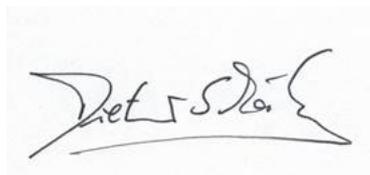
A decision to expedite an enlargement of host countries would be neither good nor good-looking governance. We call on you, as President of FIFA to take another, more careful look at the dangerous human rights risks in the countries under consideration and halt the initiative to expand the 2022 FIFA World Cup Games. Failing that, we urge the Congress to honour the essence of FIFA human rights policies and reject any proposed expansion of host countries for the 2022 FIFA World Cup Games.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely



Ambet Yuson
General Secretary



Dietmar Schaefer
Deputy President and Chair of
Sports and Labour Working Group

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