

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PRESS RELEASE

15 June 2023 EMBARGO 0001BST

Qatar: Hundreds of migrant workers employed as security guards at FIFA World Cup denied justice for abuses

Hundreds of migrant workers hired as security guards for last year's World Cup are still being denied justice for the abuses they suffered despite FIFA and the hosts Qatar being warned that they were especially vulnerable to exploitation and workers raising complaints and protesting about their treatment.

An investigation has found serious labour abuses occurred at the World Cup and were not properly addressed, even though Amnesty International issued [a 70-page report](#) in April 2022, which sounded the alarm about systematic and structural labour abuses across the private security sector in Qatar.

“The World Cup organizers were well aware of the issues but failed to put in place adequate measures to protect workers and prevent predictable labour abuses at World Cup sites, even after workers raised these issues directly,” said Steve Cockburn, Amnesty International's Head of Economic and Social Justice.

“It's six months since the tournament concluded but FIFA and Qatar have yet to offer an effective and accessible scheme to enable abused workers to receive the justice and compensation they are owed. FIFA must now step in and offer immediate and meaningful remediation for the human rights abuses suffered by workers.”

The investigation shows that marshals and security guards, who worked at FIFA World Cup sites and were contracted to Teyseer Security Services, a Qatar-based company, suffered a range of work-related harms and abuses.

These included the workers paying unlawful recruitment fees and other related costs, and being given misleading statements about the terms and conditions of their employment. At the end of their temporary contracts, workers said they had no option but to return home, effectively denying them recourse to any remedy or compensation.

For its research, Amnesty International spoke to 22 men from Nepal, Kenya and Ghana, who were among thousands of migrant workers employed on short term contracts by Teyseer. Amnesty International reviewed employment contracts, job offer correspondence and audio-visual materials including voice records of communications between workers and recruitment agents, and scrutinized information pertaining to other workers who were previously interviewed by the human rights group Equidem, which corroborate allegations that many others experienced similar abuses.

Those interviewed worked as marshals and security guards in the lead-up to the tournament and during the event, which was held between 20 November and 18 December 2022. They were stationed at various locations, including the Khalifa International Stadium, FIFA fan zones, the Corniche, and both in and outside the metro station in Souk Waqif in Doha.

The names of the workers quoted have been changed at their request.

Unlawful recruitment charges and false promises

The men arrived in Qatar in mid-October 2022 and were contracted to work for three months. They all said they incurred recruitment-related costs to secure their positions, with 16 saying they paid more than US\$200, including four who paid more than US\$600, which was equivalent to more than a third of their total expected earnings.

For some, these costs included up to US\$300 in recruitment agency fees, as well as medical assessments before they travelled to Qatar, Covid-19 tests and criminal records checks. Five of the workers from Ghana and Kenya said they incurred between US\$85 and about US\$250 each in travel and living costs in order to participate in a two-week training programme in their home countries, during which they were not paid.

Some recruitment agents told workers that Teyseer would pay them back for the costs incurred, and job offer letters seen by Amnesty International confirmed that the company would bear all recruitment-related costs. The vast majority, however, say they were not reimbursed, despite Teyseer representatives asking some workers shortly after their arrival in Qatar to write to management stating the amounts they had paid in recruitment fees.

Marcus, from Ghana, 33, who works to support his siblings and paid nearly US\$400 in recruitment costs, said: “I had to take out a loan to pay for the expenses to travel to work in Qatar during the World Cup. I am still paying it, what I earned was not enough.”

All of the workers interviewed said that the Teyseer’s representatives, or recruitment agents who supplied the company, made false promises such as suggesting that they could take up more senior roles and earn an extra US\$275 a month, or stay and work in Qatar beyond the three-month contract period, or earn potential bonuses. Once in Qatar, however, nothing materialized.

Richard, 24, from Ghana, who worked at a training ground for one of the football teams in the competition, said: “I lost because I paid almost US\$700 before going there. I only received about US\$1,500, so I only made US\$780. I would get more

than that if I had stayed in Ghana. I lost my job as a result [of going] so I came back with little money and no job.”

Excessive working hours and no rest day

More than a third of the men interviewed, especially those employed as marshals, said they had to work 12 hours every day and worked for up to 38 consecutive days without a day off, or adequate pay to reflect this extra work, which breaches Qatari law. Their duties often required them to stand for many hours without sitting down, and to deal with large crowds after matches without adequate training and support.

Kiran, 26, from Nepal, who worked as a marshal at the Souk Waqif metro said: “It was a tough job because there was one metro [station] in the area and too much of a crowd. I had to stand for ten to 12 hours a day... just resting our back on the barricades. At times we felt scared because it was too busy, and people were pushing.”

Reporting abuses

These abuses led many of Teyseer’s workers to protest on multiple occasions while they were in Qatar. Some told Amnesty International they reported their treatment on the World Cup Grievances Hotline in November, but that no action was taken. One worker said a manager threatened to fire him and others in retaliation for complaining, and warned them not to report issues again.

Days before their contracts expired in early January, hundreds of marshals staged a protest demanding their dues, including unpaid overtime and a bonus they said had been promised on completion of their duties.

Following this protest, workers said that representatives of both Teyseer and the government promised they would be compensated, a pledge that has not been honoured.

According to some of those interviewed, Teyseer representatives threatened unspecified “action” if the men failed to leave Qatar on flights arranged by the company, or were told they would have to pay for a new air ticket. The men said hundreds had to leave Qatar without compensation.

No recourse to justice

Despite the men’s assertions that Teyseer and FIFA were made aware of the abuses, it appears neither organization took effective action to adequately address these issues and ensure timely remedy for workers.

Qatar has introduced grievance mechanisms but workers must be in the country to [access its labour courts and compensation scheme](#). With no way to complain remotely, and with little choice but to leave the country, the migrant workers have been denied justice.

The abuses endured by the security guards are part of a pattern of harms suffered by migrant workers in Qatar since FIFA chose it to host the World Cup in 2010. Hundreds of thousands of migrant workers paid illegal recruitment fees, or had wages withheld, and have not had redress. Many who helped build stadiums and infrastructure or worked to help deliver the tournament died and their families are yet to be adequately compensated, or compensated at all.

Qatar and FIFA have yet to establish a sufficient mechanism for redress, insisting that the existing process in Qatar is adequate. In March 2023 FIFA announced that its human rights subcommittee would conduct an assessment of the human rights legacy of the tournament, including addressing the question of remedy for labour abuses.

“Qatar’s existing mechanism for redress is not fit for purpose and has left thousands of workers deprived of compensation for the abuses they suffered,” said Steve Cockburn.

“FIFA has a clear responsibility to ensure human rights are respected throughout the supply chain engaged in preparing and delivering its showcase competition. Although six months have passed since the World Cup, FIFA has yet to effectively investigate the issue, or offer remedies. Workers have already waited too long for justice.”

Responses

Teyseer denied the allegations, saying it followed an “ethical recruitment process” and detailing at length the various measures it said it had taken to protect workers’ rights on World Cup sites.

FIFA said that due diligence was conducted on Teyseer but acknowledged there were “different perceptions and views” on the experience of Teyseer’s workers. It said it will seek further clarification on the issues raised but did not commit to stepping in to provide remedy.

Both FIFA and Teyseer confirmed that issues had been raised via the hotline and claimed that they had been addressed.

Full responses from Teyseer and FIFA [can be seen here](#).

The government of Qatar responded by pointing to some of the measures taken in recent years to reform its labour system. However, it failed to address specific concerns raised in relation to Teyseer, or commit to taking any action to investigate and remedy abuses suffered by its workers.