

# Slavery in Qatar

By [Global Research News](#)

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)  
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*Almost all of the Qatari labor force is made up of foreign workers. They are several times more numerous than the normal citizenry. These workers are employed under the kafala system, under which they are indentured to a Qatari sponsor. A worker cannot leave the country or change employment, get a driver's license, or rent a home without the sponsor's consent.*

The Qatari Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Abdallah Saleh Al Khulaifi has acknowledged inadequate enforcement of laws and regulations on conditions of workers. The sponsor is prohibited from holding a passport after the worker has been cleared by Immigration. He is required to pay wages promptly, and hours of work in extreme heat are limited. Workers are to have access to drinking water and health care. He said that his ministry would be hiring more inspectors to enforce the rules and more interpreters to be able to communicate with the workers.



Conditions of foreign workers have become an acute concern because Qatar is slated to be the venue for the 2020 world cup of soccer.

Some critics contend that Qatar's treatment of foreign workers is so appalling that the venue should be shifted, especially since these workers are building the facilities for the games.

Sharan Burrow, General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation, charged, "Foreign workers in Qatar are modern-day slaves to their local employers. The local Qatari owns you."

The Reuters account spoke of withholding wages as well as passports, and work shifts which can be as long as 16 hours. A *Guardian* article this month reported 70 Nepali construction workers having died since the beginning of last year.

British Prime Minister David Cameron pointedly noted that there were no deaths in construction for the 2012 Olympics in London.

According to Nepali Union officials, lack of safety equipment results in workers falling to their deaths. Burrow said, "Scores are dying from heat exhaustion and dehydration after 12-hour shifts in blazing heat, often during the night in squalid and cramped labor camps with no ventilation and appalling hygiene."

Some 340,000 Nepalis work in Qatar. Their remittances make up more than 20% of Nepal's Gross Domestic Product. When it became known that Nepal's ambassador to Qatar, Maya Kumari Sharma, had referred to Qatar as "an open jail," the government, in response to Qatar's complaint, recalled her for her inappropriate remarks. Nepal's government is led by self-described Maoists, who apparently love those remittances. What would Karl Marx have said?

Will FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) stick with Qatar as the site of the 2020 world cup? It shouldn't.

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