**Nepalese workers are dying in Qatar due to environmental problems**

**Submitted to:** Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes

**Submitted by:** Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights (consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council).

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**Preface**

Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights (Egypt) submits this report to the Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes; to clarify its observation on the most serious violations against Nepalese workers during their work in Qatar, particularly those related to their exposure to toxic substances that lead to death or injury by Serious diseases.

**Difficult and inhuman conditions experienced by migrant workers**

International human rights law requires all States to take the necessary and reasonable measures to protect the individuals'' right to life. This includes the issuance and enforcement of legislation that provides effective protection for workers engaged in activities that pose a grave threat to life. States are also obliged to collect information, conduct studies and report on risks associated with the types of hazardous work in its nature.

Since Qatar won the right to organize the World Cup in 2022, it has brought hundreds of thousands of migrant workers to build roads, stadiums and hotels; preparing to organize the World Cup. Qatar has almost 2 million migrant workers, estimated to 95% of its total workforce. 40% which is around 800 thousand workers who work in the construction sector are Nepalese migrant workers. Nepalese workers constitute the largest group of migrant workers in Qatar where they fill the vacuum of labor shortages in the country. Qatari authorities said that they spend $ 500 million a week on World Cup-related infrastructure projects[[1]](#footnote-1).

However, those workers almost live under a system of exclusion and isolation without any protection of human rights. The underlying cause of institutional abuse and exploitation of Nepalese workers and other migrant workers is in part due to the general view of the Qatari authorities towards the migrant community. Qatar viewed migrant workers from relatively underdeveloped countries with contempt and strong racial prejudice. Nepalese workers in Qatar are also forced to work 10 to 14 hours per day, often in extreme heat with only four hours of sleep and living in cramped areas that lack minimal human and basic services. According to Time magazine, a Nepali worker dies every day due to terrible working conditions in Qatar. Although monitoring so many Nepalese workers' deaths in Qatar during the preparation of the 2022 FIFA World Cup, no deaths were reported in the actual workplaces related to the huge event[[2]](#footnote-2).

The rights of workers and migrants are often directly affected by exposure to toxic and other hazardous substances. Indeed, one of the common denominators of several human rights violations involving businesses, is the poisoning of communities, workers and consumers with toxic substances. Either through extractive industries, pesticide use in agriculture, chemicals in manufacturing, emissions from power plants, factories and their Machines and etc. Certainly, this is as a result of the non-environmentally sound disposal of wastes. The exposure of people to hazardous and harmful substances without prior informed consent does not include only communities and workers on the front lines of toxic industrial activities but also the general public.

**Violations against Nepalese workers in Qatar through exposure to toxic substances**

Work injuries are the third largest cause of accidental deaths in Qatar, with the largest proportion of deaths due to falling from high places. However, these data are in sharp contrast to the information we have seen from the embassies of labor-exporting countries, which indicate a much higher mortality rate. Nepal's local media, for example, reported that Nepalese workers had died in Qatar from heart attacks. However, those workers were not in the age group at risk of heart attacks. There are painful humanitarian stories about the sufferings of the Nepalese in Qatar, which is a country that has a long history of torturing foreign workers and massive abuses. They have been known after international human rights organizations have declared the killing of hundreds of foreign workers from Southeast Asian countries in the construction of the 2022 World Cup facilities due to unsafe conditions, particularly, without any protective measures from toxic and other hazardous substances.

In February 2014, The Guardian newspaper reported that more than 400 Nepalese workers had died in the construction sites that will host the 2022 World Cup. Raising fears that the number of deaths could reach 4,000 at the start of the 2022 World Cup. Hence, the World Federation of Trade Unions issued a report on labor conditions in Qatar, warning that by 2022 the number of dead workers in Qatar will exceed the victims of 11 September. These figures raised questions about the total number of workers who died since Qatar won the 2010 World Cup. According to the newspaper, researchers found that foreign workers live in overcrowded housing that does not meet health standards. For instance, there are no air conditioners despite very high temperatures and suffers from sewage rash problems. The researchers also found that a number of labor camps do not have electricity and that a group of men live in a place with no running water[[3]](#footnote-3).

In addition to low wages and hard work, which sometimes exceeds 14 hours per day, as well as abuses and deprivation of freedom. It sometimes describes as slave trade in modern times. The observers believe that the small emirate 'Qatar', hiding many facts, it doesn't want the media To show the real price for organizing the World Cup on Qatari territories[[4]](#footnote-4).

According to another report published in The Guardian, in March 2017, the number of unnatural deaths among migrant workers, reached 1,800 since 2014. It is expected to increase by 7,000 at the beginning of the World Cup in 2022. On the other hand, the report does not mention the exact number of deaths of Nepalese migrant workers. It is reasonable to say that it should be very higher. The increasing number of deaths of migrant workers in Qatar has drawn the attention of the international community towards their plight. Which led the International Labor Organization (ILO) to establish an investigation into serious shortcomings in Qatar, in adhering to international labor standards and ILO guidelines for migrant workers. The pressure of the international community, including the world federation of Trade Unions, the International Labor Organization and international human rights organizations, forced the Qatari authorities to make changes in their labor laws in late 2017. These changes gave some legal protection to migrant workers but their implementation remained extremely poor[[5]](#footnote-5).

Human rights and other press reports have also revealed the disastrous situation of Nepalese workers in Doha. As, they have contracted Ebola, avian influenza and some other serious viruses. By contrast, the Qatari authorities deported them to their countries without treatment, which leading to outbreaks of these diseases in their home countries. According to the newspaper 'The Himalayan Times', there is a new disaster as infectious diseases spread among the Nepalese workers in Doha. Which pointing out that's because of the poor working environment and housing in Doha. Moreover, Workers' camps lack water, sanitation and electricity services. In addition to the spread of garbage around them, which has made it fertile ground for flies and insects. The camps are also crowded with residents in the absence of ventilation and employment factors. As well as working for long hours with high temperatures[[6]](#footnote-6).

A report made by the Ministry of Labor and Employment in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) shows that Nepalese migrant workers from almost all regions have died at work. About 3,272 Nepali migrants died in the workplace during the review period due to a heart attack, homicide, natural cause, suicide, traffic accident, workplace accident and other unspecified causes[[7]](#footnote-7).

This raises the question of why Nepalese workers died in Qatar during the construction of the 2022 World Cup buildings after more than 400 workers died in mysterious circumstances. According to the authorities concerned, more than half of the victims died of a heart attack. A human rights report, titled "Qatar is the hell of Nepali Workers". the heart doctor, Rakash, who examined the bodies of dead workers returning from Qatar, said 'no one believed the phenomenon of persistent heart attacks'. He stressed that the Qatari authorities hide the real reasons behind the deaths of workers. Most workers are young and in good physical condition[[8]](#footnote-8).

The reports published by some medical sources, revealed that the continuous exposure to toxic substances from multiple sources directly affects the public health. people may expose to these toxic substances as a result of inhalation of carbon monoxide. Which may lead to the incidence of some diseases such as diarrhea and respiratory crises that may lead to death[[9]](#footnote-9).

The Higher Committee also provided information on worker deaths in projects under its supervision. Of the 10 deaths of workers in World Cup projects between October 2015 and July 2017, the Higher Committee classified 8 deaths as non-work related. Seven of these deaths were caused by a heart attack and a severe respiratory failure. These expressions and causes obscure the underlying causes of deaths. As well, they make it impossible to determine whether they are relevant to working conditions, such as heat stress or exposure to toxic substances or gases[[10]](#footnote-10).

Construction workers in Qatar are exposed to risks including extreme heat, scorching sun, hazardous chemicals, equipment malfunctions, construction collapses, and other work accidents. Especially that long-term work in companies and workplaces that use paint expose workers to different types of respiratory diseases. These types of respiratory diseases caused by inhalation of toxic chemicals used to mix paints. Qatar currently does not publish data on injuries and deaths in the workplace. The Labor Code does not require employers or the government to publish such statements publicly[[11]](#footnote-11).

**Recommendations**

* Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights urges international community to pressure Qatar to improve the conditions of migrant workers, especially the Nepalese.
* The need to uncover the true causes of deaths of Nepalese migrant workers in Qatar. So as to avoid further deaths, as Qatar has ignored key recommendations from consultants hired to investigate the deaths of migrant workers.
* FIFA and the official sponsors of the 2022 World Cup must use their influence to pressure Qatar to improve working conditions for 1.5 million migrant workers. World Cup construction workers are not allowed to leave due to pressure to complete projects on time, often resulting in undetected reasons for deaths.

1. -عمال النبيال... معاناة بلا حدود، البيان الاماراتية، 18 اكتوبر 2018، الرابط <https://www.albayan.ae/one-world/arabs/2018-10-28-1.3394779>

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2. النيباليين في قطر، موسوعة ويكيبيديا، الرابط، <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nepalis_in_Qatar> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. عمال النيبال... معاناة بلا حدود، البيان الاماراتية، 18 اكتوبر 2018، الرابط <https://www.albayan.ae/one-world/arabs/2018-10-28-1.3394779> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. قطر جحيم العمال النيباليين، البوابة الالكترونية للوفد، 5 ابريل 2014، الرابط، [https://alwafd.news/عالمـي/654388-فرانس-24-قطر-جحيم-العمال-النيباليين](https://alwafd.news/%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%80%D9%8A/654388-%D9%81%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%B3-24-%D9%82%D8%B7%D8%B1-%D8%AC%D8%AD%D9%8A%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%86) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Anwar Alam, Nepalis in Qatar,Kathmandupost, 10/5/2018,link: <https://bit.ly/2HfIgPk> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. قطر يليكس تكشف ترحيل الدوحة لعمال مصابين بفيروسات خطرة لبلادهم دون علاج، اليوم السابع، 17 نوفمبر 2018، الرابط، <https://www.youm7.com/story/2018/11/17> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Over half of migrant workers from Tarai:  However, hill districts account for the majority of the women leaving Nepal for foreign employment, government report showsers, international organization for Migration, 19 October 2014, link, <http://nepal.iom.int/jupgrade/index.php/en/press-room/18-topic-details/115-art-latest-news-28> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. قطر جحيم العمال النيباليين، البوابة الالكترونية للوفد، 5 ابريل 2014، الرابط، [https://alwafd.news/عالمـي/654388-فرانس-24-قطر-جحيم-العمال-النيباليين](https://alwafd.news/%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%80%D9%8A/654388-%D9%81%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%B3-24-%D9%82%D8%B7%D8%B1-%D8%AC%D8%AD%D9%8A%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%86) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. For more information, check <https://www.hamad.qa/EN/news/2018/November/Pages/HMC-Cautions-about-the-Danger-of-Carbon-Monoxide-Poisoning-from-Burning-Charcoal-and-Wood-in-Unventilated-Spaces.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Over half of migrant workers from Tarai:  However, hill districts account for the majority of the women leaving Nepal for foreign employment, government report showsers, international organization for Migration, 19 October 2014, link, <http://nepal.iom.int/jupgrade/index.php/en/press-room/18-topic-details/115-art-latest-news-28> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. For more information, check <https://www.hrw.org/ar/report/2012/06/12/256330> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)