

JOINT STATEMENT

FIFA Yet to Back Workers' Remedy Fund Despite Growing Support Football's Governing Body Should Commit to Compensate Before World Cup Opens

18 October 2022

Index Number: MDE 22/6120/2022

[FIFA](#) has yet to officially commit to a fund to compensate migrant workers for harms and deaths in Qatar, despite public backing from at least seven national Football Associations, [four World Cup sponsors](#), former players, political leaders and, according to an opinion poll, a large majority of the public in 15 countries, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and FairSquare said today.

On May 17, five months ago, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and FairSquare, along with a global coalition of rights groups, unions, and fan support groups, launched the [#PayUpFIFA](#) campaign demanding that FIFA provide remedy, including financial compensation, for serious abuses including deaths, injuries, unpaid wages, and exorbitant recruitment costs. Barely one month ahead of the tournament, FIFA has not yet announced it will remedy abuses but says it is still considering the proposal.

“It’s an embarrassment that despite prominent footballers, football associations and sponsors supporting the [#PayUpFIFA](#) campaign and widespread popular support, FIFA has still failed to commit to calls for a remedy fund for many thousands of migrant workers who died, were injured, or had their wages stolen while making the World Cup possible,” Michael Page, deputy Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch said. “FIFA is failing in its human rights responsibilities and showing its disdain for the migrant workers who built the Qatar tournament infrastructure that will fuel its profits.”

On October 13, the Associated Press [reported](#) that FIFA Deputy Secretary General Alasdair Bell told a Council of Europe session that compensation is “certainly something that we’re interested in progressing.” However, just weeks from the World Cup opening game, neither FIFA nor Qatar have formally committed to set up a fund to remedy a range of harms including deaths of migrant workers who delivered the World Cup.

When FIFA, football’s governing body, awarded Qatar the World Cup hosting rights in 2010, it knew or should have known that the millions of migrant workers building an unprecedented US\$220 billion in infrastructure would face grave human rights risks. Yet FIFA neither imposed labor rights conditions nor undertook effective human rights due diligence. The organization has now failed to publicly commit to remedy these serious abuses with weeks remaining before the tournament’s start.

Since May, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and FairSquare have reached out to the [32](#) football associations (FAs) that have qualified for the 2022 World Cup, urging them to publicly support the remedy fund. Of these, at least seven of the qualifying FAs have so far publicly supported the remedy call, including the:

- Royal Belgian Football Association (RBFA),
- French Football Federation (FFF),
- English Football Association,
- Deutscher Fußball-Bund (German Football Association, DFB),
- Koninklijke Nederlandse Voetbalbond (Royal Dutch Football Association, KNVB),
- Football Association of Wales (FAW), and the
- United States Soccer Federation (U.S. Soccer)

In addition, the call has been supported by the Norwegian FA, while the Union of European Football Associations ([UEFA](#)), the umbrella organization for [55 national football associations, Working Group on Workers' Rights in Qatar](#) has been pressing FIFA to commit to a remedy program. On October 14, the UEFA Working Group [stated](#) that it requested FIFA to respond and commit to outstanding issues regarding migrant workers by the end of October. The call comes after their June [report](#) following a trip to Qatar stating that the issue of compensation was discussed at length and the Working Group “agreed the principle that any injury or death in any workplace in any country should be compensated.”

Of the 32 qualifying teams, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and/or FairSquare have held in person or online briefings with FAs including the DFB, the KNVB, the English FA, Belgian FA, German FA, Swiss FA, French FA, U.S. Soccer, Dansk Boldspil-Union (the Danish Football Union, DBU) as well as the UEFA Working Group. Three FAs, the Japanese FA, the Football Association of Wales, and Football Australia, provided written responses that provided no substantive information and did not respond to a recommendation that they advocate with FIFA to remediate the harms caused to migrant workers. However, the Football Association of Wales later [issued](#) a statement saying that, with the UEFA Working Group, they “agreed the principle that any injury or death should be compensated.”

At the Germany FA's (DFB's) human rights conference on September 19, President Bernd Neuendorf [expressed](#) his “unconditional support” for the remedy fund. The Dutch FA (KNVB) has also [supported](#) the compensation call, stating that victims or relatives should be compensated. The Dutch head coach Louis Van Gaal strongly [supported](#) the remedy call. The English FA [said](#) that they continue to push for the “principle of compensation” for the families of migrant workers who have lost their lives or have been injured in construction projects. The French Football Federation (FFF) [stated](#) that they are working with a dozen other federations on the creation of “a compensation fund for all those who have been victims of work accidents during the construction of the World Cup.” In response to media queries, the Brazil Football Confederation (CBF) coach also

[supported](#) the compensation fund. Among those not yet to publicly respond include 2026 host football associations Mexico and Canada.

A recent global opinion [poll](#) commissioned by Amnesty International shows that 67 percent of the 17,477 respondents in 15 countries also share the view that their national FAs should speak out publicly about the human rights issues associated with the Qatar World Cup, including calling for compensation for migrant workers. Four sponsors, AB InBev/Budweiser, Coca-Cola, Adidas and McDonald's have stated their support for the remedy call. Recently, [15 US members of Congress](#) and more than [120 French parliamentarians](#) also [wrote](#) to FIFA supporting the remedy call.

“The message from fans, football associations, political leaders, and sponsors is clear – it is time for FIFA to act and put things right for the migrant workers who made their flagship tournament possible,” said Steve Cockburn, Amnesty International’s Head of Economic Justice. “There is a clear choice for FIFA: dedicate a small proportion of World Cup revenues to make a huge difference to thousands of workers or do nothing and accept that the tournament will be indelibly stained by human rights abuses.”

There is also growing momentum from prominent footballers, coaches, and sports commentators supporting the #PayUpFIFA call including Tim Sparv, former Finnish football team captain, and Lise Klaveness, President of the Norwegian FA, who has long led on the need to address human rights abuses tied to this World Cup. During a joint [press briefing](#) by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and Fairsquare, Australian men’s former national football team captain Craig Foster announced he would donate his salary as a broadcaster at the World Cup tournament to deceased workers’ families, among others. Such initiatives should encourage the [global football industry](#), in particular [FAs](#), to go beyond cautiously worded statements. Other prominent footballers backing the call include former star players [Gary Lineker](#) and Alan Shearer.

As FIFA member associations, FAs are expected to follow FIFA’s own Human Rights Policy. Further, as bodies that, through their business relationships with FIFA, profit financially from revenues generated by the World Cup, FAs also have a responsibility under the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights to use their leverage to prevent and mitigate actual and potential adverse human rights impacts, which they cause, contribute to, or are linked with, including in Qatar.

Since 2018, Qatari authorities have [put in place](#) some promising measures to protect workers from wage theft and enhance access to justice, while introducing [reforms](#) to the kafala (sponsorship) system. However, [significant gaps](#) remain. These programs’ benefits have been limited due to their late introduction and narrow scope as they do not cover all workers, especially in case of [Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy-led initiatives](#) that offer better protections to a limited number of workers, or address abuses in the years before the systems were established. Crucially, significant implementation and enforcement gaps remain. For example, workers who have already left Qatar cannot

access the [labor committees](#) or a fund established to pay them when their employers fail to do so.

Even FAs that have spoken up should also go beyond cautiously stated words and acts of [symbolism](#) to use their platform to push for concrete actions that tangibly benefit migrant workers and their families.

“Compensation can have far reaching consequences to families who would rely on the fund to repay loans, for children’s education or to buy food. When FAs lend their voices, they are helping ensure that thousands of families who have lost their sole breadwinner repay outstanding loans or unpaid bills,” said Nick McGeehan from FairSquare.