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ANNIVERSARY

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EMERGENCY RESOLUTION ON QATAR

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FAIR DEAL
FOR WORKERS

CONFEDERATION
**SYNDICAT
EUROPÉEN
TRADE UNION**

EMERGENCY RESOLUTION ON QATAR



The ETUC is deeply concerned about the state of labour rights and basic liberties in Qatar, as the state takes advantage of the post-World Cup lull in international attention on it to renege on promises made and unpick existing progress on workers' rights. In these circumstances it fully supports the BWI and the ITUC in its view that the prospect of a Qatari government presiding over this year's International Labour Conference is not only inappropriate but would deal a devastating blow to the ILO's reputation and role as guardian of International Labour Standards.

For more than a decade, trade unions have worked to pressure the government of the gulf state of Qatar over its labour laws and treatment of migrant workers, especially the abusive kafala sponsorship system, following the country's successful bid to host the 2022 World Cup and embark on a massive infrastructure development programme.

The Qatari government's promises to the ILO Governing Body that it would seriously reform its legislation and work with unions to address the acute health & safety crisis killing countless construction workers and respect fundamental rights and principles, have not been implemented.

After the initial enthusiasm generated by the promises and some badly-needed changes in legislation, investigations by journalists now show that while kafala might be gone in name, debt bondage and unchecked law-breaking by Qatari companies mean that for many workers little has changed.

In addition, evidence has appeared that the Qatari government tried to inappropriately influence the decision-making of European Institutions and there are ongoing investigations into allegations that they sought to bribe political figures.

In this context, the recent nomination of the representative of Qatar to be the President of the 2023 ILC is outrageous.

The ILO's reputation and its guardianship of the fundamental principles and rights at work is of the utmost importance to European trade unions and their members. In the face of increased attacks on trade unions in Europe, we need the support of a strong, independent and respected ILO as part of our defence of our fundamental rights.

Unions must refuse to allow our institutions to be cheapened by allowing Qatar to enjoy an elevated status at the ILO, even as it breaks the promises made to the same organisation.

The ETUC and all its affiliates affirm:

Their opposition to granting the Presidency of the ILC to the Qatari government in Geneva this June. Should the candidacy to the Presidency of the ILC of the Qatari government not be urgently withdrawn, affiliates will be called to express their objection in the vote at the Conference, and use other means of action to protest against this unacceptable decision. In this respect, it is further alarmed to learn that the designated "workers" representatives who will take part in the Qatar so-called tripartite delegation are in fact senior officials of Qatar Energy.

The ETUC therefore commits to support:

The calls of the global labour movement to develop a timebound roadmap towards ratification of Conventions 87 and 98 on freedom of association, the right to organise, and the right to collective bargaining, and for amending national law and practices to bring them into conformity with those standards in order to enable migrant workers to exercise and protect their rights;

The establishment of a migrant workers' centre to help workers and their organisations improve their understanding of labour laws and enforcement, work together, develop leadership skills, and defend their rights, and to act as a vital conduit of independent worker engagement with the ILO office to allow it to operate as a tripartite institution.

Make the new joint worker committees compulsory for all companies, and commit to them being the first steps to fully respecting all the fundamental ILO conventions and allowing workers to form and join trade unions to finally give workers the ability to defend their own interests;

to provide remedy to migrant workers who have faced a range of abuses to make the World Cup 2022: Qatar needs to step up and put in place a comprehensive program using a participatory process including workers and trade unions to provide remedy, including financial compensation, that is easily accessible to migrant workers and their families. This fund should be retroactive. It should be easily accessible to migrant workers and their families even from their home countries.

The ETUC and its affiliates further ask European governments to:

Use their votes at the ILC to hold Qatar to account for its broken promises, by opposing the nomination of Qatar as Conference President.

Lobby the government of Qatar, via its embassies and any other suitable means, to: immediately facilitate the creation of a migrant workers centre; to greatly increase protections for labour advocates in the country to allow them to support workers understand and access their rights without fear of persecution; for it to work towards ratification of all the ILO fundamental conventions; and for it to greatly increase access to remedy and compensation for all workers, including those suffering harm before the labour reforms as well as since, and regardless of their current country of residence.