

FOI –0176-17 Qatar World Cup Digest (2)

From: British Embassy Doha

Sent: 29 November 2016

To: Department for Culture Media & Sport; FCO Gulf Team

Cc: British Embassy Doha; Head Gulf Team; Deputy Head of Gulf Team; FCO Gulf Team; Department for Culture Media & Sport

Subject: Updated Qatar World Cup 2022 Lines – Final

All

With thanks to those who sent me updates last week. Attached is a final version which I hope we can share more widely and use ahead of the GCC summit next week, and beyond.

We can look at this again in **early March** ahead of the Qatar UK investment conference later that month to ensure they remain relevant and robust as this will definitely come up (the Guardian specifically).

Shout if I have missed anything.

Thanks

British Embassy | PO Box 3 | Doha | State of Qatar

15:52 15 May 2016 Readout of meeting between HMA Doha and Hassan Al Thawadi, Head of the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy of the 2022 Qatar World Cup

From: British Embassy Doha

Sent: 15 May 2016 15:52

To: British Embassy Doha

Cc: Ajay Sharma (Sensitive)HMA British Embassy Doha; British Embassy Doha; FCO Gulf Team; Deputy Head Arabian Peninsula & Iran Department; Neil Bush (Sensitive) Head of Arabian Peninsula

& Iran Department; Human Rights & Democracy Department; Deputy Head of Human Rights & Democracy Department; CSSF Programme Manager

Subject: HMA meeting with Hassan Al Thawadi - 15 May 2016

Ajay met Hassan Al Thawadi, Head of the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy of the 2022 Qatar World Cup, this afternoon to discuss his forthcoming trip to the UK. [Redacted]

British Embassy Doha

14:37 24 January 2016 Readout from meeting between HMA British Embassy Doha and Qatari Minister of Labour on 14 January 2016

From British Embassy Doha

Sent: 24 January 2016 14:37

To: FCO Gulf Team

Cc: Ajay Sharma (Sensitive) HMA Doha; British Embassy Doha; Human Rights & Democracy Department; Rob Fenn (Sensitive) Head of Human Rights & Democracy Department; British Embassy Dubai; Deputy Head Arabian Peninsula & Iran Department; Head Gulf Team

Subject: HMA Doha's meeting with the Minister of Labour 14 January 2016

1) Apologies for the delay in writing this up, but on 14 January, Ajay saw Minister Khuleifi, Minister for Labour and Social Affairs. Kuleifi gave us the latest on migrant worker rights:

- 900,000 workers are now enrolled in the electronic payments system – the Minister said he would not rest until everyone was enrolled. In November and December complaints had decreased thanks to the new system.
- There are now 350 labour inspectors, and they are using the Arab Labour Organisation to train them. They were aiming for a total of 400 labour inspectors by the end of 2016.
- The number of labour inspectors is 1: 6,000 labourers in Qatar. In the western world the ratio is usually 1:10,000 and in the developing world it is 1: 40,000.

- Ministry of Municipalities and Urban Planning has signed agreements for 6 more permanent labour cities, but it will take time to complete them. So far two had opened, with many facilities including an Olympic cricket stadium and five cinemas.
 - Workers' complaints kiosks now operate in 11 languages and have been publicised in the newspapers and on the side of karwa taxis.
 - Domestic workers are still under the MOI's area of responsibility, but he described it as the next big issue he had to deal with. The Kuwaiti parliament had approved a draft law on domestic workers which he was studying.
- 2) The Minister stressed that improving conditions for migrant labourers was one of the Emir's highest priorities, [Redacted].
- 3) HMA asked if there were areas where we could cooperate to help the Qataris improve their standards and their image. They agreed one area of cooperation could be around the UK's experience of helping non-native speakers to access government services. The Minister was enthusiastic about this idea and offered to send his key directors to London to speak with the relevant people.

[Redacted]– if you have any advice on how we could take this idea forward, please get in touch – I imagine that DCLG might have a lot of experience in terms of encouraging access to local government services?

15:39 15 May 2014 Diplomatic telegram from British Embassy Doha about Migrant Workers and Proposed Changes to Labour Law

From: British Embassy Doha

Sent: 15 May 2014 15:39

To: Foreign Office London

Subject: QATAR: MIGRANT WORKERS AND PROPOSED CHANGES TO LABOUR LAW

Summary

Qatari government announces proposed changes to labour law after widespread international pressure to reform the current sponsorship system. Reforms criticised for not going far enough, and for lack of implementation timetable. Approval now needed from Qatar's Chamber of Commerce and Shura Council before law is passed.

Proposed Changes

- 1) On 14 May, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Labour held a joint press conference to announce a proposed overhaul of the employment sponsorship (kafala) system.[Redacted].
- 2) [Redacted]
- 3) The main reforms proposed by the Qatari government include:
 - Employers would no longer sponsor their workforce. Instead the government would issue work visas and an electronic exit visa. Employers would have 72 hours to object to an exit visa at which point it would be referred to an arbitration committee.
 - Employees would be allowed to move to a different employer without permission (NOC letter) at the end of their contract or after five years, whichever time period was the shortest.
 - Wages would be paid electronically
 - The fines for employers who withheld their employees' passports would increase from 10,000QR to 50,000 QR (around £8,000) per confiscated passport.
 - Penalties would be given for the late payment of wages and non-adherence to new accommodation standards.
 - The number of labour inspectors would increase by 50% from 200 to 300.
 - The reforms would apply to all workers including professionals, labourers and domestic workers.
- 4) On the face of it, the proposed reforms represent a significant change to the labour laws. They are effectively a step towards abolishing the kafala system and addressing other migrant worker human rights violations. The reforms represent a clear desire by the Qatari government to respond to the mounting accusations of human rights violations towards the labour force in the build up to the 2022 World Cup after a campaign spearheaded by the Guardian newspaper, international trade unions and NGOs. The joint press conference was also a step forward in terms of a public communications effort by the Ministries of Labour and Interior.

5) [Redacted]

Wider reactions

- 6) There has been criticism from international organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch that the reforms do not go far enough. Disappointed expats in Doha have responded sceptically to the suggested reforms, pointing out there is no suggestion that the exit visa system will be abolished entirely, and strict contract terms could still result in the exploitation of workers.
- 7) Local Arabic media has welcomed the announcement, and praised the fact it covers domestic workers who are excluded from existing labour laws. There has been less enthusiasm from Qatari

businessmen and citizens, with warnings that changes should be monitored to ensure employers remain sufficiently protected.

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