

# KEY JUDGEMENTS FEBRUARY 2023

**Title:** Trafficking for Labour Exploitation Qatar FIFA World Cup 2022

**Location:** Qatar

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## INTRODUCTION

Migrant labour is an important element of Qatar's economy as a receiving market and the income generated through migrant remittances to home countries is also essential to those national economies and for families there. Trafficker groups operate within this umbrella, often in both recruiter nations and demand areas.

The 2022 FIFA World Cup event is over. Thousands of migrant workers in Qatar will be without work as the roles they travelled to Qatar for, such as event security or hospitality, are no longer required. Construction workers face similar abandonment. These migrants will be extremely vulnerable to exploitation, especially due to their visa status and debt to recruiters.

*Thank you to Equidem for their insights, which helped inform this assessment.*

## WE ASSESS AS FOLLOWS

### RECRUITMENT

- a) Migrant workers in Qatar mainly come from South West Asia including; Nepal, Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka, with good numbers from East and West Africa.
- b) Recruitment chains can be complex, with several 'agents' in the chain and the final link often being community figures or relations.
- c) Many have paid high recruitment fees to recruitment agents in their home countries, where opportunities are advertised by word of mouth and on social media. Most borrow the money to pay these fees and the debt (bonds) can take years to work off. Debts may be transferable to families should the migrant worker cease to be economically active.
- d) Leisure and services sectors, both within existing business structures, and for the informal leisure and catering sectors that are temporary, require significant additional labour. This presents an opportunity for traffickers to recruit from vulnerable communities and deploy them.

## DEMAND

- a) Qatar operates a Kafala-like system which essentially gives the employer total control of the migrant worker, despite reforms designed to enable migrant workers to switch employment. Abuses are commonplace and travel and ID documents are routinely confiscated.
- b) Non-payment or withholding of wages is common leaving workers destitute, unable to pay their debts to schedule or afford safe passage home.
- c) Qatar does not permit non-government organisations that offer support services to migrant workers to operate in the country. The national hotline for exploitation is not seen as a beneficial service. Victims of exploitation are left to make formal reports to institutions such as their nations' embassies and do not have access to information in their languages. Organisations like Equidem are invaluable actors to advise victims and assist.
- d) Scrutiny of businesses using "contract labour" in Qatar is understood to be below standard. This pattern is likely to be replicated wherever major events take place across the globe.

## MONEY (REVENUE)

- a) Recruited workers in originating countries tend to come from the informal labour market and therefore exist mostly in cash economies. They naturally gravitate to cash payments when trafficked / migrant labour, making access to international cash transfer systems essential.
- b) In Qatar, the rules require payments to workers to be digital or bank transfer. Some workers may be given ATM cards to show compliance, but even these are open to excessive charges being levied on cash withdrawals. Many employers still pay workers in cash, making it more difficult for any labour governance system to track digital payments.
- c) Both systems of remuneration lead to a stream of small payments to home countries. Larger sums to a third party are worthy of scrutiny.

## INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS

- 1) How many migrant / exploited workers and what demographic are abandoned in Qatar and how are they accessing support?
- 2) What corporations or groups are suspected of trafficking/exploitation in Qatar?
- 3) Are there key recruiter points of contact in recruitment countries that can be identified?

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