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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Institut International pour les Droits et le Développement, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[18 August 2021]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



Qatar's sports diplomacy: African journalists condemn United Arab Emirates' 'manipulation' over Qatar World Cup

In November 2022, Qatar will host the Football World Cup, which will be held for the first time in an Arab country. Qatar has hosted nearly 450 international competitions over the past 20 years. Organizing the biggest sports event in the world organized in a Muslim- Arab country is a sufficiently rare event in the history of the region, caught between crises and permanent instability for decades, to rejoice a minimum.

Manipulate African Journalist

The Federation of African Journalists (FAJ) has condemned what it calls attempts by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to “manipulate” African journalists into speaking out against the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar.

In a resolution released on June 2021, the FAJ expressed “dismay” over efforts by the UAE to “manipulate journalists’ organisations in Africa to issue public statements or campaign against the 2022 FIFA World Cup”.¹

The resolution, adopted at the African Journalists Leaders’ Conference held in June in the Ghanaian capital Accra, also called on football’s world governing body, FIFA, as well as the regional body, the Confederation of African Football, to investigate and sanction those responsible.

FAJ President Sadiq Ibrahim Ahmed clarified that at least eight African journalist associations had been contacted by people they believe are connected to high-ranking UAE officials, who pressured them to hold news conferences and speak out against Qatar hosting the World Cup and to encourage African teams to boycott the tournament.

He said the approaches to the associations were all made within the last months (February to June 2021), with the most recent reported in June, and that they were political demands “under the pretext of ‘labour rights violations’ in Qatar”.

“FAJ and its affiliated unions cannot allow African journalists to be used as if Africans are cheap people that can be manipulated and used to settle political scores,” Ahmed said.

“We are not interested in political disputes in the Gulf. Our main mandate is to defend journalists and their interests as well as media freedom.”

The resolution also cited concerns that the “unprecedented interference” could compromise reporting by African journalists on the tournament.

Affail Monney, president of the Ghana Journalist Association and executive board member of the FAJ.

“We reject any attempt at manipulation to use us or to set us on a collision course with Qatar.”

In its resolution, the FAJ also noted the “unparalleled progress” made by Qatar in improving workers’ rights.

Other possible manipulation used to settle political scores

IRDG noticed that there is a possible link between the two campaigns in Africa and the Northern European countries such as Denmark, Finland and Norway, where Norway took a unique initiative under the pressure of some parties to vote for a motion to boycott of World Cup 2022 claiming that Qatar violates the human rights. In the run-up to the vote, Ole Kristian Sandvik, spokesman of the Norwegian Supporters Alliance (NSA), said the matches in the

¹ Firstpost.com, Olympic 2020: Norway decides against boycotting FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar.

Gulf state in 2022 will "unfortunately be like playing on a cemetery," using a term commonly employed by opponents of Norway's participation.²

Norway At an extraordinary congress called by the Norwegian Football Federation (NFF), 368 delegates voted for a motion rejecting a boycott of World Cup 2022, while 121 were in favour.

The movement calling for a boycott began when the Tromsø IL club spoke out against alleged human rights abuses in February 2021 at the same time with the campaign in Africa.

Norway witnessed a hot topic between Norwegian organization (GNRD) and its relation with UAE of money laundering from 2015 until now which ended with the imprisonment of the head of the organization in 2019. The Norwegian organization who still has a very wide active network used to work for the benefit of the UAE to offend the State of Qatar.³

Make way for the 2022 World Cup

The International Labor Organization, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch set down their bags in Doha where a lot of progress is being noted. The latest cutting-edge technologies will be used to curb the legendary heat wave during the competitions. Better still, the country has taken "bold steps" to strengthen the protection of the rights of migrant workers, according to the testimonies of two key experts, namely, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, Tomoya Obokata, and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, Felipe Gonzalez Morales, both independent United Nations human rights experts. So, make way for the 2022 World Cup.

Sharan Burrow, General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), expressed support for the FAJ's resolution in a statement on Twitter. Burrow thanked the FAJ for "rejecting [the] shameful approach by UAE detractors who themselves still exploit migrant workers" and said the "focus needs to be on implementation of new laws in Qatar that protect workers".

Last year, the ITUC said workers' rights had significantly improved in Qatar following a series of reforms.

ILO announced – In a historic move, the State of Qatar has introduced major changes to its labour market, ending the requirement for migrant workers to obtain their employer's permission to change jobs, while also becoming the first country in the region to adopt a non-discriminatory minimum wage.

Following the adoption on 30 August 2020 of Law No. 19 of 2020, migrant workers can now change jobs before the end of their contract without first having to obtain a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from their employer. This new law, coupled with the removal of exit permit requirements earlier in the year, effectively dismantles the "kafala" sponsorship system and marks the beginning of a new era for the Qatari labor market.

Qatar has been able to comply with the norms of standards with regard to criticism. It is also a big opportunity for this small country to build on this event in order to give a big boost to the social modernization of the country. This will undoubtedly have a ripple effect on the entire region where labor law remains a concept, hitherto non-existent. All of this makes the state on the Persian Gulf a model of success with prospects and great growth potential.

IRDG finds that there is perceived envy and jealousy of Qatar hosting the World Cup, from some neighbours in the GCC region and from discrimination parties in the West. It was argued that this is one of the fronts where the media battle continues, as some states/stakeholders are (or had been) allegedly supporting media attacks on Qatar's hosting

² NTB scanpix, Norway Today, posted by, Pieter Wijnen, Oct 2018. Human Rights activist guilty of embezzlement in Stavanger.

³ The mysterious organization: <https://www.aftenbladet.no/magasini/On537E/the-mysterious-organisation>.

of the World Cup, despite Doha's significant strides around human rights reform vis a vis migrant workers.⁴

IRDG share the voice of the African Journalist Leader's conference

- Reject with contempt these despicable attempts to use and manipulate journalists and their organizations as tools to challenge the organization of 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar.
- Call upon CAF and FIFA to investigate and penalize the people and forces behind this unprecedented interference in global soccer events.
- Global stakeholders should be supportive and encouraging of the World Cup being hosted in a Middle Eastern and Islamic country, especially if the shining light gives the region something unifying to rally around, and further engenders human rights and labor market improvements in Qatar and across the region.

The Stronger Africa's Anti-racism Stance Campaign Coordinator of PID, Ernest Iyagi said, "We are excited that African migrants are happy about the growing spaces for rights enjoyment in this tiny Gulf country".⁵

IRDG commends of Qatar achievements concerning her 2022 FIFA World Cup host and deplores the UAE's role in manipulating a number of press organizations during the last period, to carry out organized campaigns against the FIFA World Cup, which Qatar will host in 2022.

IRDG finds that there is a tone of 'superiority' as well as outright double standards to the Northern European national team protests and calls for boycott. IRDG calls this protested team to encourage Qatar, moving out of any political agenda, calling for accountability, offering technical expertise, engaging in multilateralism on the area of human rights.

Qatar must demonstrate during the World Cup 2022 and thereafter that it is not only able to host the greatest show on earth, from a logistical perspective, but that it is indeed an open and tolerant society while an openness does not mean that the state compromises its own societal norms to satisfy demands from 'western' media and stakeholders.

⁴ Chatham House Rule, April 2021: Qatar World Cup 2022: Soft Power, Human Rights, and Labour Market Reforms. The Global Perspectives Forum.

⁵ Leadership-2021 Africa Day: CBO Calls For Stronger Africa's Anti-racism Stance.