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Plenary sitting

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B7-0535/2013

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 122 of the Rules of Procedure

on Qatar: situation of migrant workers
(2013/2952(RSP))

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on behalf of the ALDE Group

B7-0535/2013

**European Parliament resolution on Qatar: situation of migrant workers
(2013/2952(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its resolution of 24 March 2011 on European Union relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council
 - having regard to the EU-GCC Joint Council and Ministerial Meeting in Manama, Bahrain on 30 June 2013
 - having regard to the United Nations Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families of 18 December 1990,
 - having regard to Qatar ratifying the ILO Convention concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour (C029) on 12 March 1998,
 - having regard to the Decisions of the Qatari Minister of Civil Service and Housing on Applying Labour Law No. 14/2004 on regulating the conditions and procedures for issuing licenses to Qatar nationals wanting to employ foreign workers of 22 August 2005, and Qatar's Sponsorship Law No. 4 of 2009,
 - having regard the mission statement by UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, François Crépeau on 10 November 2013
 - having regard to the Policy Document on Migration of the International Trade Union Confederation General Council of 18 October 2011,
 - having regard to Human Rights Watch's World Report 2013 on Qatar, Amnesty International's Annual Report 2013 on Qatar and the Norwegian Peace building Research Center's Policy Briefing on Qatar's human rights record of 1 October 2013,
 - having regard to Rule 122 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Qatar has a population of 2 million, and nearly 88% of the workforce are migrants employed largely in construction, services and domestic works; whereas giving this number Qatar has the highest ratio of migrant workers to domestic population in the world; whereas at least 500.000 more migrant workers are expected in Qatar to accelerate the construction in preparation of the 2022 football World Cup in Qatar; whereas India and Nepal are the two main countries of origin of the migrant workers in Qatar;
- B. whereas according to the coordinator of the Nepalese community in the Middle East, Narinra Bad, 70 Nepalese workers died at their workplace since 2012; whereas several European newspapers reported higher numbers of deaths, including the deaths of 44 Nepalese workers from 4 June to 8 August 2013;

- C. whereas the International Labour Organization warns that Qatar is failing to fully implement the international convention banning the use forced or compulsory labour which it has ratified in 1998;
- D. whereas the Chairman of Qatar's National Human Rights Committee (NHRC), Ali bin Samik Al Marri, rejects the reports of several European newspapers on Nepalese workers being treated like "slaves" and claims as "false and exaggerated" the news on dozens of Nepalese workers having died while working in Qatar in recent months;
- E. whereas the Chairman of the NHRC nevertheless admitted that "there had been some problems" but "he and the government were doing their utmost to put these right"; whereas Qatari authorities announced that labour laws will be amended and accommodation for workers is being built;
- F. whereas the visa sponsorship rules known as "kafala-system" mean that workers cannot change jobs without their employer's permission and cannot leave the country unless their employer signs an exit permit; whereas the "kafala-system" is often exploited as employers withhold the workers' passports and wages, as well as workers being charged fees as high as \$3,500 to obtain a visa from the "kafeel" or sponsor leaving the migrant workers with excessively high debts; whereas hundreds of unlicensed labour agents are operating in Qatar;
- G. whereas there are reports of further violation of workers' rights in Qatar, including false promises on the nature and type of work by recruiters and sponsors, employer obligations on wages and working conditions being not met, workers being forced to live in squalid overcrowded labour camps and denial of the right to form unions;
- H. whereas migrant workers are detained and deported for solely "running away" from often abusive employers; whereas administrative detention is often very long, in some cases as much as one year;
- I. whereas domestic work, dominated by women migrant workers, lacks labour legislation protecting them which make women migrant workers particularly vulnerable; whereas in its presentation to the Universal Periodic Review Working Group in 2009, the Qatari delegation stated that "the competent authorities were considering a draft law on domestic workers" but no substantive progress has been announced by the Government on this law; whereas women with babies and children are held in detention centers in conditions which are in clear violation of the principles of the best interest of the child;
- J. whereas the International Trade Union Federation lodged a complaint to the Ministry of Labour against six Qatari companies in March 2013; whereas the Labour Relations Department of the Ministry of Labour in Qatar received 6000 worker complaints in 2012, while the Indian Embassy in Qatar received 1500 complaints until May 2013;
- K. whereas the International Labour Organisation has established a tripartite committee to review the evidence and make recommendations to the Government of Qatar on how to comply with its international commitments;

1. Regrets the death of migrant workers in Qatar and expresses its condolences to the families of the victims; Is concerned on the situation of migrant workers, including long working hours, hazardous working conditions, the workers being unpaid for months, had their passports confiscated, forced to live in overcrowded labour camps, denied the right to form unions, and without access to free drinking water in extreme heat.
2. Insists on the Qatari authorities that labour standards apply to all migrant workers, including the workers carrying out the infrastructural projects in preparation to the football World Cup 2022 in Qatar; calls on the Qatari authorities to effectively implement existing legislation, including by enforcing the prohibition against the confiscation of passports, prosecute violations and impose meaningful sanctions on companies and individuals who violate laws designed to protect migrants' rights.
3. Calls on Qatari authorities to adopt legislation on domestic workers that include meaningful labour rights' protection and effective compliance mechanisms and to establish a minimum wage for all workers.
4. Calls on the Qatari authorities to abolish the "kafala-system" and replace it by a regulated open labour market; Points out that the right of association and to self-organisation should be recognized for all workers, including migrants.
5. Is concerned about the detention of individuals for the sole purpose of having "run away" from their employer and calls on the end of this kind of practices; calls on the authorities to provide appropriate detention conditions, and to ensure that all migrants deprived of their liberty have easy access to means of contacting their family, consular services and a lawyer, have access to an interpreter, and have the right to promptly challenge their detention.
6. Calls for the establishment of more shelters for migrant workers, with a special focus on shelters for women and children, suitable for their needs; welcomes the announcement made on 9 November 2013 of the construction of accommodation for 60.000 workers to be opened in December 2013.
7. Welcomes the proposal by relevant governmental authorities to conduct investigations into all allegations and the promise of the Qatari authorities to increase the number of labour inspectors who should monitor the enforcement of proper labour laws; reminds that labour inspectors should be well trained on human rights standards, and the need of interpreters.
8. Welcomes the statement of the Lusail Real Estate Company not to tolerate breaches of labour or health and safety law and the promise to take appropriate actions as well as the announcement by the government of a blacklisting of companies that abuse migrant workers; Welcomes the decision of the Qatar's National Human Rights Committee to set up an office for the Nepalese community to receive complains.
9. Calls on Qatar to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

10. Calls on Qatar to ratify ILO Conventions, including on migrant workers, freedom of association, right to organize and collective bargaining, domestic workers and private employment agencies and to consider seeking technical assistance from the International Labour Organization to ensure Qatari legislation and practice is in line with these Conventions.
11. Welcomes the call of the international footballers' union, FIFPro, for independent workplace experts appointed by FIFA and the ILO to be given access to all sites and powers to make binding recommendations to ensure international labour standards are respected in Qatar.
12. Reminds FIFA that its responsibility goes beyond the development of football and the organisation of competitions and urges FIFA to send a clear and strong message to Qatar to avoid that the football World Cup 2022 is delivered by the assistance of modern slavery.
13. Instructs its president to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the government and parliaments of the Member States, the Government and Parliament of the State of Qatar, the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA), International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the UN High Commissioner for human rights.