Press release | 21.11.2013

Qatar world cup and human rights

FIFA must belatedly intervene on slave labour

The European Parliament is today set to adopt a resolution on Qatar and the situation of migrant workers, notably in the context of the football world cup in 2022. There are concerns that the resolution could be watered-down or delayed by the centre-right EPP political group however. Ahead of the vote, Green MEP and chair of the subcommittee on human rights **Barbara Lochbihler** said:

“We need to send a clear message on the situation in Qatar, both to the Qatari government and international football authorities. The situation regarding migrant labour in Qatar is alarming. The government must effectively implement existing legislation, reform labour law and abolish the so-called Kafala system, which pushes thousands of migrants into a situation of forced labour. At the same time, FIFA must be reminded that it cannot continue to carry on with business-as-usual and brush the major human rights concerns in Qatar under the table. FIFA must belatedly take concrete steps to ensure the preparations for the 2022 world cup in Qatar do not lead to further human rights violations.

“The draft resolution negotiated by EP political groups, which is set to be adopted this afternoon, raises all these issues. However, the EPP group now refuses to sign the resolution. The EPP group specifically wants to delete any reference to the Kafala system and forced labour. This goes to the heart of the issue and it is unacceptable to ignore it. The Greens are pushing to oppose this and ensure the European Parliament adopts a strong resolution.

"The tragic deaths of 44 Nepalese workers last month in a construction accident related to the world cup preparations is sadly the tip of an iceberg. Migrant workers account for the lion's share of Qatar's workforce, with an additional 500,000 foreign workers expected to join preparation efforts for the world cup. These workers are subject to terrible conditions and - without a concerted effort on the part of Qatar, all involved companies and the football authorities - the world cup could lead to a further deterioration in this already shocking situation.

"The response of FIFA to date has been hesitant. While it is welcome that FIFA president Blatter travelled to Qatar to discuss the issue with the authorities, this is not enough and yet another proof that FIFA tends to limit responsibility to Qatar alone. FIFA must have been aware of the existing problems in Qatar before awarding the country the world cup. They should have conditioned their decision on the implementation of concrete human rights reforms, but decided to simply push ahead. It is not too late for FIFA and UEFA to at last shoulder their responsibility. Together with the active support of its European members, FIFA must send a clear message to Qatar to take immediate steps to address the human-rights situation of migrants."

* Yesterday, the Conference of Presidents of the European Parliament endorsed the proposal of the Greens to organise a hearing on migrants' rights in the context of the world cup in Qatar in the EP's subcommittee on human rights next year. It was also decided to send a fact-finding delegation to Qatar in early 2014.

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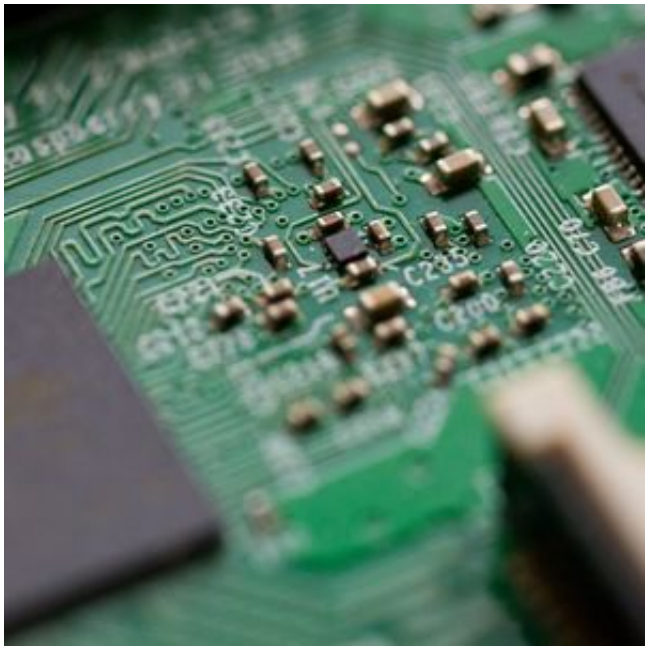


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Barbara Lochbihler

Member

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