



THE COST OF GLORY



Aparajita Burjwal reflects on modern slavery in Qatar, in the wake of the FIFA World Cup

When 42-year-old Rishi Kandel's body was returned to Kathmandu in Nepal, his wife barely had time to grapple with the shock before being forced to come to terms with the harsh reality he left behind – a debt worth £500 that he had borrowed at 24% interest per annum, to pay the recruitment agent's fees.

Rishi, like many others, had gone to Qatar in hopes of building a better life for himself and his family. He was dead within five months of his arrival. His employer refused to pay any compensation because he died of 'sudden death

syndrome' – an unexpected and sudden cardiac arrest without an identifiable cause – a term often used as a pretext to avoid further investigation.

At the time of writing, Rishi Kandel is one of the 6,500 migrant workers who have died so far in Qatar in the run up to the FIFA World Cup 2022.

When Qatar was announced as host, the country sprang into action. Building seven sprawling football stadiums, an airport, malls, hotels – even an entire city, the country was set to become the most luxurious concrete jungle in history. For those living in developing

countries, this presented an opportunity to earn a better living. Little did they know that they would soon be caught in a vicious trap beneath the very opulent world they helped build.

Qatar's unmatched luxury stands atop a starkly different world. Two million migrant workers live in crammed, unhygienic and unsafe labour camps, infested with cockroaches and rodents. They have little to no access to basic amenities such as clean drinking water, toilets, food, clothes and bedding.

According to most workers, the agreement they signed

before entering Qatar was replaced by a new contract upon arrival, which they were then forced to sign. The new terms meant their actual wage would be less than half what was promised, without any additional benefits. In fact, most of them have not been paid for months. Not only are they unable to pay off debts and send money to their families, they don't have enough money to buy groceries and access basic healthcare.

FIFA, the international football association and organiser of the tournament, stands to profit millions, if not billions, of dollars from the World Cup. Despite its name

becoming synonymous with football over the years, it hasn't been able to outrun the increasingly darker shadows of corruption, bribery and impropriety. FIFA's decision to award Qatar the hosting rights for 2022 has been mired in controversy, with growing accusations of bribery and corruption. In October 2021, the US Department of Justice found Qatar guilty of bribing FIFA officials to win the bid for 2022.

Corruption isn't new to FIFA. It's been dabbling with unfair business practices since the 70s – perhaps why it remains unfazed in the face of similar allegations today. It ignores reports of human rights'

violations. FIFA's website claims that it adheres to a strict human rights policy, but the reality is starkly different.

This is a world that has been strung together by the sweat and blood of migrant workers, who also bear the burden of upholding it throughout the spectacle. If we don't put the spotlight on this abuse, it will only continue. Participating in the tournament, either physically or remotely, is a form of endorsement of this abuse. The larger question here isn't why this should matter to us – but what we are willing to ignore to watch a football game.

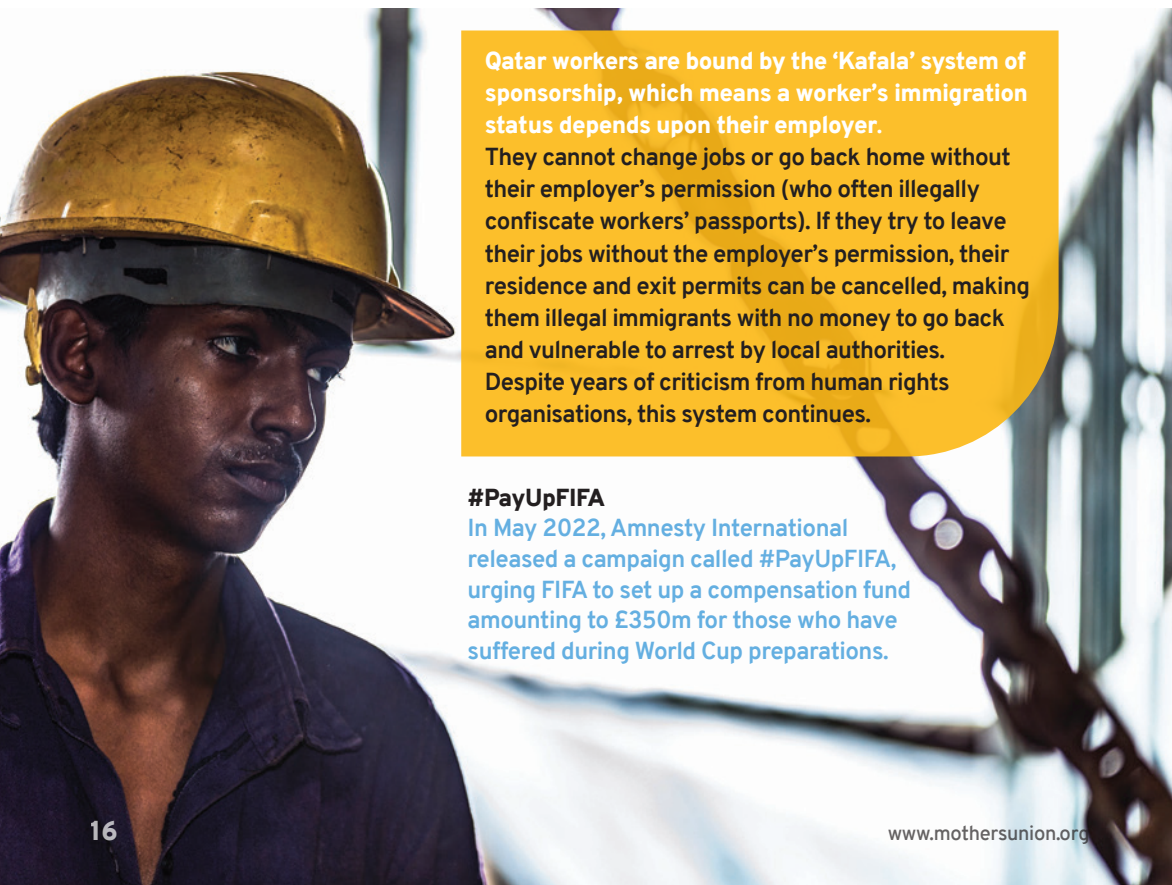
The World Cup may achieve its glory, but at what cost?

Qatar workers are bound by the 'Kafala' system of sponsorship, which means a worker's immigration status depends upon their employer.

They cannot change jobs or go back home without their employer's permission (who often illegally confiscate workers' passports). If they try to leave their jobs without the employer's permission, their residence and exit permits can be cancelled, making them illegal immigrants with no money to go back and vulnerable to arrest by local authorities. Despite years of criticism from human rights organisations, this system continues.

#PayUpFIFA

In May 2022, Amnesty International released a campaign called #PayUpFIFA, urging FIFA to set up a compensation fund amounting to £350m for those who have suffered during World Cup preparations.



Modern slavery is abusive, exploitative and often invisible.

Around 40 million people are estimated to be entrapped by modern slavery worldwide. It includes forced labour, debt bondage, forced marriage and human trafficking.

We are surrounded by people trapped in modern slavery – such as those who clean and cook in homes, serve in restaurants, work in shopping malls and cinemas, drive cars and taxis, work in factories and construction. As we go about our daily lives, we engage with these people without realising that they may be victims of slavery.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

The Clewer Initiative raises awareness of modern slavery, mobilising the church and communities to take action. Here are some suggestions from them of how you can make a difference:

ANTI-SLAVERY DAY 2022

In the lead up to Anti-Slavery Day in October, churches, communities, businesses and individuals are encouraged to sign-up to the pledge to Make It Slavery Free. Find ideas about what this might look like in different contexts here: <https://theclewerinitiative.org/campaigns/anti-slavery-day-make-it-slavery-free>

THE SAFE CAR WASH APP

This is an easy way to support the fight against modern slavery and can help spot exploitation in a local car wash: <https://theclewerinitiative.org/campaigns/safe-car-wash>

In 2021, MU branches crocheted links for chains to represent the approximate number of modern-day slaves across their region. For example, 985 were made in Bristol and used as part of services for Anti-Slavery Day 2021. Members in the Diocese of Canterbury made 191 links for the chain displayed in the cathedral crypt. Tunstall branch reused their knitted chains on a church Christmas tree, a sobering counterpoint to the usual festivities, to highlight victims of abuse and exploitation.

CHILDREN IN THE SHADOWS RESOURCE

Learn more about how modern slavery affects children in the UK and beyond, through interviews, stories, statistics, Bible study, prayer and discussion questions: <https://theclewerinitiative.org/campaigns/children-in-the-shadows>

ORDINARY ACTIVISTS CAMPAIGN

A number of MU members have been interviewed as part of this campaign, focusing on day-to-day modern slavery activism: <https://theclewerinitiative.org/what-we-do/ordinary-activists>

SINGING AGAINST SLAVERY

Two new anti-slavery hymns have been recorded: <https://theclewerinitiative.org/resources/two-new-anti-slavery-hymns>



Aurea Hart (DP, Bristol) and Kathryn Anderson (PP, Canterbury), with the Bristol chains