Resolution on Qatar: situation of migrant workers

2013/2952(RSP) - 21/11/2013 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 35 votes to 22 with 4 abstentions a resolution on Qatar: situation of migrant workers.

The resolution was tabled by the S&D, ALDE, Greens/EFA, and GUE/NGL groups.

It **expressed its concern about the situation of migrant workers in Qatar**, including long working hours, hazardous working conditions, going unpaid for months, having their passports confiscated, being forced to live in overcrowded camps, being denied the right to form unions, and having no access to free drinking water in extreme heat. It noted the estimated 1.35 million foreign nationals in Qatar, making up nearly 90 % of the country's workforce, giving Qatar the highest ratio of migrant workers to domestic population in the world with at least 500 000 more migrant workers expected to accelerate construction work in preparation for the 2022 Football World Cup.

Members also noted that the majority of migrant workers come from India and Nepal, but also from Bangladesh, Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka, and the International Trade Union Confederation's (ITUC) figures show that an average of 200 workers from India and Nepal die every year in Qatar, a situation that may further deteriorate in the run-up to the 2022 World Cup. Furthermore, Members recall that the Labour Relations Department of the Qatari Ministry of Labour received 6 000 worker complaints in 2012 and that the ITUC and Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI) have denounced this situation and jointly filed complaints with the ILO about working conditions and freedom of association in Qatar.

Members were concerned about the **detention of individuals solely because they have 'run away' from their employers** and called on the Qatari authorities to stop such practices. All migrants deprived of their liberty must have the means of contacting their families and consular services, have access to a lawyer and an interpreter, and have the right to challenge their detention promptly.

Whilst welcoming the Qatari authorities' commitment to adopting legislation on domestic workers that is currently being debated by the Supreme Council of Family Affairs, Parliament called on the Qatari authorities to:

- effectively implement existing legislation, including by enforcing the ban on confiscating passports, by prosecuting violations and by imposing meaningful sanctions on companies and individuals who violate laws designed to protect migrants' rights;
- ratify the ILO conventions, including those on migrant workers, freedom of association, the right to organise and collective bargaining, domestic workers, and private employment agencies and to consider seeking technical assistance from the ILO to ensure that Qatari legislation and practice is in line with these conventions;
- work closely with the relevant authorities in migrant workers' countries of origin, which should monitor the role of recruitment agencies supplying migrant workers to Qatar. The European External Action Service is asked to support the sending governments, notably in Asia, in delivering better treatment of the migrant labour force.

Parliament also **reminded FIFA** that its responsibility went beyond the development of football and the organisation of competitions and called on it, with the active support of its European members, to send a

clear and strong message to Qatar to **prevent the preparations for the 2022 Football World Cup being overshadowed by allegations of forced labour.**

Lastly, Parliament appealed to the **responsibility of European corporations** building stadiums or other infrastructure projects in Qatar to provide working conditions that are in line with international human rights standards. It encouraged the EU Member States to take steps to ensure that their engineering, construction and consultancy firms comply with Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development guidelines and with the Ruggie Principles.