

THE SACRIFICE OF MIGRANT WORKERS IN THE BUILD UP OF FOOTBALL WORLD CUP TOURNAMENT, QATAR 2022, THE *KAFALA* SYSTEM APPROACH

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Abstract:

In 2017, the government of Qatar has passed several of new legislation aimed at benefiting African Migrants and others in Doha, including introducing a law for domestic workers, setting up new labour dispute committees and establishing a migrants' and workers' support and insurance fund. Today, the reality for many migrant workers in Qatar remain harsh and will continue to be so until the reform process is completed, far better implementation in practice and enforcement effectively, the government must also take further measures to ensure protection of all migrants, because while the latest legal changes may make it easier to escape abusive situation, they are unlikely to put an end to the abuse itself. With this, this research aims to view the promises of but limited action in reforming the benefit of migrant, in November 2017, Qatar government signed an agreement with the UN International Labour Organisation (ILO) that has given chance to greater optimism. Now with an office in Doha, Qatar, the ILO is working with the authority on a wide-ranging reform. The heart of sacrifice faced by migrant workers and labourers is Qatar's '*Kafala*' system of sponsorship-based employment which legally binds foreign migrant workers to their employers. Over the decade, Amnesty International and others have shown how the system- which until recently prevented migrants from changing jobs or even leaving the country without their contractor's or employer's permission- trap migrant workers in a cycle of abuse. This research aim to unfold some classical information pertaining to the bid granted by FIFA to the State of Qatar prior to football tournament in 2022 by adopting the qualitative research methodology, also This research build upon scholarship that critiques the civilisational and colonial tenor of human rights discourses, considering the international lens on Qatar's 2022 football World Cup.

Keywords: Migrants, Government, Qatar, Workers, World Cup, Employment.

FULL PAPER

Qatar has built seven stadia for the football World Cup finals so also a new metro system, a new airport, about hundred new hotels and series of roads. The Qatari government claims about thirty thousand foreign migrants and labourers were hired to build the above mentioned projects mostly from Nepal, Africans, Indians, Philippines, Bangladesh, Sri Lankas and Pakistanis. In February 2021, record by the Guardian have it that, over six thousand migrant workers from Pakistan, Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Africans died in Qatar since it won its World Cup bid by FIFA. This figure was based on numbers provided by countries' embassies in Doha, however. The Qatari government has said the total is misleading, because not deaths recorded were of individuals working on football World Cup-related projects. The government claimed many of those who died had worked in Qatar for years before the bid granted to Qatar and could have died from old age and other related natural causes. The government also claimed its accident recorded showed that between the year 2015 and 2022, there were thirty seven deaths among the workers at the Football World Cup stadia construction sites, only 3 were work related. However, the International Labour Organization (ILO) says this is an understatement that Qatari government doesn't count deaths from cardiac arrest and respiratory failure as work related even though these are common signs of heatstroke, brought on from doing heavy labour in very high temperatures. ILO has compiled its own figures for football World Cup related incidents, collected from government run hospitals and ambulances services in Doha. It's concluded that fifty migrant labourers died and more than five hundred others were severely injured in the year 2021 alone, while another thirty seven thousand and six hundred suffered minor injuries. However, since Qatar granted the bid to host the football World Cup in the year 2010, human right groups have criticised its approach to treatment of foreign migrants, it is said many migrant workers lived in below average accommodation, some in containers and were also forced to pay huge recruitment fees and had wages withheld and their travelling passports confiscated from them. In 2017, the Qatari government has introduced some

measures to protect migrants from working in very hot weather, also limit their working hours and provide and improved the condition in migrants and workers' camps. However, in a 2021 report, campaign group Human rights watch claimed migrant workers were still suffering from illegal wage deductions and also faced months of unpaid wages for long hour of gruelling work. Some Qatari companies named "Kafala" under which they sponsored migrants to come to the country but then opposed them their rights among leaving a job to another. International body like ILO pressured Qatari government to abolish the act, but Amnesty International claims companies still mount pressure on foreign migrants and stop labourers switching jobs. Working in conjunction with the ILO, the Qatari government has introduced a number of reforms. These include a wage protection scheme designed to ensure employers pay their workers on time.

In 2010, when the Federation of International Football Association (FIFA) picked Qatar to host the 2022 football World Cup, a strong decision that has led to large-scale changes within one of the smallest desert emirate, this made the Qatari government to channel billions of dollars into infrastructural development to prepare for the football tournament, rebuilding many parts of the nation's capital, and constructing an entire new city Lusail, along with hotels and other venues for tourists. This infrastructural development has ramped up the country's already high reliance on migrant labour, especially in the construction sector, which marks the demography of all 6 of the Gulf Cooperative Council Countries (GCCC). The international spotlight on migrant workers abuse has become more intense as the date of the event approaches, with many mainstream news sources and human rights organizations like ILO covering the dangerous labour's conditions, cramped living quarters, lack of labours' right that low wage migrant workers face, mostly those working on building the stadia. Migrants themselves have also started using social media to document their working conditions to the fact that a Kenyan blogger who was anonymously posting about workers abuses in Qatar was arrested and detained by Qatari government, further amplifying human rights organizations' calls for reforms to Qatari labour laws. Migrant workers from Pakistan, Sri Lanka, India, Philippines and Africans often live in cramped accommodations in Qatar's industrial sector. They work in the very severe heat of Gulf summers, and the nature of the region's migrant

sponsorship system enables exploitation of companies and employers. Since 1970s the “*Kafala*” has served the country’s central immigration tool, legally binding each migrant worker to their Qatari employer, who also serves as their visa sponsor. A migrant labourer is tied to a particular work and live in Qatar is contingent on continued employment with their sponsor. Until recent labour reforms in 2021 introduced changes in the system, lower income foreign workers in Qatar were not allowed to switch jobs or sponsors, thus creating a deep imbalance in power relations between migrants and their employers.

Scholars and International rights organizations have argued that “*Kafala*” system allows for the production of a segmented labour system in which workers’ compensation and rights are pegged to their passports making those from countries in the Global South more vulnerable to economic exploitation. Radicalized anti-migrant sentiments and prejudices among citizens have frequently been cited as being commonplace across the Gulf, with direct consequences for migrants’ economic and social experience. But less focus has been to in-group biased and radicalized attitudes within immigrant communities themselves. Recent research indicates that higher status migrants frequently fall along racial and ethno-national lines, producing yet another layer of discrimination and marginalization. The international attention the World Cup has brought to Qatar specifically, and the Gulf more broadly, has highlighted some of the racisms that undergird regional worker economies, and a global awareness raising campaign has been framed as offering correctives to the system. Yet, the human rights discourses surrounding football World Cup 2022 continue also to paint a picture of Gulf exceptional, with undercurrents of orientalism and Islamophobia. Human rights approaches lead with the presumption that objective intervention from the outside international community provides the only solution to solving Qatar’s problem with migrant rights, when similar labour conditions and exploitation in the Global North countries (countries whose citizens most often produce activists, journalistic and scholarly accounts of the Gulf) are not framed as violations of human rights or as problems that require international attention. This research build upon scholarship that critiques the civilizational and colonial tenor of human rights discourses, considering the international lens on Qatar’s 2022 football World Cup as a site of racism and its correctives are defined through the white gaze. This research work objective is also to offer a

historical framework for understanding radicalized worker systems in the contemporary Gulf economies. While providing a review of the particular ways that radicalization plays out in the everyday lives of migrants labourers within Qatar, the research argue that it is very important to analyse labour conditions in Qatar as part of a globalised economic order built on colonialism and racial capitalism. Establishing an exact definition for racial capitalism is not an easy phenomenon, especially given that researchers are currently in the process of broadening out its analytical and conceptual gaze in their studies of economic and political conditions. Racial capitalism at a basic level suggests that it is critical to consider how race infuses the social as well as economic structures emergent from capitalism. While racial capitalism does not posit that capitalism is at the very outset crafted as a deliberately racist project, the research also does argue that patterns of hierarchical racialisation that have occurred are intimately tied to forms of capital accumulation. The logics of racial capitalism are that under capitalism races cannot be equal, and that a racialised devaluation of human beings is an implicit part of the capitalist bargain. In applying racial capitalism to the Gulf nations, it is important also to pay attention to how non-governmental and international human rights discourses are themselves often legitimized through their histories and relations of power that shape race, employment and immigration stratification in today's globalised economy. Any conditions or efforts to improve migrants' rights and work conditions and to also promote anti-racism in Qatar must first tackle and address the systemic features of racial ordering that are embedded within larger colonial, postcolonial and capitalist hegemony.

GENDER, RACE AND LABOUR STRATIFICATION IN QATAR AND IN GCC STATES

The labour markets across mostly of the Gulf States, mostly in United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Kuwait are stratified along a national lines and racial stratification which reflect both global immigration and employment hierarchies and localised forms of differentiation. Highly skilled and highly paid jobs are mostly frequently taken and fixed with Gulf citizens, Western usually white expatriates, even in many Gulf colleges and universities, non-Gulf Arabs and multi talented Asians and Africans. However, the vast majority of jobs at the lower end of both skill and pay levels are occupied by South Asians, Southeast Asians, and increasingly migrants from Sub Sahara

Africa. It is not that the higher tiers of the labour market look so white, as skilled Asians, Africans, and Arabs are plentiful across white collar, professional jobs; it is rather that the lower tiers are so very non- white and migrant heavy, as Westerners and Gulf citizens are almost completely absent in the lowest paid job categories that involve physical labour. In the Wealthier, small population Gulf states, the vast majority of taxi drivers, security guards, construction labourers, housemaids and restaurant and retail staff are from Africa, Southeast Asia and from Indian subcontinent, the less financially well- endowed Arab states together with Egypt, Morocco and Algeria often different nationalities from these regions will be hired to fill some specific roles.

ARAB IN A TRANSNATIONAL PHENOMENON

Qatar and some Arab nations are in a node in a transnational system of capital production that is built on deeply radicalized differences and inequalities. Systemic issues persist, so that in Arab nation including Qatar it will wage differentials that provide the highest wages to Arab and non Arab (American and European expatriates) and the lowest wages to Asians and Africans continue to be justified, as are the multiple other inequalities and differentiations related to access to benefits like annual home leave, paid time off, education scholarship and health insurance. These occur not merely because the Gulf fails to create and uphold necessary laws to protect lower income migrants, but because of the action of private actors and internal human resource policies that are deliberately deployed along racial lines and driven by profit motives, Arab businesses and multinational businesses generate profit by using cheap migrant worker, and worker that has been made deliberate cheap owing to its racially undervalued economic designation.

Transnational flows of racialised capital occur in the shape of wages, remittances, savings, purchases and investments, as well as the monies spent when migrants return to their urban centres in the West or to their villages in South Asia or Sub Sahara Africa. Profits are also made through the facilitation of transnational migration flows between the Gulf and Asia including Africa. The labour recruitment industry that extracts illegal and raw profits from migrants competing for blue- collar jobs in the Gulf is well documented, though less attention is given to the legal costs that are extracted from

migrants in the form of numerous bureaucratic procedures deemed necessary for their safe migration. Multiple public and private actors are involved in facilitating Gulf migration, from the private health hospitals in sending countries, where migrants undergo pre-departure medical screening to the facilities that provide identity authentication in the form of biometric scans, to the skill development and accreditation centres that provide migrants with the requisite paperwork to demonstrate to Gulf employers that they are well equipped to carry out their jobs. Racial capital accumulation occurs in Arab nations and in migrants' home nations not only because of the profit extracted from migrants selling their labour cheaply, but also through other migrants buying the right to sell their labour with peanuts.

The crisis around migrant workers and their protections in the Gulf is better understood as an unresolved racial crisis related to the problems of our international team. Without buying in form a range of actors and agencies involved in labour immigration, such as sending states, recruitment agents in home and host countries. Immigrant and Arab nations' managers and large scale transnational corporations, it is not likely that reforms will be universally applied or that newly illegal practices will be adequately deterred. This has been a common result of labour reform in the Gulf, which is often aimed at improving public relations internationally for the state rather the welfare and inclusion of large immigrant population.

Researchers find the framework of racial capitalism to be a more accurate way to understand the labour and race hierarchies in the Gulf States and their connection to transnational employment and migration regimes. Racial capitalism is a discussed as a framework that allows researchers to see how the development of capitalism was predicted on ideas of fundamental hierarchies between humans, how class has always been raced, and how workers value is tethered and their capacities. The development of capitalism and wage labour in Europe and America was predicted on not free labour in the form of chattel slavery and indenture in the colonies; and within the vast network of the British Empire, Indian and Chinese labourers were particularly revitalized as buffers between the black and the white. In the Arabian Peninsula and Indian Ocean, Indian workers was managed and policed in specific ways to keep nationalities apart, prevent collective action and produce racial hierarchies. These imperial forms and the networks that sustained them

shaped migration laws in both postcolonial India and the emerging Gulf states. And their legacies can be seen in the *Kafala* system and the many middlemen, secondary industries, states and corporations that sustain racialised labour stratification and suppress worker rights. What the international coverage of Qatar's labour migration following the World Cup bid and much of the scholarly literature on Gulf worker have in common is the tendency to analyse workers condition, urban development and social stratification through the lens of authoritarian nation states.

FRAMEWORK ON SOCIO- ECONOMIC CONDITION ON KAFALA SYSTEM OF QATAR

The Kafala system, most prevalent in Qatar is a legal framework surrounding labour, created to supply inexpensive, plentiful labour through hiring foreign workers by the thousands to meet the needs of local businesses in an era of booming economic growth. It has become a focal point of debate due to its implications on workers's rights and economic development, and acts as a sponsorship between employers and foreign workers, this research will delve into the historical context, economic contributions, main features, and suggested reform of Kafala system, offering a comprehensive view of its impact on socioeconomic progress. Under the Kafala system, the state of Qatar provides local individuals or companies with sponsorship permits to employ foreign labourers. The sponsor covers travel expenses, housing accommodation, ranging from houses to dorm-like accommodations or, in the case of domestic workers, the sponsor's home. Private recruitment agencies in the countries of origin facilitate the entry of workers into the host country. While Kafala system has both proponents and critics, its essential to acknowledge that its structure allows for economic growth and the protection of workers' rights with certain limitations. The historical context, the roots of the Kafala system can be traced back to the 1950s when newly oil rich gulf countries sought foreign labourers for large scale infrastructure projects. South Asia, with its affordable labour force, became a primary source of migrant workers. The term Kafala literally meaning "Guardianship", is described in Arab Gulf countries and Jordan as stemming from a noble Bedouin tradition of hospitality, this tradition made it incumbent upon nationals to grant strangers protection and temporary affiliation to the tribe for specific purposes. Over the years, the Qatar's population has increased tenfold, with

foreigners now outnumbering locals. Cultural and economic factors influenced the adoption of the *Kafala* system, with its key components including sponsorship, visa regulations, and employers' responsibilities. The initial intention behind these components was to maintain economic stability and regulate migrant labour. Also, economic contributions in which *Kafala* system has facilitated economic growth offering higher pay than are offered by jobs in workers' home countries. It has had a positive impact on industries such as construction, hospitality, and domestic services. The council of foreign relations notes that many sponsors strive to provide decent and respectful working conditions for their employees, ensuring that contracts are followed and disputes resolved through legal channel. For example, the hospitality industry has thrived due to the *Kafala* system. With an increasing number of tourists and business travelers visiting Qatar, there has been a growing demands for hotels, restaurants, and other hospitality services. Migrants workers, often employed as hotel staff, chefs, and service personnel, have played a crucial role in meeting this demand, contributing to the sector's growth and development. Despite all these, the *Kafala* system has faced widespread criticism. The International Labour Organization (ILO) highlights common problems, including the potential for abuse, lack of workers's rights, instances of restricted movement and communications. According to the Migrant Forum in Asia, other concerns including structural issues such as the confiscation of passports and other traveling documents, as well as withholding wages. Additionally, the Council of Foreign Relations highlights the routine deception or coercion that recruiters engage in to take monetary and physical advantage of migrants. There are preferential treatment based on nationality, one of the significant criticisms of the *kafala* system is the preferential treatment given to certain nationalities over others. Qatar often prioritize workers from specific countries, particularly from wealthier or politically influenced nations, over workers from poorer countries. This selective treatment is evident in the recruitment and sponsorship process, where workers from countries like the Philippines, India, Nepal and African countries may face more stringent regulations and lower wages compared to their counterparts from western countries or other affluent nations. This preferential treatment can exacerbate the already existing inequalities and lead to discrimination, exploitation, and unequal opportunities for migrant workers. Such practices undermine the principles of fairness and equality that should be

at the core of the Qatar tradition as Muslim country and of any labour system. According to a report by the International Labour Organization (ILO), workers from certain nationalities are more vulnerable to exploitation due to the discriminatory practices within the *Kafala* system. The report emphasizes the need for reforms to address these inequalities and ensure equal treatment and protection for all migrants workers, regardless of their nationality.

REFORMS

Furthermore, Human Rights Watch has highlighted the discriminatory nature of the *Kafala* system, pointing out that migrant workers from Southeast Asia and Africa often face greater challenges and cases compared to workers from Western countries. The announcement of the 2022 World Cup brought international attention to Qatar and its labour practices. Criticism from around the world was a major factor in encouraging Gulf countries to review their migration and labour policies. Recognizing the need for improvement, most Gulf countries began implementation reforms, such as standardizing contracts, allowing workers to transfer job after a certain period, and easing restrictions on leaving the country, notable reforms are:

1. Saudi Arabia: Allowing migrant workers to leave the country without their sponsor's permission
2. UAE: Introduction flexi-visas for migrant workers who have become undocumented, which one year self sponsorship visas that are primarily for freelancers of all skill levels.
3. Qatar: Implementing comprehensive reforms, including eliminating requirements for employers to consent to workers' job changes; instituting a standard minimum wage for workers of all nationalities; increasing penalties for employers who withhold wages; implementing an online platform for submitting job change notices; and launching an awareness campaign to inform workers and employers of reforms. In addition to these positive changes, countries of origin can better support their nationals by seeking bilateral labour agreement with provisions on working conditions and a minimum wage, as suggested by the International Labour Organization's Technical Specialist on Forced Labour. Existing reforms should be

more extensive and better enforced to ensure the protection of worker's right.

CONCLUSION

Historical discourses about the oppressive, repressive and corrupt Gulf have marked the coverage of the football World Cup in Qatar and human rights campaigns, in particular, have reproduced a white colonial gaze in representing labour and immigration in the Gulf as problems that require external intervention to be solved, owing either to citizens being the source of the problem or Qatar lacking in a democratic civil society where residents can freely express their desires of change, the result has been half-hearted reforms aimed more at public relations than societal change. In order for labour and immigration system to be changed adequately in any sustained way, it is important to address the range of actors involved in producing said systems; it is also imperative to not harden a division between citizens and immigrants that serves state interests by scape-goating Gulf citizens as the perpetrators of labour exploitation and non citizens are benefiting from the reproducing this system, and the everyday governance of migrant workers are falls upon other migrants. The post colonial forms of racial capitalism in today's world allow both international rights discourses and stratified labour and immigration regimes to masquerade as innocent of power relations, when in facts they are steeped in racism. In approach to labour right in Qatar and other Arabian nation, the white gaze of the international community has made civil society itself into a racialised and specialized concept that makes invisible local politics and local actors. Presumptions of naturalized nation states and the people who belong to them are baked into human rights discourses, erasing the complicity of a range of corporations, consultants, security firms, foreign interests and international sporting organisations in the production of Qatar 2022. The *Kafala* system, despite its flaws, has played a crucial role in facilitating economic growth and regulating migrant labour in the Gulf states mostly in Qatar. While there are both proponents and critics of the system, it is essential to adopt a balanced perspective when evaluating its impact and socioeconomic progress. By acknowledging its historical context, understanding its main features, recognizing its economic contributions, addressing its shortcomings and implementing suggested reforms, the *kafala* system can evolve into a more equitable and efficient framework but

safeguards the rights and well-being of both employers and migrant workers in Qatar.

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