



# PLAYING A DANGEROUS GAME?

HUMAN RIGHTS RISKS LINKED TO THE  
2030 AND 2034 FIFA WORLD CUPS



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The choice of which countries host the FIFA Men's World Cup is one of the most significant decisions that football's global governing body can make. Hundreds of thousands of workers will be involved in delivering each tournament, over a million fans will travel across borders to watch matches, billions more will watch it on TV or online, and enormous sums will be spent on major infrastructure projects. Host countries will gain huge visibility and prestige, while FIFA's earnings will be vast – projected to reach over US\$11 billion from the next World Cup in 2026.

History shows that the World Cup can be a source of dignity or exploitation, inclusion or discrimination, freedom or repression. FIFA's choice of host for the 2030- and 2034-men's World Cups is therefore both hugely consequential and already controversial. For 2030, FIFA is considering just one bid – jointly by Morocco, Portugal and Spain – with three matches to be played in Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. For 2034, only a bid from Saudi Arabia is on the table. One tournament held over three continents, and another in a country with few human rights protections, is set to test FIFA's human rights commitments to the limit.

This report brings together analysis from human rights organizations, trade unions and fans' representatives – including from members of the Sport and Rights Alliance – as well as UN experts, treaty monitoring bodies, government data and media reports. It aims to highlight key risks connected to the hosting of the two World Cups that must be addressed if FIFA and bidding countries are to prevent human rights violations during their preparation and delivery.

## FIFA'S HUMAN RIGHTS RESPONSIBILITIES AND COMMITMENTS

Since 2015, FIFA has recognized that it has a responsibility to prevent, address and remedy any adverse human rights impacts from its own activities, and those directly connected to its operations, in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UN Guiding Principles). It has since progressively operationalized these Principles in a series of policies, including through human rights requirements that were first introduced in the bidding process to host the 2026 World Cup.

As it did for the 2026 World Cup, FIFA has included human rights standards as part of the bidding requirements for the 2030 and 2034 tournaments. In July 2024, alongside their "Bid books", host candidates must submit a human rights strategy outlining how they will address the human rights risks identified by an "independent human rights context assessment", including "explicit public commitments to sustainability, human rights, sustainable procurement and climate action." The strategy must outline how the bid will comply with a range of UN and FIFA standards on labour rights, non-discrimination, freedom of expression, policing and more. FIFA's bidding regulations make clear that these are "fully binding obligations" that could lead to FIFA not selecting the bid or terminating hosting rights if not met.

The human rights strategies and assessments are supposed to be informed by stakeholder consultation, yet by the end of May 2024 – just over a month before the bidding deadline – Amnesty International is unaware of any such consultation having taken place for either the 2030 or 2034 tournaments, despite requesting FIFA for details and an opportunity to participate.





Conmebol's President Alejandro Dominguez (L-2) and FIFA President Gianni Infantino (R-2), accompanied by Paraguay's President Santiago Peñãa (L) and Uruguay's President Luis Lacalle(R), sign a book of minutes of the 2030 World Cup during Conmebol's 78th Ordinary Congress in Luque, Paraguay on April 11, 2024. © NORBERTO DUARTE/AFP via Getty Image

## RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH THE 2030 WORLD CUP: MOROCCO, PORTUGAL AND SPAIN

### Labour rights

All bidding countries face risks relating to labour rights, which should be addressed through revising legislation, ensuring compliance with international labour standards and ensuring structured social dialogue with independent trade unions. Morocco's plan to host the tournament is likely to involve a significantly higher number of construction work projects than Portugal or Spain – including the planned 115,000 capacity Grand Stade de Casablanca – while all countries will engage large numbers of workers in the service and hospitality sector.

Morocco has a comparatively high accident rate, particularly for construction workers for whom fatal work-related injuries are three times more likely than in other sectors. In response, Morocco has drafted but not yet passed a new law intended to strengthen health and safety. In Portugal and Spain, accidents at work are above the European Union (EU) average, and have been increasing in Spain. Both Morocco and Portugal need to increase the number of labour inspectors by over 50% to meet International Labour Organisation (ILO) benchmarks.

Migrant workers are particularly at risk of exploitation. The experience of migrant workers renovating the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona in 2023 is a stark example. Mohamed, a Moroccan worker, told the newspaper *El Periodico* that he earned less than €4.50 per hour for a 56-hour week, lived in a house without water or electricity and felt "like a slave". Investigations in Portugal uncovered hundreds of exploited migrant workers, while labour traffickers are reported to target the construction sector. In 2023, a UN Committee expressed concerns about forced labour among migrant workers in Morocco.

The right to join a trade union is recognized in all three countries, yet restrictions persist. In Morocco, the right to strike is recognized in the Constitution, but "obstructing work" can be penalized in law. In its bid for the 2026 World Cup, however, the Moroccan Football Association wrote that it had signed a collective agreement with trade unions. In Portugal and Spain, despite a large majority of workers being covered by collective agreements, Portuguese trade unions have reported increasing pressure on workers not to unionize. Unions in Spain state that employers are able to unilaterally change agreements or ignore obligations.

Among other significant concerns, child labour persists in Morocco's construction sector, while in Spain the unions have criticized excessive working hours. Portugal and Spain have ratified all of the ILO fundamental instruments; Morocco has yet to ratify three relating to the right to organize; forced labour; and occupational health and safety.

### **Discrimination**

Prohibited in Article 4 of its statutes, FIFA recognizes that “discrimination is an issue in the world of football both on and off the pitch.” In 2022, Morocco enshrined equality of men and women in the Family Code and banned discrimination based on sex, yet other legislation perpetuates risks for female workers and attendees at the tournament. The criminalization of extramarital sexual relations and “adultery”, for example, can prevent women from reporting incidents of sexual violence.

In 2018, an evaluation of Morocco's bid to host the 2026 World Cup highlighted that the criminalization of same-sex acts was “particularly problematic”; official statistics show that 838 people were prosecuted between 2017 and 2020 for same-sex conduct. In December 2023, a UN Committee denounced the persistence in Morocco of racism in football, while players including Moussa Ndao from Senegal, and Chancel Mbemba from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), have both been subjected to racist behaviour in stadiums in recent years.

UN experts have praised Portugal's anti-discrimination laws, but criticized the failure to introduce a law to address gender-based violence. Within sport, the National Observatory of Violence Against Athletes received 66 reports of sexual abuse, harassment and violence between September 2020 and December 2023. Portugal's Constitution prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, yet in 2022 the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Association (ILGA) Portugal received over 830 requests for support from LGBTI people. A 2020 survey of fans, players, coaches and journalists involved in Portuguese football highlighted that 60% believe there is racism in the sport.

In Spain, three pieces of legislation tackling discrimination were enacted in 2022 and 2023. However, sexism has been starkly illustrated by the discrimination and harassment faced by members of Spain's national women's football team. ILGA reported a record 466 LGBTI hate crimes in 2021 - a 68% increase on the previous year. Domestic football in Spain has continued to be marred by racist acts, with Real Madrid player Vinicius Junior deploring the fact that “since [racists] aren't punished, they are getting stronger”. In the 2021-22 season, just 28 out of 1,608 sanctions imposed by the Commission against Violence, Racism, Xenophobia and Intolerance in Sports were in relation to racism or xenophobia.

### **Forced evictions and affordable housing**

With a greater likelihood of large-scale infrastructure projects, the risks of forced evictions may be highest in Morocco where UN experts have previously criticized such violations. The threat of a large influx of visitors also risks exacerbating the severe shortages in affordable housing in Portugal and Spain, including if an increase in the use of short-term holiday rentals leads to increased rents or evictions for existing residents. Rents in Spain have already increased by 45% since 2017, while in Portugal, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing has already warned of the impact of “unbridled touristification”.

### **Freedom of expression and assembly**

All three countries recognize the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly in law, but restrict them in practice. These freedoms are both inherently important and essential in realizing other rights of fans, players, journalists and civil society in relation to the World Cup.

Morocco, for example, criminalizes criticism of Islam, the monarchy, state institutions and the military, as well as questioning the country's territorial integrity in relation to Western Sahara. Journalists and human rights defenders have been harassed, arbitrarily detained, beaten and prosecuted, inviting criticism from UN experts.

Portuguese legislation restricts demonstrations through notification requirements, leading to fines for LGBTI and environmental campaigners. Fans have also faced restrictions and sanctions for "political" banners and chants. In November 2022, Amnesty International Portugal was prevented from distributing campaign t-shirts at the Alvalade Stadium in support of migrant workers in Qatar.

Similarly in Spain, the Citizen Security Law criminalizes certain forms of protest, while some provisions of the Criminal Code relate to insults to the monarchy, state institutions, religious beliefs or the glorification of terrorism, leading to prosecutions of musicians, journalists and social media users. In October 2023, an Eibar fan was expelled from a match for displaying a Palestinian flag.

### **Policing and fan safety**

Police forces in all three countries have used excessive force, within both footballing and broader contexts, including using rubber bullets to disperse crowds in contravention of international standards. Moroccan football has experienced significant violence and mass arrests in recent years. In December 2023 a Portuguese fans' representative group denounced "an episode of real police barbarity" when Sporting Lisbon fans were beaten with batons. In May 2021, a Sporting Lisbon supporter lost an eye when police used rubber bullets and batons against fans celebrating their title victory.

Spanish police have also been the subject of numerous complaints, including in relation to Champions League fixtures and the 2022 UEFA Europa League Final. A survey carried out by the UK Football Policing Unit found that "the consistent feedback of fans is that the policing style in Spain is confrontational, frequently aggressive and on occasions violent". A representative of a Spanish football supporters' group told Amnesty International that the police rarely engage in dialogue and often treat fans "like cattle".

There is a risk of racialized policing in all bidding countries. A survey published in March 2024 showed that two out of three respondents (68%) were concerned about the existence of advocacy of hatred, violence and discrimination within Portugal's police forces. In November 2022, Portuguese journalists identified 591 police officers responsible for spreading hateful and racist messages online. In Spain, a 2022 survey showed that 14% of people of African descent had been stopped by police in the previous year, one of the highest rates in the EU.

### **Privacy and surveillance**

The growing use of invasive spyware and biometric surveillance may also threaten the right to privacy of World Cup attendees. Human rights defenders in Morocco, as well as Catalan politicians, journalists and their families in Spain, have been targeted with Pegasus spyware. In 2023, La Liga, the top professional division of the Spanish men's football league, were warned by Spain's data protection regulator that a tender for a facial recognition system would breach data protection laws.

## RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH THE 2034 WORLD CUP: SAUDI ARABIA

The risk of serious human rights violations related to the 2034 World Cup in Saudi Arabia are extremely high, both because of the scale of projects required and the country's weak rights protections. Saudi Arabia's continued refusal to ratify both international human rights covenants, as well as a number of core ILO conventions, raises serious questions about the credibility of any public commitments requested by FIFA.

### Labour rights

Saudi Arabia will need to build or renovate at least 10 stadiums to meet FIFA's capacity requirements, in addition to a range of enormous infrastructure projects. A huge number of workers will be involved, with 200,000 to be hired by 2025 to build the vast new "smart city" – and likely World Cup venue – of NEOM alone. With foreign nationals making up over 80% of the private sector workforce, Saudi Arabia will rely heavily on migrant workers to do so.

Discrimination is embedded in Saudi Arabia's laws, including the *kafala* sponsorship system, in which a migrant worker's immigration status is legally bound to their sponsor. Despite some partial reforms in recent years, this system leaves workers with limited recourse when subjected to abuses such as wage theft, excessive working hours, passport confiscation or unsafe conditions. Migrant workers are also excluded from Saudi Arabia's minimum wage and banned from joining a trade union. The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) has described the country's violations of workers' rights as "systematic".

The reality for many migrant workers can be seen from the experiences of workers at Amazon warehouses in Saudi Arabia, whose treatment is likely to have amounted to human trafficking. Workers toiling in extreme heat may also face deadly health and safety risks, with authorities failing to take action to prevent, investigate or compensate deaths. An investigation by The Guardian newspaper highlighted that four Bangladeshi nationals died every day in Saudi Arabia in 2022, of which 76% were recorded simply as from "natural causes".

Foreign nationals also face other severe human rights violations. In 2022, Amnesty International documented the detention of Ethiopian migrants who were held in inhuman and cruel conditions and subjected to torture before being forcibly returned to their home country. A 2023 Human Rights Watch report accused Saudi border guards of having killed at least hundreds of Ethiopian migrants and asylum seekers between March 2022 and June 2023. According to official figures, the Saudi authorities arrested 770,000 people for "violating labour, residency and border security" regulations in 2023, and returned at least 468,000 foreign nationals to their home country.

### Discrimination

Despite some limited reforms lifting travel restrictions on women and permitting them to drive and enter sports stadiums, women and girls continue to face discrimination, including through the entrenchment of the male guardianship system. Women working at or attending the World Cup face risks of abuse and barriers to justice. Zina rules, for example, criminalize sex outside marriage and are often used to silence victims of labour abuse and sexual violence. Women such as Manahel al-Otaibi have been prosecuted for their choice of clothes and expression online.

Saudi Arabia prohibits any public practice of a religion other than Islam, while the country's Shia Muslim minority also face particular discrimination. This manifested itself in football in 2024 when Saudi authorities sentenced 12 Shia supporters of Al Safa Football Club to prison terms ranging from six months to one year, solely for reciting a folkloric religious chant. Beyond football, over 100 Shia activists have been tried before the notorious Specialized Criminal Court (SCC) on vague and wide-ranging charges arising from their opposition to the government.



Under the country's interpretation of sharia law, sexual relations outside marriage, including "adultery", extramarital and same-sex relations, are prohibited. A leaked draft of a new penal code will further codify this prohibition, while "cross-dressing" is already punished with prison sentences of up to three years. People in Saudi Arabia have been imprisoned and subjected to lashings for using social media to arrange same-sex dates, and prosecuted under the country's public order and morality regulations, as well as the Anti-Cybercrime Law. Despite this, the Saudi Tourism Board claims that "everyone is welcome to visit Saudi Arabia and visitors are not asked to disclose such personal details."

### **Forced evictions**

Forced evictions have already been documented in prospective World Cup host cities. In NEOM, human rights organization ALQST has reported that members of the Huwaitat tribe faced compulsory evictions and land expropriations in violation of international law. In response to residents' resistance to being moved, Saudi government forces used lethal violence, killing Abdul Rahim al-Huwaiti, while authorities also sentenced 15 members of the tribe to prison terms of up to 50 years. In May 2024, a Saudi colonel told the BBC that security forces received an order that "licensed the use of lethal force against whoever stayed in their home."

In Jeddah, Amnesty International found that large-scale demolitions affecting more than 558,000 residents have been characterized by inconsistent notice periods and inadequate compensation that entirely excluded foreign nationals, who made up 47% of those evicted.

### **Freedom of expression**

In Saudi Arabia, there is little or no freedom of expression, association or assembly. No independent human rights organizations, political parties or trade unions are permitted, while recent years have seen sweeping arrests and imprisonment of journalists, human rights defenders, political activists, writers, clerics and women's rights activists. Repression extends to online spaces. In a series of landmark cases in recent years, Salma al-Shehab was sentenced to 27 years in prison for tweeting in favour of gender equality, Nourah bin Saeed al-Qahtani received a sentence of 45 years, and Mohammad al-Ghamdi was sentenced to death.



*Human rights activists with protest boards outside a reception marking Saudi Arabia's statehood day in The Hague, Netherlands, 2022. © Pierre Crom/Getty Images*

Broadly defined anti-terrorism legislation introduced in 2017 has been used to prosecute activists, imposing prison sentences of up to 30 years and even the death penalty for insulting the King or Crown Prince. It also restricts assemblies by criminalizing acts of "disturbing public order," while those who have protested have paid harsh penalties. Many of the 81 people executed in a single day in March 2022 had taken part in anti-government protests. They included Mohammad al-Shakhouri, who was tortured and who lost most of his teeth after security officers repeatedly punched him in the face.

No independent media exists in Saudi Arabia and journalists who criticize the government face censorship, repression and imprisonment. Most prominently this includes the murder of Jamal Khashoggi in 2018. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 35 journalists have been arrested between 2012 and 2024 in Saudi Arabia, including 10 in 2019 alone.

There is little sign of improvements on the horizon - a leaked draft penal code analysed by Amnesty International in 2024 would further entrench the criminalization of free expression.

***There is no greater test of FIFA's commitment to its human rights policies than how it awards, prepares and delivers its flagship tournament.***

#### **Privacy and surveillance**

The planned use of technology in “smart cities” such as NEOM may pose risks of mass surveillance at the World Cup, while the Saudi Arabian authorities have adopted new technologies to hack the online accounts of government critics and intercept communications. Saudi Arabia has also faced legal action over the use of Pegasus spyware to target and hack the phones of women's rights activists, political dissidents, journalists and their family members.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

There are serious human rights risks that must be proactively addressed in relation to the 2030 FIFA World Cup in Morocco, Portugal and Spain, while the risks associated with hosting the 2034 tournament in Saudi Arabia are of a different magnitude and severity. Indeed, it is hard to see how a World Cup could be hosted in the country without widespread violations, unless fundamental reforms are agreed and complied with.

There is no greater test of FIFA's commitment to its human rights policies than how it awards, prepares and delivers its flagship tournament. It can choose to address risks and seize opportunities for change or risk global football risks being marred by human rights violations for years to come. More detailed and country-specific recommendations are provided at the end of the full report, but in summary:

- FIFA should ensure a rigorous and transparent bidding process, based on meaningful stakeholder participation, including genuinely independent human rights risk assessments and comprehensive human rights strategies.
- FIFA and national authorities should agree to binding commitments, including legal reforms, to prevent human rights violations connected to the tournament, particularly in relation to labour rights, discrimination, housing, freedom of expression, policing and privacy, before any decision is finalized.
- FIFA should be prepared not to award the rights to host the World Cup until such agreements are made, and until it is clear that human rights violations can and will be prevented, mitigated and remedied. FIFA should also retain the option of terminating hosting rights if human rights commitments are not kept.
- FIFA and national authorities should develop rigorous systems to monitor and enforce the implementation of human rights commitments, including grievance mechanisms and access to effective remedy throughout preparation and delivery phases.
- FIFA and national authorities should ensure meaningful stakeholder participation throughout the bidding process and in the preparation of the World Cups, including with rights holders that encompass groups facing discrimination, civil society organizations, trade unions, fans' representatives and players' unions.

# 1. BACKGROUND

The choice of which countries host the FIFA Men's World Cup is one of the most significant decisions made by football's governing body, one which has far-reaching impacts on millions of people – fans, workers and players – as well as the political and economic objectives of States. According to FIFA, more than 1 million fans travelled to Qatar to watch the 2022 FIFA World Cup, and more than 5 billion people engaged with the tournament by watching matches on TV or engaging on other platforms.<sup>1</sup> Qatar spent over US\$200 billion on infrastructure in preparation for the tournament, and the country's migrant worker population doubled as hundreds of thousands of workers were employed to develop projects or deliver services.<sup>2</sup> FIFA itself generated over US\$7 billion in revenues, largely from corporate sponsors, broadcasters and hospitality, and projects that revenues from the 2026 World Cup, to be held in Canada, Mexico and the USA, will be even higher at US\$11 billion.<sup>3</sup>

In October 2023, the FIFA Council formally announced the beginning of the process for countries to “bid” for the rights to host the 2030- and 2034-men's World Cups. The news came with two major surprises – the decision to fuse two rival bids for the 2030 tournament; and the unprecedented announcement that any bids for the 2034 tournament would have to be formally made in just under four weeks' time.

The first result of these unexpected announcements was that **Morocco, Portugal and Spain** were effectively confirmed as the sole candidates to host the 2030 FIFA men's World Cup, with three “Centenary Celebration Matches” to be played in **Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay** to mark 100 years since the first-ever tournament.<sup>4</sup> All six teams are guaranteed automatic qualification. The South American countries had previously prepared a joint bid to host the entire tournament, along with Chile.<sup>5</sup>

The second result of these announcements was to clear the way for **Saudi Arabia** to then be confirmed as the sole bidder for the 2034 edition. With no African, European or South American countries now eligible to bid due to FIFA's policy of confederation rotation, Saudi Arabia announced their intention to bid within hours of the FIFA Council's announcement, accompanied by a series of high-profile statements of support. Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa, the Bahraini President of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), immediately pledged his enthusiastic support and promised that “the entire Asian football family will stand united in support of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's momentous initiative.”<sup>6</sup> Over the following weeks, other countries within the AFC that had been considering bids, such as Indonesia and Australia, withdrew in the face of short timelines and political calculation.<sup>7</sup>

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- 1 FIFA, FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 in numbers, Annual Report 2022, <https://publications.fifa.com/en/annual-report-2022/tournaments-and-events/fifa-world-cup-qatar-2022/fifa-world-cup-qatar-2022-in-numbers/>
  - 2 Amnesty International; “Qatar: Predictable and preventable: Why FIFA and Qatar should remedy abuses behind the 2022 World Cup” (Index: MDE 22/5586/2022), 19 May 2022; <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde22/5586/2022/en/>
  - 3 FIFA, 2023-2026 budget, <https://publications.fifa.com/en/annual-report-2022/finances/2023-2026-cycle-budget-and-2024-detailed-budget/>
  - 4 FIFA World Cup 2030™: Morocco, Portugal and Spain joint bid is sole candidate to host, 11 October 2023, <https://www.fifa.com/fifaplustv/en/tournaments/mens/worldcup/articles/world-cup-2030-spain-portugal-morocco-host-centenary-argentina-uruguay-paraguay>
  - 5 CONMEBOL, Juntos 2030: La CONMEBOL apoya candidatura de Sudamérica para el Mundial 2030. 7 February 2023; <https://www.conmebol.com/noticias/juntos-2030-la-conmebol-apoya-candidatura-de-sudamerica-para-el-mundial-2030/>
  - 6 Asian Football Confederation, AFC President welcomes FWC hosting decision, backs SAFF intent to bid for 2034 edition, 4 October 2023 [https://www.theafc.com/en/national/fifa\\_world\\_cup/news/afc\\_president\\_welcomes\\_fwc\\_hosting\\_decision\\_backs\\_saff\\_intent\\_to\\_bid\\_for\\_2034\\_edition.html](https://www.theafc.com/en/national/fifa_world_cup/news/afc_president_welcomes_fwc_hosting_decision_backs_saff_intent_to_bid_for_2034_edition.html)
  - 7 Football Australia, “Australia strongly positioned to host AFC Women's Asian Cup and world club elite”, 31 October 2023, <https://www.footballaustralia.com.au/news/statement-football-australia-0>

Despite FIFA confirming that the two bids for the 2030 and 2034 tournaments are the only ones currently under consideration, their selection has not yet been finalized and FIFA and host candidates must complete a process to prepare, present and evaluate plans for both editions. Outlined further in **section 3**, this includes preventing and remedying human rights violations. This process is critical in ensuring that FIFA meets its human rights responsibilities and avoids many of the abuses and controversies that have marred previous World Cups, whether in relation to forced evictions in South Africa,<sup>8</sup> use of excessive force and threats to right to protest in Brazil,<sup>9</sup> the criminalization and stigmatization of LGBTI people in Russia<sup>10</sup> or labour abuses in Qatar.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, Amnesty International and others have documented in detail how the lack of a comparable process when awarding the 2022 FIFA World Cup to Qatar led to predictable and preventable human rights violations on a massive scale, with many thousands of migrant workers experiencing abuses including the payment of illegal recruitment fees, wage theft and even losing their lives due to working in extreme heat without adequate protection.<sup>12</sup>



*The FIFA World Cup trophy is presented to the public in the Saudi Arabian capital Riyadh, during its world tour prior to the 2006 football World Cup. © FAHD SHADEED/AFP via Getty Images*

There are huge questions over FIFA's willingness to stand by its own human rights commitments, and the remaining selection process for the 2030 and 2034 World Cups will be deeply revealing. With bidding countries to submit plans by July 2024, and a final decision expected by FIFA before the end of the year, there is no time to waste in setting out clear binding plans to safeguard human rights at the world's most watched sporting event.

8 Amnesty International, "Human rights concerns in South Africa during World Cup", June 2010, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2010/06/human-rights-concerns-south-africa-during-world-cup>

9 Amnesty International, "Brazil: Human rights under threat ahead of World Cup", 11 April 2014, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2014/04/brazil-human-rights-under-threat-ahead-world-cup/>

10 Amnesty International, "Why human rights matter at the Russia World Cup", June 2018, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/06/why-human-rights-matter-at-the-russia-world-cup>

11 Amnesty International, "Qatar: Predictable and preventable: Why FIFA and Qatar should remedy abuses behind the 2022 World Cup" (Index: MDE 22/5586/2022), 19 May 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde22/5586/2022/en/>

12 *Ibid*



## 2. METHODOLOGY

This report draws on existing analysis of key human rights issues in countries bidding to host the 2030 and 2034 World Cups, in order to identify salient human rights risks that should be addressed before selections are finalized. The report outlines FIFA's human rights responsibilities according to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and as articulated in its own statutes, human rights policy and tournament hosting criteria. The extent of FIFA's responsibility has been further articulated in previous reports over more than a decade by Amnesty International and other organizations, not least a 2022 report highlighting FIFA's responsibility to ensure remedy for migrant workers who had suffered abuses in relation to the preparation and delivery of the 2022 FIFA World Cup.<sup>13</sup>

The report focuses on the main human rights risks directly connected to the hosting of a major sporting event, including those highlighted by FIFA itself in its human rights policy.<sup>14</sup> These include labour rights, discrimination, the right to housing and protection from forced evictions, freedoms of expression, association and assembly, and the right to privacy. FIFA also has responsibilities in relation to climate change and sustainability under the UN Guiding Principles, as well as its own commitment as part of the UN Sports for Climate Framework to halve carbon emissions by 2030 and reach "net zero" emissions by 2040. While the severe human rights harms of the climate crisis are beyond doubt, the issue is beyond the scope of this report.

To evaluate the risks connected to the 2030 and 2034 tournaments, this report draws on a range of sources, including reports from international human rights organizations and trade unions such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Association (ILGA World), Football Supporters Europe (FSE) and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) – all members of the Sport and Rights Alliance.<sup>15</sup> The report cites globally recognized indexes including the Global Rights Index by ITUC, and the World Press Freedom Index by Reporters Without Borders. The report further draws on reports from a range of UN bodies and experts, including analysis by international and regional treaty monitoring bodies, as well as regional and national government reports. At a national level, media monitoring has complemented reports and analysis by civil society organizations. Further interviews were conducted with football supporter representatives in Portugal and Spain.

Summaries of these findings were sent for comment to national authorities and football governing bodies in Morocco, Portugal, Spain and Saudi Arabia. All responses will be made available online. A summary of findings was also sent to FIFA with a request to further share them with the teams conducting the independent human rights assessments.

In addition to research conducted by Amnesty International and other members of the Sport and Rights Alliance, the report was published with the valued contribution of Helen Chen, Johannes Kuehle, Rebecca Passeri and Martina Ventrella from the International Human Rights Clinic at SOAS University of London, who provided a detailed literature review, with additional research conducted by FairSquare.

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13 Amnesty International, "Qatar: Predictable and preventable: Why FIFA and Qatar should remedy abuses behind the 2022 World Cup" (Index: MDE 22/5586/2022), 19 May 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde22/5586/2022/en/>

14 FIFA, FIFA's Human Rights Policy – May 2017 edition, <https://img.fifa.com/image/upload/kr05dqyhwr1uhqy2lh6r.pdf>

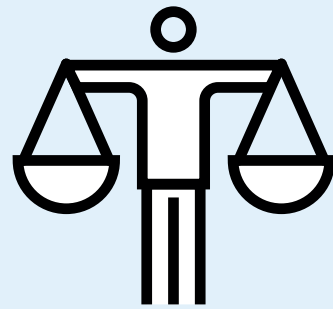
15 The Sport and Rights Alliance (SRA) is a global civil society coalition committed to leveraging the power of sport to advance social rights into the very fabric of society and to promote the rights and well-being of those most affected by sport. Our vision is to see a world where global sport is an authentic force for good. Our partners include Amnesty International, The Army of Survivors, Committee to Protect Journalists, Football Supporters Europe, Human Rights Watch, ILGA World, the International Trade Union Confederation, Transparency International Germany, and World Players Association, UNI Global Union.

# 3. FIFA'S HUMAN RIGHTS RESPONSIBILITIES

FIFA's responsibility to respect human rights stems primarily from the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UN Guiding Principles) and is independent of the responsibilities of other state or non-state actors. This responsibility exists regardless of what states are doing – or failing to do – to fulfil their own obligations to respect and protect human rights, including by regulating corporate actors.<sup>16</sup>

## According to the UN Guiding Principles, FIFA's responsibility to respect human rights requires that it:

- Avoids causing or contributing to adverse human rights impacts through its own activities and addresses such impacts when they occur; and
- Seeks to prevent or mitigate adverse human rights impacts that are directly linked to its operations, products or services by business relationships, even if it has not contributed to those impacts.<sup>17</sup>
- Conducts ongoing human rights due diligence to identify, prevent, mitigate and account for how it addresses its impacts on all human rights, across all operations, products and services and throughout business relationships across its value chain. This process should be conducted in consultation with key stakeholders, with whom it should also share the effectiveness of its efforts.<sup>18</sup>
- Remediates or cooperates in remediation through legitimate processes, if FIFA identifies that it is causing or contributing to an adverse human rights impact.<sup>19</sup> As such it must “take the necessary steps to cease or prevent its contribution and use its leverage to mitigate any remaining impact to the greatest extent possible.”<sup>20</sup>
- Implements these UN Guiding Principles without discrimination, paying particular attention to discriminatory outcomes and the impacts of its decisions.



16 UN Guiding Principles, Commentary to Principle 11. The OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct also clarifies that “Enterprises retain responsibility to address adverse impacts that they cause or contribute to, even when operating in contexts where systemic issues are prevalent.” OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct, 2018, p. 75, <http://mneguidelines.oecd.org/OECD-Due-Diligence-Guidance-forResponsible-Business-Conduct.pdf>

17 UN Guiding Principles, Principle 13. Under the UN Guiding Principles, “business relationships” include “relationships with business partners, entities in its value chain, and any other non-State or State entity directly linked to its business operations, products or services

18 UN Guiding Principles, Principle 15.

19 UN Guiding Principles, Principle 22, UN Guiding Principles.

20 UN Guiding Principles, Principle 19 and Commentary.

It should also be noted that FIFA's responsibilities are not limited to infrastructure and services built or provided specifically for its tournaments such as stadiums, but also to those directly related to its preparation and delivery, as well as its exit from the country after the tournament. FIFA has already accepted this principle in its Sustainability Strategy for the 2022 FIFA World Cup.<sup>21</sup> Applying these principles to the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, Amnesty International has called for remediation for hundreds of thousands of workers who suffered abuses while working on a range of projects including transport, accommodation and services for visitors.<sup>22</sup>

Over time, the UN Guiding Principles have been progressively integrated into FIFA's own policies and strategies that apply to the bidding and selection processes for FIFA tournaments. In July 2015, FIFA's Executive Committee (today, the FIFA Council) publicly stated its intention to adhere to the UN Guiding Principles.<sup>23</sup> In December of that year, FIFA announced that it would ask Professor John Ruggie, author of the UN Guiding Principles, to provide it with recommendations for "further embedding" the UN Guiding Principles into FIFA's policies and practices.<sup>24</sup> Further steps followed, including:

- In February 2016, the FIFA Congress adopted a new Article 3 of the FIFA Statutes, which committed FIFA to respect all internationally recognized human rights and to promote the respect of these rights in the context of FIFA's activities.<sup>25</sup>
- In August 2016, Professor Ruggie published his advice to FIFA, laying out 25 broad recommendations for FIFA's implementation of its new human rights commitments.<sup>26</sup>
- In March 2017, FIFA announced the creation of an independent Human Rights Advisory Board to provide FIFA with advice on implementing its human rights responsibilities.<sup>27</sup> The Board was eventually disbanded in March 2020 and replaced with a Human Rights Sub-Committee in 2023.<sup>28</sup>
- In May 2017, FIFA's Council confirmed the inclusion of detailed human rights requirements based on the UN Guiding Principles in the bidding and selection process for the 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup.<sup>29</sup>
- In May 2017, FIFA adopted its first Human Rights Policy, outlining the organization's responsibilities and commitments in line with the UN Guiding Principles.<sup>30</sup>
- In May 2018, FIFA adopted its Statement on Human Rights Defenders and Media Representatives,<sup>31</sup> and launched a Human Rights Grievance Mechanism where people could report complaints.<sup>32</sup>

21 FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Sustainability Policy, January 2022, <https://fifa-backend.pressfire.net/media/newsletter/sustainability-policy-Jan-2020.pdf>.

22 Amnesty International, "Qatar: Predictable and preventable: Why FIFA and Qatar should remedy abuses behind the 2022 World Cup" (Index: MDE 22/5586/2022), 19 May 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde22/5586/2022/en/>.

23 FIFA, FIFA Executive Committee sets presidential election for 26 February 2016 and fully supports roadmap for reform, 20 July 2015, no longer available on fifa.com but accessible on <https://www.infobae.com/aroundtherings/federations/2021/07/12/fifa-executive-committee-sets-presidential-election-for-26-february-2016-and-fully-supports-roadmap-for-reform/>. (accessed 15 April 2024)

24 FIFA, "FIFA to further develop its human rights approach with international expert John Ruggie", 14 December 2015, <https://www.business-humanrights.org/de/neuste-meldungen/fifa-to-further-develop-its-human-rights-approach-with-international-expert-john-ruggie/>

25 FIFA, FIFA Activity Update on Human Rights, May 2017, p. 4, <https://img.fifa.com/image/upload/ah5ghjuqbc6nzdbtpxhy.pdf>

26 John Ruggie, For the Game. For the World – FIFA and Human Rights, 2016, [https://www.hks.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/centers/mrcbg/programs/crj/files/Ruggie\\_humanrightsFIFA\\_reportApril2016.pdf](https://www.hks.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/centers/mrcbg/programs/crj/files/Ruggie_humanrightsFIFA_reportApril2016.pdf)

27 FIFA, Independent Advisory Board of Human Rights Experts to meet on 13 March, 10 March 2017, <https://www.fifa.com/media-releases/independent-advisory-board-of-human-rights-experts-to-meet-on-13-march2875485>

28 FIFA, FIFA Human Rights Advisory Board provides closing report, 23 March 2021, <https://www.fifa.com/aboutfifa/organisation/committees/news/fifa-human-rights-advisory-board-provides-closing-report>. All details about the Board's work as well as its earlier four reports can be found at: <https://old.business-humanrights.org/en/fifa-humanrights-advisory-board>.

29 FIFA, Report by the FIFA Human Rights Advisory Board - First Report with the Advisory Board's Recommendations and an Update by FIFA, September 2017, p. 39, <https://img.fifa.com/image/upload/ab2ywfct8qle92nghiee.pdf>

30 FIFA, FIFA's Human Rights Policy – May 2017 edition, <https://img.fifa.com/image/upload/kr05dqyhw1uhqy2lh6r.pdf>

31 FIFA statement on human rights defenders and media representatives, May 2018, <https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/ec85f3de496c6cb6/original/ejf1ecdku14lm2v9zc03-pdf.pdf>

32 FIFA, 'Grievance Mechanism'; Available at: <https://inside.fifa.com/en/social-impact/human-rights/grievance-mechanism> (accessed 16 April 2024).

- In January 2020, FIFA published its Sustainability Policy and the Sustainability Strategy for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, covering human rights and the environment.<sup>33</sup>
- In April 2020, FIFA, Q22 and the Supreme Committee – the 2022 FIFA World Cup organizing bodies – launched the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Sustainable Sourcing Code.<sup>34</sup>
- In June 2020, the 2023 FIFA Women’s World Cup was awarded to Australia and New Zealand, in a process which also included human rights requirements.<sup>35</sup>
- In October 2023, FIFA published the bidding criteria for the 2030 and 2034 FIFA Men’s World Cups, including human rights requirements.<sup>36</sup>

FIFA has also committed to go beyond the UN Guiding Principles. Its human rights policy states that "FIFA will strive to go beyond its responsibility to respect human rights, as enshrined in the UN Guiding Principles, by taking measures to promote the protection of human rights and positively contribute to their enjoyment, especially where it is able to apply effective leverage to help increase said enjoyment or where this relates to strengthening human rights in or through football."<sup>37</sup>

While these initiatives are positive steps forward in FIFA recognizing its human rights responsibilities, huge challenges remain in implementing them.

## WORLD CUP BIDDING REGULATIONS AND HOSTING REQUIREMENTS

One critical way in which FIFA has committed to implementing its responsibilities under the UN Guiding Principles is through its process of choosing a host for major tournaments, including the men’s and women’s World Cups. Human rights standards were first embedded in the process of selecting the hosts for the 2026 World Cup, which was awarded to Canada, Mexico and the USA in 2018. The process to select the hosts for the 2030 and 2034 World Cups follow a similar framework – albeit critically noting that this time only one bid is being considered for each tournament.

The requirements for the two tournaments are outlined in four similar and overlapping documents – “Bidding Regulations”<sup>38</sup> and an “Overview of the Bidding Process”<sup>39</sup> for both tournaments, as well as a separate “Overview of Hosting Requirements” for each.<sup>40</sup> There are only a small number of differences in the requirements for the 2030 and 2034 World Cups, for example in the number of existing stadiums required for the 2030 edition (seven of 14 stadiums used must be already built) compared to 2034 (4 of 14). According to FIFA, the regulations are “fully binding obligations.”<sup>41</sup>

33 FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Sustainability Policy, and FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Sustainability Strategy, <https://resources.fifa.com/image/upload/fifa-world-cup-qatar-2022tm-sustainability-strategy.pdf?cloudid=u25obd7303tdxupsjysn>.

34 FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Sustainable Sourcing Code, Version 1, April 2020, (a newer version dated December 2020 was issued with no significant modifications).

35 FIFA, "Australia and New Zealand selected as hosts of FIFA Women’s World Cup 2023TM", 25 June 2020, <https://inside.fifa.com/tournaments/womensworldcup/australia-new-zealand2023/media-releases/australia-and-new-zealand-selected-as-hosts-of-fifa-women-s-world-cup-2023tm>

36 FIFA, "Bidding processes for the FIFA World Cup 2030 and the FIFA World Cup 2034", October 2023, [https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/28801bb1a9d35eac/original/-1861\\_Bidding-processes-for-the-FIFA-World-Cup-2030-and-the-FIFA-World-Cup-2034.pdf](https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/28801bb1a9d35eac/original/-1861_Bidding-processes-for-the-FIFA-World-Cup-2030-and-the-FIFA-World-Cup-2034.pdf)

37 FIFA, FIFA’s Human Rights Policy – May 2017 edition, <https://img.fifa.com/image/upload/kr05dqyhwr1uhqy2lh6r.pdf>

38 FIFA, Bidding Regulations for the FIFA World Cup 2030™ and the FIFA World Cup 2034™, October 2023, <https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/51aef03d916e5ad/original/FIFA-World-Cup-2030-and-FIFA-World-Cup-2034-Bidding-Regulations.pdf>

39 FIFA, Overview of the Bidding Process, October 2023, <https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/51aef03d916e5ad/original/FIFA-World-Cup-2030-and-FIFA-World-Cup-2034-Bidding-Regulations.pdf>

40 FIFA, Overview of the Hosting Requirements for the FIFA World Cup 2030, [FIFA-World-Cup-2030-Overview-of-Hosting-Requirements.pdf](#); and FIFA, Overview of the Hosting Requirements for the FIFA World Cup 2034, [Overview-of-Hosting-Requirements-for-the-FIFA-World-Cup-2034- EN.pdf](#)

41 FIFA, Bidding Regulations, section 4, and Overviews of Hosting Requirements, 1.2.





## THE GOVERNMENT DECLARATIONS SHOULD INCLUDE STATEMENTS OF COMMITMENT TO WORKING WITH FIFA

**“TO ENSURE THAT THE HOSTING OF THE COMPETITION DOES NOT INVOLVE ADVERSE IMPACTS ON INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED HUMAN RIGHTS, INCLUDING LABOUR RIGHTS”.**

There are a number of central elements to the World Cup bidding process related to human rights:

- The commissioning by bidding countries of an “independent human rights context assessment” to identify key risks.
- The submission by bidding countries of a “human rights strategy”, alongside the technical bid, that should outline how those risks should be addressed.
- Written government declarations with “explicit public commitments to sustainability, human rights, sustainable procurement and climate action.”
- Requirements to comply with a range of FIFA policies and international human rights laws and standards (see detail below).
- A commitment to stakeholder participation in all of these processes.
- An evaluation of the human rights plan with a risk rating, and an ultimate decision by FIFA of whether standards have been met and/or what action must be taken.

Bids, including human rights plans, are to be submitted by July 2024, with evaluations to take place in the third quarter of the same year and a final decision in the fourth quarter.

The quality and rigour of all these processes, including the level of stakeholder participation, will be key, as will the importance with which they are treated by FIFA and potential host countries. The human rights strategy should include, for example, “a description of the key human rights risks identified in relation to the Competition (reflecting the results of the independent human rights context assessment), the plans to prevent and mitigate these risks, as well as the stakeholder engagement conducted in the process of developing the strategy.”<sup>42</sup>

The government declarations should include statements of commitment to working with FIFA “to ensure that the hosting of the Competition does not involve adverse impacts on internationally recognized human rights, including labour rights”. Host governments are asked to commit to “respecting, protecting and upholding human rights, including workers’ labour rights”, especially in relation to security, evictions, workers’ rights, children, gender equality, freedom of expression and assembly, and non-discrimination.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> FIFA, Overview of the Hosting Requirements, p21.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, p15.

Governments are also asked to commit to ensuring that “access to effective remedies is available where such rights violations occur, including judicial and non-judicial complaint mechanisms with the power to investigate, punish and redress human rights violations.”<sup>44</sup>

The Overview of Hosting Requirements provide a list of general and topic-specific requirements to which bidding countries “must commit”. These include FIFA’s Sustainable Sourcing Code,<sup>45</sup> FIFA’s Statement on human rights defenders and media representatives,<sup>46</sup> the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials,<sup>47</sup> the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials<sup>48</sup> and the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers.<sup>49</sup>

Further, it is clear that the above requirements are not supposed to be merely advisory, but “fully binding obligations” that could lead to FIFA not selecting the bid or terminating hosting rights.

***“It is important to note that each of the requirements laid out in this overview are considered as key hosting requirements. In the event that a bid is unable to demonstrate that it can meet any of these requirements, FIFA is entitled, and reserves the right, to determine that such bid has materially failed to meet the minimum requirements to host the Competition and that such bid is not eligible for consideration by, nor presentation to, the FIFA Council/FIFA Congress. These requirements also form an integral part of the legal framework for the hosting of the Competition and are fully binding obligations, with the consequence that any material breach could give grounds for the right of termination of hosting rights.”<sup>50</sup>***

FIFA’s willingness to consider *not* confirming the selection of a host country if they fail to meet human rights requirements - and if it is therefore clear that human rights violations cannot or will not be prevented - will in part determine how seriously the requirements are taken.

Finally, there are precedents that must be built upon, rather than weakened. For example, for the process to select the hosts of the 2026 FIFA Men’s World Cup, detailed independent human rights assessments were conducted. The assessment for the successful “United” bid, conducted by Ergon Associates, provides 155 pages of analysis on law, policy and practice.<sup>51</sup> This led to a 90-page human rights action plan.<sup>52</sup> Critically, the assessments, plans and evaluations of all bidding countries were

44 Ibid, p20.

45 FIFA, FIFA Sustainable Sourcing Code, September 2021, [https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/79017a0bef51a587/original/FIFA-Sustainable-Sourcing-Code-EN\\_Sept-2021.pdf](https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/79017a0bef51a587/original/FIFA-Sustainable-Sourcing-Code-EN_Sept-2021.pdf)

46 FIFA statement on human rights defenders and media representatives, May 2018, <https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/ec85f3de496c6cb6/original/ejf1ecdku14lm2v9zc03-pdf.pdf>

47 Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, 7 September 1990, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/basic-principles-use-force-and-firearms-law-enforcement>.

48 Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials, 17 September 1979, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/code-conduct-law-enforcement-officials>

49 ICOCA, The International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers, <https://icoca.ch/the-code/>

50 FIFA, Overview of Hosting Requirements, p2.

51 Ergon Associates, “Human rights in Canada, Mexico and the USA in the context of a potential FIFA 2026 World Cup competition”, 7 March 2018, <https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/5fd4153e87d31602/original/New-Heights-WWC27-Ergon-Human-Rights-Report-for-United-Bid.pdf> (accessed 15 April 2024).

52 United 2026, “Proposal for a United Human Rights Strategy”, 16 March 2018., <https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/755c74217132ee40/original/New-Heights-WWC27-Proposal-for-a-United-Human-Rights-Strategy.pdf> (accessed 15 April 2024).

made available for public scrutiny. Further, for the process of awarding the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup, independent human rights assessments and human rights plans were made publicly available in December 2023, six months before a final decision was due, although not every bid provided detailed information.<sup>53</sup>

By the end of May 2024 – just over one month before the deadline for Bid Books and human rights strategies to be submitted – Amnesty International is unaware of any consultation with civil society having taken place for either the 2030 or 2034 tournaments, despite requesting FIFA for the opportunity to participate.

## CLIMATE CHANGE

In 2018, FIFA joined the UN Sport for Climate Action Framework, which commits the governing body to creating sustainable events as well as advocating for climate action in line with the Paris Agreement.<sup>54</sup> FIFA has a stated commitment on climate change, including a 50% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030 and “net-zero” by 2040. FIFA has pledged to take steps to mitigate the environmental impact of the tournament but has not yet outlined these measures.<sup>55</sup>

FIFA's own report into the 2022 Qatar World Cup - which similarly involved a major infrastructure programme and carbon intensive cooling technologies - predicted that it would produce up to 3.6 million tonnes of carbon dioxide.<sup>56</sup> This figure has been disputed by climate researchers, and the organizers' claim that the tournament was “carbon neutral” has been dismissed by a Swiss regulatory body which found this claim to be false.<sup>57</sup> Using data from Carbon Market Watch, The Economist estimated that the 2022 tournament was the single biggest carbon-emitting sports event in history.<sup>58</sup>

The 2030 and 2034 World Cups will be larger still than the tournament in Qatar, expanded from 36 teams playing 64 matches to 48 teams playing 104. While accurate projections regarding the carbon emissions resulting from the 2030 and 2034 World Cups will not be available until closer to the tournament, it is clear that they will be highly carbon intensive. The bidding and hosting requirements demand that countries provide an explicit commitment to sustainability and climate action, as well as provide “a summary of the environmental and climate impact of hosting the Competition and the foreseen mitigation measures for the following key areas:

- A** Transport of fans to and from matches;
- B** Accommodation for fans during their stay in the host country/countries;
- C** Energy consumption;
- D** Waste management;
- E** Stadiums/infrastructure.”<sup>59</sup>

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53 FIFA, “Three bid books submitted for FIFA Women's World Cup 2027™”, 9 December 2023, <https://inside.fifa.com/about-fifa/organisation/media-releases/three-bid-books-submitted-for-fifa-womens-world-cup-2027-tm>

54 FIFA, “FIFA joins the UN Sports for Climate Action Framework”; 12 December 2018; <https://www.fifa.com/social-impact/sustainability/news/fifa-joins-the-un-sports-for-climate-action-framework>

55 Reuters, “FIFA to mitigate environmental impact of 2030 World Cup”, 9 October 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/sports/soccer/fifa-mitigate-environmental-impact-2030-world-cup-2023-10-09/>

56 BBC Sport, “FIFA to consider biennial World Cups proposal”, 4 June 2021, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/57443375>

57 BBC Sport, “FIFA boss Infantino meets Boris Johnson to discuss World Cup plan”, 2 June 2022, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/61636473>; see also, Carbon Market Watch, “Poor tackling: Yellow card for FIFA”, May 2022, [https://carbonmarketwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Poor-tackling\\_-\\_Yellow-card-for-2022-FIFA-1.pdf](https://carbonmarketwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Poor-tackling_-_Yellow-card-for-2022-FIFA-1.pdf)

58 The Economist, “Qatar's World Cup will emit more CO2 than any recent sporting event”, 1 December 2022, <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2022/12/01/qatars-world-cup-will-emit-more-co2-than-any-recent-sporting-event>

59 FIFA, “Bidding processes for the FIFA World Cup 2030 and the FIFA World Cup 2034”, October 2023, [https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/28801bb1a9d35eac/original/-1861\\_Bidding-processes-for-the-FIFA-World-Cup-2030-and-the-FIFA-World-Cup-2034.pdf](https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/28801bb1a9d35eac/original/-1861_Bidding-processes-for-the-FIFA-World-Cup-2030-and-the-FIFA-World-Cup-2034.pdf)





Iranian fans hold up "Woman Life Freedom" signs during a FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 match in Doha, Qatar. © Juan Luis Diaz/Quality Sport Images/Getty Images

The requirements further demand that host countries “show leadership in climate action, including using best efforts to engage in the process of becoming a signatory of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Sports for Climate Action Framework” and “have a plan of action to reduce emissions in line with the Paris Climate Agreement and/or their country’s climate action plans.”<sup>60</sup>

The 2030 World Cup with 48 teams will take place over three different continents (Europe, Africa and South America) thus having a significant impact on emissions, including travel. While FIFA says that it “will take all required measures to mitigate the environmental impact of the FIFA World Cup”<sup>61</sup>, a representative of Avocat.e.s pour le Climat – who took a case on behalf of the Swiss Climate Alliance against FIFA for “greenwashing” – told Reuters with regard to 2030 that, “in such big tournaments, with people coming from all over the world, most emissions are from flights. This is something FIFA cannot reduce... It’s too big, it’s about 80-85% of total emissions. I cannot see how FIFA can commit to have any positive effect on those emissions.”<sup>62</sup>

For the 2034 tournament, the huge scale of new construction will inevitably have major climate impacts. It is also not yet clear whether the tournament will be played in winter or summer, when temperatures reach over 43°C (109°F). Saudi Arabian Football Federation president Yasser al-Mishehal suggested that the tournament can be played during either season, with the use of air conditioners and cooling.<sup>63</sup>

A summer World Cup in Saudi Arabia would be extremely energy-intensive and will inevitably entail high carbon emissions. Extreme summer heat may also be an important issue in Morocco, Portugal and Spain – potentially harming players, workers and fans.

60 *Ibid*

61 FIFA, “FAQ, Bidding Process FIFA World Cup 2030”, <https://inside.fifa.com/about-fifa/bidding-processes/bidding-process-wc-2030>.

62 Reuters, “World Cup: Six countries at odds with FIFA’s climate strategy – experts”, 11 October 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/sports/soccer/world-cup-six-countries-odds-with-fifas-climate-strategy-experts-2023-10-11/>

63 Al-Monitor, “Saudi ready for summer or winter World Cup 2034 — FA chief”, 6 November 2023, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2023/11/saudi-ready-summer-or-winter-world-cup-2034-fa-chief>



# 4. MOROCCO, PORTUGAL AND SPAIN FIFA MEN'S WORLD CUP 2030

## BID OVERVIEW

On 11 October 2023 the FIFA Council confirmed that the joint bid by **Morocco, Portugal and Spain** to host the 2030 FIFA Men's World Cup was the sole candidate, with three "Centenary Celebration Matches" to be held in **Argentina, Paraguay** and **Uruguay**.<sup>64</sup> Assuming the 2030 hosts are officially confirmed toward the end of 2024, this will mark the first occasion the tournament has been held across three continents.<sup>65</sup>

Concerns were immediately raised in relation to the impact of such a geographically dispersed tournament on fans, players and the climate. FIFA has stated that the 2030 schedule will be adapted for teams involved in the matches in South America to provide additional days to "travel, rest, adapt and prepare", with no additional burden on any participating teams or players.<sup>66</sup>

In terms of previous experience, **Morocco** hosted the Men's Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) in 1988 and will host the next edition of that tournament in 2025.<sup>67</sup> The country also hosted the 2022 Women's AFCON and will be the venue in 2024 as well.<sup>68</sup> Morocco hosted the 2022 FIFA Club World Cup, held in February 2023. In March 2024 FIFA announced that Morocco would host the U-17 Women's World Cup for five successive years from 2025 to 2029.<sup>69</sup> Morocco has made unsuccessful bids to host the World Cup on five previous occasions, most recently losing to Canada, Mexico and the USA to host the 2026 tournament.

**Portugal** hosted the European Championship in 2004, as well as the UEFA Nations League finals in 2019. **Spain** is the only country of the three hosts to have previously hosted the Men's World Cup tournament, having done so in 1982. Spain also hosted the European Championship in 1964.

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- 64 FIFA, "FIFA World Cup 2030™: Morocco, Portugal and Spain joint bid is sole candidate to host", 11 October 2023, <https://www.fifa.com/fifaplust/en/tournaments/mens/worldcup/articles/world-cup-2030-spain-portugal-morocco-host-centenary-argentina-uruguay-paraguay>
- 65 Inside World Football, "Infantino officially rubber stamps sole bidders for 2030, 2034 World Cup finals", 1 November 2023, <https://www.insideworldfootball.com/2023/11/01/infantino-officially-rubber-stamps-sole-bidders-2030-2034-world-cup-finals/>
- 66 FIFA, "FIFA World Cup 2030™: Morocco, Portugal and Spain joint bid is sole candidate to host", 11 October 2023, <https://www.fifa.com/fifaplust/en/tournaments/mens/worldcup/articles/world-cup-2030-spain-portugal-morocco-host-centenary-argentina-uruguay-paraguay>
- 67 Reuters, "Morocco to host 2025 Africa Cup of Nations finals", 27 September 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/sports/soccer/morocco-host-2025-africa-cup-nations-finals-2023-09-27/>
- 68 BBC Sport, "Women's Africa Cup of Nations: South Africa, Nigeria among qualified nations for the Total Energies CAF Women's Africa Cup of Nations Morocco 2024", <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/africa/62306596> and Confederation of African Football (CAF), "South Africa, Nigeria among qualified nations for the Total Energies CAF Women's Africa Cup of Nations Morocco 2024", <https://www.cafonline.com/caf-womens-africa-cup-of-nations/news/south-africa-nigeria-among-qualified-nations-for-the-totalenergies-caf-women-s-africa-cup-of-nations-morocco-2024/>
- 69 FIFA, "Morocco awarded multi-year hosting rights to FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup™", 14 March 2024, <https://inside.fifa.com/about-fifa/organisation/news/morocco-awarded-multi-year-hosting-rights-to-fifa-u-17-womens-world-cup-tm>

Ahead of the 2030 World Cup, the president of the Moroccan FA announced that **Morocco, Portugal and Spain** will co-host the 2029 FIFA Club World Cup to “confirm our readiness” for 2030.<sup>70</sup>

This report focuses primarily on **Morocco, Portugal and Spain** which between them will host 101 of the 104 matches and which are therefore the primary sites of risk. Of the three primary hosts, Spain may provide more than half of the 18 venues and is therefore likely to host the majority of matches. This necessarily increases the salience of human rights risks in Spain, although more construction may be expected in Morocco.

While cooperation between Morocco, Portugal and Spain is central to the 2030 FIFA World Cup bid, relations have often been marred by conflicts over migration, repressive border practices and their racially discriminatory outcomes.<sup>71</sup> In 2021, Amnesty International accused Spain and Morocco of using people “as pawns in a political game”, after Morocco allowed 8,000 people to cross into the Spanish enclave of Ceuta, where the two countries share a land border, and Spanish forces subjected them, including children, to violence.<sup>72</sup> On 24 June 2022, at least 37 people were killed when over 2,000 Sub-Saharan African migrants and refugees attempted to cross from Morocco to the Spanish enclave of Melilla and were met with prolonged and unlawful use of force by Moroccan and Spanish security.<sup>73</sup> There has been no adequate investigation by either the Spanish or Moroccan authorities to date.<sup>74</sup> More broadly, the primary tournament hosts have regularly been criticized for failing to protect refugees and migrants; more than 950 people died in the first six months of 2023 alone while trying to reach Spain from Africa.<sup>75</sup>

Tensions regarding Morocco’s border with Algeria and restrictions on participants from Algeria would also need to be addressed. Morocco’s land border with Algeria has been closed since 1994, and in 2023 two Moroccan tourists were shot at and killed by Algeria’s coastguard for veering too close to the border.<sup>76</sup> Diplomatic ties were severed in 2021, and in 2023 Morocco withdrew from the African Nations Championship held in Algeria after being refused a direct flight to the host country.<sup>77</sup>

***In 2021, Amnesty International accused Spain and Morocco of using people “as pawns in a political game”, after Morocco allowed 8,000 people to cross into the Spanish enclave of Ceuta, where the two countries share a land border, and Spanish forces subjected them, including children, to violence.***

70 Morocco World News, “Morocco Plans to Host 2029 FIFA Club World Cup”, 23 October 2023, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2023/10/358100/morocco-plans-to-host-2029-fifa-club-world-cup>

71 Amnesty International, “Submission to the UN CERD-CMW joint general comment/recommendation” (Index: IOR 40/7898/2024), 4 April 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ior40/7898/2024/en/>

72 Amnesty International, “Spain/Morocco: People being used as pawns as political games turn violent”, 17 May 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/05/spainmorocco-people-being-used-as-pawns-as-political-games-turn-violent/>

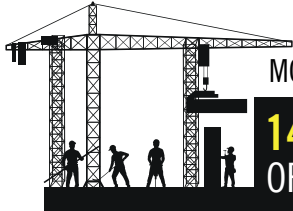
73 Amnesty International, “Morocco: “They beat him in the head, to check if he was dead”: Evidence of crimes under international law by Morocco and Spain at the Melilla border” (Index: MDE 29/6249/2022), 13 December 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde29/6249/2022/en/>

74 Amnesty International, “Morocco/Spain: Agony goes on for families of missing and dead as Melilla cover-up continues”, June 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/06/morocco-spain-agony-goes-on-for-families-of-missing-and-dead-as-melilla-cover-up-continues/>

75 InfoMigrants, “Nearly 1,000 migrants died on Africa-Spain routes in six months, NGO reports”, 30 June 2021, <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/50236/nearly-1000-migrants-died-on-africaspain-routes-in-six-months-ngo-reports>

76 BBC News, “Jet Ski Moroccan Tourist Describes Being Shot At Off Algerian Coast”, 2 September 2023, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-66694136> (accessed 30 April 2024).

77 BBC News, “Holders Morocco Withdraw Amid Algeria Tensions”, 12 January 2023, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/africa/64250586>



MOROCCO, PORTUGAL AND SPAIN WILL NEED TO PROVIDE A MINIMUM OF

**14 STADIUMS TO HOST THE 2030 FIFA WORLD CUP,  
OF WHICH SEVEN MUST ALREADY EXIST.**

## PLANNED STADIUM AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Morocco, Portugal and Spain will need to provide a minimum of 14 stadiums to host the 2030 FIFA World Cup, of which seven must already exist.<sup>78</sup> In 2022, Spain unveiled a list of 15 potential host stadiums, seven of which would require expansion to reach the capacity required by FIFA.<sup>79</sup> Morocco has announced its intention to build a new mega-stadium near Casablanca with a capacity of over 100,000, alongside the renovation of six stadiums in the cities of Agadir, Casablanca, Fez, Marrakech, Rabat and Tangier.<sup>80</sup>

In October 2023, António Laranjo, chair of the bid's Coordination Commission, stated that no new Portuguese stadiums would need to be built for the tournament – only renovations would be needed – and that in Morocco and Spain, new infrastructure will be planned only where it can be justified for future use.<sup>81</sup>

Spain and Portugal expect the World Cup to generate 82,513 and 26,000 new jobs respectively, while Morocco's government is yet to make similar estimates public.<sup>82</sup> Morocco and Spain have outlined plans to cooperate on a series of joint infrastructure projects, including a tunnel linking the countries, as part of their cooperation and preparation for the 2030 World Cup.<sup>83</sup>

## CENTENARY STADIUMS IN SOUTH AMERICA

The opening ceremony and the first game will be held in the Estadio Centenario in Montevideo, Uruguay, in recognition of Uruguay's role as the host and winner of the 1930 edition. The stadiums for the matches in Paraguay and Argentina have not yet been confirmed. Argentina currently has several that meet the minimum requirements set by FIFA. The head of the Argentinian FA has stated that there will be "zero cost" to their role in hosting the tournament.<sup>84</sup> In Paraguay, plans have been announced by CONMEBOL (the South American Football Confederation, whose headquarters are in the country) for the building of a new stadium, "Estadio CONMEBOL", with a capacity of more than 50,000.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>79</sup> Inside the Games, "Spain to use stadiums from 1982 FIFA World Cup for 2030 tournament", 16 July 2022, <https://www.insidethegames.biz/articles/1125752/spain-stadiums-2030-world-cup>

<sup>80</sup> Reuters, "Morocco to build new stadium, upgrade six others before 2030 World Cup", 20 October 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/sports/soccer/morocco-build-new-stadium-upgrade-six-others-before-2030-world-cup-2023-10-20/>

<sup>81</sup> The Portugal News, "Stadiums being checked ahead of 2030 World Cup", 20 October 2023, <https://www.theportugalnews.com/news/2023-10-20/stadiums-being-checked-ahead-of-2030-world-cup/82468>

<sup>82</sup> Palco23, "El Gobierno español estima que el Mundial de 2030 costará 1.430 millones de euros", 22 December 2022, <https://www.palco23.com/competiciones/el-gobierno-espanol-estima-que-el-mundial-de-2030-costara-1430-millones-de-euros>

<sup>83</sup> The Telegraph, "Underwater tunnel could link Spain to Morocco by 2030", 14 January 2023, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/news/underwater-tunnel-link-spain-to-morocco-by-2030/>

<sup>84</sup> beIN SPORTS, "Argentina announce zero cost to host 2030 World Cup", 6 October 2023, <https://www.beinsports.com/en-us/soccer/world-cup/articles-video/argentina-announce-zero-cost-to-host-2030-world-cup-2023-10-06>

<sup>85</sup> StadiumDB.com, "Paraguay: A special stadium for one of the opening matches of the 2030 World Cup", 13 November 2023, [http://stadiumdb.com/news/2023/11/paraguay\\_a\\_special\\_stadium\\_for\\_one\\_of\\_the\\_opening\\_matches\\_of\\_the\\_2030\\_world\\_cup](http://stadiumdb.com/news/2023/11/paraguay_a_special_stadium_for_one_of_the_opening_matches_of_the_2030_world_cup)

## HUMAN RIGHTS TREATIES AND INSTITUTIONS

Morocco has ratified all core human rights treaties except for the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming for the abolition of the death penalty; and the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.<sup>86</sup> Portugal and Spain have both ratified all core international human rights treaties apart from the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, and the Interstate communication procedure under the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.<sup>87</sup>

All three host countries are members of the International Labour Organisation and legally recognize trade unions. Morocco has ratified eight of the ILO's 11 fundamental instruments<sup>88</sup> but has not ratified the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention (C087), the Protocol to the Forced Labour Convention (PO29) and the Occupational Safety and Health Convention (C155).<sup>89</sup> Portugal and Spain have ratified all 11 fundamental instruments of the ILO.

Portugal and Spain are both members of the EU. They are therefore bound by the political and social rights enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU as well as EU minimum labour rights. Both countries have ratified the European Convention on Human Rights and the Revised European Social Charter and its Additional Protocol, providing for a System of Collective Complaints.<sup>90</sup> They will also be bound by the EU's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive, adopted in May 2024. In 2017, Morocco rejoined the African Union having left its precursor, the Organisation of African Unity, over that organization's recognition of Western Sahara.<sup>91</sup> It has not yet ratified the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights, despite recommendations to do so by the country's National Human Rights Council.<sup>92</sup>

All three host countries have National Human Rights Institutions which have received an "A" accreditation status from the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, designating the institutions as fully compliant with the UN Paris Principles and the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) Statute.<sup>93</sup>

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86 UN Treaty Body Database, [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=117&Lang=EN](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=117&Lang=EN) (accessed 22 April 2024).

87 *Ibid*

88 The ILO's fundamental instruments include 10 core conventions and one protocol related to forced labour, <https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:12200:::>

89 International Labour Organisation, NORMLEX Information System on International Labour Standards, [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:10011:::10011:P10011\\_DISPLAY\\_BY,P10011\\_CONVENTION\\_TYPE\\_CODE:2,F](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:10011:::10011:P10011_DISPLAY_BY,P10011_CONVENTION_TYPE_CODE:2,F)

90 Council of Europe, "Signatures and Ratifications", <https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-social-charter/signatures-ratifications>

91 Financial Times, "Morocco returns to African Union", 30 January 2017, <https://www.ft.com/content/6479ea72-e718-11e6-893c-082c54a7f539>

92 National Human Rights Council of Morocco (CNDH), "CNDH reiterates its recommendation for the ratification of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights", November 2021, <https://www.cndh.ma/an/highlights/cndh-reiterates-its-recommendation-ratification-african-charter-human-and-peoples-rights>

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# HUMAN RIGHTS AT RISK

The following section covers key human rights that could be connected to the hosting of the FIFA World Cup, many of which are also identified in FIFA's Human Rights Policy and tournament bidding requirements. It does not seek to analyse every human rights issue in each country.

## LABOUR RIGHTS

Preparation and delivery of the World Cup will require the expansion of the workforce in the construction, tourism and hospitality sectors across the three countries. In its Human Rights Policy, FIFA says that it “strives to uphold and promote the highest international labour standards, in particular the principles enshrined in the eight core ILO conventions.”<sup>94</sup> FIFA's 2030 guidelines state that host nations must “ensure that effective protections are in place for workers involved in the preparation and delivery of the Competition”.<sup>95</sup> Section five of FIFA's Human Rights policy acknowledges the construction of stadiums and infrastructure as a predominant concern in the hosting of a World Cup,<sup>96</sup> although service and hospitality staff require equal attention given their key role in the delivery of the tournament. The Sustainability Strategy for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, for example, recognized FIFA's responsibility in relation to the risks faced by these workers.<sup>97</sup>

**Morocco** is set to undertake the largest infrastructure building projects of the three host countries, building the 115,000-capacity Grand Stade de Casablanca in addition to the renovation of other stadiums and infrastructure projects. FIFA's assessment of Morocco's 2026 World Cup bid – which included the construction of six new stadiums and the acceleration of a range of transport and telecommunications projects<sup>98</sup> – identified “significant” risks to human and labour rights in construction and supply chains, the latter particularly relating to “low-skilled and low-paid occupations”.<sup>99</sup> Beyond stadium construction and renovations, it is clear that Morocco will embark on a major programme of infrastructure development ahead of 2030: foreign business interest groups have already begun planning how to capitalize on a likely construction boom.<sup>100</sup> A 2024 report by Sogécapital Gestion, the asset management arm of Société Générale in Morocco, estimated that the government would need to budget 52 billion dirhams (US\$5 billion) to deliver the tournament, with the construction industry a primary beneficiary of this spending.<sup>101</sup>

Workers involved in these major projects may face potentially serious health and safety risks if adequate protections are not put in place. A 2018 peer-reviewed study comparing the number of fatal incidents in Morocco with countries in Europe and North America, found that despite deficiencies in available data on health and safety, “it is obvious that, at all the levels, there are dangerous gaps [in occupational health and safety] that can make, at any time, the Moroccan construction sites a scene of serious

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94 FIFA, FIFA's Human Rights Policy – May 2017 edition, <https://img.FIFA.com/image/upload/kr05dqyhwr1uhqy2lh6r.pdf>

95 FIFA, Bidding processes for the FIFA World Cup 2030 and the FIFA World Cup 2034, October 2023, [https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/28801bb1a9d35eac/original/-1861\\_Bidding-processes-for-the-FIFA-World-Cup-2030-and-the-FIFA-World-Cup-2034.pdf](https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/28801bb1a9d35eac/original/-1861_Bidding-processes-for-the-FIFA-World-Cup-2030-and-the-FIFA-World-Cup-2034.pdf)

96 FIFA, FIFA's Human Rights Policy – May 2017 edition, <https://img.FIFA.com/image/upload/kr05dqyhwr1uhqy2lh6r.pdf>

97 FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Sustainability Policy, and FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Sustainability Strategy, <https://resources.fifa.com/image/upload/fifa-world-cup-qatar-2022tm-sustainability-strategy.pdf?cloudid=u25obd7303tdxupsjysn>

98 Royal Morocco Football Federation (RFEF), “Bidding Nation: Morocco”, March 2018, p369, <https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/31939d837a8ad761/original/weegrtynecqg3hgw8hmmr-pdf.pdf>

99 FIFA, “2026 FIFA World Cup™ Evaluation Report Published, Bids Submitted to FIFA Council”, <https://www.fifa.com/about-fifa/organisation/media-releases/2026-fifa-world-cup-evaluation-report-published-bids-submitted-to-fifa-council>

100 U.S. Department of Commerce, “Morocco - Infrastructure”, January 2024, <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/morocco-infrastructure>; and British Expertise International, “Transport Infrastructure - World Cup 2030 Morocco”, March 2024, <https://www.britishexpertise.org/product/transport-infrastructure---world-cup-2030-morocco>; and Switzerland Global Enterprise, “World Cup Investment”, March 2024, <https://www.s-ge.com/en/publication/fact-sheet/2024-e-infra-morocco-ct6-world-cup-investment?ct>

101 Morocco World News, “Despite \$5 Billion Cost, Morocco's 2030 World Cup Promises Lasting Legacy”, 20 October 2023, <https://www.morocccoworldnews.com/2023/10/358140/despite-5-billion-cost-moroccos-2030-world-cup-promises-lasting-legacy>



accidents.”<sup>102</sup> The ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations also raised concerns about the lack of health and safety data.<sup>103</sup> A separate 2020 study found that construction workers in Morocco are three times more likely to experience fatal work injuries and twice as likely to suffer from other work-related injuries than workers in other fields. The sector employs about 1 million people, of which 70% do not have any form of insurance.<sup>104</sup> One high-profile example in 2023 includes three construction workers and three other people who died during renovation works in a textile factory.<sup>105</sup>

In 2022, the government indicated to the ILO that as part of the National Occupational Safety and Health Programme 2020-24, it had prepared a draft bill on occupational safety and health, “intended to resolve the gaps identified at legislative level and to adapt national legislation to reflect relevant international standards.”<sup>106</sup> The government added that it will develop a tool to analyse and publish the causes of occupational accidents and diseases. The health and safety bill is still under consultation,<sup>107</sup> although another law to compensate accidents at work was passed in January 2024.<sup>108</sup>

Attention will also need to be given to the risk of child labour. The country’s Minimum Age for Work is set at 15 for many sectors - in violation of international conventions ratified by Morocco<sup>109</sup> - and 18 for “hazardous” work. Approximately 4.5% of Moroccan children (150,178) aged between 10 and 14 are economically active, with six out of 10 performing hazardous work, including in the construction industry.<sup>110</sup> The ILO has raised concerns that “even if Moroccan regulations provide for the obligation for the employer to take all necessary measures to preserve the safety and health of employees under the age of 18, the reality on the ground is alarming. A significant percentage of children of working age are exposed to hazardous work.”<sup>111</sup>

Morocco has increasingly become a destination country for sub-Saharan African migrant workers, with the Migration Policy Institute estimating their number at around 700,000. The job market offers few opportunities for undocumented migrant workers, and construction is one of the few sectors in which they can find work.<sup>112</sup> In 2023, the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families expressed concerns at reports that “forced labour has been imposed on migrants [in Morocco], in particular those in an irregular situation, but also some migrant workers in a regular situation whose identity papers have been confiscated by their employers or their employers’ families.”<sup>113</sup>

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102 Bakeli Tarik and Hafidi Alaoui Adil, Occupational health and safety in the Moroccan construction sites: preliminary diagnosis, International Journal of Metrology and Quality Engineering, 18 May 2018 <https://www.metrology-journal.org/articles/ijmqe/full.html/2018/01/ijmqe170024/ijmqe170024.html> (accessed 15 April 2024).

103 ILO, “Country Profiles - Morocco”, [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100\\_COMMENT\\_ID,P13100\\_COUNTRY\\_ID:4303356,102993:NO](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100_COMMENT_ID,P13100_COUNTRY_ID:4303356,102993:NO)

104 Elmoujaddidi F, Bachir A, “Perceived risk, safety climate and safety behavior on Moroccan construction sites”, March 2020, Int J Occup Saf Ergon, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30422083/> (accessed 15 April 2024)

105 Sourcing Journal, “Morocco: Six workers killed in Casablanca textile factory collapse”, 13 June 2023, <https://www.business-eferhumanrights.org/en/latest-news/morocco-six-workers-killed-in-casablanca-textile-factory-collapse/> (accessed 15 April 2024).

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107 Secrétariat Général du Gouvernement (SGG), -Royaume du Maroc, Projet de loi n° 55-17 portant code de la protection sociale (étude d’impact), <http://www.sgg.gov.ma/Portals/0/legislation/ProjetLois/EtudeImpact/projetLoi55-17FR.pdf>

108 Industries.ma, Réparation des accidents du travail: Vote unanime à la Chambre des Conseillers, <https://industries.ma/reparation-des-accidents-du-travail-vote-unanime-a-la-chambre-des-conseillers/>

109 Convention on the Rights of the Child and ILO Convention 182, concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

110 U.S. Department of Labor, 2022 Child Labor Reports, Morocco, [https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child\\_labor\\_reports/tda2022/Morocco.pdf](https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child_labor_reports/tda2022/Morocco.pdf)

111 ILO, “IPEC Projects: Morocco”, <https://www.ilo.org/ipec/projects/global/map16/morocco/lang--en/index.htm>

112 Migration Policy Institute, “Growing Destination: Sub-Saharan Africans in Morocco”, 2 July 2019, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/growing-destination-sub-saharan-africans-morocco>

113 Concluding observations on the 2nd periodic report of Morocco : Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, 23 May 2023, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4032992?v=pdf> (accessed 15 April 2024).



Workers stand in front of large machinery as they wait for the wall to be breached at the future Estrela underground station on May 28, 2022 in Lisbon, Portugal. © Horacio Villalobos/Corbis via Getty Images

In 2022 there were 500 labour inspectors in the country, an increase of 23% from 2021.<sup>114</sup> However, over 300 additional inspectors would be required to meet ILO benchmarks for industrializing economies such as Morocco.<sup>115</sup>

Trade union membership in Morocco stands at less than 11%, but due to a strict application of the right to collective bargaining, the rate of workers who can engage in bargaining is only 3%.<sup>116</sup> In 2023, the Moroccan government drafted legislation to “regulate” the right to strike. Trade union leaders expressed their concerns about the bill and its infringement of the right to strike.<sup>117</sup> Khadija Riady, former president of the Moroccan Association for Human Rights, has said that “In Morocco, the right to strike is recognized in the Constitution, but it is not respected. Article 288 of the penal code punishes with prison sentences the ‘obstruction of work’, which is vaguely defined and used to arrest people participating in picket lines.”<sup>118</sup> The ILO noted in 2022 that Moroccan authorities had failed to respond to accusations of “anti-union behaviour” or to expand access to the right to collective bargaining.<sup>119</sup> In 2018, in its bid to host the 2026 FIFA World Cup, the Moroccan Football Association wrote that it had signed a collective agreement on social dialogue with trade union organizations.<sup>120</sup>

114 U.S. Department of Labor, 2022 Child Labor Reports, Morocco, [https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child\\_labor\\_reports/tda2022/Morocco.pdf](https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child_labor_reports/tda2022/Morocco.pdf)

115 ILO, Strategies and Practice for Labour Inspection, November 2006, [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed\\_norm/@relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\\_gb\\_297\\_esp\\_3\\_en.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_norm/@relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_gb_297_esp_3_en.pdf). The ILO recommends 1 inspector per 10,000 workers in industrial market economies, 1 per 15,000 in industrialising economies, 1 per 20,000 in transition economies and 1 per 40,000 in less developed countries. Morocco’s ratio is approximately 1 per 25,000. See also, U.S. Department of Labor, 2022 Child Labor Reports, Morocco, [https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child\\_labor\\_reports/tda2022/Morocco.pdf](https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child_labor_reports/tda2022/Morocco.pdf)

116 Danish Trade Union Development Agency, “Labour Market Profile Morocco 2023/24”, 2023, <https://www.ulandssekretariatet.dk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/LMP-Morocco-2023-final1.pdf> (Accessed 19 April 2024)

117 Arab Trade Union Confederation, “Morocco’s strike regulation bill: a potential source of social tension and a pretext for employers to avoid implementing minimum wage increases”, <https://arabtradeunion.org/news/morocco-s-strike-regulation-bill-a-potential-source-of-social-tension-and-a-pretext-for-employers-to-avoid-implementing-minimum-wage-increases>

118 Equal Times, “Trade Union Freedom in Morocco: more an aspiration than a right”, 29 March 2023, <https://www.equaltimes.org/trade-union-freedom-in-morocco>

119 ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, Direct Request, 2022; [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100\\_COMMENT\\_ID,P13100\\_COUNTRY\\_ID:4302483,102993:NO](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100_COMMENT_ID,P13100_COUNTRY_ID:4302483,102993:NO)

120 Royal Morocco Football Federation (RFEF), “Bidding Nation: Morocco” p369, March 2018, <https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/31939d837a8ad761/original/weegrtvecqg3hvw8hmmr-pdf.pdf>



In 2023, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) classed Morocco as scoring 3 out of 5 on its Global Rights Index – with 1 being the best score and 5 the worst – indicating “regular violations of rights”. According to the ITUC, this ranking means that “[g]overnments and/or companies are regularly interfering in collective labour rights or are failing to fully guarantee important aspects of these rights. There are deficiencies in laws and/or certain practices which make frequent violations possible.”<sup>121</sup>

In **Portugal**, concerns have been raised by trade unions about the proper enforcement of labour regulations, given a 21% decline in the number of labour inspectors between 2010 and 2018, and a 55% fall in the number of inspections in the same period.<sup>122</sup> A 2021 ILO report noted that this left Portugal with 0.62 inspectors per 10,000 workers, below the ILO benchmark of 1 per 10,000. Of nine European countries studied, only the UK had fewer.<sup>123</sup> In 2021, Portugal’s incidence of fatal accidents was slightly above the EU average, and its incidence of non-fatal accidents was over 50% higher.<sup>124</sup>

An estimated 19% of employees are in trade unions whilst 89% are covered by collective bargaining agreements.<sup>125</sup> In 2023, the União Geral de Trabalhadores (UGT-P, the national trade union centre) reported increasing pressure from employers on workers to discourage them from joining trade unions.<sup>126</sup>

Infrastructure projects in Portugal have generally relied heavily on the recruitment of migrant workers, and this is likely to be the case for projects related to the 2030 World Cup – as would the delivery of hospitality and services. In 2021, the Minister for Territorial Cohesion said that “as we are in a special period of investment, we will need a lot of manpower, a lot of workers, and I believe that this can only be achieved with a very active policy of attracting immigrants and treating them well.”<sup>127</sup>

In Portuguese law, foreign nationals who are not from the EU but who have Portuguese residence or work permits have the same employment rights as any other EU citizen, as long as they have a written employment contract and a residence/work permit.<sup>128</sup> However, in recent years, abuse and exploitation of migrant workers has been well documented. For example, in 2023, Portuguese police uncovered at least 243 victims of labour exploitation – mostly from Latin America, Eastern Europe and South Asia – in a warehouse where they were reportedly housed to illegally harvest shellfish.<sup>129</sup> In addition to numerous examples of exploitation in the agricultural sector,<sup>130</sup> the US State Department has reported that labour traffickers in Portugal target the construction sector.<sup>131</sup> Trade unions have raised concerns

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121 International Trade Union Confederation, “Global Rights Index 2023”, <https://www.globalrightsindex.org/en/2023> (accessed 15 April 2024).

122 European Trade Union Confederation, “Huge fall in labour inspections raises Covid risk”, 28 April 2021, <https://www.etuc.org/en/pressrelease/huge-fall-labour-inspections-raises-covid-risk>

123 ILO, “Policies to prevent and tackle labour exploitation and forced labour in Europe” p45, 2021, [https://webapps.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---europe/---ro-geneva/---ilo-rome/documents/publication/wcms\\_842406.pdf](https://webapps.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---europe/---ro-geneva/---ilo-rome/documents/publication/wcms_842406.pdf) (accessed 26 April 2024).

124 Eurostat, Accidents at work statistics - Statistics Explained, October 2023, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Accidents\\_at\\_work\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Accidents_at_work_statistics) (accessed 17 April 2024)

125 Worker Participation.eu, “National Industrial Relations – Portugal”, <https://www.worker-participation.eu/national-industrial-relations/countries/portugal> (accessed 15 April 2024); see also, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, “Collective Bargaining in Europe”, <https://www.worker-participation.eu/National-Industrial-Relations/Across-Europe/Collective-Bargaining2> (accessed 17 April 2024).

126 International Trade Union Confederation, “Global Rights Index 2023 - Portugal”, <https://www.globalrightsindex.org/en/2023/countries/prt> (accessed 15 April 2024).

127 SAPO24, “Censos2021: Ministra da Coesão diz que Portugal vai precisar de emigrantes”, 28 July 2021, <https://24.sapo.pt/atualidade/artigos/censos2021-ministra-da-coesao-diz-que-portugal-vai-precisar-de-emigrantes>

128 Agency for Administrative Modernization, Working in Portugal, [Working.in.Portugal - ePortugal.gov.pt](http://Working.in.Portugal-ePortugal.gov.pt) (accessed 30 April 2024)

129 InfoMigrants, “Hundreds of alleged victims of migrant labor exploitation found in Portugal”, 22 June 2023, <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/49867/hundreds-of-alleged-victims-of-migrant-labor-exploitation-found-in-portugal>

130 InfoMigrants, “Migrant fruit pickers face exploitation in Portugal”, 27 April 2024, <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/40125/migrant-fruit-pickers-face-exploitation-in-portugal>; see also Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, “Portugal: Asian migrant workers in agriculture at heightened risk of labour exploitation, human trafficking”, <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/portugal-asian-migrant-workers-in-agriculture-at-heightened-risk-of-labour-exploitation-human-trafficking/>

131 U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Report 2023: Portugal”, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/portugal/> (accessed 15 April 2024).

about criminal networks recruiting migrant workers with little experience of construction and exploiting them for low wages while keeping them undocumented.<sup>132</sup>

Migrant workers employed in sectors including agriculture, construction and domestic service who were interviewed for a 2017 EU research project said that the key factors in their exploitation were: their employers' poor and racist attitudes towards them; the economic vulnerability of migrant workers; and their undocumented situation in the country.<sup>133</sup> Their treatment often relates to their broader experience of systemic racism (see section on discrimination).

In 2021, the ILO recognized reporting which found foreign workers continue to be paid lower average wages than nationals and are more exposed to poverty and social exclusion. The ILO called on the Portuguese government to increase its efforts to guarantee in practice equality of opportunity and treatment for migrant workers.<sup>134</sup>

## CASE STUDY

### POLICE ABUSE OF MIGRANT WORKERS IN PORTUGAL

In January 2024, the Beja court in Portugal sentenced two military police officers to prison and another to a suspended sentence for kidnapping and assaulting migrants in Odemira, Beja region. The two officers sentenced to prison had already been dismissed from the Republican National Guard (GNR), but the third remains in service. These men, along with four other GNR soldiers, were accused of kidnapping and assaulting migrants in two separate cases in September 2018 and March 2019.<sup>135</sup>

Rights group SOS Racismo said the incident was not isolated and that "xenophobia, abuse and police violence cannot go unpunished".<sup>136</sup>

In 2023, the ITUC classed Portugal as scoring 2 out of 5 on its Global Rights Index – with 1 being the best score and 5 the worst - indicating "repeated violations of rights." According to the ITUC, this ranking means that "certain rights have come under repeated attacks by governments and/or companies and have undermined the struggle for better working conditions."<sup>137</sup>

In **Spain**, concerns around health and safety have also been raised by trade unions. In February 2023, the Confederación Sindical de Comisiones Obreras (CCOO) – Spain's main trade union federation – denounced a significant increase in accidents at work. According to data published by the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy, accidents leading to time off work and fatal accidents increased in 2022

132 Euractiv, "Portuguese construction sector points to worst-ever labour situation", 27 October 2023, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/portuguese-construction-sector-points-to-worst-ever-labour-situation/>

133 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, "Portugal SELEX II Report", September 2017, [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/portugal-selex-ii-report\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/portugal-selex-ii-report_en.pdf)

134 ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, "Direct Request (CEACR) - adopted 2022, published 111st ILC session (2023) Portugal", 2023, [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100\\_COMMENT\\_ID:P13100\\_COUNTRY\\_ID:4118678.102815:NO](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100_COMMENT_ID:P13100_COUNTRY_ID:4118678.102815:NO)

135 Time to Portugal, "Jail for guards who humiliated and assaulted immigrants", 13 January 2024, <https://timetoportugal.com/portugal/jail-for-guards-who-humiliated-and-assaulted-immigrants/>

136 Reuters, "Alleged police abuse against migrant workers shocks Portugal", 17 December 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/alleged-police-abuse-against-migrant-workers-shocks-portugal-2021-12-17/>

137 International Trade Union Confederation, "Global Rights Index 2023", <https://www.globalrightsindex.org/en/2023> (accessed 15 April 2024).



A group of tourists in a tour bus record the cranes demolishing the 3rd grandstand of the Spotify Camp Nou. The Barcelona team is renovating its stadium to expand its capacity to 105,000 spectators and will be among the most modern stadiums in the world. © Pol Cartie/SOPA Images/LightRocket via Getty Images

by 10.4% and 17.2% respectively.<sup>138</sup> The construction sector ranks second for accidents among work sectors.<sup>139</sup> In 2021, like Portugal, Spain's incidence of both fatal and non-fatal accidents was above the EU average.<sup>140</sup>

In 2021 unions raised concerns about the number of labour inspections taking place, citing a 14% reduction between 2011 and 2015, the last year for which statistics were available.<sup>141</sup> Official statistics now show, however, that there has since been a growth in the number of inspectors from 1,800 in 2015 to 2,125 in 2022, approximately in line with ILO benchmarks.<sup>142</sup>

Excessive working hours remain a risk in Spain, with the European Committee on Social Rights highlighting that "the maximum working time may exceed 60 hours per week, within the framework of flexible work time formulas and for certain categories of workers."<sup>143</sup> While working time is governed by the Workers Statute, aiming for an average of 40 hours per week, the CCOO notes how irregular distributions

138 CCOO (Comisiones Obreras), "La gestión del gobierno en la crisis sanitaria y social", September 2020, <https://www.ccoo.es/31194e3b577c37267342180212c1b783000001.pdf>

139 Ministerio de Trabajo y Economía Social, "Estadísticas Anuales de Trabajo Registrado 2022: Resumen", 2023, [https://www.mites.gob.es/estadisticas/eat/eat22/TABLAS%20ESTADISTICAS/ATR\\_2022\\_Resumen.pdf](https://www.mites.gob.es/estadisticas/eat/eat22/TABLAS%20ESTADISTICAS/ATR_2022_Resumen.pdf)

140 Eurostat, Accidents at work statistics - Statistics Explained, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Accidents\\_at\\_work\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Accidents_at_work_statistics) (accessed 17 April 2024)

141 European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), "Huge fall in labour inspections raises Covid risk", 28 April 2021, <https://www.etuc.org/en/pressrelease/huge-fall-labour-inspections-raises-covid-risk>

142 Ministerio de Trabajo y Economía Social, "Memoria de la Inspección de Trabajo y Seguridad Social 2022", 2023, [https://www.mites.gob.es/its/ITSS/ITSS\\_Descargas/Que\\_hacemos/Memorias/Memoria\\_ITSS\\_2022\\_3.pdf](https://www.mites.gob.es/its/ITSS/ITSS_Descargas/Que_hacemos/Memorias/Memoria_ITSS_2022_3.pdf)

143 Council of Europe, Comments by Spanish trade unions CCOO and UGT, 2022, <https://rm.coe.int/comments-spanish-trade-unions-cco-and-ugt-2022-1680a732ca> (accessed 17 April 2024)



of working time and certain collective agreements mean that many workers far exceed these hours.<sup>144</sup> In April 2024, the Secretary General of the CCOO reiterated this concern, saying "One of the great problems of our country is non-compliance with the agreed working day, especially in some sectors."<sup>145</sup>

In Spain, an estimated 19% of employees are members of trade unions and collective bargaining agreements cover 70% of workers.<sup>146</sup> However, according to the ITUC's Global Rights Index, the CCOO "deplored that in several sectors, employers often did not respect their obligations under collective agreements, and refused to apply the wage rates agreed in the collective agreements by applying to authorities for an exemption (*descuelgue salarial*)."<sup>147</sup> In a submission to the European Committee on Social Rights, the CCOO also highlighted how Spanish legislation "empowers the employer to unilaterally change very important working conditions established by pacts or collective agreements."<sup>148</sup>

Risks may be particularly acute for migrant workers. Foreign nationals account for 14% of all workers across Spain,<sup>149</sup> but - as of 2023 - about 24% of construction workers.<sup>150</sup> Migrants working in low-wage sectors across Spain experience higher rates of underemployment, temporary employment and unemployment. It is calculated that 54.2% of non-EU and 46% of EU citizens are at risk of poverty or social exclusion, more than double that of the local population.<sup>151</sup>

Exploitation has been documented among migrant workers in the construction industry.<sup>152</sup> For example, in August 2023, Spanish police discovered a network that was forcing migrant workers to eat and sleep inside vehicles and to work in shifts that sometimes were longer than 24 hours, either as labourers or security guards on construction sites. The investigation ultimately led to the arrest of 17 suspects in Malaga and one in Madrid.<sup>153</sup> In December 2023, police in Majorca arrested a businessman who had allegedly recruited construction workers, left them undocumented and paid them as little as €50 a month.<sup>154</sup>

One Spanish construction sector expert told academics for a 2021 study that the fact that many migrant workers are employed by subcontractors at the end of long supply chains puts them at particular risk: "we have more problems in small companies, as safety plans do not work for most of the time."<sup>155</sup>

Most relevantly for FIFA and the 2030 World Cup, high-profile projects, including the renovation of prestige football stadiums, have seen serious exploitation.

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144 *Ibid*

145 CCOO (Comisiones Obreras), "El Gobierno debe ser más ambicioso en materia económica y socio laboral", 18 April 2024, [https://www.ccoo.es/noticia:691487--%E2%80%9CEl\\_Gobierno\\_debe\\_ser\\_mas\\_ambicioso\\_en\\_materia\\_economica\\_y\\_socio\\_laboral](https://www.ccoo.es/noticia:691487--%E2%80%9CEl_Gobierno_debe_ser_mas_ambicioso_en_materia_economica_y_socio_laboral)

146 Worker Participation.eu, "National Industrial Relations - Spain"; undated; Available at: <https://www.worker-participation.eu/national-industrial-relations/countries/spain>

147 International Trade Union Confederation, "2023 Global Rights Index", <https://www.globalrightsindex.org/en/2023/countries/esp> (accessed 16 April 2024).

148 Council of Europe, Comments by Spanish trade unions CCOO and UGT, 2022, <https://rm.coe.int/comments-spanish-trade-unions-ccoo-and-ugt-2022-/1680a732ca>

149 Instituto Nacional de Estadística, "EPA Fourth Quarter 2023", <https://www.ine.es/dyngs/Prensa/en/EPA4T23.htm>

150 National Institute of Statistics (Spain), Population Figures, 2023, <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Tabla.htm?t=4133&L=0>

151 TASC (Think-tank for Action on Social Change) & FEPS (Foundation for European Progressive Studies), "Migrant Key Workers in Europe: A Comparative Policy Study", 11 January 2022, [https://www.tasc.ie/assets/files/pdf/feps\\_tasc\\_policy\\_study\\_migrant\\_key\\_workers\\_11\\_jan\\_2022.pdf](https://www.tasc.ie/assets/files/pdf/feps_tasc_policy_study_migrant_key_workers_11_jan_2022.pdf)

152 Fernández García, M., Molinero-Gerbeau, Y., & Sajir, Z. (2023), 'They think you belong to them': migrant workers' perspectives on labour exploitation in Spain. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 49(15), 3976–3995, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2023.2235896> (accessed 15 April 2024).

153 Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), "Spanish Police Arrest 23 in Crackdown on Modern Slavery", 2 August 2023, <https://www.occrp.org/en/daily/17893-spanish-police-arrest-23-in-crackdown-on-modern-slavery>

154 Majorca Daily Bulletin, "Mallorca arrests: foreign building workers were being exploited", 26 November 2023, <https://www.majorcadailybulletin.com/news/local/2023/11/26/119183/mallorca-arrests-foreign-building-workers-were-being-exploited.html>

155 Rose Shepherd, Laura Lorente, Michela Vignoli, Karina Nielsen, José María Peiró, "Challenges influencing the safety of migrant workers in the construction industry: A qualitative study in Italy, Spain, and the UK", *Safety Science*, Volume 142; 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssci.2021.105388> (accessed 15 April 2024)



## CASE STUDY

### WORKING CONDITIONS AT CAMP NOU<sup>156</sup>

FC Barcelona's Camp Nou is one of Spain's most iconic stadiums and has been undergoing renovation to increase the capacity from 99,500 to 105,000. In 2023, an investigative report by the Spanish newspaper El Periódico found unsafe working conditions, excessive working hours and wage theft at the site. Reporters found that workers from Morocco, Pakistan, Bolivia and Senegal were receiving pay well below the legal minimum wage after working 10-11 hour shifts and being forced to work overtime without extra pay. Many workers were estimated to have lost up to €1,000 per month when taking into account their legal entitlement regarding fair pay and paid overtime.

Mohamed, a Moroccan worker at the site, explained to reporters why he was sleeping in a bag outside Camp Nou. His low pay meant that he could only afford to rent a dilapidated house over 50 km away in Manresa without water or electricity. To reach FC Barcelona's stadium, Mohamed woke at 5am every morning to travel across the city. After he arrived late one day when the train was delayed, a supervisor threatened to fire him if it happened again. Mohamed decided his only option was to sleep outside the stadium.

***“And all this suffering for a pittance! I look like a slave!”***

According to El Periodico, Mohamed was forced to work long hours, including overtime without pay. After working 14 consecutive days, including an extra six hours on Saturday, Mohamed found he was not paid for the overtime and received a monthly salary of only €1,000 for 56 hours' work per week. He should have been paid at least €1,750 simply on the minimum wage and without taking into account overtime rates and the higher wage collectively agreed between unions and employers in the construction sector.

In 2023, the ITUC classed Spain as scoring 2 out of 5 on its Global Rights Index – with 1 being the best score and 5 the worst - indicating “repeated violations of rights”. According to the ITUC, this ranking means that “certain rights have come under repeated attacks by governments and/or companies and have undermined the struggle for better working conditions.”<sup>157</sup>

156 El Periódico, "Obras del Camp Nou: trabajadores denuncian explotación laboral", 20 November 2023, <https://www.elperiodico.com/es/deportes/20231120/camp-nou-obras-trabajadores-explotacion-laboral-fcbarcelona-94721283>

157 International Trade Union Confederation, "Global Rights Index 2023", <https://www.globalrightsindex.org/en/2023> (accessed 15 April 2024).



Police officers check documents of men belonging to ethnic minorities in the area of Lavapiés, Madrid, Spain.  
© Edu León / Fronteras Invisibles

## DISCRIMINATION

As FIFA's human rights policy acknowledges, "discrimination is an issue in the world of football both on and off the pitch."<sup>158</sup> The attendance of millions of fans from across the world at a World Cup can lead to increased discrimination if adequate guarantees are not in place. According to Article 4 of FIFA's statutes, "Discrimination of any kind against a country, private person or group of people on account of race, skin colour, ethnic, national or social origin, gender, disability, language, religion, political opinion or any other opinion, wealth, birth or any other status, sexual orientation or any other reason is strictly prohibited and punishable by suspension or expulsion."<sup>159</sup>

## GENDER DISCRIMINATION

While **Morocco** was congratulated in 2022 by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee) on enshrining the equality of men and women in the Family Code and banning discrimination based on sex,<sup>160</sup> key aspects of legislation perpetuate the risk of gender discrimination for female workers and attendees at a future tournament. A 2022 study by NGO Mobilising for Rights Associates found that Morocco's penal code, which criminalizes extramarital sexual relations and "adultery", prevents women from reporting incidents of sexual violence, thereby depriving them of protection, prevention, adequate remedy and reparation. Further, the research found these legal provisions create an environment where perpetrators can engage in violence against women without facing consequences.<sup>161</sup> The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders has also denounced Moroccan police and security agents for using physical, verbal and sexual violence against 12 women Sahrawi activists who were demonstrating in support of another Sahrawi activist.<sup>162</sup>

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158 FIFA, FIFA's Human Rights Policy – May 2017 edition, <https://img.FIFA.com/image/upload/kr05dqyhwr1uhqy2lh6r.pdf>

159 FIFA statutes, [https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/3815fa68bd9f4ad8/original/FIFA\\_Statutes\\_2022-EN.pdf](https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/3815fa68bd9f4ad8/original/FIFA_Statutes_2022-EN.pdf)

160 Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, "Experts from the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women praise Morocco", 16 June 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/06/experts-committee-elimination-discrimination-against-women-praise-morocco>

161 Moroccan Association for Women's Rights (MRA), "Protection Not Prison: How the criminalization of sexual relations outside of marriage promotes violence against women", June 2022, <https://mrawomen.ma/wp-content/uploads/doc/English%20490%20report%20FINAL.pdf>

162 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), "Morocco: UN human rights expert decries clampdown on human rights defenders", July 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2021/07/morocco-un-human-rights-expert-decries-clampdown-human-rights-defenders>

**Portugal** has taken steps to address gender discrimination in both society and the labour market.<sup>163</sup> The CEDAW Committee has praised Portugal's anti-discrimination laws, while criticizing the country for failing to introduce a law which addresses gender-based violence.<sup>164</sup> Portugal continues to face a serious problem with domestic violence, for example, which accounted for approximately 1 in 4 murders in 2023.<sup>165</sup> In recent years there have also been high profile cases of sexual abuse, harassment and violence in academic and sporting settings. According to a report published following reports of sexual abuse at Coimbra University, over 100 complaints of sexual and moral harassment, discrimination or violence in Portuguese higher education institutions have been made public.<sup>166</sup> In the sport setting, the National Observatory of Violence Against Athletes has received 66 reports of sexual abuse, harassment and violence between 2021 and 2023, the majority from women and girls.<sup>167</sup> More than a third of the complaints to this body followed a series of sexual harassment claims made by young women football players in September 2022.<sup>168</sup>

In 2022, **Spain** enacted the Comprehensive Law on Equal Treatment and Non-Discrimination<sup>169</sup>, which was described by Equinet, the European Network of Equality Bodies, as a "major step forward in Spain for the protection of equal rights".<sup>170</sup> Also in 2022, Spain enacted the new Sports Law, whose objectives include eliminating gender inequalities within sport.<sup>171</sup> Nevertheless, gender discrimination remains a reality for many Spanish women in practice, something that has been highlighted starkly in football.

In 2022, several former players from the Spanish women's team accused Ignacio Quereda, who managed the team for 27 years, of creating a culture of fear, sexism and homophobia.<sup>172</sup> Later that year, 15 Spanish women's team players wrote to the RFEF (the national football association) declaring themselves unavailable for selection for as long as the national team coach Jorge Vilda - whose management style they said had affected their health and emotional state - continued in his role.<sup>173</sup> In September 2023, RFEF president Luis Rubiales eventually resigned after sparking global controversy by kissing national team player Jenni Hermoso without her consent after the final of the Women's World Cup in August 2023.<sup>174</sup> In March 2024, the Spanish labour inspectorate (ITSS) upheld a complaint filed by FUTPRO, a trade union representing women footballers, that accused the RFEF of failing to put in

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163 Ministerio do Trabalho, Solidariedade e Seguranca, "CC-136/2016: Submissions by the Government on the Merits", 16 October 2017, <https://rm.coe.int/cc-136-2016-submissions-by-the-gvt-on-the-merits/1680762b07> (accessed 15 April 2024).

164 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), "Experts committee on the elimination of discrimination against women praise Portugal", June 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/06/experts-committee-elimination-discrimination-against-women-praise-portugal>

165 Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG), Área: Igualdade entre mulheres e homens - Indicadores 2022 - Violência de género, <https://www.cig.gov.pt/area-igualdade-entre-mulheres-e-homens/indicadores-2022/violencia-de-genero/> (accessed 17 April 2024)

166 Centre for Social Studies (University of Coimbra), Final Report: Citizenship, Inclusion and Work in Europe, February 2024, [https://www.ces.uc.pt/ficheiros2/files/Final%20Report%20-%20CI\\_en.pdf](https://www.ces.uc.pt/ficheiros2/files/Final%20Report%20-%20CI_en.pdf)

167 Observatório Nacional da Violência contra os/as Atletas, "Resultados 2020-2023", [umaia.pt/pt/investigacao/obnva](http://umaia.pt/pt/investigacao/obnva) (accessed 1 May 2024)

168 Público, "Já há 26 queixas de violência contra atletas em 2023", 30 September 2023, <https://www.publico.pt/2023>

169 Official State Gazette (Spain), Ley 9/2022, de 26 de diciembre, de medidas urgentes de reequilibrio financiero en el ámbito de la Administración General del Estado, 26 December 2022, <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2022-11589>

170 Equinet - European Network of Equality Bodies, Summary of the New Spanish Comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Law, September 2022, <https://equineteurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/New-Spanish-Comprehensive-Anti-Discrimination-Law-summary.pdf>

171 Boletín Oficial del Estado (BOE), Real Decreto-ley 27/2022, de 30 de diciembre, por el que se adoptan determinadas medidas urgentes para garantizar el abastecimiento energético y la competitividad, 31 December 2022, <https://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2022/12/31/pdfs/BOE-A-2022-24430.pdf>

172 Goal.com, "Boquete: Spain player revolt movement against abusive coaches", 23 February 2022, <https://www.goal.com/en-gb/news/boquete-spain-player-revolt-movement-abusive-coaches/blt658662b9b54ae65d>

173 The Guardian, "Mutiny in Spain squad as women's football team refuse to play and oust head coach Jorge Vilda", 23 September 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2022/sep/23/mutiny-spain-squad-women-football-refuse-play-oust-head-coach-jorge-vilda>

174 FIFA, "Former Spanish Football Association president Luis Rubiales is banned for three years", 30 October 2023, <https://www.fifa.com/legal/media-releases/former-spanish-football-association-president-luis-rubiales-is-banned-for-three-years>; see also, The Army of Survivors, "TAOS Extends Support to Jenni Hermoso & Spain's Women's National Football Team", 2023, <https://thearmyofsurvivors.org/2023/09/taos-extends-support-to-jenni-hermoso-spains-womens-national-football-team/>



MARCH 2024

## THE SPANISH LABOUR INSPECTORATE (ITSS)



### UPHELD A COMPLAINT FILED BY FUTPRO, A TRADE UNION REPRESENTING WOMEN FOOTBALLERS, THAT ACCUSED THE RFEF OF FAILING TO PUT IN PLACE ADEQUATE MEASURES TO PROTECT PLAYERS FROM SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED HARASSMENT

place adequate measures to protect players from sexual and gender-based harassment.<sup>175</sup> FIFA banned Rubiales from all national and international football<sup>176</sup> and in March 2024 Spanish prosecutors charged him with one count of sexual assault and one of coercion. Jorge Vilda and two other staff were also charged.<sup>177</sup> A joint commission was established between FUTPRO, RFEF and the government's High Council of Sport (CSD) in October 2023 to look at structural changes required.<sup>178</sup>

In the past decade there have also been incidents of sexist chanting at Spanish football matches as well as songs in support of players accused of violence against women.<sup>179</sup>

#### DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR GENDER IDENTITY

In **Morocco** a combination of a lack of legislative protection and discriminatory practices pose clear risks to individuals who identify as LGBTIQ+ and wish to work at or attend the tournament. There is no legal protection against discrimination based on gender or sexuality in the Moroccan Constitution, and Article 489 of the Penal Code punishes same-sex conduct by imprisonment.<sup>180</sup> When Morocco bid for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, its human rights strategy did not address this issue. According to an independent evaluation of the strategy commissioned by FIFA, “[t]he absence of reference and qualification of the specific risks for LGBTQ communities is particularly problematic because Article 489 of the Moroccan penal code, which prohibits sexual acts between people of the same sex, is not aligned with international human rights standards and conventions.”<sup>181</sup>

The Human Dignity Trust, an international organization using the law to defend the human rights of LGBTI people, notes that there is “substantial evidence of the law being enforced in recent years, with LGBTI people being frequently subject to arrest.”<sup>182</sup> Official statistics show that from 2017 until 2020, a total of 838 people were prosecuted under Article 489. The number of cases increased steadily from

175 FutPro, “Resolución de la Inspección de Trabajo y Seguridad Social sobre la RFEF”, 6 March 2024, <https://futpro.es/2024/03/06/resolucion-de-la-inspeccion-de-trabajo-y-seguridad-social-sobre-la-rfef/>

176 FIFA, “FIFA Appeal Committee confirms ban on former Spanish Football Association president Angel Maria Villar Llona”, 2 March 2018, <https://inside.fifa.com/legal/media-releases/fifa-appeal-committee-confirms-ban-on-former-spanish-football-association>

177 BBC News, “Luis Rubiales: Prosecutors seek 2.5-year jail term over World Cup kiss”, 27 March 2024, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-68679506>

178 FutPro, “2023: Un año repleto de cambios y éxitos”, 17 January 2024, <https://futpro.es/2024/01/17/2023-un-ano-repleto-de-cambios-y-exitos/>

179 Global Voices, “Spanish Football Fans Sing Chants That Justify Violence Against Women”, 2 March 2015, <https://globalvoices.org/2015/03/02/spanish-football-fans-sing-chants-that-justify-violence-against-women/>; see also, The Washington Post, “Spanish soccer reportedly investigating sexist chants directed at pop star Shakira”, 22 January 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/early-lead/wp/2016/01/22/spanish-soccer-reportedly-investigating-sexist-chants-directed-at-pop-star-shakira/>

180 Equaldex, “LGBT Rights in Morocco”, <https://www.equaldex.com/region/morocco>

181 BSR, “Evaluation Report of the Human Rights Strategy Submitted by 2026 FIFA World Cup Bidders: Morocco”, April 2018; Available at <https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/730e84d329bfb1f0/original/ipqfksqjofqncmrnptg-pdf.pdf>

182 Human Dignity Trust, “Morocco”, <https://www.humandignitytrust.org/country-profile/morocco/>.



130 in 2017 to 168 in 2019.<sup>183</sup> Arrests of foreign tourists based on laws prohibiting same-sex relations are rare, although not unheard-of. In September 2023, Moroccan authorities arrested four individuals, including a foreign national, for “homosexuality” and drug use.<sup>184</sup>

In its submission to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group on Morocco in November 2022, the Moroccan Coalition for Gender and Sexual Diversity, a group of civil society organizations working on LGBTI rights, stated that “LGBTI persons in Morocco face alarming levels of verbal, physical, psychological, and sexual violence. Such violence is widespread in the private and public sphere as well as in digital spaces...[and] is legitimized by criminalization and repression from authorities.” The submission noted that LGBTI persons are often viewed as “easy targets”, as they are unlikely to be able to file complaints or obtain police protection.<sup>185</sup> In 2020, Association Akaliyat conducted a convenience survey of 400 LGBTI people in Morocco and found that 70% had been subject to violence in a public or private space, and 29% had been arrested or detained by authorities. Of those arrested, over half were explicitly told it was for “suspicions of homosexuality”, while others were arrested for reasons including their gender expression or for defending themselves when attacked. Trans and non-binary people were twice as likely to have faced arrest than others surveyed.<sup>186</sup> The World Values Survey in 2022 also demonstrated a high level of discriminatory attitudes towards LGBTI people.<sup>187</sup>

## CASE STUDY

### ONLINE HARASSMENT OF LGBTI PEOPLE IN MOROCCO<sup>188</sup>

LGBTI people using dating apps in Morocco have been subjected to abuse and discrimination after groups of people began using the apps cynically to publicly reveal people’s identity. The “outing” campaign emerged in Morocco in April 2020, when many individuals created fake accounts on same-sex dating applications and then circulated on social media photos of men who used those applications, captioning the photos with insults and threats based on the men’s perceived sexual orientation.

A 23-year-old gay university student told Human Rights Watch that his brother learned of his sexual orientation when he was “outed” online and kicked him out of the house: “I have been sleeping on the street for three days and I have nowhere to go.” He feared for his safety if he tries to return to his brother’s house.

183 Moroccan Coalition for Gender and Sexual Diversity, “Human Rights Violations Based on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sexual Characteristics in Morocco”, November 2022, <https://uprdoc.ohchr.org/uprweb/downloadfile.aspx?filename=10346&file=EnglishTranslation> (accessed 15 April 2024).

184 Kech24.com, “4 people, including a foreigner, arrested for homosexuality in Marrakech”, 16 September 2023, <https://tinyurl.com/mr2jujv> (accessed 15 April 2024)

185 Moroccan Coalition for Gender and Sexual Diversity, “Human Rights Violations Based on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sexual Characteristics in Morocco”, November 2022, <https://uprdoc.ohchr.org/uprweb/downloadfile.aspx?filename=10346&file=EnglishTranslation> (accessed 15 April 2024).

186 Association Akaliyat, “Study Of The Needs Of Sexual And Gender Diversity Population In Morocco”, 19 January 2024, <https://akaliyat.org/study-of-the-needs-of-sexual-and-gender-diversity-population-in-morocco/>

187 Equaldex, “LGBT Rights in Morocco”, <https://www.equaldex.com/region/morocco>

188 Human Rights Watch, “Morocco: Online Attacks Over Same-Sex Relations”, 27 April 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/27/morocco-online-attacks-over-same-sex-relations>



Moroccan activists participate in a vigil in Rabat on June 15, 2016, to pay tribute to the victims of the Orlando gay nightclub shooting in the USA. © FADEL SENNA/AFP via Getty Images

The increased scrutiny on LGBTI rights that is likely to accompany the World Cup may impact both Moroccan and foreign LGBTI people. Whether this manifests itself in increased respect for LGBTI rights or greater surveillance or repression will depend on whether the Moroccan authorities and FIFA provide adequate guarantees and protections, and how constructively they engage with organizations representing LGBTI people. When Morocco submitted its bid to host the 2026 tournament, Ahmed El Haij, president of the Moroccan Association for Human Rights, commented that, “if Morocco was to host the World Cup, LGBTI people coming to watch the games will face a lot of discrimination. The state will not be able to protect them, nor will it be able to commit to preventing measures that could be taken against them by both the state and society.”<sup>189</sup>

In particular, transgender attendees may face additional risks as there is no gender reassignment and legal gender recognition in the country. There have been documented instances of violence against transgender individuals.<sup>190</sup> In 2022, a transgender woman was assaulted by a group of minors who used transphobic slurs. An adult and three minors were detained by Tangier police following the incident.<sup>191</sup> A 2022 report by Nassawiyat, an LBTQ womxn<sup>192</sup> and feminist group, found most survivors of anti-LGBTI violence who report aggression to the police feel obliged to hide their gender identity and sexual orientation, which are typically the reasons behind the attacks.<sup>193</sup> In the above survey conducted by Association Akaliyat, trans and non-binary people were twice as likely to have faced arrest than other members of the LGBTI community.<sup>194</sup>

189 AP News, “Morocco: Four arrested after physical assault on trans woman”, 17 April 2018, <https://apnews.com/article/99fa19f7a87c423e9610dc4f85e93687>.

190 The New Arab, “Four arrested in Morocco for physical assault on trans woman”, 14 November 2022, <https://www.newarab.com/news/four-arrested-morocco-physical-assault-trans-woman>

191 Tanja News, “Tangier Security Arrests Four People After Video Assault On Man Wearing Women’s Clothes On The Corniche”, 13 November 2022, <https://tanjanews.com/121658.html>

192 Womxn: anyone who identifies as women, including cis women, queer women, trans, non-binary and gender nonconforming people.

193 Nassawiyat, “Report on the Situation of LGBTIQ+ People in Morocco”, February 2021, <https://nassawiyat.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/3-Updated-Version-Rapport-Nassawiyat-English.pdf>

194 Association Akaliyat, “Study Of The Needs Of Sexual And Gender Diversity Population In Morocco”, 19 January 2024, <https://akaliyat.org/study-of-the-needs-of-sexual-and-gender-diversity-population-in-morocco/>

In 2019 the National Human Rights Council recommended decriminalizing “homosexuality” but the government rejected this proposal.<sup>195</sup> During Morocco’s 2023 UPR session at the UN Human Rights Council, several states called on Morocco to decriminalize same-sex relationships and take steps to combat homophobic discrimination.<sup>196</sup>

**Portugal** is one of the few countries in the world whose constitution explicitly prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation.<sup>197</sup> Gender reassignment is permitted without a medical report and in January 2024, the President promulgated a decree that prohibits and criminalizes conversion therapies for sexual orientation or gender identity.<sup>198</sup> While opinion polls show a large majority supporting LGBTI rights, discrimination remains a serious problem.<sup>199</sup> A 2020 survey of LGBTI people conducted by the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency found that in Portugal 25% of respondents often or always avoid certain locations for fear of being assaulted and 40% reported feeling discriminated against in at least one area of life in 2019.<sup>200</sup> Between January and early December 2022, ILGA Portugal received a total of 830 requests for support from LGBTI people, including 220 cases of domestic violence and assault.<sup>201</sup> Despite legal advances, trans people in Portugal still face high rates of violence and discrimination.<sup>202</sup>

In addition to the Equal Treatment Law mentioned earlier, in 2023 **Spain** enacted the “Ley Trans” to further enshrine protection of LGBTI rights in law, including by recognizing gender self-determination. The law was praised by UN experts as “a fundamental feminist achievement”.<sup>203</sup> However, amendments to two regional laws weakened many of the protections in the Community of Madrid.<sup>204</sup> Further, homophobia and transphobia remain serious and growing concerns, with far-right politicians using discriminatory language to fuel division.<sup>205</sup> While opinion polls show a large majority supporting LGBTI rights, as in Portugal, discrimination remains a serious problem.<sup>206</sup> ILGA documented a record number of 466 anti-LGBT hate crimes in 2021, with one in every four hate crimes targeting LGBT people, representing a 68% increase in one year.<sup>207</sup> After regional and municipal elections in May 2023, one of the first measures of the Vox party in many municipal councils included the elimination of rainbow flags from public buildings.<sup>208</sup> Incidents of homophobic chanting were recorded at Spanish football matches, including the targeting of one player on five occasions between 2017 and 2022.<sup>209</sup>

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195 Human Rights Watch, “Morocco: Online Attacks Over Same-Sex Relations”, 27 April 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/27/morocco-online-attacks-over-same-sex-relations>

196 Universal Periodic Review, Morocco, 2023, [https://www.upr-info.org/sites/default/files/country-document/2023-02/a\\_hrc\\_wg\\_41\\_MOR\\_E.pdf](https://www.upr-info.org/sites/default/files/country-document/2023-02/a_hrc_wg_41_MOR_E.pdf)

197 Reply of Portugal to the OHCHR’s request for information on the implementation of HRC Resolution 27/32 on Human Rights, sexual orientation and gender identity, 7 January 2015, [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Discrimination/LGBT/Res\\_27\\_32/Portugal.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Discrimination/LGBT/Res_27_32/Portugal.pdf)

198 BBC News, “Portugal parliament approves same-sex marriage”, 13 April 2018, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-43740417> and Equaldex, “LGBT Rights in Portugal”, <https://www.equaldex.com/log/2848>

199 Equaldex, LGBTI rights in Portugal, <https://www.equaldex.com/region/portugal>

200 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, “EU LGBTI survey - Country Data: Portugal”, [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/lgbti-survey-country-data\\_portugal.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/lgbti-survey-country-data_portugal.pdf)

201 ILGA-Europe, “Anti-LGBTI violence in Europe & Central Asia: By the numbers”, 9 March 2023, <https://www.ilga-europe.org/blog/anti-lgbti-violence-europe-central-asia-numbers/>

202 Neves, S., Borges, J., Ferreira, M., Correia, M., Sousa, E., Rocha, H., Silva, L., Allen, P., & Vieira, C. P. (2023); “A literature review on violence and discrimination against trans people in Portugal: Are we still living in a dictatorship?”; Sexualities, 0(0), <https://doi.org/10.1177/13634607231197059>

203 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), “Spain: UN experts hail new feminist legislation”, February 2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/02/spain-un-experts-hail-new-feminist-legislation>

204 Amnesty International Spain, “Ley Trans en Madrid: avanzamos en derechos”, 20 September 2021, <https://www.es.amnesty.org/en-que-estamos/blog/historia/articulo/ley-trans-madrid/>

205 El País, “Murder of Samuel Luiz galvanizes Spain’s LGBTQ+ community: ‘There is no going back’”, 12 June 2021, <https://english.elpais.com/society/2021-07-12/murder-of-samuel-luiz-galvanizes-spains-lgbtq-community-there-is-no-going-back.html>

206 Equaldex, LGBTI rights in Spain, <https://www.equaldex.com/region/spain>

207 ILGA-Europe, “Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex People in Europe”, 20 February 2023, <https://www.ilga-europe.org/report/annual-review-2023/>

208 Euronews, “Rise of the far-right undermines LGBTQI+ rights in Europe”, 30 June 2023, <https://www.euronews.com/2023/06/30/rise-of-the-far-right-undermines-lgbtqi-rights-in-europe>

209 Daily Mail, “LaLiga to investigate FOURTEEN chants by Espanyol fans during Sunday’s Catalan derby with Barcelona”, 19 February 2022, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article-10530171/LaLiga-investigate-FOURTEEN-chants-Espanyol-fans-Sundays-Catalan-derby-Barcelona.html>



FEB 2020

# MOUSSA MAREGA



WALKED OFF THE PITCH DURING A MATCH AGAINST VITÓRIA DE GUIMARÃES, REFUSING TO TOLERATE THE RACIST ABUSE HE WAS RECEIVING FROM FANS

## RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

In December 2023, experts from the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) expressed concern about the persistence in **Morocco** of advocacy of racist and xenophobic hatred and stereotypes in football, notably towards Black African migrants, Amazigh, Black Moroccans and non-citizens.<sup>210</sup> In 2017, fans of Hassania Agadir team made a complaint to FIFA after they were reportedly subjected to anti-Amazigh racist slogans and jeers during a game against Raja Casablanca.<sup>211</sup> In 2021, Moussa Ndao, a Senegalese former professional footballer and coach of a Moroccan club, was subjected to racist remarks by a former player and current employee of the Père Jégo Stadium during a game.<sup>212</sup> DRC football player Chancel Mbemba was subjected to a torrent of racist abuse online from Moroccan fans after a confrontation with the Morocco manager in January 2024.<sup>213</sup>

Football players in **Portugal** have faced racial discrimination both in stadiums and online. In February 2020, Moussa Marega walked off the pitch during a match against Vitória de Guimarães, refusing to tolerate the racist abuse he was receiving from fans.<sup>214</sup> Three supporters received fines of €1,000 each, while Vitória de Guimarães were punished with a fine and six matches without fans.<sup>215</sup> In 2023, four sportspeople – national team footballer Jessica Silva, futsal players Daniel Ramos and Vitão, and basketball player Ivan Almeida – told Amnesty International Portugal of their regular experiences of racism. In 2020, researchers published a study based on the experiences of 1,681 people involved in Portuguese football, including fans, coaches and professional and amateur players. Some 60% said they believe there is racism in the sport. The treatment of these cases was considered inadequate by 86.8% of the women and 82.8% of the men surveyed.<sup>216</sup>

Since 2019, the Authority for Preventing and Combating Violence in Sport (APCVD) has received 79 cases showing evidence of racism or xenophobia in the context of sports events, with 19 convictions to date resulting in stadium bans and fines averaging €780.<sup>217</sup> Under Portugal's penal code, the crime of racism can lead to a sentence ranging from six months to five years, or a fine of up to €10,000. Other consequences may include a ban on the sports venue or matches being held behind closed doors.<sup>218</sup>

210 Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, "Concluding observations on the combined nineteenth to twenty-first periodic reports of Morocco", 21 December 2023, [tinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CERD%2FC%2FMR%2FCO%2F19-21&Lang=en](https://tinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CERD%2FC%2FMR%2FCO%2F19-21&Lang=en)

211 Al Arabiya, "Racism clouds Moroccan football game after Amazigh fans face slurs", 28 October 2017, <https://english.alarabiya.net/sports/2017/10/28/Racism-clouds-Moroccan-football-game-after-Amazigh-fans-face-slurs>

212 Morocco World News, "Moussa Ndao Case: Spotlight on Morocco's Legacy of Anti-Black Prejudices", February 2021, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2021/02/334463/moussa-ndao-case-spotlight-on-moroccos-legacy-of-anti-black-prejudices>

213 ESPN, "CAF to investigate Morocco vs. Congo DR racism allegations", 23 January 2024, [https://www.espn.co.uk/football/story/\\_/id/39368884/caf-investigate-morocco-congo-dr-racism-allegations](https://www.espn.co.uk/football/story/_/id/39368884/caf-investigate-morocco-congo-dr-racism-allegations)

214 ESPN, "Porto's Moussa Marega calls racist incident 'massive humiliation'", 16 February 2022, [https://www.espn.co.uk/football/story/\\_/id/37581597/porto-moussa-marega-calls-racist-incident-massive-humiliation](https://www.espn.co.uk/football/story/_/id/37581597/porto-moussa-marega-calls-racist-incident-massive-humiliation)

215 Amnesty International Portugal, Humanista, July 2023, <https://www.amnistia.pt/humanista/>

216 Neves, Sofia, Joana Topa, Janete Borges, and Estefânia Silva, Racism in Football in Portugal: Perceptions of Multiple Actors; Social Sciences 12: 165, <https://www.repository.utl.pt/handle/10400.5/30617> (accessed 24 May 2024)

217 Amnesty International Portugal; Humanista; July 2023, <https://www.amnistia.pt/humanista/>

218 Gerador, "Dentro do campo vale tudo: a normalização do racismo no futebol em Portugal", 27 May 2023, <https://gerador.eu/dentro-do-campo-vale-tudo-a-normalizacao-do-racismo-no-futebol-em-portugal/>



MARCH 2024

# VINICIUS JUNIOR



“SINCE THE FIRST TIME I OFFICIALLY COMPLAINED ABOUT THE RACISM IN SPAIN IN THE STADIUMS, THINGS ARE GETTING WORSE BECAUSE, SINCE THEY AREN'T PUNISHED, THEY ARE GETTING STRONGER.”

Migrant workers, particularly in the construction sector, have also given testimony to researchers with the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) about feeling discriminated against and targeted based on prejudice. There have been documented incidents of employers discriminating against Black employees and failing to offer them workplace opportunities.<sup>219</sup>

More broadly, a 2022 survey by the EU FRA highlighted the continued experience of racism faced by people of African descent in Portugal.<sup>220</sup> Some 19% of people of African descent reported having experienced discrimination in the previous 12 months, compared to 13% of the general population, and 21% within the last five years. Discrimination in the labour market and housing were the most cited areas. Less than 2% had made a complaint, however, indicating a lack of faith that action would be taken. Further, 16% had been subjected to racist harassment in the previous year, while 7% had been stopped by the police.

There are also significant fears across the population of advocacy of hatred, violence and discrimination within the police force (see section on policing and fan safety).

Despite the existence of legislation outlawing racism, xenophobia and discrimination,<sup>221</sup> domestic football in **Spain** has been marred by a series of high-profile incidents of abuse against Black players. For example, Afro-Brazilian Real Madrid player Vinicius Junior has been repeatedly subjected to racist slurs; in January 2023, his effigy was hung from a bridge. In May 2023, Vinicius was subjected to racist slurs and “monkey gestures” by fans during a match between Real Madrid and Valencia. Valencia received a fine and a partial stadium ban.<sup>222</sup> The incident marked the eighth occasion a complaint of racism committed against Vinicius Junior had been filed in the 2022/23 season. In March 2024, following further racist incidents, Vinicius Junior said at a press conference “Since the first time I officially complained about the racism in Spain in the stadiums, things are getting worse because, since they aren’t punished, they are getting stronger.”<sup>223</sup> In April 2024, La Liga, the top professional division of the Spanish men’s football league, sent a letter of complaint to the RFEF and the Anti-Violence Commission in relation to racial insults by Getafe fans against Sevilla player Marcos Acuña and coach Quique Sánchez.<sup>224</sup>

219 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), “Severe Labour Exploitation: Country Findings – Portugal”, [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/severe-labour-exploitation-country\\_pt.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/severe-labour-exploitation-country_pt.pdf) (accessed 15 April 2024).

220 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, “Being Black in the EU - Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey”, 2023: [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2023-being-black\\_in\\_the\\_eu\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2023-being-black_in_the_eu_en.pdf) (accessed 16 April 2024).

221 Official State Gazette (Spain), “Ley 52/2007, de 26 de diciembre, por la que se reconocen y amplían derechos y se establecen medidas en favor de quienes padecieron persecución o violencia durante la guerra civil y la dictadura”, 26 December 2007, <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act>

222 BBC Sport, “Vinicius Jr: Valencia fined and sanctioned with partial stadium closure for five matches”, 24 May 2023, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/65691729>

223 CNN, “Vinicius Jr: Real Madrid forward in tears over racist abuse”, 26 March 2024, <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/03/26/sport/vinicius-jr-racism-press-conference-tears-spt-intl/index.html>

224 Sport, “LaLiga denuncia insultos de “mono” y “gitano” durante el Sevilla-Getafe”, 14 April 2022, <https://www.sport.es/es/noticias/sevilla/laliga-denuncia-insultos-mono-gitano-100498367> (accessed 17 April 2024)



Protesters march with a banner saying "For a fairer and more equal society" during the demonstration against racism, xenophobia, and the extreme right in the city of Porto, Portugal, in February 2024. © Rita Franca/SOPA Images/LightRocket via Getty Images

In Spanish law, the Spanish Commission against Violence, Racism, Xenophobia and Intolerance in Sports can impose administrative sanctions on clubs (for example the closure of stadiums) in response to racist incidents, and individuals can be fined between €150 and €650,000.<sup>225</sup> In 2021-22, only 28 of 1,608 administrative sanctions imposed on individuals were related to racism or xenophobia – an increase from 3 in 2018/19.<sup>226</sup> A total of 79 people were criminally prosecuted for racist, intolerant or xenophobic acts in sport in 2021, almost unchanged from 83 in 2013.<sup>227</sup> In May 2023, FIFPRO, the global players' union, said in response to Vinicius Junior's experiences of racism that "players remain exposed and insufficiently protected in their place of work against racism and other forms of abuse and harassment."<sup>228</sup>

The 2022 EU FRA survey highlighted more widely the pervasive experience of racism in Spain.<sup>229</sup> It found that 24% of people of African descent reported having experienced discrimination in the previous 12 months, compared to 11% of the general population, and 38% within the last five years. Discrimination in the labour market, housing and healthcare were the most cited areas. Only 4% had made a complaint, however, indicating a lack of faith that action would be taken. Further, 16% had been victims of racist harassment in the previous year, while 14% had been stopped by the police – one of the highest rates in the EU. In March 2024, Amnesty International called on Spain to stop carrying out identity checks based on racial profiling.<sup>230</sup>

225 Law 15/2022, of July 12, 2022, comprehensive for equal treatment and non-discrimination. Law 19/2007, of 11 July, against violence, racism, xenophobia and intolerance in sport.

226 Comisión Estatal contra la violencia, el racismo, la xenofobia y la intolerancia en el deporte; Datos para la memoria 2021/2022, [https://www.csd.gob.es/sites/default/files/media/files/2023-03/CEVRXID-datos-temporada-2021-2022\\_0.pdf](https://www.csd.gob.es/sites/default/files/media/files/2023-03/CEVRXID-datos-temporada-2021-2022_0.pdf) (accessed 24 April 2024).

227 The Conversation, "Vinicius Junior: How Spanish law is starting to tackle racism and what else it could do", 29 March 2024, <https://theconversation.com/vinicius-junior-how-spanish-law-is-starting-to-tackle-racism-and-what-else-it-could-do-207867>

228 FIFPRO, "FIFPRO Statement: Vinicius Jr", 17 April 2024, <https://www.fifpro.org/en/supporting-players/safe-working-environments/racism-and-discrimination/fifpro-statement-vinicius-jr>

229 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, "Being Black in the EU - Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey", 2023, [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2023-being-black\\_in\\_the\\_eu\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2023-being-black_in_the_eu_en.pdf) (accessed 16 April 2024).

230 Amnesty International, "Día Internacional contra el racismo: España debe dejar de realizar controles de identidad basados en perfiles raciales", 21 March 2024, <https://www.es.amnesty.org/en-que-estamos/noticias/noticia/articulo/dia-internacional-contra-el-racismo-espana-debe-dejar-de-realizar-controles-de-identidad-basados-en-perfiles-raciales/>

## HOUSING AND LAND

Mega sporting events can pose risks to the right to adequate housing when, for example, people are subject to forced evictions to make way for infrastructure projects. Evicting people from their homes and their lands against their will, in the absence of due process requirements including without either meaningful consultation, alternative accommodation or compensation – sometimes accompanied by the threat of violence – constitutes a forced eviction.<sup>231</sup> A forced eviction is a violation of the right to adequate housing among other human rights. FIFA's Human Rights policy states that the organization, "expects and promotes the respect of international human rights standards where land acquisition involves expropriations and in particular where people are resettled in the process."<sup>232</sup> Affordability, a key component of the right to adequate housing, may also be impacted when a large influx of visitors leads to rent increases or reduced supply for existing residents in host communities.

Since 2004, **Morocco** has followed a policy of *Villes sans bidonvilles (Cities without slums)*, which aims at eliminating self-built dwellings in all Moroccan cities, with Casablanca being the main focus of this programme. In the past, evictions such as that of Douar Wasti in Northern Casablanca in 2018 have been marked by lack of due process, with residents being informed about their eviction at very short notice and demolitions taking place before the conclusion of negotiations between residents and authorities.<sup>233</sup> UN experts also expressed concerns "about forced evictions in August 2018 year in neighbourhoods in Tangier with predominantly Black sub-Saharan migrants, which resulted in the destruction of property and migrant displacement, including of regular migrants, pregnant women, and children."<sup>234</sup> Migrants are particularly at risk of being evicted without due process, as documented in a 2014 Human Rights Watch report.<sup>235</sup>

It is not yet clear whether or which World Cup-related projects will involve resettlement of existing residents of the areas. However, given the scale of likely developments, the risk of forced evictions is real unless adequate safeguards are in place.

In **Portugal**, the country's ongoing housing crisis risks being exacerbated by preparations for the World Cup if an inadequate supply of housing is made worse by a surge in short-term rentals for visitors. Data from Confidencial Imobiliário, a Portuguese real estate analytics company, found that Portugal's housing stock had reached a 15-year low in 2022.<sup>236</sup> In October 2023 the government announced that there were 86,000 families with housing needs, triple the number in 2018, while data from the National Statistics Institute (released in March 2024) estimated that almost 13% of families lived in overcrowded houses, 27.7% of whom are at risk of poverty.<sup>237</sup> The country has relied on tourism and attracting migrants to drive its economy but has failed to keep up with the new demand for housing. Amnesty International has expressed concern about the housing situation for migrants.<sup>238</sup>

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231 UN Special rapporteur on adequate housing, "Forced Eviction"<https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-housing/forced-evictions>)

232 FIFA, FIFA's Human Rights Policy – May 2017 edition, <https://img.FIFA.com/image/upload/kr05dqyhwr1uhqy2lh6r.pdf>

233 International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, "Eviction and Displacement from the Neighbourhood of Douar Wasti in Casablanca, Morocco", <https://www.ijurr.org/the-urban-now/eviction-and-displacement-from-the-neighbourhood-of-douar-wasti-in-casablanca-morocco/>.

234 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), "UN Expert Commends Morocco's International Leadership on Migration, Urges More Action on Migrants' Rights", December 2018, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2018/12/un-expert-commends-moroccos-international-leadership-migration-urges>

235 Human Rights Watch, "Abused and Expelled: Ill-Treatment of Sub-Saharan African Migrants in Morocco", 10 February 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/02/10/abused-and-expelled/ill-treatment-sub-saharan-african-migrants-morocco>

236 Confidencial Imobiliário, "Número de casas à venda em Portugal cai para mínimos de 15 anos", 31 January 2023, <https://www.confidencialimobiliario.com/en/mercados/habitacao-compra-e-venda/numero-de-casas-a-venda-em-portugal-cai-para-minimos-de-15-aos/>

237 National Institute of Statistics (Portugal), Population Estimates - 2022, [https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine\\_destaquas&DESTAQUESdest\\_boui=639503443&DESTAQUESmodo=2](https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_destaquas&DESTAQUESdest_boui=639503443&DESTAQUESmodo=2) (accessed 17 April 2024)

238 Amnesty International, Annual Report 2022/3, Portugal, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/europe-and-central-asia/western-central-and-south-eastern-europe/portugal/report-portugal/>



The Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing warned in 2017 that “unbridled touristification” risks undermining the right to housing in Portugal, particularly for people living in poverty as well as those vulnerable to marginalization and discrimination, because growth in the use of properties for short-term rentals has led to the displacement of families and significant increases in rent – doubling in some areas.<sup>239</sup> In 2024, the newly elected government announced its intention to revoke the “Mais Habitação” programme, which had included measures for forced leasing, rent freezes and the regulation of short-term rentals.<sup>240</sup>

Portugal’s housing crisis disproportionately impacts racialized groups. In 2023, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed concern about the relocation of Africans and persons of African descent to social housing which resulted in spatial segregation. The Committee also found that further risks were created by the dismantling of affordable social housing, leading to forced evictions and resultant precarious housing conditions.<sup>241</sup> The European Committee of Social Rights of the Council of Europe ruled in 2021 that Portugal continues to violate the right to decent housing of the Roma community.<sup>242</sup>



Women seen holding a banner during a “Barcelona no está en venta” (Barcelona is not for sale) protest in 2018 against gentrification, flats renting and tourism in the Spanish city. © Laura Calonge/SOPA Images/LightRocket via Getty Images

239 Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, “Mission to Portugal” (Index: A/HRC/34/51/Add.2), 28 February 2017, <https://www.housingrightswatch.org/sites/default/files/Mission%20to%20Portugal%20Report%20SR%20Adequate%20Housing.pdf> (accessed 15 April 2024)

240 Government of Portugal, “Programa do XXIV Governo Constitucional”, <https://www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/gc24/comunicacao/documento?i=programa-do-xxiv-governo-constitucional> (accessed 23 April 2024)

241 Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, “Concluding observations on the combined 18th and 19th periodic reports of Portugal”, 2023, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4011836?ln=en&v=pdf> (accessed 15 April 2024).

242 Council of Europe, “No. 61/2010 - European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) v. Portugal”, [https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-social-charter/processed-complaints/-/asset\\_publisher/5GEFkJmH2bYG/content/no-61-2010-european-roma-rights-centre-errc-v-portugal](https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-social-charter/processed-complaints/-/asset_publisher/5GEFkJmH2bYG/content/no-61-2010-european-roma-rights-centre-errc-v-portugal)

A lack of social housing coupled with significant increases in rents has created a shortage of affordable housing in **Spain**. Rents across all tenures have increased by over 45% since 2017.<sup>243</sup> Renters in Spain have one of the highest housing cost overburden rates in Europe - the proportion of people for whom total housing costs represent more than 40% of income.<sup>244</sup> This is despite the Law on the Right to Housing recommending that housing expenses should not exceed 30% of income.<sup>245</sup> The number of people experiencing homelessness in Spain increased by 24.5% between 2012 and 2023, bringing the number to 28,552.<sup>246</sup> The government has sought to address homelessness through the introduction of rent controls and the freeing up of social housing stock.<sup>247</sup>

In the context of the World Cup, the influx of tourists could lead to an increase in demand for housing, especially in the short-term rental sector. This in turn may lead to a further shrinking of the affordable housing market, increased rental costs and evictions. The significant impact of tourist rentals on increased rental costs has been well documented in Spain and elsewhere in Europe and the USA.<sup>248</sup> Analysing data in Spain, researchers concluded that “the shortage of housing resulting from the conversion of residential accommodation into tourist housing has become one of the causes of its price increase, endangering the right to housing of citizens.”<sup>249</sup> The impact has also recently been recognized by Spain’s Minister of Housing and Urban Agenda,<sup>250</sup> although holiday rentals are not regulated by Spain’s Law on the Right to Adequate Housing.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION

FIFA’s Human Rights policy notes that “providing for the safety and security of people who are attending or are otherwise involved in or affected by FIFA’s events may impact certain fundamental human rights, such as freedom of movement, expression and assembly. FIFA commits to engaging with relevant host-country governments and private-sector entities in its ongoing efforts to minimize any such impact, ensuring it is necessary and proportionate, while taking into account legitimate security concerns.”<sup>251</sup>

International human rights law and standards protects these rights in both public and private places, including stadiums. Therefore, relevant regulatory authorities should refrain from imposing blanket bans or other unnecessary or disproportionate restrictions on flags, banners or chants. Any restrictions imposed should be clearly prescribed, non-discriminatory, necessary and proportionate. In previous tournaments FIFA has banned flags in stadiums that are deemed to be “political, offensive, and/or discriminatory”.<sup>252</sup> In 2022, Iranian fans at the World Cup in Qatar displaying ‘Woman Life Freedom’ flags and t-shirts were targeted by security forces.<sup>253</sup>

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243 Ministerio de Vivienda y Agenda Urbana, Observatorio de vivienda y suelo. Boletín núm. 47, tercer trimestre 2023 <https://cyp.mitma.gob.es/observatorio-de-vivienda-y-suelo-boletin-num-47-tercer-trimestre-2023>

244 EU-SILC Survey, “Housing Cost Overburden Rate by Tenure Status”, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tessi164/default/table?lang=en> (accessed 15 April 2024)

245 BOE (Boletín Oficial del Estado), “Real Decreto 100/2023, de 23 de marzo, por el que se aprueba el Plan Estatal de Vivienda 2023-2026”, <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2023-12203>

246 Ministerio de Derechos Sociales y Agenda 2030, “Estrategia Nacional Integral para Personas Sin Hogar 2023-2030”, <https://www.mdsocialesa2030.gob.es/derechos-sociales/servicios-sociales/Personas-sin-hogar/docs/StrategyHomeless20232030.pdf>

247 Bloomberg, “Spanish Government Wins Support to Cap Rental Prices With New Law”, 14 April 2023, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-04-14/spanish-government-win-support-to-cap-rental-prices-with-new-law>

248 Ana Maria De la Encarnación, “Las cicatrices de la vivienda turística: reducción del mercado residencial inmobiliario y encarecimiento de precios”; October 2023; REALA: Revista electrónica de administración, <https://revistasonline.inap.es/index.php/REALA/issue/view/740/106>

249 *Ibid*

250 El Diario, “Isabel Rodríguez: El PP debe replantear su posición en las zonas tensionadas por el alquiler, provocando dramas sociales”, 15 February 2024, [https://www.eldiario.es/economia/isabel-rodriguez-pp-debe-replantear-posicion-zonas-tensionadas-alquiler-provocando-dramas-sociales\\_128\\_10928120.html](https://www.eldiario.es/economia/isabel-rodriguez-pp-debe-replantear-posicion-zonas-tensionadas-alquiler-provocando-dramas-sociales_128_10928120.html)

251 FIFA, FIFA’s Human Rights Policy – May 2017 edition, <https://img.fifa.com/image/upload/kr05dqyhwr1uhqy2lh6r.pdf>

252 FIFA, Prohibited Items, 1 June 2021, FIFA, FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™ - Ticket Holder Code of Conduct, <https://www.fifa.com/fifaplus/en/articles/qatar2022-ticket-guide-prohibited-items-en>

253 Reuters, “Fans brace for politically charged US-Iran match at World Cup”, 29 November 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/sports/fans-brace-politically-charged-us-iran-match-world-cup-2022-11-29/>



The 2011 **Moroccan** Constitution guarantees freedom of thought, opinion and expression subject to the limits “expressly provided for by law”. This clause allows for broad exceptions that undermine Morocco’s constitutional guarantees. Morocco maintains laws with broad restrictions on freedom of expression including the criminalization of criticism of Islam, of the legitimacy of the monarchy, of state institutions, of government and military officials, and of the government’s positions regarding territorial integrity and Western Sahara.<sup>254</sup> Reporters Without Borders’ 2024 World Press Freedom Index reports that “[i]ndependent journalists in Morocco are under constant pressure” and that the authorities are trying to control the media.<sup>255</sup>

Morocco has targeted activists, journalists and human rights defenders who criticize the government or allegedly insult Islam, and has been condemned by UN experts for this practice.<sup>256</sup> In September 2023, 10 French journalists, who had arrived in Morocco following an earthquake that had killed 3,000 people, were arrested at their hotel in Casablanca and expelled from the country for planning to report on the rule of King Mohammed IV.<sup>257</sup>

Moroccan laws criminalize speech considered to be “incitement against territorial integrity”, which is used to restrict peaceful advocacy for self-determination for Western Sahara.<sup>258</sup> Morocco claims sovereignty over Western Sahara and has subjected the territory to its de facto rule since Spain withdrew in 1975. The EU, the African Union and the UN do not recognize the sovereignty of Morocco over Western Sahara. The area is classed by the UN Special Committee on Decolonization as a non-self-governing territory.<sup>259</sup>

Hostilities have increased since November 2020 when the Polisario Front, which supports Sahrawi self-determination, ended support for a ceasefire with Morocco.<sup>260</sup> In December 2020, following recognition by the USA of Morocco’s territorial claim, Moroccan police took increasingly repressive measures against Sahrawi demonstrators, including beatings and arbitrary detention.<sup>261</sup> Moroccan authorities continue to harass activists supporting Sahrawi self-determination, preventing gatherings and obstructing the work of human rights organizations. UN experts have condemned such repressive practices, including attacks on the Saharawi Committee against the Moroccan Occupation (ISACOM).<sup>262</sup> Sahrawi activists wishing to use the 2030 World Cup to demonstrate their opposition to Moroccan policy or support for self-determination face a serious risk of being subjected to imprisonment, intimidation and abuse.

In April 2024, **Portugal** celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Carnation Revolution. Since 1976, freedom of expression and peaceful assembly have been enshrined in Articles 37 and 45 of the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic. However, legislation regulating the right to peaceful assembly and demonstration has not been updated in the last 50 years, resulting in obstacles for demonstrators,

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254 U.S. Department of State, “2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Morocco”, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/morocco>

255 Reporters Without Borders, “World Press Freedom Index 2024”, 3 May 2024, <https://rsf.org/en/country/morocco-western-sahara>

256 Amnesty International, “Annual Report 2023: Morocco”, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol10/5670/2023/en/>; see also, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, “Morocco: UN human rights expert decries clampdown on human rights defenders”, July 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2021/07/morocco-un-human-rights-expert-decries-clampdown-human-rights-defenders>

257 Committee to Protect Journalists, “Morocco expels French journalists Quentin Muller and Thérèse Di Campo”, September 2023, <https://cpj.org/2023/09/morocco-expels-french-journalists-quentin-muller-and-therese-di-campo/>

258 Human Rights Watch, “Red Lines Stay Red: Morocco’s Reforms and Its Speech Laws”, 5 July 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/05/05/red-lines-stay-red/moroccos-reforms-its-speech-laws>

259 United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, “Non-Self-Governing Territories: Western Sahara”, <https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/nsgt/western-sahara>

260 Reuters, “Polisario leader says Western Sahara ceasefire with Morocco is over”, 14 November 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-morocco-westernsahara-idUSKBN27U0GE/>

261 Human Rights Watch, “Western Sahara: Morocco Cracks Down on Activists”, 18 December 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/12/18/western-sahara-morocco-cracks-down-activists>

262 UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, “Morocco: UN human rights expert decries clampdown on human rights defenders”, July 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2021/07/morocco-un-human-rights-expert-decries-clampdown-human-rights-defenders>



*Demonstrators hold a banner showing a portrait of Omar Radi, a Moroccan journalist detained over tweet criticising the judiciary, during a demonstration, on December 28, 2019, in the city of Rabat. © STR/AFP via Getty Images*

particularly the requirement that protesters notify authorities of their intention to demonstrate. Amnesty International Portugal has documented a number of cases where protesters have been fined for failing to notify the authorities, even when information on how to do so was not properly available. This includes a LGBTI group fined €700 for demonstrating in Sintra and an environmental campaigner fined €300 for interrupting the Prime Minister’s speech.<sup>263</sup>

In June 2019, the climate activist group Climáximo filed a complaint against the police after female protesters arrested during a demonstration outside Lisbon airport were allegedly forced to undress after being detained. Following an internal investigation, a police officer was given a disciplinary reprimand. Similar cases between October and December 2023 are being investigated by IGAI.<sup>264</sup>

Freedom of expression is also restricted within stadiums. In November 2022, Amnesty International Portugal was prevented from distributing 1,000 campaign t-shirts at the Alvalade Stadium ahead of a friendly game between Portugal and Nigeria. The shirts were to highlight the “forgotten team” of migrant workers in Qatar. Restrictions on banners and chants also apply in professional leagues.<sup>265</sup> In September 2021, Sporting Braga was fined €867 after the crowd chanted in opposition to a planned introduction of identity cards for fans.<sup>266</sup> In February 2024, supporters of Sporting Braga left the stadium during a match against Farense after police expelled a fan involved in holding an unauthorized banner protesting against security measures.<sup>267</sup>

Freedom of expression in **Spain** is enshrined in Article 20 of the 1978 Constitution, but it has been undermined by recent legislation. In 2015, the Spanish authorities introduced the Citizen Security Law that Amnesty International described as “an assault on the rights of its citizens” because it criminalizes

263 Amnesty International Portugal, “A liberdade como bandeira”, March 2024, <https://www.amnistia.pt/a-liberdade-como-bandeira/>

264 *Ibid*

265 Amnistia Internacional Portugal, “Ação de solidariedade com o Qatar restringida no jogo da Seleção”, 17 November 2022, <https://www.amnistia.pt/acao-solidariedade-qatar-restringida-jogo-selecao/>

266 Record, “Derbi do Minho resulta em várias multas a Sp. Braga e V. Guimarães”, 25 April 2021, <https://www.record.pt/futebol/futebol-nacional/liga-betcllc/detalhe/derbi-do-minho-resulta-em-varias-multas-a-sp-braga-e-v-guimaraes>

267 Record, “Claques do Sp. Braga deixaram o Estádio Municipal de Braga durante o jogo com o Farense”, 24 January 2022, <https://www.record.pt/futebol/futebol-nacional/liga-betcllc/sp--braga/detalhe/claques-do-sp-braga-deixaram-o-est>

some legitimate forms of protest and increases penalties for others.<sup>268</sup> A 2018 report by Amnesty International also found that a provision in the Criminal Code prohibiting the “glorification of terrorism” was having a significant impact on freedom of expression in Spain with ordinary social media users, musicians and journalists who faced prosecution following alleged violations of the law.<sup>269</sup>

In 2021, Amnesty International described the imprisonment of Spanish rapper Pablo Hasél for “glorifying terrorism” and “insulting the crown” as “unjust and disproportionate”.<sup>270</sup> In February 2024, the organization again called for Spain to repeal its restrictive laws after Hasél’s appeal to the European Court of Human Rights was ruled inadmissible.<sup>271</sup> In October 2023, Amnesty International criticized La Liga for prohibiting the display of symbols “with political issues unrelated to the sports event”, leading to the expulsion of an Eibar fan from a match for displaying a Palestinian flag.<sup>272</sup> Amnesty International has also expressed concern over the opening of criminal investigations into “offending religious sentiments”.<sup>273</sup>

Reporters Without Borders’ 2024 World Press Freedom Index highlights reports that “Press freedom is also threatened by a new wave of attacks against reporters during anti-government protests.”<sup>274</sup>

## FAN SAFETY AND POLICING

As well as ensuring respect for international standards on freedom of expression, assembly and association, FIFA’s World Cup hosting requirements relate to law enforcement and the provision of security. This includes compliance with FIFA’s “Statement on human rights defenders and media representatives”,<sup>275</sup> the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials,<sup>276</sup> the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials<sup>277</sup> and the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers.<sup>278</sup> Each of the three proposed principal hosts for the 2030 World Cup have witnessed scenes of fan disorder and disproportionate police responses, which could pose risks to public safety as well as racial profiling.

Domestic football in **Morocco** has been marred by a series of violent clashes between rival fans over the past decade. In 2016, two people died and 54 were injured in clashes between rival fans in Casablanca in an incident known as “Black Sunday”.<sup>279</sup> In 2022, in Rabat and a week later in Agadir, violence broke

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268 Amnesty International, “Spain: Two-pronged assault targets rights and freedoms of Spanish citizens, migrants, and refugees”, March 2015, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/03/spain-two-pronged-assault-targets-rights-and-freedoms-of-spanish-citizens-migrants-and-refugees/>

269 Amnesty International, “Spain: Tweet... if you dare: How counter-terrorism laws restrict freedom of expression in Spain” (Index: EUR 41/7924/2018), 13 March 2018, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur41/7924/2018/en/>

270 Amnesty International, “Spain: Jailing of rapper for song lyrics and tweets unjust and disproportionate”, February 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/02/spain-jailing-of-rapper-for-song-lyrics-and-tweets-unjust-and-disproportionate/>

271 Amnesty International, “Spain: European Court of Human Rights ruling on Pablo Hasél’s case a blow to freedom of expression” (Index: EUR 41/7720/2024), 16 February 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/EUR4177202024ENGLISH.pdf>

272 El Diario, “La Ertzaintza multa a un aficionado del SD Eibar por exhibir en Ipurua una bandera de Palestina”, 16 October 2023, [https://www.eldiario.es/euskadi/ertzaintza-multara-aficionado-sd-eibar-exhibir-ipurua-bandera-palestina\\_1\\_10600300.html](https://www.eldiario.es/euskadi/ertzaintza-multara-aficionado-sd-eibar-exhibir-ipurua-bandera-palestina_1_10600300.html)

273 Amnesty International Spain, “Revista Mongolia: libertad de expresión, nuevo episodio de una causa penal por ofensas religiosas que nunca debería haberse iniciado”, 22 March 2023, <https://www.es.amnesty.org/en-que-estamos/noticias/noticia/articulo/revista-mongolia-libertad-de-expresion-nuevo-episodio-de-una-causa-penal-por-ofensas-rel>

274 Reporters Without Borders, “World Press Freedom” Index 2024, 3 May 2024, <https://rsf.org/en/country/spain>

275 FIFA statement on human rights defenders and media representatives, May 2018, <https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/ec85f3de496c6cb6/original/ejfl1ecdku14lm2v9zc03-pdf.pdf>

276 Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials; 7 September 1990, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/basic-principles-use-force-and-firearms-law-enforcement>

277 Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials, 17 September 1979, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/code-conduct-law-enforcement-officials>

278 ICOCA, The International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers, <https://icoca.ch/the-code/>

279 Independent, “Casablanca football riot: two dead and 54 injured”, 20 March 2016, <https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/football/morocco-casablanca-football-riot-fight-violence-video-hooligans-two-dead-54-injured-a6942411.html>



# DOMESTIC FOOTBALL IN **MOROCCO** HAS BEEN MARRED BY



## **A SERIES OF VIOLENT CLASHES BETWEEN RIVAL FANS**

out at matches leading to over 200 arrests.<sup>280</sup> Both 2023 and 2024 have witnessed violence followed by mass arrests at football games.<sup>281</sup> In February 2024, the Moroccan government established local committees to combat violence in sports stadiums.<sup>282</sup> During the 2030 World Cup, there are potential risks to fans from violence, including by the authorities, who have a well-documented history of using excessive, arbitrary, abusive or otherwise unlawful use of force.<sup>283</sup>

In February 2024, in **Portugal**, a scheduled top-flight game was postponed due to a lack of proper security provisions in place to respond to clashes between fans ahead of the match. Officials determined that safety could not be guaranteed because of a lack of police personnel.<sup>284</sup> In December 2023, fans' representative group APDA received dozens of complaints that people were beaten with batons in "an episode of real police barbarity" outside a match between Sporting Lisbon and FC Porto.<sup>285</sup> In May 2021, Sporting Lisbon's title celebrations were marred after police used rubber bullets and batons against fans who broke down metal barriers put in place to keep them from getting too close to the team bus.<sup>286</sup> One fan lost an eye after being hit by a rubber bullet, prompting an investigation by the General Inspectorate of Internal Administration (IGAI).<sup>287</sup> A fan was also blinded in 2017 after being beaten by police outside a match between Vitória de Guimarães and Boavista. The public prosecutor opened an investigation against 11 police officers, but the case did not go to trial.<sup>288</sup>

In March 2024, a scientific survey published by Amnesty International Portugal showed that two out of three respondents (68%) were concerned about the existence of advocacy of hatred, violence and discrimination within police forces.<sup>289</sup> In November 2022, a consortium of journalists conducted an investigation that identified 591 profiles of police officers who were responsible for spreading hateful

280 Africanews, "Morocco: More than 80 people arrested over violence", 22 March 2022, <https://www.africanews.com/2022/>

281 Africanews, "Soccer: 18 arrested in Morocco after violence between fans", 16 January 2023, <https://www.africanews.com/2023/01/16/soccer-18-arrested-in-morocco-after-violence-between-fans/>; see also, Middle East Eye, "Morocco football ultras blame state violence", 29 March 2022, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/morocco-football-ultras-blame-state-violence>

282 Morocco World News, "29 fans arrested post riots at Moghreb Tetouan-Raja match", February 2024, <https://www.morocccworldnews.com/2024/02/361024/29-fans-arrested-post-riots-at-moghreb-tetouan-raja-match>

283 Amnesty International, "Report: Morocco and Western Sahara", <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/morocco-and-western-sahara/report-morocco-and-western-sahara/>; see also, U.S. Department of State, "2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Morocco", 2022, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/morocco/>

284 Associated Press, "Portuguese league game suspended due to police sick protest", 3 February 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/portuguese-league-game-suspended-police-sick-protest-e76d7e92c829ae82f9cd1567dec73578>

285 Record, APDA e as queixas de adeptos do Sporting sobre a atuação da polícia: "Verdadeira barbarie policial", 19 December 2023, <https://www.record.pt/futebol/futebol-nacional/liga-betclis/sporting/detalhe/apda-e-as-queixas-de-adeptos-do-sporting-sobre-a-atuacao-da-policia-verdadeira-barbarie-policial>

286 Reuters, "Portugal to allow fans back into stadiums from next week", 15 May 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN2CS2U8/>

287 Público, "IGAI investiga caso de adepto do Sporting que cegou com tiro da PSP de bala de borracha", 19 May 2021, <https://www.publico.pt/2021/05/19/desporto/noticia/igai-investiga-caso-adepto-sporting-cegou-tiro-psp-bala-borracha-1963223>

288 Jornal de Notícias, "PSP acusados de agredir adepto que ficou cego não vão a julgamento", 26 February 2018, <https://www.jn.pt/justica/psp-acusados-de-agredir-adepto-que-ficou-cego-nao-va-a-julgamento-912052>

289 Amnistia Internacional Portugal, "A liberdade como bandeira; March 2024", <https://www.amnistia.pt/a-liberdade-como-bandeira/>





Police force seen during the Taca de Portugal 2024 final game between FC Porto and Sporting CP, 26 May 2024. © Maciej Rogowski/ SOPA Images/LightRocket via Getty Images.

messages, racial discrimination and inciting violence within the police force. According to news reports released in January 2024, the public prosecutor's office investigation into these allegations has yet to gather evidence to support an indictment. Thirteen police officers were subject to disciplinary proceedings by the IGAI.<sup>290</sup>

There have been a number of high-profile cases of police misconduct over the last five years unrelated to football; among these were border officers convicted of killing a Ukrainian man in airport custody<sup>291</sup> and eight police officers convicted of kidnapping and assaulting six Black men.<sup>292</sup>

Both Spanish and foreign fans have complained about the tactics employed by police forces in **Spain**. In 2017, German club Bayern Munich lodged a formal complaint following "violent attacks" by Spanish police on their fans during half-time at a Champions League fixture against Real Madrid. The complaint described the police's behaviour as "misplaced and excessive".<sup>293</sup> Following a match between English club Arsenal and Atletico Madrid in 2018, the Arsenal Independent Supporters' Association wrote to the Spanish authorities urging them to address police violence and accusing police of attacking Arsenal fans "without provocation".<sup>294</sup> After the 2022 UEFA Europa League final hosted in Seville, fans of both Rangers and Eintracht Frankfurt registered complaints about policing and safety, including a lack of water and food and soaring temperatures.<sup>295</sup> Football Supporters Europe stated that the expectation of fans to be treated with respect and dignity were "not met at all".<sup>296</sup>

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290 Expresso, "Quando o ódio veste farda: 591 polícias praticam crimes nas redes sociais", 16 November 2022, <https://expresso.pt/sociedade/2022-11-16-Quando-o-odio-veste-farda-591-policias-praticam-crimes-nas-redes-sociais-902e3fbe>

291 Reuters, "Portugal border cops sentenced to jail over death of detained traveller", 10 May 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/portugal-border-cops-sentenced-jail-over-death-detained-traveller-2021-05-10/>; see also, Amnesty International, "Annual Report 2021/22", <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2022/03/annual-report-202122/>

292 BBC News, "Portugal police convicted of attack on black youths", 20 May 2019, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-48345089>

293 ITV News, "Bayern Munich complain to Uefa over fan treatment in Spain", 19 April 2017, <https://www.itv.com/news/2017-04-19/bayern-munich-complain-to-uefa-over-fan-treatment-in-spain>

294 Football Supporters' Association, "Behaviour of Spanish police inexcusable, say Arsenal fans", 8 May 2020, <https://thefsa.org.uk/news/behaviour-of-spanish-police-inexcusable-say-arsenal-fans/>

295 Rangers Football Club, "Seville Supporter Update", 30 May 2003, <https://www.rangers.co.uk/Article/seville-supporter-update-3005/1WSXjhLZzBStxvwuXVb6M>

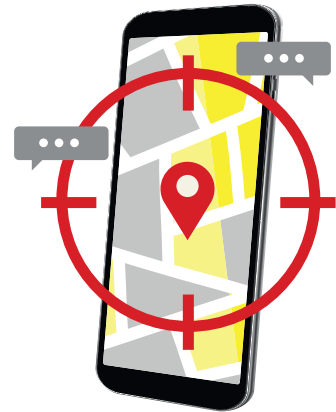
296 Fans Europe, "Statement on the 2022 UEFA Europa League Final in Seville", 17 April 2024, <https://www.fanseurope.org/news/statement-on-the-2022-uefa-europa-league-final-in-sevilla/>

During the 2022 Men's World Cup, videos circulated on social media showing Spanish police in the enclave of Ceuta using physical force including batons against Moroccan fans celebrating their team's win.<sup>297</sup> A recent survey of British fans who attended football matches in Spain carried out by the UK Football Policing Unit (UKFPU) found that "the consistent feedback of fans is that the policing style in Spain is confrontational, frequently aggressive and on occasions violent".<sup>298</sup> A representative of the leading supporters' association in Spain told Amnesty International that police lack training and are unwilling to engage in dialogue with fans ahead of matches, resulting in misunderstandings, unnecessary use of force, and officers treating fans "as if we were cattle".<sup>299</sup>

In addition, concerns remain over the use of less lethal weapons by various police forces in Spain. For example, in June and July 2023, the National Police used rubber bullets to disperse protests in the city of Vigo, injuring one protester. This contravened international human rights standards which prohibit the use of rubber bullets to disperse protests.<sup>300</sup>

## PRIVACY AND SURVEILLANCE

While targeted digital surveillance can be lawfully conducted by states in the presence of adequate human rights safeguards to prevent abuse, targeting of journalists and human rights defenders with these technologies solely because of their work is unambiguously unlawful under international human rights law. Highly invasive spyware allows unlimited access to a device by default and leaves minimal traces, making it almost impossible for the user to know what data was taken, effectively depriving the individual of the right to privacy. In such cases human rights safeguards would still be inadequate to prevent human rights violations and Amnesty International therefore calls for a permanent global ban of highly invasive spyware.<sup>301</sup>



Despite the existence of legal protections guaranteeing the right to privacy in Spanish and Moroccan law,<sup>302</sup> both governments have been accused of using spyware technology against individuals associated with groups critical of the government, including documented cases of the use of highly invasive forms of spyware such as Pegasus.

In addition to risks regarding targeted surveillance, biometric mass surveillance is an increasing practice at sporting events, posing risks not only to the right to privacy, but also the rights to equality and non-discrimination, freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Across the globe, the adoption of facial recognition for identification and mass surveillance, which is riddled with biases and discriminatory outcomes, has been on the rise. The technology works by scraping millions of images from large databases, such as social media profiles and drivers' licence registries, often without people's knowledge and consent. Software then runs facial analysis of images captured on CCTV or other video surveillance to search for potential matches against the database of scraped images.<sup>303</sup>

297 Morocco World News, "Spanish Police Use Force Against Moroccan Football Fans", 15 March 2022, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2022/12/352973/spanish-police-use-force-against-moroccan-football-fans>

298 The Independent, "UK Football Policing Unit to help fans at Champions League final", 29 May 2021, <https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/football/uk-football-policing-unit-champions-league-police-spanish-english-b2499587.html>

299 Interview with a representative of the FASFE, conducted 11 March 2023

300 Amnesty International, The State of the World's Human Rights 2023/24 (Index: POL 10/7200/2024), 23 April 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol10/7200/2024/en/>

301 Amnesty International, "Campaigns: What is targeted surveillance", <https://securitylab.amnesty.org/campaigns/>

302 Organic Law 3/2018, of December 5, on the Protection of Personal Data and guarantee of digital rights, <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2018-16673>; and Royal Decree No. 1-09-15 of 22 Safar 1430 (February 18, 2009) promulgating Law No. 09-08 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data, <https://www.cndp.ma/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Loi-09-08-Fr.pdf>

303 Amnesty International, "Submission from Amnesty International to the Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy", September 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/digitalage/reportprivindigage2022/submissions/2022-09-06/CFI-RTP-Amnesty-International.pdf> (accessed 17 April 2024)

Amnesty International has joined over 200 civil society organizations to call for an outright ban on facial recognition technology systems for mass surveillance.

In September 2022, Football Supporters Europe warned that fans were being targeted by biometric mass surveillance in a number of countries and “used as test subjects for invasive technologies and practices.”<sup>304</sup> In 2023, French lawmakers approved draft legislation set to introduce AI-driven surveillance at the Paris 2024 Olympics. This could put millions of people at risk, subjecting them to disproportionate and arbitrary tracking as they travel to and from venues.<sup>305</sup> As Amnesty International’s research has shown on numerous occasions, AI-driven systems such as facial recognition amplify racist policing and threaten the right to protest. Ethnic minorities, migrants, Black and other racialized people are most at risk of being targeted by the technology.<sup>306</sup>

There have been numerous documented cases of targeting of activists with spyware in **Morocco**. In 2022, an Amnesty International investigation revealed that a prominent human rights activist in Morocco, Aminatou Haidar, had been targeted with NSO Group’s Pegasus spyware.<sup>307</sup> Previously Amnesty had documented similar cases, including those of Maati Monjib and Abdessadak El Bouchattaoui in October 2019,<sup>308</sup> Omar Radi in June 2020,<sup>309</sup> and Hicham Mansouri and Claude Mangin in July 2021.<sup>310</sup>

**In Spain**, there have been documented cases of the use of Pegasus spyware to target Catalan politicians, journalists and their families. Confirmed targets include journalist Meritxell Bonet, activist Jordi Sanchez and Catalan NGO President Elisenda Paluzie.<sup>311</sup> In 2022 UN experts called on Spain’s government to conduct a full investigation into the claims and join the global moratorium on the use of surveillance technology.<sup>312</sup> The government denied the allegations.<sup>313</sup>

In recent years, the Spanish football authorities have attempted to increase the amount of information they collect about fans, including fingerprint data. This practice has attracted scrutiny and has been restricted following guidance published by the Spanish Data Protection Authority (AEPD).<sup>314</sup> In 2019, AEPD fined La Liga €250,000 (US\$280,000) for not adequately informing users of the La Liga app that the programme can activate smartphone microphones and monitor user location.<sup>315</sup> In 2023, La Liga issued a tender for a facial recognition system, prompting a warning from AEPD that this would breach data protection laws.<sup>316</sup>

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304 Fans Europe, “Football Fans Are Being Targeted by Biometric Mass Surveillance”, 29 September 2022, <https://www.fanseurope.org/news/football-fans-are-being-targeted-by-biometric-mass-surveillance/>

305 Amnesty International, “France: Intrusive Olympics surveillance technologies could usher in a dystopian future”, 14 March 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/03/france-intrusive-olympics-surveillance-technologies-could-usher-in-a-dystopian-future/>

306 Amnesty International European Institutions Office, “EU AI Act at risk as European Parliament may legitimize abusive technologies”, 28 March 2023, <https://www.amnesty.eu/news/eu-ai-act-at-risk-as-european-parliament-may-legitimize-abusive-technologies/>

307 Amnesty International, “Morocco/Western Sahara: Activist targeted with NSO Group’s Pegasus spyware”, 15 March 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/03/morocco-western-sahara-activist-nso-pegasus>

308 Amnesty International, “Morocco: Human Rights Defenders Targeted with NSO Group’s Spyware”, October 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2019/10/morocco-human-rights-defenders-targeted-with-nso-groups-spyware/>

309 Amnesty International, “Moroccan Journalist Targeted with Network Injection Attacks Using NSO Group’s Tools”, June 2020, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2020/06/moroccan-journalist-targeted-with-network-injection-attacks-using-nso-groups-tools/>

310 Amnesty International, “Forensic Methodology Report - Appendix D”, July 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2021/07/forensic-methodology-report-appendix-d/>

311 Amnesty International, “Spain: Pegasus spyware: Catalans targeted”, 17 April 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/04/spain-pegasus-spyware-catalans-targeted/>

312 OHCHR, “Spain: UN experts demand investigation into alleged spying programme targeting Catalans”, 23 February 2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/02/spain-un-experts-demand-investigation-alleged-spying-programme-targeting>

313 Euronews, “Spain begins investigation into Catalonia Pegasus spyware allegations”, 25 April 2022, <https://www.euronews.com/2022/04/25/spain-begins-investigation-into-catalonia-pegasus-spyware-allegations>

314 Agencia Española de Protección de Datos (AEPD), “Guía de control de presencia biométrico”, November 2023, <https://www.aepd.es/guias/guia-control-presencia-biometrico.pdf>

315 The Guardian, “La Liga fined over app that spied on illegal bar screenings of matches”, 12 June 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2019/jun/12/la-liga-fined-over-app-that-spied-on-illegal-bar-screenings-of-matches>

316 Agencia Española de Protección de Datos (AEPD), “Advertencia AI-00394-2023”, 2023, <https://www.aepd.es/documento/ai-00394-2023-advertencia.pdf>



# 5. SAUDI ARABIA 2034 FIFA MEN'S WORLD CUP

## BID OVERVIEW

Saudi Arabia announced its intention to bid as sole host for the 2034 FIFA Men's World Cup on 4 October 2023, just hours after the FIFA Council made a surprise announcement that the process would begin in less than a month.<sup>317</sup> There had previously been speculation that the country would launch a joint bid with Egypt and a third European country – first reported as Italy, then later Greece – for the 2030 edition.<sup>318</sup> FIFA President Gianni Infantino visited the country twice in 2021 and 2022, saying “the world in its entirety should come to Saudi Arabia to watch [what is happening here]”.<sup>319</sup>

Saudi Arabia's bid to host the 2034 World Cup takes place within a broader context of significant economic reform and investment in sports centred around Vision 2030, a national plan to diversify the economy and end the country's dependence on income from oil. Alongside economic goals, the government has also aimed to provide young people with more entertainment options and establish Saudi Arabia as an attractive destination for tourism and work, including as a “a world-renowned sports and entertainment location, a global tourism hotspot, and a top-ranked country people can call home”.<sup>320</sup>

According to data compiled by The Guardian, the Saudi government has invested US\$6bn in sports-related projects since early 2021, a vast increase on the US\$1.5bn spent between 2014 and early 2021.<sup>321</sup> Investment in sports has been led by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, the country's sovereign wealth fund chaired by Crown Prince Mohamed bin Salman. The programme of investment included a planned merger between LIV Golf and the PGA Golf tour, landmark boxing fights, a Formula One race and the purchase of English Premier League club Newcastle United, among others. Research institute Play The Game has detailed how Saudi Arabia has also concluded a total of 312 sponsorship deals across 21 sports, including significant sponsorship deals by State-owned companies such as oil giant Aramco.<sup>322</sup> In April 2024, FIFA announced that Aramco had become the sport's body's new “Major Worldwide Partner”<sup>323</sup> in a deal previously estimated to be worth US\$100m a year.<sup>324</sup>

317 Saudi Arabian Football Federation, “Saudi Arabian Football Federation announces intention to bid for 2034 FIFA World Cup™”, <https://www.saff.com.sa/>

318 Sky News Arabia, “Will Egypt apply to organize the 2030 World Cup?”, 9 June 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TN4Ynp4dWnY>; see also Politico, “Qatar FIFA World Cup: The secret Saudi plan to buy the cup”, 7 February 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/qatar-fifa-world-cup-the-secret-saudi-plan-to-buy-the-cup/>; and Ekathimerini.com, “Saudi Arabia sign raft of agreements during crown prince's visit”, 27 July 2022, <https://www.ekathimerini.com/news/1190031/greece-saudi-arabia-sign-raft-of-agreements-during-crown-princes-visit/>; and The New York Times, “Saudi Arabia Fills World Cup Void Left by Qatar”, 15 November 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/15/world/middleeast/saudi-arabia-fifa-world-cup.html>

319 FIFA, “FIFA President meets Saudi government and federation”, 8 March 2022, <https://www.fifa.com/about-fifa/president/news/fifa-president-meets-saudi-government-and-federation> and Twitter, Ministry of Sport tweet, [https://twitter.com/mosgovsa\\_en/status/1347171012954222598?s=20](https://twitter.com/mosgovsa_en/status/1347171012954222598?s=20)

320 Saudi Vision 2030, “Quality of Life Program”, <https://www.vision2030.gov.sa/en/vision-2030/vrp/quality-of-life-program/>

321 The Guardian, “Revealed: Saudi Arabia's £6bn spend on sportswashing”, 26 July 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jul/26/revealed-saudi-arabia-6bn-spend-on-sportswashing>

322 Play the Game, “Sports power relations in Saudi Arabia”, January 2023, <https://www.playthegame.org/projects/power-relations-in-international-sport/dataset-on-sports-power-relations-in-saudi-arabia/>

323 FIFA, “Aramco and FIFA announce global partnership”, 25 April 2024, <https://inside.fifa.com/about-fifa/commercial>

324 The Times, “Saudi Arabian oil giant Aramco to become major FIFA sponsor”, 16 November 2023, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/saudi-arabian-oil-giant-aramco-to-become-major-fifa-sponsor-pmrs8g6vm>





Al-Awwal Stadium in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, prior to an Italian EA Sports FC Supercup Final match on January 22, 2024.  
© Matteo Ciambelli / DeFodi Images via Getty Images

At the heart of this investment is football, the most popular sport in Saudi Arabia.<sup>325</sup> The men's national team has played in six World Cups and won back-to-back AFC Asian Cup titles in 1984 and 1988. The Saudi Arabia women's team played their first match in 2022, having previously been banned by the authorities, with the first women's league launched later that same year.

Saudi Arabia also hosts one of the strongest domestic football leagues in Asia, the Saudi Pro League. In 2022, the Public Investment Fund brought the four biggest Saudi clubs - Al-Ittihad, Al Hilal, Al-Ahli and Al-Nassr - into public ownership, leading to a flurry of high-profile signings including Cristiano Ronaldo and others.<sup>326</sup>

In December 2023 Saudi Arabia hosted the FIFA Club World Cup – an annual tournament for the top club team from each continent. The country hosts the finals of the Spanish and Italian Super Cups each year and has been awarded the rights to host the 2027 AFC Asian Cup, the 2029 Asian Winter Games and the 2034 Asian Games.

Investment in sport is part of Saudi Arabia's efforts to improve its public image and international reputation. In 2023 the Riyadh General Manager of public relations firm Edelman, hired by Crown Prince Mohamed bin Salman to work on the country's global standing, said that "hosting sports championships creates a distinct mental image of the Kingdom and its sports, and adds value to the country's efforts to enhance its position in the international community".<sup>327</sup> The Saudi Arabian

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325 Saudi Arabian Embassy, "Sports and Recreation", <https://www.saudiembassy.net/sports-and-recreation>

326 BBC News, "Saudi Arabia considers relaxation of travel ban to allow vaccinated tourists", 30 March 2022, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-66614458>

327 The Guardian, "Edelman ends contract with Saudi Arabia as pressure rises over human rights", 22 December 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/dec/22/edelman-saudi-arabia-pr-image>; see also Okaz, "Sports diplomacy in the orbits of soft power" 2 March 2023, <https://www.okaz.com.sa/articles/authors/2127957>

A UN PANEL OF EXPERTS REPORT DOCUMENTED THAT THE MILITARY COALITION LED BY **SAUDI ARABIA** HAD

**KILLED THOUSANDS OF CIVILIANS IN AIRSTRIKES, TORTURED DETAINEES, RAPED CIVILIANS AND USED CHILD SOLDIERS, AMOUNTING TO POSSIBLE WAR CRIMES.**



ambassador to Norway described this practice as “soft power diplomacy” in 2022.<sup>328</sup> It has been characterized by organizations including Amnesty International as “sportswashing”, the practice of using sports to distract from more negative aspects of Saudi Arabia’s international reputation such as human rights abuses. These criticisms have been dismissed by Crown Prince Mohamed bin Salman, who told an American TV interviewer in 2023 that the purpose of investing in sports was primarily economic, saying: “if sportswashing is going to increase my GDP by 1%, then we’ll continue doing sportswashing.”<sup>329</sup>

Saudi Arabia has been involved in a military conflict with Houthi rebels in Yemen since 2015. In 2018, a UN Panel of Experts report documented that the military coalition led by Saudi Arabia had killed thousands of civilians in airstrikes, tortured detainees, raped civilians and used child soldiers, amounting to possible war crimes.<sup>330</sup> International sporting events have previously been impacted by this ongoing conflict. For example, in March 2022, Houthi rebels based in Yemen fired missiles into Jeddah days before the Saudi Grand Prix was set to take place in the city.<sup>331</sup> The race went ahead after Formula One provided “safety assurances” to drivers. An agreed six-month ceasefire elapsed in October 2022 and peace talks resumed in April 2023. Since October 2023, Houthi rebels have been attacking international shipping in the Red Sea.<sup>332</sup>

328 Dagbladet, “Derfor kjøper Saudi-Arabia opp fotball”, 11 December 2022, <https://www.dagbladet.no/sport/derfor-kjoper-saudi-arabia-opp-fotball/77912583>

329 Fox News, “Mohammed bin Salman: We aren’t proud of all of our laws in Saudi Arabia”, 20 September 2023, <https://www.foxnews.com/video/6337519179112> )

330 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), “Yemen: United Nations experts point to possible war crimes by parties to the conflict”, August 2018, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2018/08/yemen-united-nations-experts-point-possible-war-crimes-parties-conflict?LangID=E&NewsID=23479> .

331 NPR, “Saudi Arabia F1 Race: Houthi attack”, 26 March 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/03/26/1088975885/saudi-arabia-formula-one-f1-race-houthi-attack>

332 Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), “Yemen War, updated as per CFR’s Global Conflict Tracker 5 March 2024 update”, <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/war-yemen>

# PLANNED STADIUM AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Saudi Arabia's infrastructure development for the World Cup will take place as part of its wider economic development programme. Saudi Arabia is pursuing a swathe of massive projects as part of Vision 2030. One real estate consultancy estimated that as of 2022, the Saudi government had spent over US\$1.1 trillion on 15 "giga-projects" including newly built stand-alone cities.<sup>333</sup> Some of these projects, such as NEOM, will be used to host mega sporting events including the 2034 FIFA World Cup.

The Saudi 2034 bid has not yet outlined its full plans for stadium development or broader World Cup infrastructure. It will need to provide at least 14 stadiums to FIFA's standards, currently met only by four.<sup>334</sup> Proposals from Saudi Arabia's successful bid to host the 2027 AFC Asian Cup show plans to build three new stadiums and improve the capacity of four existing ones.<sup>335</sup> Several of these are highly likely to be located within major projects still in development. For example, in January 2024, Saudi Arabia revealed its designs for a 45,000-seat multi-functional stadium with a combined retractable roof, pitch and LED wall in the Qiddya City urban entertainment district, currently under construction.<sup>336</sup>

In 2017, the government announced its vision for NEOM, a futuristic megacity including The Line, a district that was intended to be entirely contained within two 170 kms-long mirrors but which is now reported to have been scaled back.<sup>337</sup> The executive director of The Line has suggested that NEOM will have multiple football stadiums.<sup>338</sup>

Saudi Arabia is currently significantly expanding its tourism and hospitality sectors, with a plan to add 250,000 new hotel rooms by 2030.<sup>339</sup> Further construction will be required to house migrant workers, as well as the building of critical infrastructure such as roads connecting building sites and other utilities needed to begin preparations. In January 2024, NEOM issued a tender for the construction for workers' accommodation, comprising 20 villas each hosting 10,000 accommodation units.<sup>340</sup> In April 2024, NEOM's CEO announced that its workforce would reach 200,000 people by 2025.<sup>341</sup> It is clear that Saudi Arabia will undertake significant infrastructure and stadium development as part of its plans to host major tournaments including the 2034 World Cup, bringing under scrutiny the country's labour rights, workplace standards and treatment of migrant workers.

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333 Knight Frank, "Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030: Real estate and infrastructure projects top US\$11 trillion", 6 September 2022, <https://www.knightfrank.com/research/article/2022-09-06-saudi-arabias-vision-2030-real-estate-and-infrastructure-projects-top-us-11-trillion>

334 The Guardian, "FIFA relaxes stadium rule for Saudi Arabia ahead of World Cup 2034 bid", 9 October 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2023/oct/09/fifa-stadium-rule-relaxed-saudi-arabia-world-cup-2034>

335 Construction Week Online, "Saudi Arabia to host 2027 Asian Cup", 19 February 2023, <https://www.constructionweekonline.com/news/2027-asian-cup-saudi>

336 The Guardian, "Saudi Arabia's 2034 ambitious World Cup plans force Fifa leap of faith", 28 December 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2023/dec/28/saudi-arabia-2034-ambitious-world-cup-plans-force-fifa-leap-of-faith>; see also BDOnline, "Populous reveals proposals for cliff-top stadium in Saudi Arabia", 23 January 2024, <https://www.bdonline.co.uk/news/populous-reveals-proposals-for-cliff-top-stadium-in-saudi-arabia/5127395.article>

337 Bloomberg, "Saudis Scale Back Ambition for \$1.5 Trillion Desert Project Neom", 5 April 2024, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024-04-05/saudis-scale-back-ambition-for-1-5-trillion-desert-project-neom>

338 Hotelier Middle East, "NEOM to get a football club with multiple stadiums at The Line", 26 March 2023, <https://www.hoteliermiddleeast.com/saudi-arabia/neom-to-get-a-football-club-with-multiple-stadiums-at-the-line>

339 Arab News, "Saudi Arabia plans 250k new hotel rooms by 2030, says minister of tourism", 6 February 2024, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2455096/business-economy>

340 Construction Review Online, "NEOM tenders \$8 billion Saudi Arabia workers accommodation PPP project", 6 October 2023, <https://constructionreviewonline.com/construction-news/neom-tenders-8-billion-saudi-arabia-workers-accommodation-ppp-project/>

341 Arab News, "Saudi Arabia announces partnership with NEOM for world's first digital water network", 7 March 2024, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2493401/business-economy>



## HUMAN RIGHTS TREATIES AND INSTITUTIONS

Like other host nations, Saudi Arabia will be asked to sign a “Government Declaration” that it will respect international human rights law in relation to the tournament. However, it is not a signatory to the majority of international human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).<sup>342</sup>

Saudi Arabia is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, but in all cases has entered reservations stating that it does not consider itself bound by any provisions that conflict with sharia law.<sup>343</sup> Such reservations are either incompatible with the object and purpose of the treaties and are therefore impermissible under international law, or create doubts about the commitment of Saudi Arabia to the implementation of the treaty’s provisions.

Saudi Arabia has also ratified the UN Convention against Torture and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and two additional protocols on the rights of children.<sup>344</sup> Saudi Arabia has been a member state of the ILO since 1976 and has ratified seven of the 11 fundamental instruments of that organization. It has not ratified either of the conventions on freedom of association (C087 and C098) or the Health and Safety Conventions (C155 and C187).<sup>345</sup> It has ratified the Arab Charter on Human Rights, which reaffirms – but falls short of – the principles of the UDHR and the ICCPR. The country is also a signatory to the Gulf Cooperation Council Human Rights Declaration.<sup>346</sup>

The Saudi Arabian Human Rights Commission (SHRC) was established in 2005.<sup>347</sup> MENA Rights Group, a respected human rights NGO, has researched the activities of the SHRC and determined that it lacks independence and closely aligns with the positions of the government.<sup>348</sup> The SHRC has never sought accreditation as a National Human Rights Institution in line with the Paris Principles and has therefore not been assessed on these terms.

Saudi Arabia has published two National Action Plans (2017-2021 and 2021-2023) focused on human trafficking, which the government says is informed by the goals set out in the “Palermo” Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2000), to which Saudi Arabia is a signatory.<sup>349</sup>

342 UN Treaty Body Database, [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=152&Lang=EN](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=152&Lang=EN)

343 United Nations Treaty Collection, Convention on the Rights of the Child, [https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=IV-11&chapter=4&clang=en](https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-11&chapter=4&clang=en); and CEDAW, [https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=IV-8&chapter=4&clang=en#EndDec](https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-8&chapter=4&clang=en#EndDec)

344 UN Treaty Body Database, [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=152&Lang=EN](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=152&Lang=EN)

345 ILO, NORMLEX Information System on International Labour Standards, [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:10011:0::NO::P10011\\_DISPLAY\\_BY,P10011\\_CONVENTION\\_TYPE\\_CODE:2,F](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:10011:0::NO::P10011_DISPLAY_BY,P10011_CONVENTION_TYPE_CODE:2,F)

346 Gulf Cooperation Council, “Human Rights”, 2015, <https://www.gcc-sg.org/en-us/CognitiveSources/DigitalLibrary/Lists/DigitalLibrary/Human%20Rights/1453192982.pdf>

347 Human Rights Commission Saudi Arabia, <https://www.hrc.gov.sa/website>.

348 Middle East and North Africa Rights, “Saudi Human Rights Commission: Whitewashing Tool in the Kingdom”, 27 November 2023, <https://menarights.org/en/documents/saudi-human-rights-commission-whitewashing-tool-kingdom>.

349 National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking Saudi Arabia, “National Action Plan”, <https://www.ncct.gov.sa/en/national-action-plan>



# HUMAN RIGHTS AT RISK

## LABOUR RIGHTS

In line with the 2034 FIFA World Cup Hosting Requirements, Saudi Arabia has an obligation to “ensure that effective protections are in place for workers involved in the preparation and delivery of the Competition” and “ensure decent working conditions for workers associated in any way with the delivery of the competition.”<sup>350</sup> In its Human Rights Policy, FIFA says that it “strives to uphold and promote the highest international labour standards, in particular the principles enshrined in the eight core International Labour Organisation conventions.”<sup>351</sup>

As described above, Saudi Arabia’s 2034 World Cup bid will require the significant development of football stadiums and broader infrastructure, creating a wide range of risks for workers. Labour risks exist with each World Cup bid but are significantly enhanced by the scale of construction required in Saudi Arabia, the reliance on migrant workers in key sectors, and the prevalence of labour abuses including health and safety risks, discrimination, recruitment fees, wage theft, the prohibition of trade unions and restrictions on freedom of movement linked to the country’s kafala sponsorship system. While assessment of the risks to migrant workers in Saudi Arabia is severely hampered by a lack of data and the fact that trade unions and independent NGOs are not able to operate in the country, there is no doubt that major risks exist for workers involved in the preparation and delivery of the 2034 tournament.

## MIGRANT WORKERS AND THE *KAFALA* SYSTEM

As of 2023, almost 80% of Saudi Arabia’s 10.7 million workers in the private sectors were foreign nationals.<sup>352</sup> This includes key sectors such as construction, hospitality and other service sectors that will be integral to the preparation and delivery of the World Cup.

Discrimination between the rights of foreign and citizen workers is deeply embedded in Saudi Arabia’s legal framework. For example, only Saudi Arabian nationals may be employed on permanent contracts, and the minimum wage only applies to citizens.<sup>353</sup> While independent trade unions, public demonstrations and collective bargaining are illegal for all workers,<sup>354</sup> the Labour Law permits the establishment of worker councils, but only for Saudi Arabian nationals.<sup>355</sup> Further, a leaked draft of the penal code analysed by Amnesty International threatens to entrench discrimination between Saudi citizens and foreign nationals by introducing a flawed definition of discrimination, which does not consider the “exception, restriction, preference or distinction” between Saudi nationals and others as discrimination if it does not target a specific nationality.<sup>356</sup>

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350 FIFA, Overview of Hosting Requirements for the FIFA World Cup 2034, <https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/6036e6c71384b364/original/Overview-of-Hosting-Requirements-for-the-FIFA-World-Cup-2034-EN.pdf>

351 FIFA, FIFA’s Human Rights Policy – May 2017 edition, <https://img.fifa.com/image/upload/kr05dqyhwr1uhqy2lh6r.pdf>

352 Arab News, “Saudi private sector employment touches 10.7 million in Oct”, 5 November 2023, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2403751/business-economy>

353 Rödl & Partner, “Saudi Arabia: Labour Law and Employee Contract”, <https://www.roedl.com/insights/saudi-arabia-labour-law-employee-contract>

354 International Trade Union Confederation, “Internationally recognised core labour standards in Saudi Arabia”, January 2012, [https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/final\\_tpr\\_saudi\\_arabia.pdf](https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/final_tpr_saudi_arabia.pdf)

355 ILO, “Saudi Arabia: Regulatory Framework Governing Migrant Workers”, November 2019, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-/arabstates/-/ro-beirut/documents/legaldocument/wcms\\_728262.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-/arabstates/-/ro-beirut/documents/legaldocument/wcms_728262.pdf)

356 Draft Penal Code, Article 217.

In Saudi Arabia, employment and immigration status for foreign nationals is regulated by a system known as “kafala”, which means sponsorship. Under the kafala system, a migrant worker’s immigration status is legally bound to an individual employer or sponsor (kafeel). This leaves workers with limited recourse when subjected to common abuses such as wage theft, excessive working hours, confiscation of passports, deprivation of basic social and health needs, restriction of movement, discrimination and violence.<sup>357</sup> The ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR), which is responsible for evaluating the state of application of international labour standards, has noted that “the kafala system may be conducive to the exaction of forced labour”.<sup>358</sup> In 2017, the ILO described Saudi Arabia as having the most restrictive kafala system in place in the region, with workers reliant on employers for all the critical stages of their migration journey and thus at enhanced risk of abuse.<sup>359</sup>

In 2021, Saudi Arabia introduced labour reforms that it said would ease restrictions for some migrant workers, enabling them to leave the country and change jobs without employer consent under specific circumstances. Analysis by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch has found that these reforms have failed to dismantle the kafala system, which continues to restrict the rights of migrant workers to change jobs, exit the country freely or join a trade union.<sup>360</sup> Migrant workers can still be arrested and deported if their employers report them as having “absconded” from their job, or if their employers fail to renew their residence permit or cancel their visas, rendering workers undocumented in the country through no fault of their own.<sup>361</sup>

Well-documented risks exist in the recruitment process. The ILO has identified a trend of organized human trafficking of Nepali workers to several Gulf countries including Saudi Arabia.<sup>362</sup> Many migrant workers incur hundreds or even thousands of dollars in recruitment fees and related costs while securing their jobs in Saudi Arabia, putting them at increased risk of labour abuses in the country. This is despite such charges being prohibited by international standards<sup>363</sup> and Saudi law stating that recruitment costs should be borne by the employer.<sup>364</sup>

In 2021, Saudi Arabia introduced a minimum wage for nationals in the private sector that was recently increased to SAR 4,000 (US\$1,067) a month. However, there is no minimum wage for foreign migrant workers.<sup>365</sup>

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357 Migrant Forum in Asia, “Migration of Bangladeshi Domestic Workers to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia”, <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/migpractice/docs/132/PB2.pdf>

358 ILO, “Labour Migration in the Arab States”, [https://www.ilo.org/beirut/areasofwork/labour-migration/WCMS\\_514910/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/beirut/areasofwork/labour-migration/WCMS_514910/lang-en/index.htm)

359 ILO, “Employer-migrant worker relationships in the Middle East: Exploring Scope for internal labour market mobility and fair migration”, March 2017, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-arabstates/-ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms\\_552697.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-arabstates/-ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_552697.pdf)

360 Amnesty International, “Saudi Arabia: Migrant Workers Who Toiled in Amazon Warehouses Were Deceived and Exploited”, 10 October 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/10/saudi-arabia-migrants-workers-who-toiled-in-amazon-warehouses-were-deceived-and-exploited/>; see also, Human Rights Watch, “Saudi Arabia: Labor Reforms Insufficient”, 25 March 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/25/saudi-arabia-labor-reforms-insufficient>

361 Migrant-Rights.org, “Huroob, Runaway, Absconding: Trapping migrants in extreme abuse”, 30 September 2020, <https://www.migrant-rights.org/2020/09/huroob-runaway-absconding-trapping-migrants-in-extreme-abuse/>. In April 2022, Saudi Arabia’s Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development issued a statement about updates to regulations for employers reporting worker ‘absences’. See: Saudi Gazette, “Saudi ministry updates rules for notifying worker absence”, 19 April 2023, <https://saudigazette.com.sa/article/619532>

362 The Guardian, “McDonald’s faces lawsuit over alleged trafficking links in Saudi Arabia”, 10 October 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/oct/10/mcdonalds-trafficking-links-claims-chuck-e-cheese-saudi-arabia> ; see also, ILO, “Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, International Labour Conference 111<sup>th</sup> session”, 2023, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed\\_norm/-relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\\_868115.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed_norm/-relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_868115.pdf)

363 ILO, “General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment”, 22 May 2019, [https://webapps.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed\\_protect/-protrav/-migrant/documents/publication/wcms\\_703485.pdf](https://webapps.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed_protect/-protrav/-migrant/documents/publication/wcms_703485.pdf)

364 Article 40 of Saudi Arabia’s Labour Law, <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/MONOGRAPH/74429/89847/F2095468703/SAU74429%20Arab.pdf>

365 Gulf News, “Saudi Arabia raises minimum wage for nationals in private sector to SR4,000”, 4 September 2023, <https://gulfnews.com/world/gulf/saudi/saudi-arabia-raises-minimum-wage-for-nationals-in-private-sector-to-sr4000-1.97911088>



Restaurant workers and a street cleaner watch the Saudi Arabia vs. Uruguay World Cup football match live on a television at a restaurant's outdoor seating on June 20, 2018 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. © Sean Gallup/Getty Images

## 🔍 CASE STUDY

### BIBEK, AMAZON WORKER IN SAUDI ARABIA

In October 2023, Amnesty International published an investigation into serious human rights abuses faced by Nepali migrant workers who were contracted to work in Amazon warehouses in Saudi Arabia via third party contractors. Amnesty found that dozens of workers had been deceived by recruitment agents and labour supply companies, cheated of their earnings, housed in appalling conditions and prevented from finding alternative employment or leaving the country. The deception and exploitation involved means the abuses were highly likely to have amounted to human trafficking.<sup>366</sup>

Bibek's experience was typical of workers interviewed by Amnesty International who paid on average US\$1,500 to recruitment agents to secure their employment with Amazon's third-party contractors. He told Amnesty International of his excitement at working with the company:

***I asked [the recruitment agent] if it was a supply company and he said it was direct. I searched Amazon on Google, and it said it was in the top 10 companies, so I was so excited and hopeful. I realized it was a different company on the day of the flight. When I received the documents, I saw on my passport it said, 'Al Basmah Co.', but the agent said, 'don't worry, it's a branch of Amazon'.***

However, when he arrived in Saudi Arabia, Bibek was left without work for more than seven weeks.

***"One month and 22 days after arriving in Saudi Arabia, I started working at Amazon. During the time we were unemployed we kept asking [the supply company] to find us work. We told them we need money; our family is very poor, and we have to send money back, but they always said, 'we are trying to find work for you so you should wait'. They didn't treat us well – if we went to their office to ask for work, they made us stay outside in the hot sun."***

<sup>366</sup> Amnesty International; "Saudi Arabia: 'Don't worry, it's a branch of Amazon': Exploitation of migrant workers contracted to Amazon in Saudi Arabia" (Index: MDE 23/7229/2023); 10 October 2023; Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/7229/2023/en/>

Bibek worked at Amazon's facilities for less than 12 months before Amazon ended his engagement at its facilities – a process that workers regarded as being “fired” from Amazon. When Bibek's young child became sick in Nepal while he was “jobless” after being “fired” from Amazon, the third-party contractor would not provide him with an exit permit unless he paid a SAR 5,000 (US\$1,330) “fine” and refused to pay for his flight home. Under Saudi Arabian law, migrant workers are unable to leave the country without an exit permit.

Bibek told Amnesty International that he was only able to return to Nepal when one of his co-workers acted as a guarantor for the fine and another lent him money for his flight. He did not arrive home until 10 days after his child had died. In the approximately six months after Bibek arrived back in Nepal, he accrued around NPR 130,000 (US\$980) in interest alone on debts incurred to travel to Saudi Arabia. He has been unable to find work since returning home.

In February 2024, following the allegations published by Amnesty International, Amazon announced that they were paying US\$1.9 million to reimburse over 700 workers in Saudi Arabia.<sup>367</sup>

## RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

While Saudi authorities have stated that racial discrimination is prohibited in Saudi Arabia and is considered an aggravated circumstance for crimes,<sup>368</sup> there is no legislation criminalizing discrimination on any ground, including on the basis of race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin, (dis)ability, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity.

Saudi Arabia's Basic Law of Governance guarantees equality “in accordance with the Islamic Shari'ah,”<sup>237</sup> which does not prohibit discrimination based on sex or gender in line with the country's obligations under ICERD and CEDAW.

Migrant workers in Saudi Arabia primarily come from Africa and South and South-East Asia and are at heightened risk of racial discrimination and disproportionate risk of labour exploitation.<sup>369</sup> Saudi Arabian media outlets often stigmatize migrant workers and blame victims of abuse while calling for the “Saudization” of roles such as taxi and delivery drivers.<sup>370</sup> Migrant-Rights.org has documented how dehumanizing workers from Africa and Asia can lead to physical, verbal and sexual abuse, alongside financial exploitation.<sup>371</sup>

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367 Amnesty International, “Saudi Arabia: Amazon reimburses unlawful fees following Amnesty International report highlighting abuses”, 28 February 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/02/saudi-arabia-amazon-reimburses-workers-for-unlawful-fees-following-amnesty-international-report-highlighting-abuses/>

368 OHCHR, “Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination examines the report of Saudi Arabia”, 27 April 2018, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2018/04/committee-elimination-racial-discrimination-examines-report-saudi-arabia> )

369 Amnesty International, “Submission on the strategic vision for the fulfilment of the mandate of Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance” (Index: IOR 40/6567/2023), 21 March 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ior40/6567/2023/en/>

370 Saudi Gazette, “Time to Saudize Uber, Careem”, 24 February 2017, <http://saudigazette.com.sa/opinion/local-viewpoint/time-saudize-uber-careem/>

371 Migrant- Rights.Org, “Op-ed: In Saudi Arabia, racist state policy and social discourse reinforce each other”, 28 August 2017, <https://www.migrant-rights.org/2017/08/op-ed-in-saudi-arabia-racist-state-policy-and-social-discourse-reinforce-each-other/>



## HEALTH AND SAFETY

The planned development as part of the World Cup bid will create particular risks for the more than 2 million workers in the construction industry, 85% of whom are foreign nationals.<sup>372</sup> Migrant workers are exposed to risks to their health, including from heat and humidity, air pollution, overwork and abusive working conditions, poor occupational health and safety practices, and psychosocial stress. Analysis of the available public data issued by the National Social Insurance Agency shows that the highest number of accidents and injuries are in the construction sector, comprising 46.5% of all injuries between 2004 and 2016. Occupational injuries were far more common among foreign workers than among Saudi nationals across all sectors (93.5 % vs 6.5 %, respectively).<sup>373</sup>

Workers in Saudi Arabia are also at increased risk to their health because of the extreme heat. In most parts of the Gulf, there are between 100 and 150 days when the maximum daily temperature exceeds 40C.<sup>374</sup> Excessive heat exposure, as outlined by the World Health Organization (WHO), has various physiological effects on all individuals, frequently worsening pre-existing health conditions and leading to premature death and disability.<sup>375</sup>



Labourers work on a steel mesh at a construction site in Saudi Arabia's capital Riyadh on May 23, 2022 during a heat wave.  
© FAYEZ NURELDINE/AFP via Getty Images

The risk of death is intimately linked with workplace accidents and working in extreme heat. Saudi Arabia publishes no meaningful mortality data on migrant workers, but data published by the Nepali government on the deaths of its nationals abroad shows that in Saudi Arabia a high proportion of migrant worker deaths are attributed to “natural causes” or “cardiac arrest”, terminology which medical experts have criticized as being imprecise and not revealing the underlying cause of death.<sup>376</sup> A 2022 report by the Vital Signs Partnership, a coalition of NGOs, stated that, “the fact that more Nepalese deaths in the Gulf are attributed to ‘natural causes’ than to any other cause of death is

372 Zawya, “254mln employees work in construction and building sector, most of which in Riyadh”, 7 August 2023, <https://www.zawya.com/en/legal/regulations/254mln-employees-work-in-construction-and-building-sector-most-of-which-in-riyadh-by-473-jxva5mkx>

373 Abbas M, Saeed R, Asam ZU, “Epidemiology of occupational injuries among insured workers in Saudi Arabia between 2004 and 2016”, March 2021, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8191427/>

374 Vital Signs Project, Vital signs 3: Environmental trends that are shaping our future, June 2023, [https://vitalsignsproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Vital\\_signs\\_3\\_online.pdf](https://vitalsignsproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Vital_signs_3_online.pdf)

375 World Health Organization, “Climate change and health”, June 2018, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-heat-and-health>

376 Bandana Pradhan, Tord Kjellstrom, Dan Atar, Puspa Sharma, Birendra Kayastha, Gita Bhandari, Pushkar K. Pradhan, Heat Stress Impacts on Cardiac Mortality in Nepali Migrant Workers in Qatar. *Cardiology* 4 September 2019; 143 (1-2): 37–48, <https://karger.com/crd/article/143/1-2/37/97107/Heat-Stress-Impacts-on-Cardiac-Mortality-in-Nepali> (Accessed 16 April 2024).

particularly troubling”.<sup>377</sup> An investigation by The Guardian published in March 2024 highlighted that four Bangladeshi nationals died every day in Saudi Arabia in 2022, of which 76% were recorded as from “natural causes” – indicating a failure to investigate and certify workers’ deaths in a way that could determine whether they were work-related or preventable and denying families the possibility of receiving compensation.<sup>378</sup>

## DETENTION AND KILLING OF MIGRANTS

In recent years, the Saudi Arabian authorities have continued a crackdown on individuals accused of violating residency, border and labour regulations, including through arbitrary arrests and deportations of foreign nationals solely due to their irregular immigration status, disproportionately affecting racialized people.<sup>379</sup> According to the Ministry of Interior, between January and December 2023, at least 468,000 foreign nationals were returned to their home country out of over 770,000 arrested for “violating labour, residency and border security” regulations. In the same period, over 40,000 foreign nationals, most of them Ethiopian and Yemeni nationals, were arrested for crossing the border irregularly from Yemen into Saudi Arabia.<sup>380</sup>

The targeting of foreign nationals can lead to other severe human rights violations. In 2022, Amnesty International documented the arbitrary and indefinite detention of Ethiopian migrants in inhuman and cruel conditions. They were subjected to torture and other ill-treatment by Saudi Arabian authorities before being forcibly returned to their home country solely because they did not have valid residency documents.<sup>381</sup> A 2023 Human Rights Watch report also accused Saudi border guards of killing at least hundreds of Ethiopian migrants and asylum seekers who tried to cross the Yemen-Saudi border between March 2022 and June 2023.<sup>382</sup> These risks could be heightened in the years before the World Cup as the recruitment opportunities associated with expansion of construction across the country lead migrants seeking work to attempt the crossing from the Horn of Africa into Yemen with a view to travelling on to Saudi Arabia.

In 2018, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed concern about “violence and abuse against migrant workers, especially domestic workers, instances of arbitrary detention and death sentences imposed on migrant workers, and their disproportionate representation in the prison population.”<sup>383</sup>

In 2023, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) classed Saudi Arabia as scoring 4 out of 5 on its Global Rights Index – with 1 being the best score and 5 the worst – indicating “systematic violations of rights”. According to the ITUC, this ranking means that “the government and/or companies are engaged in serious efforts to crush the collective voice of workers, putting fundamental rights under threat.”<sup>384</sup>

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377 Vital Signs, “The Deaths of Migrants in the Gulf”, March 2023, [https://vitalsignsproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Vital\\_signs-report-1.pdf](https://vitalsignsproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Vital_signs-report-1.pdf)

378 The Guardian, “Why should fit young men be dying? Migrant worker deaths spark concerns over Saudi Arabia World Cup”, 20 March 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2024/mar/20/why-should-fit-young-men-be-dying-migrant-worker-deaths-spark-concerns-over-saudi-arabia-world-cup?ref=mc.news>

379 Amnesty International, “Submission to the UN CERD-CMW joint general comment/recommendation” (Index: IOR 40/7898/2024), 4 April 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ior40/7898/2024/en/>

380 Logs on file with Amnesty International

381 Amnesty International, “Saudi Arabia: “It’s like we are not human”: Forced returns, abhorrent detention conditions of Ethiopian migrants in Saudi Arabia” (Index: MDE 23/5826/2022), 16 December 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/5826/2022/en/>

382 Human Rights Watch, “Saudi Arabia: Mass Killings of Migrants at Yemen Border”, 21 August 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/08/21/saudi-arabia-mass-killings-migrants-yemen-border>

383 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination examines report of Saudi Arabia”, April 2018, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2018/04/committee-elimination-racial-discrimination-examines-report-saudi-arabia>

384 International Trade Union Confederation, “Global Rights Index 2023”, <https://www.globalrightsindex.org/en/2023>

## DISCRIMINATION

Host nations have a responsibility to ensure that all fans, staff and players can attend the tournament free from racism, sexism and discrimination of all kinds. Article 4 of the FIFA statutes prohibits discrimination on account of race, skin colour, ethnic, national or social origin, gender, disability, language, religion, political opinion or any other opinion, wealth, birth or any other status, sexual orientation or any other reason.<sup>385</sup>



*Loujain Hathloul, a Saudi Arabian women's rights activist who was released in February 2021 after nearly three years in detention. She had been arrested in May 2018 with about a dozen other women activists just weeks before the lifting of a decades-long ban on female drivers, a reform they had long campaigned. © FAYEZ NURELDINE/AFP via Getty Images*

## GENDER DISCRIMINATION

Although Saudi Arabia ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2000, it set out reservations regarding contradictions between the Convention and “the norms of Islamic law”, conditions that are incompatible with the core objective and purpose of the treaty.<sup>386</sup>

The Saudi Arabian authorities maintain highly restrictive laws, which continue to codify discrimination against women. In 2018 the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women raised concerns about the “persistence of discriminatory laws” including “the Civil Status Code, the Labour Code, the Nationality Act and the system of male guardianship”.<sup>387</sup> In 2019, while welcoming certain reforms made to the guardianship system, UN experts called for a “complete abolition of the ‘guardianship’ system,” and reaffirmed the need for women's rights to be reflected in the national constitution rather than being dependent on royal decrees.<sup>388</sup>

385 IFA, FIFA Statutes 2022, [https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/3815fa68bd9f4ad8/original/FIFA\\_Statutes\\_2022-EN.pdf](https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/3815fa68bd9f4ad8/original/FIFA_Statutes_2022-EN.pdf)

386 United Nations Treaty Collection, “Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women”, [https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=IV-8&chapter=4&clang=en#EndDec](https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-8&chapter=4&clang=en#EndDec)

387 Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, “Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Saudi Arabia”, CEDAW/C/SAU/CO/3-4, 14 March 2018, [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2fC%2fSAU%2fCO%2f3-4&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2fC%2fSAU%2fCO%2f3-4&Lang=en)

388 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Positive steps for women in Saudi Arabia, but guardianship system remains – UN experts”, 2 August 2019, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2019/08/positive-steps-women-saudi-arabia-guardianship-system-welcomed-more-needed?LangID=E&NewsID=24879>



WOMEN STILL REQUIRE THE PERMISSION OF

## A MALE LEGAL GUARDIAN,

WHOM THEY HAVE NO RIGHT TO CHOOSE,  
FOR MANY ACTIVITIES INCLUDING MARRIAGE,  
AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS RELATED TO THEIR  
CHILDREN REMAIN LIMITED.



In recent years the Saudi Arabian government has undertaken a set of reforms relating to the status of women, including lifting travel restrictions and allowing Saudi women to drive and enter sports stadiums.<sup>389</sup> However, Amnesty International's analysis of domestic legislation shows how discrimination against women has been codified in all aspects of family life in the 2022 Family Law, as well as through the entrenchment of the male guardianship system in the Family Law and the Law of Protection from Abuse.<sup>390</sup> Women still require the permission of a male legal guardian, whom they have no right to choose, for many activities including marriage, and women's rights related to their children remain limited. Further, the Family Law requires wives to "obey in righteousness" and permits cancelling a woman's right under the law to financial maintenance by her husband if she "refuses herself to her husband...without a legitimate reason".<sup>391</sup>

The CEDAW Committee noted with concern, among other issues, "the prevalence of gender-based violence against women; the absence of comprehensive legislation to criminalize all forms of gender-based violence against women ... and the lack of support services for women who are victims of gender-based violence and the fact that they are not allowed to leave state-run shelters without their male guardian's consent."<sup>392</sup>

Foreign and Saudi nationals attending matches or working to prepare or deliver the World Cup could be impacted by Saudi Arabia's restrictive laws in different ways. Female workers and fans may be at greater risk of different forms of abuse and may be far less able to seek recourse due to deeply entrenched discrimination in the legal system. For example, both Saudi and foreign women – whether fans or workers – are particularly at risk of unfair and disproportionate prosecution under Zina rules that criminalize sex outside marriage. Zina rules are not codified and are arbitrary, falling under the complete jurisdiction of judges. They are often used to silence victims of labour and sexual violence and can result in indefinite detention, including of victims of rape.<sup>393</sup> Manahel al-Otaibi and other women have been prosecuted under Zina rules for their choice of clothing.

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389 The Guardian, "Saudi Arabia to allow women into sports stadiums as reform push intensifies", 30 October 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/30/saudi-arabia-to-allow-women-into-sports-stadiums-as-reform-push-intensifies>

390 Amnesty International, "Saudi Arabia: Human rights defenders detained", 5 September 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/6431/2023/en/>; see also ,Human Rights Watch, "Boxed In: Women and Saudi Arabia's Male Guardianship System", 17 July 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/07/17/boxed/women-and-saudi-arabias-male-guardianship-system#842ef7>

391 Articles 105-115, Personal Status Law.

392 CEDAW, "Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Saudi Arabia", 14 March 2018, UN Doc. CEDAW/C/SAU/3-4, para. 31.

393 Amnesty International, "As a Human Rights Council candidate, Saudi Arabia should make concrete commitments to promote and protect human rights" (Index: MDE 23/2800/2020), 28 July 2020, <https://www.amnesty.org/es/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/MDE2328002020ENGLISH.pdf>



## RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION

Saudi Arabia bans any public practice of a religion other than Islam, and it does not permit any places of worship other than mosques. It also criminalizes apostasy and blasphemy, with both crimes having the potential to carry a death sentence, though no executions have been carried out for either in recent years.<sup>394</sup>

Saudi Arabia follows the Sunni school of Islam, and authorities have systematically discriminated against the country's Muslim Shia minority, estimated to make up 10–15% of the population,<sup>395</sup> including in education curricula, the justice system and religious practices.<sup>396</sup>

Human Rights Watch has documented advocacy of hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination against Saudi Arabia's Shia citizens by religious preachers and government representatives.<sup>397</sup> Over 100 Saudi Arabian Shia activists have been tried before the notorious Specialized Criminal Court (SCC), the country's counter-terror court, on vague and wide-ranging charges arising from their opposition to the government, including peaceful criticism in speeches or on social media, participation in anti-government protests and alleged involvement in violent attacks or espionage for Iran. Several Shia Muslims of other nationalities have also been tried by the SCC. Amnesty International documented the cases of at least 28 Shia men who were executed between January 2016 and April 2019 following trials at the SCC. During the same period, the SCC sentenced at least 30 other Shia men to prison terms of up to 30 years.<sup>398</sup>

Reforms passed in 2018 have reduced the influence of anti-Shia religious establishments and altered the curriculum to remove some anti-Shia images and rhetoric. However, according to an analysis from Human Rights Watch, "some of the worst abuses of the Saudi state of its Shia citizens and their ability to practise their religion remain unchanged".<sup>399</sup> There are risks to Shia workers, fans and players of all nationalities at the tournament who wish to practise or otherwise express their faith.

***Amnesty International documented the cases of at least 28 Shia men who were executed between January 2016 and April 2019 following trials at the SCC. During the same period, the SCC sentenced at least 30 other Shia men to prison terms of up to 30 years.***

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394 United States Department of State, "2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Saudi Arabia", <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/saudi-arabia/>

395 Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, "Mapping the Global Muslim Population", <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2009/10/Shiarange.pdf> (accessed 25 April 2024)

396 Human Rights Watch, "Denied Dignity Systematic Discrimination and Hostility toward Saudi Shia Citizens", 3 September 2009, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2009/09/03/denied-dignity/systematic-discrimination-and-hostility-toward-saudi-shia-citizens>

397 Human Rights Watch, "They Are Not Our Brothers: Hate Speech by Saudi Officials", 26 September 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/09/26/they-are-not-our-brothers/hate-speech-saudi-officials>

398 Amnesty International, "Saudi Arabia 2020", <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/1633/2020/en/>

399 Human Rights Watch, "Saudi Arabia's Reforms Don't Include Tolerance for Shia Community", 21 September 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/09/21/saudi-arabias-reforms-dont-include-tolerance-shia-community>



## ARRESTS OF SHIA FOOTBALL SUPPORTERS

In February 2024, the Saudi authorities summoned and questioned more than 150 people who attended a football match at Al Safa football club, detaining and sentencing 12 of them to prison terms ranging from six months to one year. They were prosecuted solely for reciting a peaceful folkloric religious chant that has a historic significance to the country's Shia minority, and posting it online.

According to court documents reviewed by Amnesty International, the authorities charged the 12 fans, who are members of the club's supporters' association, under the Kingdom's Anti-Cybercrime Law. The law prohibits the "production, preparation, transmission or storage of material impinging on public order, religious values, public morals and privacy, through the information network or computers". In addition to the charges that the 12 individuals faced, the Saudi Arabian Football Federation announced disciplinary measures against the Al Safa football club saying that its fans violated regulations by "reciting phrases and chants that violated the provisions of the disciplinary and ethics regulations". The club was fined SAR 200,000 (around US\$53,000) and was obliged to play the next five matches in its home base without fans.<sup>400</sup>

## DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR GENDER IDENTITY

Saudi Arabia offers no legal protection for LGBTI people. Under the country's interpretation of sharia law, judges can sanction people accused of having sexual relations outside marriage, including "adultery" and extramarital and same-sex relations. LGBTI people have been imprisoned and subject to lashings for using social media to arrange same-sex dates. Prosecution under the country's vague and overly broad public order and morality regulations, as well as the Anti-Cybercrime Law, is a real risk.<sup>401</sup> In 2019, Saudi Arabia's state security agency published a promotional video categorizing feminism, "homosexuality" and atheism as "extremist ideas", punishable by jail and flogging.<sup>402</sup> Following public and international outcry, the video was taken down and the Saudi Human Rights Commission stated that feminism was not a crime, while making no reference to "homosexuality" or atheism.<sup>403</sup>

Due to the inability of domestic organizations to work on LGBTI rights and the severe risks to LGBTI people if their sexual identity is revealed publicly, little or no data is available on rights violations against the LGBTI community in Saudi Arabia. Personal testimony from Saudi citizens who felt forced to leave the country due to risks of human rights violations on the grounds of their gender or sexuality provides an insight into the repression, danger and alienation that members of Saudi Arabia's LGBTI community face.<sup>404</sup>

400 Amnesty International, "Saudi Arabia: Detained Football Fans Could Face Up to Five Years in Prison for Chanting During Match", March 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/03/saudi-arabia-detained-football-fans-could-face-up-to-five-years-in-prison-for-chanting-during-match/>

401 The Independent, "Gay Saudi Arabian man sentenced to three years and 450 lashes for meeting men via Twitter", 25 July 2014, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/gay-saudi-arabian-man-sentenced-to-three-years-and-450-lashes-for-meeting-men-via-twitter-9628204.html>; see also, Amnesty International, "Manifesto for Repression: Saudi Arabia's Forthcoming Penal Code Must Uphold Human Rights in Line with International Law and Standards" (Index: MDE 23/7783/2024), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/7783/2024/en/>; and iNews, "Going to lose my life: LGBTQ Saudis reveal truth about regime", <https://inews.co.uk/news/going-lose-life-lgbtq-saudis-reveal-truth-regime-2807136>

402 Amnesty International, "Saudi Arabia: Categorizing Feminism, Atheism, Homosexuality as Crimes Exposes the Kingdom's Dangerous Intolerance", November 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2019/11/saudi-arabia-categorizing-feminism-atheism-homosexuality-as-crimes-exposes-the-kingdoms-dangerous-intolerance/>

403 BBC News, "Saudi Arabia apologises for video labelling feminism as extremism", 13 November 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-50401311>

404 iNews, "Going to lose my life: LGBTQ Saudis reveal truth about regime", <https://inews.co.uk/news/going-lose-life-lgbtq-saudis-reveal-truth-regime-2807136>



### TARIQ BIN AZIZ

On 6 July 2021, the Criminal Court in Dammam sentenced Tariq bin Aziz to one year in prison and a fine of SAR 10,000 (approximately US\$2,700) under the Anti-Cybercrime law and ordered the confiscation of the two devices used in the “crime” as well as the closure of his Twitter/X account (@t\_alaziz).

According to his court documents, which Amnesty International reviewed, Aziz was charged with producing, preparing and publishing what would allegedly prejudice public order, religious values and public morals online through his Twitter account, including by advocating for legislation to protect LGBTI rights.

The charges included denying the Qur’an and questioning it; contempt for the teachings of the Islamic religion, sharia and *hudud*; mocking the symbolism of the Saudi flag; and storing video clips and “perverted” pictures of himself and other people on his phone, as well as on Twitter and Snapchat. They cite Aziz’s support of LGBTI rights, as well as his views against the death penalty and discrimination by Islamic clerics against members of the LGBTI community, criticism of child marriage, the appointment of judges based on religious background instead of merit, and persecution of individuals by religious groups.

Aziz’s sentence was upheld by the Court of Appeals in Dammam on 17 September 2021. The court justified upholding the conviction by quoting Aziz’s tweets in support of “homosexuality”, women’s rights, transgender people’s rights, children’s rights and human rights in general.

Aziz, who was detained in relation to his public support of LGBTI rights, told Amnesty International:

***I was arrested by men in civilian clothing after I posted a video on Twitter about security officials telling me that the expression of my identity is a violation of public morals. Interrogators told me that I will get out if I cooperated with the interrogation, gave them my passwords and fingerprint on a paper with my tweets. I believed them, but later realised that I was deceived. After I had confirmed that the tweets they presented were mine, the interrogator told me ‘you have now given us your fingerprints, this is a confession’. While I [was] assigned my own lawyer, he was not allowed to enter my interrogations the first two times, and was not allowed to speak the third time. It’s as if I had no legal representation during my interrogations.’<sup>405</sup>***

405 Interview by voice call with Tariq bin Aziz, a Saudi activist, 26 July 2023.



## SAUDI ARABIA OFFERS NO LEGAL PROTECTION FOR LGBTI PEOPLE.

UNDER THE COUNTRY'S INTERPRETATION OF SHARIA LAW, JUDGES CAN SANCTION PEOPLE ACCUSED OF **HAVING SEXUAL RELATIONS OUTSIDE MARRIAGE, INCLUDING "ADULTERY" AND EXTRAMARITAL AND SAME-SEX RELATIONS**

Although in 2022 the Saudi Tourism Board stated in relation to LGBTI visitors that “everyone is welcome to visit Saudi Arabia and visitors are not asked to disclose such personal details”,<sup>406</sup> there is no evidence that any legislation or practice has changed that would ensure protection for either visitors or residents. LGBTI foreign nationals have been subject to repression and may also be at risk because they risk deportation to their home countries, where LGBTI people may also face discrimination and criminalization. In 2020, a Yemeni blogger was fined and deported for social media posts supporting equal rights.<sup>407</sup> In June 2022, Saudi authorities confiscated rainbow-coloured toys on the basis that they “encourage homosexuality”.<sup>408</sup>

In March 2024, Amnesty International published its analysis of a leaked draft Saudi Arabian penal code, which would criminalize “illegitimate” consensual sexual relations and “homosexuality”.<sup>409</sup> Saudi law already punishes “cross-dressing” with prison sentences of up to three years,<sup>410</sup> while gender-affirming care and legal gender recognition are not permitted.<sup>411</sup> Although incidents of criminal arrest or prosecution of people who are transgender appear to be rare,<sup>412</sup> this is likely to be due to the significant social stigma preventing individuals from disclosing their trans identities.

## HOUSING AND LAND

FIFA's Human Rights policy states that the organization, “expects and promotes the respect of international human rights standards where land acquisition involves expropriations and in particular where people are resettled in the process.”<sup>413</sup> While we do not yet know precise plans, given the scale of infrastructure projects likely to be associated with the 2034 FIFA World Cup and the history of large-scale developments in Saudi Arabia, there is a significant risk of forced evictions in relation to the tournament.

406 CNN, “Saudi Arabia to offer visa-free access for foreign tourists, but not for everyone”, 5 May 2023 <https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/saudi-arabia-lgbt-tourists/index.html>

407 Amnesty International, “Saudi Arabia: Yemeni LGBTIQ+ Rights Defender Arrested: Mohamed al-Bokari” (Index: MDE 23/2641/2020), 2 June 2020, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/2641/2020/en/>

408 BBC News, “Saudi authorities seize rainbow toys for promoting homosexuality”, 15 June 2022, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-61813390>

409 Amnesty International, “Saudi Arabia: Repressive Draft Penal Code Shatters Illusions of Progress and Reform”, March 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/03/saudi-arabia-repressive-draft-penal-code-shatters-illusions-of-progress-and-reform/>

410 Arab Local, “New Saudi Law to Jail Crossdressers for up to 3 Years”, 23 July 2022, <https://arablocal.com/news/new-saudi-law-to-jail-crossdressers-for-up-to-3-years>

411 Sabq, “”ةيدوعسلأ يف سنج ريغ تاي لم ع يرجن ال: صتخ م” [Mukhtass: We do not perform sex change operations in Saudi Arabia], 19 February 2019, <https://sabq.org/saudia/w8jtf9>

412 Dawn MENA, “Eden Knight's death is an all too familiar story for transgender Saudis”, 1 June 2023, <https://dawnmena.org/eden-knights-death-is-an-all-too-familiar-story-for-transgender-saudis/>

413 FIFA, FIFA's Human Rights Policy – May 2017 edition, <https://img.FIFA.com/image/upload/kr05dqyhwr1uhqy2lh6r.pdf>





View of the Neom presentation pavilion at the Mipim real estate fair in Cannes, France. © Laurent Coust/SOPA Images/LightRocket/Getty Images

Forced evictions have already been documented on the site of NEOM, where plans for several stadiums are being developed.<sup>414</sup> The area has historically been inhabited by the Huwaitat tribe, which according to the human rights organization ALQST has faced compulsory eviction and land expropriations in violation of international law and Saudi Arabia's obligations under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.<sup>415</sup>

In May 2024, the BBC published an investigation in which a Saudi colonel deployed to NEOM described an order he received in April 2020 stating that "whoever continues to resist [eviction] should be killed, so it licenced the use of lethal force against whoever stayed in their home".<sup>416</sup> Indeed, that month Saudi security forces used lethal violence, killing Huwaitat tribe member Abdul Rahim al-Huwaiti (see below).<sup>417</sup> Authorities also imprisoned and sentenced 15 members of the tribe to prison terms of up to 50 years.<sup>418</sup> In May 2023 UN experts expressed alarm at the imminent risk of execution of three members of the tribe and urged all companies involved in NEOM, including foreign investors, to ensure that they are not causing or contributing to, and are not directly linked to, serious human rights abuses.<sup>419</sup>

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414 Hotelier Middle East, "NEOM to get a football club with multiple stadiums at The Line", 26 March 2023, <https://www.hoteliermiddleeast.com/saudi-arabia/neom-to-get-a-football-club-with-multiple-stadiums-at-the-line>

415 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, [A/RES/61/29](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/2019/04/15/un-declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples)

416 BBC News, "NEOM: Saudi forces 'told to kill' to clear land for mega-city", 10 May 2024, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-68945445>

417 Bloomberg, "Hope Turns to Doubt, Then Gunfire as New Saudi Megacity Emerges", 24 April 2020, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-04-24/hope-turns-to-doubt-then-gunfire-as-new-saudi-megacity-emerges>

418 ALQST, "The Dark Side of NEOM: Expropriation, Expulsion, and Prosecution", February 2023, <https://alqst.org/uploads/the-dark-side-of-neom-expropriation-expulsion-and-prosecution-en.pdf>

419 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Saudi Arabia: UN experts alarmed at imminent executions linked to NEOM project", May 2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/05/saudi-arabia-un-experts-alarmed-imminent-executions-linked-neom-project>



## **AL-KHURAIBA VILLAGE AND ABDUL RAHIM BIN AHMED MAHMOUD AL-HUWAITI**

According to research by the diaspora Saudi Arabian human rights organization ALQST for Human Rights, in February 2018 committees from the Justice Ministry began secretly issuing emergency acquisition orders on all land owned by private citizens falling within the boundaries of the NEOM project. This included al-Khuraiba village which was largely inhabited by the Huwaitat tribe. In January 2020, local residents were informed they would be subject to compulsory eviction. The Saudi Arabian authorities sent in security forces to raid the homes of those resisting eviction.

Abdul Rahim al-Huwaiti was a 43-year-old government employee at the Ministry of Finance and a resident of al-Khuraiba village. On 12 April 2020, al-Huwaiti refused to allow a land registry committee into his home. When the authorities arrived at his house, he began filming them and posting videos on social media criticizing the forced eviction of his tribe and describing it as “state terrorism”.

The next morning, Special Forces accompanied by armoured trucks surrounded his home and began firing at his house using heavy weapons, without warning or provocation. Abdul Rahim al-Huwaiti initially returned fire before being killed by Special Forces agents. The Saudi Arabian authorities held his body for over a week until it was released after local pressure.<sup>420</sup>

This pattern of dispossession and repression is matched elsewhere in the country. In Jeddah, Amnesty International’s research has found that authorities demolished buildings in at least 20 neighbourhoods to make way for Vision 2030. Large-scale demolitions affecting more than 558,000 residents have been characterized by inconsistent notice periods and inadequate compensation. Foreign nationals, who make up 47% of those evicted, have been entirely excluded from the compensation scheme.<sup>421</sup>

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420 ALQST, “The Dark Side of NEOM: Expropriation, Expulsion, and Prosecution”, February 2023, <https://alqst.org/uploads/the-dark-side-of-neom-expropriation-expulsion-and-prosecution-en.pdf>

421 Amnesty International, “Saudi Arabia: Mass demolitions and forced evictions marred by violations and discrimination”, 14 June 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/06/saudi-arabia-mass-demolitions-and-forced-evictions-marred-by-violations-and-discrimination/>

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

FIFA's World Cup hosting requirements state that bidding countries must outline how they will respect international standards on the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association. The requirements specify that this includes compliance with FIFA's Statement on human rights defenders and media representatives,<sup>422</sup> the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials,<sup>423</sup> the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials<sup>424</sup> and the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers.<sup>425</sup> In its Human Rights policy, FIFA also commits to "engaging with relevant host-country governments and private-sector entities in its ongoing efforts to minimise any such impact" on these rights.<sup>426</sup>

In Saudi Arabia, the Basic Law of Governance does not include express provisions on the right to freedom of association, and no other national legislation protects the rights to peaceful assembly.<sup>427</sup> Since no independent actors such as human rights organizations, political parties or trade unions are permitted to document abuses and seek solutions, the deep repression of free expression in Saudi Arabia presents a profound challenge to FIFA's ability to understand, assess and address human rights risks.

### TARGETING OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Civil society in Saudi Arabia is subject to severe restrictions and repression. These have intensified over the past decade, initially in response to fears of protests following demonstrations across the region as part of the Arab Spring, and then following the rise of Crown Prince Mohamed bin Salman. Recent years have seen sweeping arrests and imprisonment of journalists, human rights defenders, political activists, writers, clerics and women's rights activists. Virtually all Saudi Arabian human rights defenders are now either in detention without charge, on trial, serving prison terms or in exile.<sup>428</sup>

The Saudi authorities have intensified repression of women's rights activists in recent years, including the detention of high-profile activists who campaigned for reforms.<sup>429</sup> Even following their release, many women's rights activists remain under travel bans and suspended sentences.<sup>430</sup>

In 2017, Saudi Arabia introduced the Law for the Crimes of Terrorism and its Financing which has a broad definition of "terrorism" and has been used to prosecute activists in the Specialized Criminal Court (SCC), established in 2011.<sup>431</sup> The law imposes prison sentences of up to 30 years and even the death penalty for "directly or indirectly" insulting the King or Crown Prince.<sup>432</sup>

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422 FIFA statement on human rights defenders and media representatives, May 2018, <https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/ec85f3de496c6cb6/original/ejf1ecdku14lm2v9zc03-pdf.pdf>

423 Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, 7 September 1990, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/basic-principles-use-force-and-firearms-law-enforcement>

424 Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials, 17 September 1979, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/code-conduct-law-enforcement-officials>

425 ICOCA, "The International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers", <https://icoca.ch/the-code/>

426 FIFA, FIFA's Human Rights Policy – May 2017 edition, <https://img.fifa.com/image/upload/kr05dqyhwr1uhqy2lh6r.pdf>

427 UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), "Freedom of Association in the Middle East and North Africa", April 2022, <https://romena.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/Freedom-of-Association-EN.pdf>

428 Amnesty International, "Saudi Arabia: Repressive draft penal code shatters illusions of progress and reform", March 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/03/saudi-arabia-repressive-draft-penal-code-shatters-illusions-of-progress-and-reform/>

429 Amnesty International, "Saudi Arabia: Women's rights reforms must be followed by release of detained activists", 1 August 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2019/08/saudi-arabia-womens-rights-reforms-must-be-followed-by-release-of-detained-activists/>

430 Amnesty International, "Muzzling Critical Voices", 4 February 2020, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2020/02/saudi-arabia-specialized-criminal-court/>

431 Saudi Arabian Government, "Law Details: Law on Associations and Foundations", <https://laws.boe.gov.sa/Boelaws/Laws/LawDetails/57694209-3eed-46c7-a5d8-a9ed012761d4/1>

432 Amnesty International, "Saudi Arabia: Muzzling critical voices: politicized trials before Saudi Arabia's Specialized Criminal Court" (Index: MDE 23/1633/2020), 6 February 2020, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/1633/2020/en/>

The curtailing of freedom of expression extends to the digital sphere. The Saudi Arabian authorities exercise extensive control over the internet, both in terms of what content is available and what users are allowed to say. Authorities block a wide range of websites under rules prohibiting content deemed harmful, illegal, anti-Islamic or offensive. The 2007 Anti-Cybercrime Law criminalizes “producing something that harms public order, religious values, public morals, the sanctity of private life, or authoring, sending, or storing it via an information network”.<sup>433</sup> In 2023, Amnesty International documented an escalation in the authorities’ crackdown on individuals using online spaces to voice their opinions, including those who are not prominent activists. Human rights defenders in Saudi Arabia have been sentenced to some of the longest prison terms the organization has documented for peaceful expression.<sup>434</sup>

In addition to widespread self-censorship as a result of the threat of imprisonment, critical voices are removed from online spaces and human rights defenders who have been conditionally released face restrictions on their freedom of expression, including online. For example, members of the Indigenous Huwaitat tribe resisting evictions had their social media accounts deleted after criticizing the government.<sup>435</sup>

Saudi Arabian citizens have been handed extremely lengthy prison sentences based on criticism of the government. Salma al-Shehab, a Saudi doctoral student at the University of Leeds in the UK, was sentenced to 27 years in prison based on her Twitter activity.<sup>436</sup> Nourah bin Saeed al-Qahtani was given a 45-year prison sentence for “using the internet to tear the [country’s] social fabric”.<sup>437</sup> Mohammad al-Ghamdi, whose brother is a Saudi critic living in exile, was sentenced to death for retweeting critics of the Saudi government; his two accounts had a combined 10 followers.<sup>438</sup>

Online censorship is also extended to foreign nationals. Ahmad Ali Abdelkader, a Sudanese media figure based in Saudi Arabia, was handed a four-year prison sentence in June 2021 for “insulting the state’s institutions and symbols”.<sup>439</sup> Further, in October 2022, the SCC sentenced 10 Egyptian Nubian men to between 10 and 18 years in prison under the counter-terror law on charges which included establishing an association without a licence and posting on social media for organizing a peaceful remembrance event.<sup>440</sup>

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433 Human Rights Watch, “Saudi Arabia: Assault on Online Expression”, 22 November 2014, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/11/22/saudi-arabia-assault-online-expression>

434 Amnesty International, “Saudi Arabia: Alarming crackdown on online expression”, 28 February 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/02/saudi-arabia-alarming-crackdown-on-online-expression>

435 Al Jazeera, “Saudi forces kill man who refused to give up property: Activists”, 15 April 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/4/15/saudi-forces-kill-man-who-refused-to-give-up-property-activists>

436 Amnesty International, “Saudi Arabia: Further information: Release woman sentenced to 27 years for tweets: Salma al-Shehab (Index: MDE 23/6643/2023)”, 3 April 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/6643/2023/en/>

437 Dawn Mena, “Saudi Arabia: Government sentences woman to 45 years for her tweets”, 30 August 2022, <https://dawnmena.org/saudi-arabia-government-sentences-woman-to-45-years-for-her-tweets/>

438 Amnesty International, “Saudi Arabia: Drop ludicrous conviction and death sentence against man convicted over social media posts”, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/08/saudi-arabia-drop-ludicrous-conviction-and-death-sentence-against-man-convicted-over-social-media-posts/>

439 Human Rights Watch, “Saudi Arabia: Sudanese media personality jailed over critical tweets”, 27 July 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/07/27/saudi-arabia-sudanese-media-personality-jailed-critical-tweets>

440 Amnesty International, “Saudi Arabia: Quash sentences for Egyptian Nubians who organized peaceful remembrance event”, October 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/10/saudi-arabia-quash-sentences-for-egyptian-nubians-who-organized-peaceful-remembrance-event/>





## CASE STUDY

### **SALMA AL-SHEHAB SERVING 27 YEARS IN PRISON AND MANAHEL AL-OTAIBI RISKING A SIMILAR FATE FOR SUPPORTING WOMEN'S RIGHTS**

In March 2022 the SCC sentenced Salma al-Shehab, an academic and mother of two, to six years in prison for terrorism and cybercrimes. The charges arose from tweets she published in support of women's rights activists, including Loujain al-Hathloul who was jailed in 2018 and later released in 2021. The court found Salma al-Shehab guilty on charges of "supporting those who seek to disrupt public order, destabilize security and the stability of the state" and publishing tweets that "disturb public order, destabilize the security of society and the stability of the state." She was sentenced by the SCC to 27 years in prison followed by a 27-year travel ban.<sup>441</sup>

According to court documents reviewed by Amnesty International, Salma al-Shehab was detained in solitary confinement for 285 days before she was brought to trial, in violation of international fair trial standards and Saudi Arabia's own Law on Criminal Procedures. She had no access to legal representation throughout her pre-trial detention, including during interrogations.

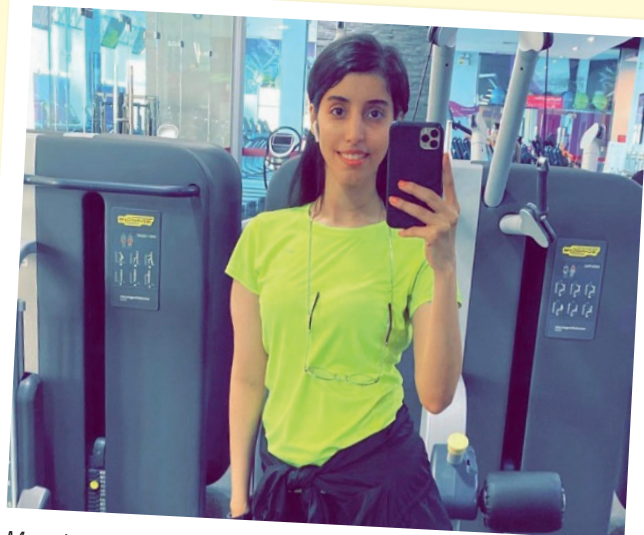


*Salma al-Shehab. © Private*

441 Amnesty International, "Saudi Arabia: Further information: Release woman sentenced to 27 years for tweets: Salma al- Shehab" (Index: MDE 23/6643/2023), 3 April 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/6643/2023/en/>

In another shocking case, Manahel al-Otaibi, a fitness instructor, blogger and human rights defender, faces trial before the SCC for posting photos of herself on Snapchat in a mall wearing western clothes without the abaya (a traditional robe), as well as for social media posts in support of women's rights and calling for the removal of Saudi Arabia's repressive male guardianship laws.

According to court documents reviewed by Amnesty International, the Riyadh Criminal Court examined Manahel al-Otaibi's case in January 2023 and referred it to the SCC because her actions "violate religious principles and social values and disrupt public order and undermine the security of the society". The charges against her include "publishing and spreading content that contains committing public sins and inciting individuals and girls in society to renounce religious principles," in violation of the Anti-Cybercrime Law.<sup>442</sup>



*Manahel al-Otaibi. © Private*

## REPRESSION OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA

No independent media exists in Saudi Arabia and journalists who criticize the government face censorship, repression and imprisonment both inside and outside the country. In one of the most egregious cases, Saudi agents murdered the dissident Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018 in the Saudi consulate in Turkey. Authorities in Saudi Arabia closed Jamal Khashoggi's case in 2019 after eight people were convicted in a closed trial which lacked credibility and transparency.<sup>443</sup> A report released by the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions in June 2019 concluded that Jamal Khashoggi was the victim of "a pre-meditated extrajudicial killing for which the state of Saudi Arabia is responsible." Amnesty International and other organizations continue to call for an international, independent and impartial investigation into Khashoggi's killing to identify all those involved in the crime, however high their rank or status, and to ensure that those suspected of responsibility are brought to justice in fair trials.<sup>444</sup>

442 Amnesty International, "Saudi Arabia: Release forcibly disappeared woman facing trial for supporting women's rights online", February 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/02/saudi-arabia-release-forcibly-disappeared-woman-facing-trial-for-supporting-womens-rights-online/>

443 Amnesty International, "Saudi Arabia: Joint Open Letter to States Monitoring the Jamal Khashoggi Trial" (Index: MDE 23/0157/2019), 8 April 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/0157/2019/en/>

444 Amnesty International, "Saudi Arabia: Still no justice for state-sanctioned murder of Jamal Khashoggi five years on", 29 September 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/09/saudi-arabia-still-no-justice-for-state-sanctioned-murder-of-jamal-khashoggi-five-years-on/>

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 35 journalists have been arrested between 2012 and 2024 in Saudi Arabia. Of these, 10 were arrested in 2019 as part of a wave of detentions targeting journalists and bloggers who had written about a range of cultural, economic, political and social issues and who in many cases had not been active for years.<sup>445</sup> According to Reporters Without Borders' 2024 World Press Freedom Index, "Independent media are non-existent in Saudi Arabia, and Saudi journalists live under heavy surveillance, even when abroad. The number of imprisoned journalists and bloggers has tripled since 2017."<sup>446</sup>

## PROHIBITION OF PUBLIC PROTESTS

The Penal Law for Crimes of Terrorism and Its Financing criminalizes acts of "disturbing public order." Those who have protested have paid harsh penalties. In a single day in March 2022, the Saudi authorities executed 81 Saudi and non-Saudi citizens – over half from the country's Shia minority – in a marked escalation of the authorities' use of the death penalty.<sup>447</sup> Many of those executed were also convicted of charges such as "disrupting the social fabric and national cohesion" and "participating in and inciting sit-ins and protests".

Mohammad al-Shakhouri was one of those executed, following his arrest for taking part in anti-government protests. During his trial at the SCC, he said that he had no access to legal representation during his detention and interrogation, his family was only allowed to visit eight months after his arrest, and he had been subjected to torture. He lost most of his teeth after security officers repeatedly punched him in the face. Another man executed on the same day, As'ad Ali, had been sentenced to death by the SCC on 30 January 2021 for similar offences. He told the court he had suffered physical and emotional torture while being interrogated in solitary confinement, his "confession" had been extracted through torture and he had been denied medical treatment.<sup>448</sup>

The severe limitations on freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly that are currently in place in Saudi Arabia would make it almost impossible for any individual or organization to safely express critical views or hold demonstrations related to the 2034 World Cup. Despite Saudi Arabia's claims to be reforming, Amnesty International's 2024 analysis of a leaked draft penal code shows that there is no imminent hope for positive change: the draft would entrench the criminalization of the rights to freedom of expression, thought and religion and would fail to protect the right to freedom of peaceful assembly.<sup>449</sup>

## PRIVACY AND SURVEILLANCE

The Saudi Arabian authorities have adopted new technologies to repress freedom of expression, hacking the online accounts of government critics and dissidents, intercepting communications between activists and human rights organizations, and targeting critics abroad with malicious software. Such technologies could be used in connection with the 2034 World Cup, including in relation to journalists, human rights defenders and other groups targeted by the authorities. The extensive deployment of "smart city" technologies in Saudi Arabia, for example in NEOM, may also risk indiscriminate mass surveillance, which is especially troubling in a context with limited legal safeguards for privacy, data protection and freedom of expression.<sup>450</sup>

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445 Committee to Protect Journalists, "Database on attacks on the press, Saudi Arabia", 1992-2024, [https://cpj.org/data/location/?cc\\_fips=SA&start\\_year=1992&end\\_year=2024&report-builder-type=year&status%5B%5D=Imprisoned](https://cpj.org/data/location/?cc_fips=SA&start_year=1992&end_year=2024&report-builder-type=year&status%5B%5D=Imprisoned)

446 Reporters Without Borders, "2024 World Press Freedom Index", 3 May 2024, <https://rsf.org/en/country/saudi-arabia>

447 Amnesty International, "Saudi Arabia: Mass execution of 81 men shows urgent need to abolish the death penalty", March 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/03/saudi-arabia-mass-execution-of-81-men-shows-urgent-need-to-abolish-the-death-penalty/>

448 *Ibid*

449 Amnesty International, "Saudi Arabia: Repressive draft penal code shatters illusions of progress and reform", March 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/03/saudi-arabia-repressive-draft-penal-code-shatters-illusions-of-progress-and-reform/>

450 Amnesty International, "Assessment of human rights risks in Saudi Arabia for businesses and investors" (Index: MDE 23/3321/2020), 9 November 2020, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/MDE2333212020ENGLISH.pdf>

Saudi Arabia has put pressure on and offered bribes to employees at tech companies such as Twitter (now X) to reveal the identities of critics of the Saudi Arabian authorities, leading to spying convictions in the USA for employees found to be complicit in this practice.<sup>451</sup> In 2018, an Amnesty International staff member received a message which contained a link purporting to be about a protest outside the Saudi Arabian embassy in Washington. If clicked, the link would have secretly installed malware, allowing the sender to obtain near-total control of the phone.<sup>452</sup>

## CASE STUDY

### ABDULRAHMAN AL-SADHAN

On 12 March 2018, security agents from the Presidency of State Security arrested Abdulrahman al-Sadhan at his workplace at the Red Crescent Society in Riyadh. He was charged under anti-cybercrime and counter-terror laws based on his satirical tweets critical of the country's economic policies. Saudi authorities accused al-Sadhan of “funding terrorism” and “support for a terrorist entity (ISIS) and advocating for it” among other charges. In April 2018, the SCC handed down a prison sentence of 20 years, followed by a 20-year travel ban.<sup>453</sup>

The “evidence” brought against Abdulrahman al-Sadhan consisted of over 200 pages of tweets extracted from the satirical X/Twitter accounts and a two-page document containing “confessions” that his family believes were made under duress. He had been forced to sign and stamp the “evidence” documents.

Abdulrahman al-Sadhan's sister says that someone close to an FBI investigation told the family that his account is believed to be on a list of people whose identities were leaked to the Saudi government by spies planted in X/Twitter.<sup>454</sup>

The US Department of Justice charged three Saudi Arabian nationals in 2019 for accessing the private information of Twitter users critical of the Saudi Arabian government. Two of those charged were Twitter employees, who are alleged to have used private Twitter data to identify and locate users critical of the regime. In 2023, al-Sadhan's family members filed a lawsuit against X/Twitter accusing the company of helping Saudi Arabia commit grave human rights violations.<sup>455</sup>

451 Wired, “How Saudi Arabia Infiltrated Twitter”, 1 September 2020, <https://wired.com/story/mohammed-bin-salman-twitter-investigation/>; see also, NBC News, “Former Twitter employee sentenced to three years in prison for spying for Saudi Arabia”, 14 December 2022, <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/security/former-twitter-employee-sentenced-three-years-prison-spying-saudi-arab-rcna61384>

452 Amnesty International, “Amnesty International among targets of NSO-powered campaign”, August 2018, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2018/08/amnesty-international-among-targets-of-nso-powered-campaign/>

453 Amnesty International, “Saudi Arabia : Release aid worker sentenced to 20 years” (Index: MDE 23/4072/2021), 5 May 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/4072/2021/en/>

454 Associated Press, “The Pegasus Project”, July 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/technology-joe-biden-middle-east-business-jamal-khashoggi-6d2ee8dcfd7140928948886d8df33d1>

455 Amnesty International, “Release aid worker sentenced to 20 years” (Index: MDE 23/4072/2021), 5 May 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/4072/2021/en/>; see also The Guardian, “Twitter 'buried' Saudi Arabia's alleged human rights abuses”, 4 September 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/sep/04/twitter-saudi-arabia-human-rights-abuses>



Saudi Arabia has faced legal action over the use of Pegasus spyware to target and hack the phones of women's rights activists, political dissidents, journalists and their family members.<sup>456</sup> This has included both critics based in Saudi Arabia and those now in exile such as the family members of Jamal Khashoggi.<sup>457</sup> A report by Meta also identifies customers in Saudi Arabia of another spyware firm known as Cytox.<sup>458</sup>

As a result of widespread surveillance and spying allegations, as well as the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, in 2018 the European Parliament approved a resolution calling for an embargo on sales of surveillance equipment to Saudi Arabia.<sup>459</sup> According to Freedom House, "telecommunications companies likely retain and intercept customer data for use by law enforcement agencies and state authorities". This information can then be used for arrest, imprisonment and in some documented cases, torture.<sup>460</sup>

Saudi Arabia has faced legal action over the use of

## PEGASUS SPYWARE

TO TARGET AND HACK THE PHONES OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTIVISTS,  
POLITICAL DISSIDENTS, JOURNALISTS AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS



456 Reuters, "How a Saudi woman's iPhone revealed hacking around the world", 17 February 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/technology/how-saudi-womans-iphone-revealed-hacking-around-world-2022-02-17/>

457 Amnesty International, "Massive data leak reveals Israeli NSO Group's spyware used to target activists, journalists, and political leaders globally", 19 July 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/07/the-pegasus-project/>

458 Facebook, "Threat Report on the Surveillance-for-Hire Industry", December 2021, <https://about.fb.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Threat-Report-on-the-Surveillance-for-Hire-Industry.pdf>

459 European Parliament, "Resolution on the situation of human rights in Saudi Arabia", 24 October 2018, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-8-2018-0498\\_EN.html?redirect](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-8-2018-0498_EN.html?redirect)

460 Freedom House, "Saudi Arabia", [https://freedomhouse.org/country/saudi-arabia/freedom-net/2022#footnote4\\_k8k05tk](https://freedomhouse.org/country/saudi-arabia/freedom-net/2022#footnote4_k8k05tk)

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO FIFA AND BIDDING STATES

There can be no doubt that the potential impact of hosting the FIFA Men's World Cup is enormous, involving hundreds of thousands of workers, billions of dollars of investment in infrastructure projects and the hosting of over one million foreign visitors. FIFA's claim that five billion people engaged with the 2022 tournament makes the World Cup the most watched sporting on the planet, providing a huge platform for host states to project their image and pursue their goals. It is also FIFA's primary source of revenue, with the 2026 edition projected to generate over US\$11 billion for the sports body, largely through corporate sponsorships, broadcasting rights, ticket sales and hospitality.

The scale and nature of the FIFA Men's World Cup carries major human rights risks that must be addressed and significant opportunities that should be seized. In theory at least, FIFA has recognized this through its human rights policy, the formal bidding requirements for the 2030 and 2034 tournaments, and its "expectation" that bids show how they will comply with international human rights law and standards as well as the range of FIFA policies on labour rights, discrimination, the right to housing, freedom of expression, policing and other issues. Through the bidding requirements, FIFA also stresses that such requirements are "fully binding obligations" and that it "is entitled, and reserves the right, to determine that such bid has materially failed to meet the minimum requirements to host the Competition". Whether this is a process that will lead to meaningful or adequate action, however, remains seriously in doubt. At the time of writing, just one month before bids are due to be submitted, Amnesty International is unaware of any consultation with civil society organizations for either bid, despite asking FIFA for information and the opportunity to participate.

The proposed hosting arrangements for the **2030 FIFA World Cup** raise a variety of significant human rights risks and environmental concerns that must be proactively addressed. Ensuring respect for international labour standards for all workers, including migrant workers, will be essential in all of the bidding countries, in both the service and construction sectors, as will structured dialogue with trade unions. The continued prevalence of sexism, homophobia and racism in football and broader society in all host countries shows that strategies will be needed to address discrimination, violence and barriers to reporting, both where positive laws exist and where discrimination continues to be embedded in legislation. The risk of exacerbating Spain and Portugal's housing crises must be anticipated and addressed, as must the risk of forced evictions to make way for major infrastructure in Morocco. Freedom of expression of everyone connected to the World Cups must be upheld, requiring legislative changes, the release of human rights defenders and guarantees of safety and protection. All countries must address their excessive use of force used by security forces, including in relation to football fans, and prohibit the use of invasive spyware and biometric mass surveillance.

The risks associated with **2034 FIFA World Cup** are of another magnitude and severity entirely. The Saudi government, working with the ILO and independent trade unions, will need to undertake large-scale reform of its labour laws and practices in order to prevent widespread abuse of hundreds of thousands of migrant workers' rights. Significant legal reforms and guarantees of protection will be required to prevent systemic discrimination of women, racialized groups, religious minorities and

LGBTI people. Rigorous safeguards will be needed to protect people from forced eviction in the face of enormous infrastructure projects. Repressive laws restricting freedom of expression – backed by unfair trials and the death penalty – will need deep reform, and credible guarantees must be provided to human rights defenders, civil society organizations, journalists and trade unions that they will be able to operate independently and safely. Human rights defenders should be released. Biometric mass surveillance and the use of the invasive spyware will need to be prohibited.

While any country should have the opportunity to bid to host a sporting event, ultimately it is hard to see how Saudi Arabia could host a World Cup in line with international standards and FIFA's policies while the kafala system remains in place, minorities are persecuted and any dissenting voices are crushed. Fundamental reforms are needed, as well as actions that demonstrate commitment and build trust, such as the release of human rights defenders. If FIFA's human rights commitments are to mean something, the sports body and the Saudi Arabian authorities must tell the world what will change and when, in order to deliver dignity over exploitation, inclusion over discrimination and freedom over repression.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO FIFA ON THE BIDDING PROCESS

To ensure that FIFA upholds its own statutes, human rights policies and bidding requirements in the awarding of the 2030 and 2034 World Cups, FIFA must deliver a transparent and effective bidding in line with its own policies to ensure human rights are respected and promoted. To achieve this, FIFA should:

- Ensure that each bid commissions a genuinely independent human rights risk assessment that includes meaningful consultation with potentially affected stakeholders and develops a rigorous human rights strategy that outlines how key risks will be addressed by states, FIFA and tournament organizing bodies.
- Publish in full the independent human rights risk assessment, human rights strategy and bid book before FIFA's evaluation process begins, and allow for open consultation with other stakeholders, in order to uphold commitments to transparency and the practices of previous processes.
- Agree binding commitments with bidding countries to address human rights risks and adverse human rights impacts before awarding either tournament, including a clear plan of action with specific measurable targets that if not reached can ultimately lead to withdrawal of hosting rights.
- Engage in meaningful stakeholder engagement with all impacted groups before, during and after the World Cups are awarded, leading to the development and implementation of binding commitments to address identified human rights risks.
- Ensure that FIFA's Human Rights Sub-Committee has a role in evaluating and scrutinizing the human rights strategies proposed by bidding countries.
- Be ready and willing *not* to award the World Cup if any bidding nation is unable to develop a substantive plan with measurable targets that transparently demonstrates how it will ensure respect rights in relation to the tournament, across all relevant internationally recognized human rights.

# RECOMMENDATIONS TO FIFA AND NATIONAL AUTHORITIES ON HUMAN RIGHTS AGREEMENTS

Before awarding the World Cup hosting rights, FIFA and national authorities of potential host states should agree on binding commitments to address key human rights risks in each country, including to:

- Ratify outstanding human rights treaties and ILO conventions, as well as remove reservations that are incompatible with the object and purpose of treaties already ratified, to give greater credibility to public commitments to uphold human rights.
- Bring labour laws and practices in line with the ILO's fundamental Conventions, including for migrant workers, and ensure they are enforced through an adequate inspection regime. Ensure that these rights are upheld in all supply chains for tournament delivery, merchandise and services provided to participants and spectators.
- Establish structured social dialogue with the representative and independent trade unions and employer organizations to ensure labour rights and decent work in delivering the tournament, especially for migrant workers and other populations in vulnerable situations.
- Develop comprehensive strategies with national authorities, football associations, players' unions, fans' representatives and other impacted groups to address all forms of discrimination that could be faced in relation to the tournaments, including reforms to discriminatory laws and guarantees of protection.
- Implement protections against forced evictions in line with international standards and develop strategies, including through the regulation of short-term rentals and other methods, to ensure that the increased demand for tourist accommodation does not impact access to affordable housing for residents in host cities.
- Reform laws, policies and practices in line with international law and standards on the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, with guarantees that human rights defenders, civil society organizations, trade unions and journalists can operate freely without fear of reprisal.
- Respect the right to freedom of expression of fans within stadiums, provided that the expression does not constitute prohibited speech under international law.
- Ensure that security forces are properly trained, in accordance with the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, to work with football crowds and respond effectively to incidents without resorting to excessive force. This should include in relation to the use of specific less-lethal weapons and a prohibition on the use of rubber bullets to disperse gatherings.
- Ensure safeguards on the right to privacy for all, including prohibitions on the use of biometric mass surveillance, facial recognition technology and highly invasive spyware.
- Develop rigorous systems to monitor and enforce the implementation of human rights commitments, including grievance mechanisms and access to effective remedy in response to violations and abuses.



# SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS TO BIDDING COUNTRIES

Amnesty International provides below a series of recommendations to potential host countries in order to help ensure the tournaments are delivered in line with internationally recognized human rights law and standards and are not associated with adverse impacts. The recommendations do not seek to address every human rights issue in the country, only those with some relation to the preparation and delivery of the respective World Cups. Detailed plans should be developed in each area following meaningful consultation with rights holders, fans' groups, players' unions, human rights organizations, trade unions and other stakeholders. Most recommendations are also relevant to contexts far beyond the World Cup and would leave a positive human rights legacy beyond the tournament.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO MOROCCAN, PORTUGUESE AND SPANISH AUTHORITIES

Human rights laws and standards

- All bidding countries should ratify outstanding human rights treaties and ILO fundamental instruments.
  - **Morocco** should ratify, at the very least:
    - The Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention (C087), the Protocol to the Forced Labour Convention (P029) and the Occupational Safety and Health Convention (C155).
    - The African Charter for Human and Peoples' Rights.
  - **Portugal and Spain** should ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and implement the recommendations received by UN and Council of Europe human rights mechanisms.
- **Portugal and Spain** should develop and align national due diligence legislation with international standards by transposing the recently passed EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) into domestic law. They should also consider applying due diligence requirements to the full value chain.
- **Morocco** should develop national due diligence legislation in line with international business and human rights standards to ensure that all companies are required to assess and address human rights risks across the full value chain.

## LABOUR RIGHTS

### All bidding countries should:

- Ensure the enforcement of the highest standards of labour rights without discrimination, in line with ILO conventions, at all World Cup-related projects.
- Ensure that these rights are respected for all workers, including migrant workers, and in all supply chains for tournament delivery, licenced merchandise and services provided to participants and spectators.
- Establish structured social dialogue with representative and independent trade unions and employer organizations to ensure labour rights and decent work.
- Increase the number of labour inspectors to at least meet ILO benchmarks and ensure an adequate inspection system.
- Take comprehensive measures to address racial discrimination at work in accordance with the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), as well as addressing violence and harassment in the world of work in line with ILO Convention 190.

### Morocco should:

- Ensure proposed health and safety legislation is in line with ILO Conventions on Health and Safety.
- Remove all legal and practical barriers to the rights to organize and collective bargaining, in accordance with the ILO Conventions (C87 and C98).
- Prioritize the elimination of the worst forms of child labour in all sectors of the economy, including all supply chains related to the World Cup, and work towards the effective abolition of all child labour (ILO Conventions 138 and 182).
- Take steps to implement the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, issued in May 2023.

### Portugal and Spain should:

- Review the Opinions of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights on Protecting migrant workers from exploitation, as well as the European Committee on Social Rights, with a view to implementing their recommendations.

## HOUSING AND LAND

### All bidding countries should:

Undertake a comprehensive impact assessment of the hosting of the World Cup on the Right to Adequate Housing of residents, including migrants, in all host cities.

- Ensure that World Cup-related infrastructure projects do not result in forced evictions, and guarantee protection and promotion of the right to adequate housing as a priority throughout the planning and preparation process.
- Ensure that any evictions, and compensation and resettlement measures, comply with international human rights law and standards, including the UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-Based Evictions and Displacement.
- Ensure that the increased demand for tourist accommodation for the World Cup does not impact on access to affordable housing for residents in host cities, including through the regulation of short-term rentals.

## DISCRIMINATION

### All bidding countries should:

- In collaboration with fans' groups, players' unions and representatives of affected communities (including women and girls and racialized and LGBTI people), develop a strategy to combat sexist, homophobic and intersectional discrimination and protect people, including fans and players, from verbal and physical harassment and violence related to the tournament and beyond.
- Tackle systemic racism, sexism and gender, racial and intersectional discrimination faced by migrant workers and racialized groups, and ensure their human rights without discrimination.
- Firmly condemn discriminatory, sexist, homophobic and racist rhetoric, and reiterate the right of racialized people and people of all genders, including athletes, to be free from discrimination.
- Promptly, effectively and impartially investigate any instances of discrimination and physical violence on grounds of race, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation and sex characteristics. Any investigations must establish any discriminatory motive associated with those attacks.

### Morocco should:

- Repeal laws that criminalize sexuality and reproduction and any other laws that discriminate against groups and individuals on grounds of gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation or sex characteristics. This includes revising or abolishing legislative provisions that target individuals based on these grounds.

# FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

## All bidding countries should

- Ensure that no one connected to the tournament is subject to criminal prosecution for any opinions and views expressed, online or offline, before or during the World Cup.
- Ensure that laws governing the right to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly are applied in accordance with state obligations under the ICCPR and that any restrictions imposed on the exercise of that right is in line with the limitations permitted under the ICCPR.
- Respect the right to freedom of expression of fans within stadiums, provided that the expression does not constitute prohibited speech under international law. The relevant regulatory authorities must refrain from imposing blanket bans or other unnecessary or disproportionate restrictions against certain forms of expression such as flags, banners or chants. Where any restriction is to be imposed, it should be clearly prescribed and must be non-discriminatory, necessary, proportionate and aimed at protecting a specified legitimate interest.

## Morocco should:

- Repeal laws which infringe the right to free expression, including those which criminalize criticism of the monarchy or state institutions, or question territorial integrity.
- Ensure political speech that does not constitute prohibited speech under international law is not criminalized, including supporting the self-determination of Saharawi.
- Immediately release journalists, bloggers and human rights defenders who have been imprisoned solely for their expression. This should include Saida Alami, Mohamed Ziane, Fatima Karim, Omar Radi, Souleimene Raissouni and Taoufik Bouachrine.

## Portugal should:

- Review Decree-law 406/74 regulating the right to public assembly and demonstration to ensure its compliance with international laws and standards and the Portuguese Constitution.
- Ensure that notification requirements are treated only as a notice of the intent to hold a protest and not a request for permission, nor as grounds to determine that an assembly is unlawful or to allow for its dispersal. Any notification process must be transparent, free of charge, coherent, non-bureaucratic and non-discriminatory.
- Ensure that any restriction on civil disobedience actions is in accordance with international law and standards relating to the rights to freedom of conscience, expression and peaceful assembly.

## Spain should:

- Bring the Criminal Code in line with international human rights law by repealing provisions that disproportionately restrict freedom of expression. This includes repealing the crimes of “glorifying terrorism”, “offences against religious beliefs”, “insults to the Crown” and “insults to State institutions”.
- Bring the Public Security Act in line with international human rights law by eliminating articles relating to disrespect for law enforcement officials and modifying vaguely defined articles relating to resistance and disobedience to the police.



## FAN SAFETY AND POLICING

### All bidding countries should:

- Provide comprehensive training, including through dialogue with supporter associations of participating teams, to all security personnel involved in the tournament on engagement with fans, non-violent de-escalation, crowd safety and cultural sensitivity.
- Ensure that security forces are properly trained, in accordance with the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, to work with football crowds and respond effectively to incidents without resorting to unnecessary and excessive force.
- Ensure law enforcement officials are properly trained on international standards on the use of force and firearms, and on the appropriate use of specific less-lethal weapons such as teargas, batons, kinetic impact projectiles and water cannon.
- Explicitly prohibit the use of rubber bullets to disperse gatherings due to their inaccuracy and the high risk of serious injury associated with their use.
- Take steps to prevent racial discrimination and dismantle racial and discriminatory policing.
- Ensure all incidents involving the use of force by the police are subjected to prompt, independent, impartial, effective and thorough investigations. Where violations are found to have been committed, ensure that victims have access to effective remedies and individual police officers are criminally prosecuted.

## PRIVACY AND SURVEILLANCE:

### All bidding countries should:

- Enforce a ban on the sale, transfer, export or use of highly invasive spyware, and enforce a moratorium on the purchase, sale, transfer, export and use of all spyware until a human rights regulatory framework that governs surveillance in line with international human rights standards is implemented.
- Ban the use, development, production, sale and export of remote biometric or facial recognition technology for mass surveillance.

# RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SAUDI ARABIAN AUTHORITIES

## HUMAN RIGHTS LAWS AND STANDARDS

- Ratify without reservation outstanding international human rights treaties including the ICCPR and its Optional Protocols, the ICESCR and its Optional Protocol and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.
- Ratify ILO Conventions 87 and 98 related to freedom of association and collective bargaining, and Conventions 155 and 187 related to health and safety.
- Withdraw reservations that are incompatible with the object and purpose of ratified treaties, including reservations on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
- Develop national due diligence legislation in line with international business and human rights standards to ensure that all companies are required to assess and address human rights risks across the full value chain.

## LABOUR RIGHTS

- Reform labour laws and policy to ensure compliance with international human rights law and standards, in partnership with the ILO.
- Introduce legislation to fully abolish the kafala system by:
  - Removing all requirements for foreign nationals to obtain the permission of their current employer before moving jobs.
  - Removing all requirements for foreign nationals to notify or obtain the permission of their current employer and the government in order to leave the country.
  - Decriminalizing “absconding” and refraining from detaining migrant workers for having “run away” and, in the meantime, penalizing employers who file such cases as a retaliatory measure.
  - Taking steps to further reduce migrant workers' dependence on their employers, including for their entry into, exit from and their legal presence in the country.
- Ensure both Saudi and foreign nationals in all occupations are covered by the national minimum wage.
- Remove restrictions on freedom of association and collective bargaining, and respect the right of all workers, including foreign nationals, to form and join trade unions.
- Put in place comprehensive measures to protect migrant workers' health and safety, including in their accommodation and workplace, and ensure that they can access health care without discrimination.
- Ensure there are sufficient and well-trained labour inspectors, at least in line with ILO benchmarks.
- Conduct regular and unannounced inspections of World Cup-related worksites and labour accommodation to ensure they are in line with national and international law and standards.

- Publish extensive, disaggregated data related to the deaths of migrant workers, and commit to properly investigating underlying causes of migrant workers' deaths with a view to strengthening health and safety protections. Such data should be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, national origin, gender and other characteristics to ensure compliance with international obligations under ICERD.
- Provide effective grievance mechanisms to ensure remedy is provided to all migrant workers who are subjected to labour abuse and exploitation while working on projects related to the World Cup.
- Take comprehensive measures to address systemic racism and racial and intersectional discrimination embedded in migration policies and prevent racial discrimination against migrant workers.

## HOUSING AND LAND

- Conduct and publish independent assessments on the site of each proposed World Cup stadium and related infrastructure and guarantee that these developments do not infringe the right to adequate housing of local populations.
- End the use of forced evictions and practices of intimidation and violence against local populations including for people inhabiting sites intended for World Cup-connected development.
- Ensure that any evictions, and compensation and resettlement measures, comply with international human rights law and standards, including the UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-Based Evictions and Displacement. This should include those forcibly displaced from the site of NEOM.

## DISCRIMINATION

- Review, amend or repeal laws that discriminate against women, including the Personal Status Law, to bring them in line with international human rights standards.
- Repeal laws that criminalize consensual sexual relationships between adults, including same-sex relationships and sex outside marriage and zina, as well as any other laws that discriminate against individuals on grounds of their gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation and sex characteristics.
- Repeal anti-Shia legislation and introduce legal provisions to guarantee the human rights of Saudi Arabia's Shia population, including their freedom of religion and expression.
- Enact legislation explicitly prohibiting direct and indirect discrimination in line with Article 1 of ICERD.
- Tackle systemic racism, sexism and racial, gender and intersectional discrimination faced by migrant workers, religious minorities, and racialized groups, and ensure their human rights without any discrimination.
- Firmly condemn discriminatory, sexist, homophobic and racist rhetoric, and reiterate the right of racialized people and people of diverse genders and sexualities, including athletes and all fans, to be free from discrimination.
- Promptly, effectively and impartially investigate any instances of discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation or sex characteristics, and physical violence against racialized people and people of diverse genders and sexualities. Any investigations must establish any discriminatory motive associated with those attacks.

## **FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY**

- Reform national legislation to expressly guarantee the right to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, in line with international human rights law.
- Amend or repeal legislation that is used to restrict freedom of expression, including the Law of Combating Crimes of Terrorism and its Financing, Anti-Cybercrime Law, Anti-Harassment Law and Law of Protection from Abuse. Amend the draft penal code to bring it into line with international law.
- Permit the establishment and operation of independent Saudi Arabian media, civil society organizations and human rights monitors, and grant access to World Cup construction and development sites.
- Refrain from harassing, prosecuting and imposing excessive and disproportionate penalties against anyone, including Saudi Arabian and international human rights defenders, who exercise their freedom of expression and right of peaceful assembly.
- Immediately release all prisoners of conscience held solely for expressing their views, including Manahel al-Otaibi, Salma al-Shehab, Mohammad al-Ghamdi, Mohammed al-Qahtani and Abdulrahman al-Sadhan.
- Respect the right to freedom of expression within stadiums, provided that the expression does not constitute prohibited speech under international law.
- Refrain from imposing blanket bans or other unnecessary or disproportionate restrictions against certain forms of expression such as flags, banners or chants. Where any restriction is to be imposed, it should be clearly prescribed, and must be non-discriminatory, necessary, proportionate and aimed at protecting a specified legitimate interest.

## **FAN SAFETY AND POLICING**

- Provide comprehensive training, including through dialogue with support associations of participating teams, to all police officers involved in the tournament on engagement with fans, non-violent de-escalation and cultural sensitivity towards foreign fans.
- Ensure that security forces are properly trained, in accordance with the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, to work with football crowds and respond effectively to incidents without resorting to excessive force.
- Ensure police are properly trained on international standards on the use of force and firearms, and on the appropriate use of specific less-lethal weapons such as teargas and kinetic impact projectiles.
- Explicitly prohibit the use of rubber bullets to disperse gatherings due to their inaccuracy and the high risk of serious injury associated with their use.
- Take steps to prevent racial discrimination and dismantle racial and discriminatory policing.
- Ensure all incidents involving the use of force by the police are subjected to prompt, independent, impartial, effective and thorough investigations. Where violations are found to have been committed, ensure that victims have access to effective remedies and that individual police officers are criminally prosecuted, including by incorporating independent mechanisms for investigating policing.



## **CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND USE OF THE DEATH PENALTY**

- Impose an immediate moratorium on death sentences and executions, with a view to abolishing the use of the death penalty before the tournament.
- Ensure that those arrested and detained are not subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment. Where allegations of torture or ill-treatment have been made, prompt, independent and impartial, transparent, effective and thorough investigations must be initiated and those found culpable prosecuted in a fair trial.

## **PRIVACY AND SURVEILLANCE**


- Enforce a ban on the sale, transfer, export or use of highly invasive spyware, and enforce a moratorium on the purchase, sale, transfer, export and use of all spyware until a human rights regulatory framework that governs surveillance in line with international human rights standards is implemented.
- Ban the use, development, production, sale and export of remote biometric or facial recognition technology for mass surveillance.






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# PLAYING A DANGEROUS GAME?

## HUMAN RIGHTS RISKS LINKED TO THE 2030 AND 2034 FIFA WORLD CUPS

History shows that the World Cup can be a source of dignity or exploitation, inclusion or discrimination, freedom or repression. The choice of which countries host the 2030 and 2034 FIFA Men's World Cups is one of the most significant decisions that football's global governing body can make. Hundreds of thousands of workers will be involved in delivering the tournaments, over a million fans will travel across borders to watch matches, billions more will watch it on TV or online, and enormous sums will be spent on major infrastructure projects. Host countries will gain huge visibility and prestige, while FIFA's earnings will be vast – projected to reach over US\$11 billion from the next World Cup in 2026. This report brings together analysis from human rights organizations, trade unions and fans representatives – including from members of the Sport and Rights Alliance – as well as UN experts, treaty monitoring bodies, government data and media reports. It aims to highlight key risks connected to the hosting of the two World Cups that must be addressed if FIFA and bidding countries – Morocco, Portugal and Spain in 2030, and Saudi Arabia in 2034 - are to prevent human rights violations during their preparation and delivery.

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