

Corruption Within FIFA: the Qatar 2022 'Winter' World Cup

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## **Introduction**

The city hosting the World Cup Final in Qatar in 2022, Lusail, has yet to be built. The plan of building a new city completely from scratch will cost the Qatari government \$45 billion (Manfred, 2014). The world cup final in 2022 will be like no other if FIFA carries on as is. The games will be played in the winter, disrupting professional leagues and businesses around the world. The city has faced various ethical concerns as well, including the accusation of over 1,200 migrant workers being worked to death since construction began, with the death total expected to rise to 4,000 before the tournament begins. These negatives, in addition to the troubling allegations of corruption, leave FIFA with only one righteous option: revoke their decision of awarding the 2022 World Cup to Qatar (Adams, 2017). The Qatar football association has already proven they have no sense of ethics, and will undoubtedly continue to prove that up until the tournament takes place. This decision to award Qatar the right to host the tournament only serves as an embarrassment to the already scandal-plagued organization, that is FIFA. Ultimately, due to various ethical concerns, economic detriments to football leagues around the world, and accusations of corruption, FIFA should undisputedly revoke their decision of awarding the 2022 World Cup to Qatar.

## **An Organization Plagued By Scandals**

FIFA is notorious for scandals and controversies; it has been that way for the past few decades. The controversies over the past few decades include match fixing, bribe accepting, embezzling, and the list goes on; you name it, FIFA has done it. The world of football thought the age of a corrupt FIFA was over in 2015, when seven FIFA executives were arrested, and the president, Sepp Blatter, rightfully stepped down (ESPN Staff, 2015). This, however, is not the case. Seven years after the 'vote' that awarded Qatar the right to host the tournament, corruption is still a major point of discourse within the football community, with very little action

being done to solve the problem. That being said, FIFA initiated their own internal investigation concerning corruption, which, according to their governing body, “had not proven enough wrongdoing to justify re-running the bidding process for either tournament” (Rumsby, 2015). Despite this, the Swiss attorney general, Michael Lauber, was still left unsatisfied, and so he decided to start his own widespread investigation into FIFA’s corruption. Lauber’s investigation began with a raid of FIFA’s headquarters, acquiring a staggering 9 terabytes of data, which is equivalent to a 750 million page word document (Rumsby, 2015). In addition to this, the FBI has also declared they have begun their own investigation into FIFA’s awarding of the 2018 and 2022 World Cups (Rumsby, 2015). Yet, regardless of all the investigations, very little has been done to stop Qatar from hosting the tournament. Regardless of the known fact of collusion between Qatar and Spain-Portugal in trading votes, regardless of the known fact of a top Qatari football official [Mohamed bin Hammam] supervising and organizing more than “£3 million in payments to officials in football associations in Africa, the Caribbean and Oceania”, on top of countless other examples of corruption, very little has been done (Telegraph view, 2014). Real action needs to take place. FIFA’s executive committee members have had their fair share of scandals too (Ziegler, 2015). The process for awarding a city the privilege of hosting a world cup involves the panel of FIFA executives voting on a shortlist of cities that have applied to host the tournament and are the frontrunners to receive it. Out of the 22 members of FIFA’s executive committee that voted for Qatar to host the World Cup in 2022 back in 2010, 18 of them are now either banned for life, currently under investigation, dead, retired, indicted, fined, provisionally suspended, or they have lost their title as executive committee member (Ziegler, 2015). This staggering fact alone merits a re-vote for the 2022 World Cup, excluding Qatar from the options. This, in addition to the long list of corruption scandals and investigations, make it an easy decision to strip Qatar of it’s World Cup hosting rights.

## **Economic Determinants of a Winter World Cup**

The average high temperature in the summer in Qatar is 107°F, or 41.3°C (Leberfinger, 2015). With such heat, the historic summertime tournament has no option but to be played during the winter season, specifically from november to december (PA Sport, 2015). The fact that this issue was brought up and overlooked during the voting process is utterly embarrassing for FIFA, with the own chairman of FIFA's medical committee describing a summer World Cup in Qatar as "dangerous" (Youd, 2014). To make matters worse, even the president of FIFA at the time, Sepp Blatter, who supported the decision to award Qatar the hosting rights of the World Cup, later said that it was "a mistake" to award a summer world cup to Qatar, due to the extreme heat (Youd, 2014). The repercussions of such a decision include possibly having to pay millions of dollars in compensation to professional football leagues, who play during the winter. These top football leagues will ultimately lose millions in revenue and will have their seasons disrupted (Youd, 2014). A winter World Cup would affect not only professional football leagues, but the players' health too. It would place extra stress on the players in the middle of their professional season, with the most likely outcome of a winter World Cup for professional leagues would be to have their season run from June to June, with a mid season break for the World Cup. The break for the World Cup could be hugely detrimental to professional teams, as they could lose top players due to injuries sustained in the tournament (Youd, 2014). This shift from summer to winter will also be hectic for broadcasting companies. It is predicted that the large gap in the middle of the professional football season will make it hard for broadcasting companies to retain the interest of their viewers (Youd, 2014). The broadcasting companies for professional leagues will not be the only ones who would be at a disadvantage with a winter World Cup, as the World Cup broadcasting companies will also have to battle for viewers as a "summer tournament is more lucrative than a winter tournament from a telecast point of view" (Youd, 2014). Thus, it is

clear to see the economic determinants of the repercussions of a winter World Cup in Qatar, and the tournament should undoubtedly be held in a different city where the tournament can stay true to its tradition of being a summer event.

### **Human Rights?**

The most shocking part about the World Cup preparations that are already underway in Qatar is the human rights concern. With the World Cup just five years away now, the \$45 billion project to build a city completely from scratch is well underway. That being said, the progress has come at the cost of 1,200 migrant workers' lives already, a tally which will most likely exceed 4,000 by the time of the World Cup (Adams, 2017). FIFA is well aware of these conditions in which the workers are literally being worked to death in, however they remain blinded by their own greed and desire for capitalistic gain to do anything to stop it. The simple matter of the issue is that they are making enormous amounts of profits, while their workers suffer greatly. Unhealthy living conditions, workers not receiving salaries on time or a salary much below what they were promised, coupled together with the fact that they cannot leave the stadium, camp or country, altogether does not make for a healthy and safe environment in which to live and work in (Qatar World Cup of Shame, 2017). The workers are also threatened on the daily with pay cuts and deportation if they refuse to work due to the poor conditions. The 1.7 million migrant workers were truly in for a shock when they arrived in Qatar, as one worker describes his first day "I remember my first day in Qatar. Almost the very first thing [an agent] working for my company did was take my passport. I haven't seen it since" (Qatar World Cup of Shame, 2017). The disgraceful treatment of the migrant workers needs to be stopped, and it is up to FIFA to do so.

## **What's next?**

Although FIFA has been making progress in the past few years to get back on the right track, implementing new policies and trying to put the days of scandal and corruption behind them, there is still large room for improvement. They need to make an example out of Qatar by stripping them of their right to host the World Cup and prove to the footballing world that they can place their trust in FIFA once again. As the Harvard University Professor in human rights and international affairs exclaims, "The foundational shift for Fifa now is to go beyond putting words on paper and adding new administrative functions. What is required is a cultural shift that must affect everything Fifa does and how it does it" (Gibson, 2016). The way the workers in Qatar are being treated is disgraceful, and FIFA should not stand for it. This, in addition to the economic detriments of the tournament being held in the winter, as well as the accusations of corruption and bribery, altogether do not make for a successful World Cup tournament. Thus, FIFA ought to revoke their decision of awarding the World Cup hosting rights to a city that has yet to be built in Qatar, and instead have a revote in order to fairly and properly select a city to host the prestigious and historic tournament.

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