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Qatar: Human Rights Investigators Vanish, as FIFA Forges Ahead on 2022 World Cup

Brussels, 4 September 2014 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC has expressed serious concern for the safety and welfare of two human rights investigators, Ghimire Gundev and Krishna Upadhyaya, in Qatar. The two British nationals were being followed and harassed by Qatari security agents as they documented extreme violations of workers' rights in the Gulf state. They then disappeared as they prepared to leave their hotel for Doha airport to leave the country on 31 August.

Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary said "Qatar seems to think that creating a climate of fear and intimidation will somehow turn the eyes of the world away from its modern slavery economy. Hundreds of migrant workers, many of them women, are languishing in Doha's detention centres simply for running away from abusive and violent employers. Foreign journalists have been detained for trying to report the truth, and state repression is actually increasing in a country that already showed no respect for basic human rights and legal standards."

Norwegian based human rights ngo GNRD, the employer of the two investigators, is "deeply concerned that these employees, both British citizens, may have been subjected to enforced disappearance and are currently at risk of torture".

Meanwhile, FIFA is pushing ahead with preparations for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, with meetings scheduled for 8 September on whether to hold the event in summer or winter.

"FIFA appears to have forgotten about the plight of the hundreds of thousands of migrants building the World Cup infrastructure, with at least one worker losing their life every day. Even the cosmetic changes to the kafala system of servitude have been put back for as much as 18 months while the local Chamber of Commerce decides if it will allow even these so-called reforms to see the light of day. FIFA should vote again on who should host in 2022 rather than dancing to the tune of corporate sponsors and multinational construction firms at the expense of some of the world's most exploited workers," said Burrow.

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