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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[7 February 2022]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.

The Situation of Human Rights in Qatar, Host of the 2022 FIFA World Cup

Since 2013, the State of Qatar is ruled by the Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and his prime minister Sheik Chalid bin Chalifa bin Abdulasis who is in office since 2020. In the second half of the 20th century the Islamic country has become one of the wealthiest states in the world, caused by its natural gas and oil deposits. As a consequence thereof, the population growth has been on the rise ever since: From 200,000 people in the 1980s to more than 1.7 million in 2010. The highest share of the population is held by foreign workers, they make up 88% percent of the inhabitants and realize the ambitious major construction projects. Frequently, these are given to international investors and are supposed to enhance the prestige of the country, to attract more investment and to help Qatar become a popular tourist destination.

The workers usually come from Asian low-wage countries to the State of Katar and enter the country with a temporary residence permit with the aim to earn money for their families at home. To construct infrastructure projects, new stadiums and hotels for the FIFA World Cup 2022 alone, the plan is to send for ca. 1,5 million additional workers that come under the sponsors system Kafala: In their home countries they are recruited through promises of simple work being chosen by themselves and high income measured against standard wage in their country. Yet, for the usually young men to start the job in Qatar, they must first pay for the flight and the commission fee in the amount of ca. 1,000 dollar.

The contract of employment is often signed without knowing the Arabic language or the signature is done by the company or the agent. Being in Qatar, the situation for the people is getting worse: Entering the country is only possible when a citizen acts as a guarantor, in this case usually the employer. This situation allows the employer to take charge of the workers' identity papers which leads to them not being able to move freely or leaving the country, instead being at the mercy of the employer. Also, changing companies is a problem because a new employment only is possible with the consent of the old employer.

At the beginning of the employment, the workers therefore often have to work off the debts they took in order to enter the country. They do any job with additional extra hours under working and living in conditions unfit for human beings. Existing labor laws like the continuation payment in case of sickness or accident or the mutual termination of the employment are not being considered in many cases: Sick or injured people are not getting paid and do not receive medical treatment. The rights of termination often do not take effect in the case of foreign worker because ordinary termination cannot be used within their temporary employment of a few years. In comparison employers can use extraordinary termination according to Qatari law. This willfully constructed dependence in the system leads to the oppressed person not complaining or taking any legal actions against the injustice.

An additional problem is the payment of the workers: Many of them are not getting paid in the first few months or even years of their employment to keep them under pressure and to prevent them from fleeing the workplace. At the time they are getting paid eventually it is not rare that the wage is lower than laid down in the contract or monthly wages are not being paid at all. In addition to that the workers have to do their job under extreme conditions: They are cases known where people had to work at over 120°F (50°C) for 12 hours without breaks and sometimes without free water provision, although both certain time for breaks and free access to water is established in the Qatari law. According to reports from some workers, they even got forced to work without getting paid or food. Furthermore, there are reports known about disastrous living conditions of Nepalese workers who have to share a filthy hotel room with up to 12 people. All these conditions are indicative of severe physical and psychic impairments of the foreign workers by Qatari companies as well as purposely deception concerning their workload and conditions at the workplace.

However, one of the greatest threats for the workers is the permanent exposure to often unratable dangers at the workplace. Regularly, people lose their life in the construction zones of Qatari companies without their families getting paid any compensation. According to media reports more than 6,500 workers died since the State of Qatar got selected as the host for the FIFA World Cup 2022 in 2010. The greater part of the young men died because of heart attacks. The Government of Qatar neither reacts to complaints by small organizations nor to demands against the conditions by the International Trade Union Confederation.

Therefore, it is to be noted that, despite its wealth, the State of Qatar does very little to ensure safe work and living conditions for the workers it needs to maintain and improve its status quo. Thus far the demands for better conditions and minimum wages from the International Trade Union Confederation are not being acknowledged. Instead, people have to live as forced laborers and the State of Qatar tolerates and even facilitates mafia-like structures and human rights violations. In addition, there is constraint of religious freedom, especially for non-members of the Islam, nonexistent gender equality and the support for radical organizations worldwide by the Government. In particular Islamist groups like the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS), founded by the Egyptian Yusuf al-Qaradawi who now lives in Qatar, receive support in their actions of agitation, persecution and torture against numerous minorities like Kurds, Armenians, Christs, Yezidis and Hazaras.

Society for Threatened Peoples therefore calls upon the UN Human Rights Council to urge the Government of the State of Qatar, the FIFA, and international companies to:

- scrap the sponsors systems Kafala and strictly control the prohibition, that also involves the abolition of the commission fee, the retention of identity papers and permission to change employment,
- effectively control the compliance with labor law-related regulations such as working hours and living and working conditions,
- stop the support for international radical organizations, especially for IUMS,
- predetermine for the national football associations that the placing of and participation at the FIFA World Cup 2022 is to be conditioned on the fulfillment of these demands,
- to condition entrepreneurial actions in Qatar on the fulfillment of these demands.