

## Analysis: Why Qatar is a controversial venue for 2022 World Cup

Bloomberg

Required Annotations		Student-Created Annotations		Summary / Questions / Reflection	
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There's been a lot of international upset over the 2022 World Cup host, Qatar. The country's scorching climate made it impossible to hold the competition during the usual time in the summer. So, the event was switched to November and December. Yet, that is when national leagues are normally in full swing. Since their star players will be off competing in Qatar, the leagues will have to shut down competitions in their home countries for up to six weeks. Investigations continue into how Qatar, a tiny nation of 3 million people, managed to win a secret vote to become host. Human rights groups have **condemned** the treatment of foreign workers building the stadiums and places for visiting fans to stay.

### Why was the bidding process controversial?

In 2010, soccer's ruling body FIFA awarded Qatar the rights to the 2022 World Cup. Ever since then, there have been suspicions and **accusations** that Qatar illegally bribed people to get chosen. Two members of the 24-man FIFA executive committee that chooses the host countries were suspended before the 2010 vote after being filmed offering their votes for cash. An investigation continues in France into the award of the 2022 tournament. Several soccer officials have been charged in U.S. federal court in 2020 of receiving bribes to support Qatar. Their trial is set to begin in New York in January 2023. Qatar denies paying anyone for the hosting rights.

### How does Qatar benefit?

Qatar wants the tournament to help it improve its international image. It wants to be a tourism and business destination as popular as its Persian Gulf **rival** Dubai. The World Cup is the world's most-watched sports event with billions of television and online viewers. Qatar was set to complete \$300 billion of infrastructure projects before the opening game on November 20. Infrastructure includes all facilities to support the event like airport, roads, hotels, stadiums and public transit. That looks like a lot for a country smaller than Connecticut, but Qatar is one of the world's wealthiest nations thanks to **vast** natural gas reserves. Organizers expect the event to add \$17 billion to the economy of the country.

### Why the complaints over migrant workers?

Qatar's workforce largely comes from foreign countries. Media reports have detailed cases of laborers working on the new stadiums and other infrastructure being treated **inhumanely** with unsafe working conditions. Amnesty International accused the government of failing to properly investigate the deaths of many migrant workers. The World Cup preparations have shone a light on the Gulf region's "kafala," or sponsorship, system. Under kafala, workers have to get their employer's permission in order to switch jobs, return home or even open a bank account. In 2019, the United Nations condemned Qatar for racial discrimination of laborers.

## **What does the government say?**

It denies accusations that laborers are mistreated in the country. Meanwhile, the government has been building some new living quarters for laborers and promising to improve safety. Qatar introduced new labor laws in 2020 in an effort to take down the kafala system. Rules instituted in 2021 further limited the hours that workers can toil outside in the summer heat. At least on paper, the reforms make Qatar's labor laws among the most worker-friendly in the Gulf region. Rights groups acknowledge that working conditions have improved in recent years. They continue to publish reports listing abuses.

## **Is Qatar a free country?**

Qatar is ruled by its emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. He controls the government and the judiciary. Political parties are banned and most of the population are noncitizens with few civil or political rights. Homosexuality is officially illegal. While FIFA rules require that the World Cup doesn't restrict displays promoting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights in stadiums, a senior official responsible for security during the event warned that rainbow flags could be taken away from fans. He said it was to protect those fans from being attacked. In Qatar, women's personal decisions are dependent on approval from a male family member.

## **Will there be boycotts?**

Players and teams in Norway and fans in Denmark have called for boycotts. Soccer authorities in participating countries ultimately have rejected the idea. International human rights organizations have said that the labor reforms in Qatar have been positive overall. They have discouraged the idea of a stay-away. The mayors of Paris and several other French cities have said they won't set up giant screens and zones for fans to watch the tournament. Several tied the decision to Qatar's poor human rights record, while others cited financial reasons, energy costs and the winter climate.

## **What will it be like for fans?**

The weather should be quite pleasant with the average mid-November high temperature about 85 degrees Fahrenheit (29 degrees Celsius), cooling off more in December.

## **How should fans behave in Qatar?**

The country's dress code reflects its Muslim traditions. Women and men must cover their bodies from shoulders to knees in malls and most public spaces and public displays of affection between members of the opposite sex are unwelcome.

## Questions

1. Which selection from the section "Why the complaints over migrant workers?" BEST explains why most people in Qatar have few rights?
  - a) Media reports have detailed cases of laborers working on the new stadiums and other infrastructure being treated inhumanely with unsafe working conditions.
  - b) Under kafala, workers have to get their employer's permission to switch jobs, return home or even open a bank account.
  - c) Qatar introduced new labor laws in 2020 in an effort to take down the kafala system. Rules instituted in 2021 further limited the hours that workers can toil outside in the summer heat.
  - d) Qatar is ruled by its emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. He controls the government and the judiciary.
2. Read the following claim: "The decision to hold the World Cup in Qatar has been a controversial choice." Which sentence from the article provides the BEST support for the statement?
  - a) In 2010, soccer's ruling body FIFA awarded Qatar the rights to the 2022 World Cup.
  - b) Qatar wants the tournament to help it improve its international image.
  - c) Organizers expect the event to add \$17 billion to the economy of the country.
  - d) Players and teams in Norway and fans in Denmark have called for boycotts.
3. According to the article, WHY did the mayors of several French cities decide against setting up giant screens during the World Cup?
  - a) They were concerned about Qatar's human rights record and the cost of the screens.
  - b) They were upset that the World Cup was awarded to Qatar instead of France.
  - c) They wanted to encourage fans to attend the World Cup games in person.
  - d) They wanted to protect the workers who would be responsible for setting up the screens.
4. Which answer choice would BEST describe the Qatar government's reaction to accusations of foreign workers being mistreated in the country?
  - a) It forced most workers to live in government housing.
  - b) It improved safety and passed laws to protect workers.
  - c) It pointed out most workers have moved to Qatar permanently.
  - d) It briefly suspended work on World Cup infrastructure.