

# Why I won't boycott Qatar World Cup



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**FAWAZ ROB**

More than 1,000 Bangladeshis died while working in Qatar between 2010 and 2020 as the Middle-Eastern country took up massive construction projects to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup, which is due to kick off on November 20. A few more thousands of South Asian workers – from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Nepal – also died during the same period, an investigation by *The Guardian* found. Most of these workers were poor immigrants who risked their lives and mortgaged their village homes to seek a better future. A lot of them died because of a lack of safety measures, poor working conditions, and complete callousness of construction companies. More people died in construction-related accidents in Qatar than in the Russia-Ukraine war, according to the UN.

Countries like Qatar and Saudi Arabia have an appalling history of labour rights, worker safety, and basic human rights. People who worked at construction sites in Qatar were not even allowed to visit local shopping malls in Doha. They were loaded in cage-like trucks and brought to the sites, where they worked all day, and then taken back to their residences in a faraway place from the city.

On the surface, one can clearly establish a direct line between the callousness of the Qatar government and the death of construction workers. But if one digs a little deeper, it is astounding to find that there is more to the whole situation. Many of these contractors are not necessarily Qatari companies; some of them are actually American and European companies with many German, French, Italian, and Japanese executives. Interestingly enough, they don't follow the same rules in Qatar as they would in Europe. In these companies, a large part of the labour acquisition and management is done by Bangladeshis, Indians, and Pakistanis.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), any international company regardless of where it operates should follow certain compliance guidelines to provide proper compensation, living conditions, and safety to its workers. However, these giant construction companies encompassing employees and bosses from Europe and the US often ignore ILO compliances. One study found that of the whole construction and labour process, only five percent work was done by Qatari nationals.

This does not excuse the Qatar government for its callousness. They should have had stronger enforcement of laws to provide worker safety. They should have had more laws to punish the contractors. They should be held accountable for labour conditions. But it's not so black and white. While we crucify

Qatar, we should also realise that there is an intrinsic problem of corruption in the whole system, where Europeans, Americans, and even Bangladeshis are involved. What happens in the Middle East to the workers is a crime against humanity. It has gone on for far too long, and it needs to stop today. But an eye-washing boycott of the World Cup is not the way.

We are hearing that there is an uproar in

from the World Cup, saying no European nation would participate in the tournament that's tainted with workers' rights violation. But instead, average citizens think boycotting the World Cup would solve the labour problem.

Why just blame Europeans or Americans? We Bangladeshis have also collectively failed our immigrant brothers and sisters. There is a culture of turning a blind eye to the problems



FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

Football brings the whole world together every four years, to laugh, cry and celebrate.

Europe to boycott the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Many cities are even imposing restrictions on having public displays of games and celebrations. The hypocrisy of the European Union is quite well-known. European countries like France, Belgium, and Spain still reap economic benefits from impoverished African nations. They still provide weapons to various rebel groups, send armies to protect European corporations, extract natural minerals and collect tax from former colonies. When Europeans talk about labour rights, I would like them to visit the Belgian-controlled diamond mines in Sierra Leone.

Americans and Europeans do business worth billions of dollars with Saudi Arabia and the UAE. There is nothing wrong with that. In a globalised economy, countries should be doing business with each other. But what bothers me is the amazing power of their liberal storytelling. On the one hand, they are convincing their people that "we are doing the right thing by boycotting Qatar and showing our solidarity with the workers," while on the other hand, they are doing business as usual with proven violators of workers' rights. They could easily put sanctions on Saudi Arabia for violating human rights, and they could easily withdraw

of the poor working class. When Mofizuddin of Moghadia steps on a plane, he has no idea that the game is skewed from the inside. The odds are all stacked against him. Nobody in the world, neither the Bangladeshi government nor the Europeans has an iota of sympathy for him.

The World Cup is a time of worldwide celebration. If someone wants to boycott it, it is their choice. But please don't make the rest of us feel guilty about it. We need not follow your misconstrued neoliberal agenda. Bangladesh is a cricket-hungry nation, but we all love football. More than 211 countries are enlisted in FIFA, and whether your country plays in the final round or not, everyone comes around every four years to celebrate the champions of the world. I remember being in Rome in 2006 when Italy won the World Cup, and I witnessed the endless celebration. We still ask each other, "Where were you when Brazil became the champion?" In Bangladesh, every four years we see the overwhelming festoons and flags of Brazil and Argentina. We wait every four years to express the pure joy of laughter and tears, for late-night parties and idiotic dances. The world comes together every four years to laugh and cry. We are one with the world.

The World Cup is a chance to celebrate humanity. Why should we boycott it?

# The changing patterns of US politics



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**MOSTOFA SARWAR**

The US midterm election results show a recurring motif – a split ballot, where voters have chosen candidates from both the Democratic and the Republican parties, instead of voting for all candidates up and down the ballot belonging to the same party. This practice creates an apparent shift towards moderation, and it showed up in many states this election. For example, we can analyse two crucial swing states: Georgia and Pennsylvania.

In Georgia, Donald Trump's acolyte and MAGA extremist Herschel Walker lagged behind moderate Democrat Raphael Warnock, the incumbent senator. They will face each other in a run-off election on December 6. A significant contrast to Walker is Republican Brian Kemp, the incumbent governor, who won his re-election by a margin of approximately eight percentage points. Governor Kemp courageously fended off extreme pressure from the then President Donald Trump, who wanted him to manipulate Georgia's 2020 presidential election results in Trump's favour. Many 2022 midterm voters from Georgia split their ballots, rewarding Kemp and punishing Walker in a predominantly Republican state that has looked more like a swing state in recent election cycles.

A similar pattern appeared in Pennsylvania, too. Doug Mastriano, who joined the January 6 rioters at Capitol Hill, believes that Joe Biden is not a legitimately elected president. Mastriano is an ultra-right-wing MAGA devotee of Donald Trump. Moderate Democrat Josh Shapiro handily defeated Mastriano in the gubernatorial race with a whopping margin of 13 percent. This outcome differs significantly from the Senate race. Republican Mehmet Oz (the only senatorial candidate in the entire US midterm election who is a Muslim), although endorsed by Trump, presented himself as a moderate Republican and lost the election to John Fetterman by a margin of five percent.

Republican candidates who aligned with the ultra-right MAGA movement of Donald Trump did not fare well in swing states, when compared to moderate Republicans. Split-ballot voting caused several underperformances, far below expectations – so much so that relatively conservative media like *The Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Post*, and Fox News all published and broadcasted derogatory editorials, news headlines, and commentary against Donald Trump.

It is now clear that Trump's conspiracy-infested MAGA – Make America Great Again – movement has started losing steam. His ardent following in the Republican Party has precipitously fallen. In fact, a recent "survey conducted by YouGov found that 42 percent of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents said they would prefer DeSantis over Trump to run in 2024. Just 35 percent said they would prefer Trump over DeSantis," as reported by *The Hill* on November 12.

The Democratic Party's talking heads have also recently been emphasising their support of law enforcement and their distance from cries on the left in favour of defunding law enforcement agencies. This is a wise emphasis on moderation considering the recent increase of violent crimes across the US.

The policy stances of many Republican candidates in competitive states showed significant deviations between the primaries and the general election. One stark example is Republican JD Vance of Ohio, who drastically moderated his extreme position against abortion rights when he started campaigning against moderate Democrat Tim Ryan. Vance won the Senate seat from Ohio. This same softening transformation was adopted by several other Republican candidates even in Republican dominated states where abortion rights appeared on the ballot. (Five states – California, Kentucky, Michigan, Montana, and Vermont – had this issue on the ballot, and voters generally were supportive of abortion rights.)

The midterm seems to have ushered in the rain of hope after six years of extreme rhetoric, political violence, insurrection, and racist demagoguery – all fuelled by a narcissistic and semi-fascist cult personality. As the midterm results came in, I remembered "What the Thunder Said," Part V of TS Eliot's poem "The Waste Land." He alluded to the *Upanishad's* "Datta, Dayadhvam, Damyata," meaning welfare, self-control, and compassion. May Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security be spared from the chopping block as *Datta* (welfare). May gun violence, school massacres, and hate crimes subside as *Dayadhvam* (self-control). And may reasonable abortion rights be restored as *Damyata* (compassion). Then peace shall prevail, just as Eliot said in his poem, "Shantih, shantih, shantih."

**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**  
Survey of Bangladesh  
NSDI Project  
Tejgaon, Dhaka-1208

**Invitation for Tenders**

1	Ministry	Ministry of Defense			
2	Agency	Survey of Bangladesh			
3	Purchaser name	Project Director "Establishment of National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) for Bangladesh"			
4	Purchaser district	Dhaka			
5	Invitation for	Procurement of Computers and Accessories			
6	Invitation Ref No. and date	23.08.0000.019.26.005.20.259 date: 16-11-2022			
7	Procurement method	Open Tender Method			
8	Budget and source of funds	Government of Bangladesh (GOB)			
9	Project code	223041800			
10	Project name	"Establishment of National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) for Bangladesh"			
11	Tender Package No.	GD 01			
12	Tender package name, date	Procurement of Computers and Accessories, 16-11-2022			
13	Tender publication date	16 -11-2022			
14	Tender last selling date	29-11-2022 at 10.00 am			
15	Tender closing date and time	30-11-2022 at 11.00 am			
16	Tender opening date and time	30-11-2022 at 11.30 am			
17	Selling tender document	1. Office of the Project Director NSDI Project 2. Security Gate (Office hour), Survey of Bangladesh, Tejgaon I/A, Dhaka-1208			
18	Receiving tender document	Security Section, Survey of Bangladesh, Tejgaon I/A, Dhaka-1208			
19	Eligibility of tenderer	The tenderer must have a minimum of 05 (five) years of overall experience in the supply of Computer and related services as a supplier in government and non-government organizations.			
20	Brief description of goods	Computer and Accessories should be powerful to operate some Geo-spatial related software such as GIS, GIS database, Summit evaluation and so on.			
21	Brief description of related	Desktop- 06 Nos, Laptop-03 Nos			
22	Price of tender document: Tk 500.00 (five hundred) only				
23	Lot No.	Identification of lot	Location	Tender security amount (Tk)	Completion time
	1	Procurement of Computers and Accessories	SOB	BDT 35,000.00/= (thirty-five thousand)	45 (forty-five) days from the date of contract signature
24	Name of official inviting tender		Md. Abul Kalam, PD, NSDI, Atten: Md. Saidus Jaman, PM, NSDI		
25	Contact details of official inviting tender		Tel: 88-02-8170396, 01520100431, nsdi.sob@gmail.com		
26	The procuring entity reserves the right to reject all tenders or annul the tender proceedings				

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Tejgaon, Dhaka-1208

**Invitation for Tenders**

1	Ministry	Ministry of Defense			
2	Agency	Survey of Bangladesh			
3	Purchaser name	Project Director "Establishment of National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) for Bangladesh"			
4	Purchaser district	Dhaka			
5	Invitation for	Procurement of transport hiring service			
6	Invitation Ref No. and date	23.08.0000.019.26.005.20.258 Date: 16-11-2022			
7	Procurement method	Open Tender Method			
8	Budget and source of funds	Government of Bangladesh (GOB)			
9	Project code	223041800			
10	Project name	"Establishment of National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) for Bangladesh"			
11	Tender Package No.	GD 01			
12	Tender package name, date	Procurement of Transport Hiring service, 16-11-2022			
13	Tender publication date	16 -11-2022			
14	Tender last selling date	29-11-2022 at 10.00am			
15	Tender closing date and time	30-11-2022 at 11.00am			
16	Tender opening date and time	30-11-2022 at 11.30am			
17	Selling tender document	Office of the Project Director, Establishment of National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) for Bangladesh Project, Survey of Bangladesh, Tejgaon I/A, Dhaka-1208			
18	Receiving tender document	Security Section, Survey of Bangladesh, Tejgaon I/A, Dhaka-1208			
19	Eligibility of tenderer	The tenderer must have a minimum of 03 (three) years of overall experience in the supply of vehicle and related services as a supplier in government and non-government organizations.			
20	Brief description of goods	Hiring one vehicle Minimum Engine Capacity: 1500 CC or over; No. of Seat: 5 Seats or More; No. of Door: 4; Model Year 2012 or Later, New Looking; Built-in Air-Conditioning System; Dual-Fuel) for "NSDI Project" Work Both in Dhaka And Outside Dhaka.			
21	Brief description of related	1 vehicle, 24 hours, initially 4 months it may extend according to performance, run average 2000 km/month (inside and outside Dhaka)			
22	Price of tender document: Tk 500.00 (five hundred) only				
23	Lot No.	Identification of Lot	Location	Tender security amount (Tk)	Completion time
	1	Procurement of transport hiring service	SOB	BDT 16,000.00/= (sixteen thousand)	45 (forty-five) days from the date of contract signature
24	Name of official inviting tender		Md. Abul Kalam, PD NSDI, Atten: Md. Saidus Jaman, PM NSDI		
25	Contact details of official inviting tender		Tel: 88-02-8170396, 01520100431, nsdi.sob@gmail.com		
26	The purchaser reserves the right to reject all tenders or annul the tender proceedings.				

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