

Research Briefing

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FIFA men's football world cup Qatar 2022: FAQs



Summary

- 1 How did Qatar come to host the world cup?
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Summary

In November 2022, Qatar will become the first country in the Middle East to host the men's football world cup. 32 teams will participate, including England and Wales. The tournament was [debated in the House of Commons on 20 October 2022](#).

Since the country was awarded the competition, there have been allegations that football officials were bribed to vote in support of Qatar's bid, concerns over the treatment of migrant workers working on world-cup facilities, and for the rights of LGBT+ people in the country. To its critics, Qatar attaches a low priority to human rights, but its defenders have pointed to improvements in the rights of workers from the late 2010s.

This briefing addresses key questions on the tournament. For background on Qatar's politics, the wider human rights situation, including for women, and its relations with the UK, visit the Library's [Qatar: Country profile](#) briefing.

Was Qatar awarded the tournament fairly?

Allegations that Qatar bribed officials to support the country's bid and engaged improperly with them prior to the Fédération Internationale de Football Association's (FIFA) decision, have not been proved. There are ongoing investigations in [France](#) and the [United States](#), however, into aspects of the decision. [Qatar rejects the allegations](#) as false.

A 2014 FIFA report, which was published in 2017, [concluded nothing inappropriate occurred in the decision to award Qatar the tournament](#). It did, however, recommend reforms to the bidding process such as greater transparency and engagement with independent experts to evaluate bids.

How are migrant workers treated in Qatar?

According to Qatar's Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs, there are more than [1.9 million migrant workers in Qatar](#). They are mostly from South Asia and Africa. As non-citizens, they lack many rights and [until reforms in 2020 had to seek their employers' permission to change jobs](#) and to leave and enter the country. In 2021 a minimum wage for all workers was also introduced.

The most significant allegation against Qatar is the high number of worker deaths in Tournament infrastructure. Eight stadiums have been [built or refurbished for the tournament](#). In 2021, the Guardian estimated [more than 6,500 workers from five Asian countries died from 2010 to 2021](#) (this data does not relate solely to world-cup related activity). Qatar argues this to be an overestimate.

The UN's International Labour Organization (ILO) has also criticised Qatar for gaps in data recording. The ILO estimated that [50 workers died and 500 were severely injured](#) in 2020 (including in activity beyond world cup preparations).

Scrutiny is now focusing on [whether the 2020 reforms are being implemented](#) and on the [rights of hospitality workers](#).

How are LGBT+ people treated?

[Same-sex sexual relations between both men and women are illegal in Qatar](#), and it is possible for men engaged in such acts to be sentenced to death. However, there are no reports that this has been applied. Civil society groups have [cited examples of hostility to LGBT+ communities](#), including online surveillance and censoring of LGBT+ content.

Qatari authorities have said transgender and gay [fans will be welcome](#), but emphasise public displays of affection by anyone is “frowned upon.” Security officials have suggested rainbow flags may be confiscated [to “protect” fans](#).

The UK Government has said it will continue to work with Qatar to [ensure all fans are welcome](#). It has produced [foreign travel advice for LGBT+ people](#).

What general advice is there for visitors on clothing and public displays of affection?

Regardless of sexual orientation, Qatar's tourism website states that visitors are expected to show respect for local culture by [“avoiding excessively revealing clothing in public.”](#) It cites examples of making sure knees and shoulders are covered. It also advises against public displays of affection by visitors. The UK Government warns any intimacy in public between men and women [may lead to arrest](#).

Are any teams planning a boycott?

No team has committed to boycott the cup. In 2022, [England manager Gareth Southgate said he was unsure what this would achieve](#), arguing that the team

has “to use our voice in the right way at the right time.” Along with Wales and eight other European teams, [England had planned to participate in the OneLove campaign for the tournament](#), where players would wear armbands. This was cancelled following threats of players being booked. FIFA is running a “No Discrimination” campaign, where team captains may wear armbands.

The [UK Government has rejected a boycott](#). Instead, it said it would engage with Qatar to improve its human rights record. This stands in contrast to the Beijing Winter Olympics in 2022, where the [UK supported a diplomatic boycott](#) (with public officials not attending) in protest at China’s human rights record.

Will the tournament be carbon-neutral?

Qatar has committed to [hosting the first carbon-neutral world cup](#) (PDF). It said this would be achieved through the use of public transport, recycling, renewables and carbon-offsetting (eg planting woodland).

Meeting the goal is likely to be dependent on high levels of carbon offsetting. In 2021, FIFA estimated the tournament [will generate 3.6 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent](#) (carbon dioxide plus other pollutants). Travel, accommodation, and construction is estimated to be responsible for 96% of emissions.

Will alcohol be allowed?

Alcohol is not illegal in Qatar, but it is an [offence to drink alcohol or be drunk in public](#). On 18 November FIFA said, following discussions with Qatar, that alcohol sales will be limited to select sites, [not including stadium perimeters](#).

What military support is the UK providing?

The UK has a [long-standing defence relationship with Qatar](#), with the country hosting the RAF’s Middle East headquarters. Two joint air squadrons have also been established. For the Tournament, [one joint squadron will provide air security](#) while on regular deployment to Qatar.

What support is there for UK nationals?

The [British Embassy in Doha](#), the capital of Qatar, cannot provide legal advice, but can help provide local information (eg lists of lawyers, interpreters) and support if individuals are victims of a crime. The [UK Government has published advice for those planning to attend](#).

1 How did Qatar come to host the world cup?

In December 2010, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) (the international governing body for football), chose Qatar to host the 2022 world cup, beating rival bids from countries including the US and Japan.¹

1.1 What did Qatar's bid say?

FIFA's [bid evaluation report on Qatar](#) (PDF) noted that Qatar's bid presented "a novel approach" to the event and its legacy:

- Almost all key facilities would be in a compact area within a radius of 60 kilometres, enabling visitors to watch multiple matches on the same day.
- Qatar would aim for a carbon-neutral tournament.
- After the tournament, modular sections from some stadiums would be used to construct 22 stadiums in developing countries.
- Hosting the tournament in the Middle East would "introduce a new generation of fans" to football.
- Hosting would aid "social integration" of non-nationals living in Qatar.²

The tournament is not the first major sporting event to be hosted by Qatar: In 2006 it hosted the Asian Games and in 2021 the Formula 1 Grand Prix.

1.2 Claims of corruption in the decision

FIFA's decision has been controversial. Since Qatar was awarded the tournament, there have been allegations that attempts were made to bribe football officials to support the country's bid.³

¹ The Guardian, [Qatar wins 2022 world cup bid](#), 2 December 2010, accessed 22 April 2022

² FIFA, [Bid evaluation report: Qatar](#) (PDF), undated (2010?), pp4, 10

³ For example, BBC News, [Qatar world cup: "£3m payments to officials" corruption](#), 31 May 2014, accessed 22 April 2022

These complaints have continued, despite a FIFA investigation finding that votes were not bought (see below) and the withdrawal of allegations by some individuals.⁴ Two investigations remain ongoing:

- In April 2020, the **US Department of Justice** filed documents as part of wider legal proceedings claiming that some FIFA officials received payments to vote for Qatar's 2022 bid. No further updates have been issued.⁵
- Investigators from **France's serious financial crime unit** have also examined allegations of corruption. Sepp Blatter, former president of FIFA, and Michel Platini, former president of the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) (the governing body for football in Europe), were reportedly questioned in 2017 and 2019, respectively, regarding Qatar's bid.⁶ No updates have been issued.

1.3 How have FIFA and Qatar responded?

Both Qatar and FIFA have consistently denied allegations of corruption.

In 2020, Qatar's organisers of the tournament, the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, said "evidence has never been produced" to demonstrate Qatar won the right to host unethically or by means that broke FIFA bidding rules. FIFA has said it supports all investigations into alleged criminal wrongdoing.⁷

1.4 What did the 2014 FIFA investigation into corruption find?

In June 2017, a [November 2014 report by FIFA's then-ethics investigator](#) (PDF), Michael Garcia, was published after it had been leaked to a German newspaper.

The report looked at the voting process for the Qatar bid for 2022 (as well as Russia's successful bid for the 2018 tournament).

⁴ The Guardian, [Qatar world cup whistleblower retracts her claims of FIFA bribes](#), 10 July 2011, accessed 22 April 2022

⁵ CNN, [Qatar and Russia deny allegations of bribery surrounding world cup bids](#), 9 April 2020, accessed 27 April 2022

⁶ BBC, [Michel Platini released after being questioned over awarding of world cup to Qatar](#), 19 June 2019, accessed 27 April 2022

⁷ Al-Jazeera, [Qatar denies allegations of corruption in world cup 2022 bid](#), 7 April 2020, accessed 27 April 2022

In response to allegations of inappropriate Qatari Government spending and engagement with football officials, the investigation concluded these were not improper. However, it did recommend reforms to FIFA's bidding process, including:

- Incorporating independent experts and objective criteria into the process of evaluating and selecting venues.
- Limits on travel to bidding nations by officials.
- Enhanced reporting requirements on gifts, friendly matches, and advisors.⁸

The Qatar Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy cooperated with the investigation and said it welcomed its findings.⁹ The Committee is responsible for organising the tournament in Qatar.

⁸ FIFA, [Report on the inquiry into the 2018/22 FIFA world cup bidding process](#) (PDF), November 2014, part X and pp344-50; FIFA, [FIFA statement on recent media coverage regarding the "Garcia Report,"](#) 27 June 2017, both accessed 27 April 2022

⁹ Reuters, [Qatar says FIFA report vindicates integrity of 2022 bid](#), 28 June 2017, accessed 27 April 2022

2

How have world cup workers been treated?

Qatar has long hosted migrant workers. Their numbers have grown substantially over the last decade to service demand for new stadiums, hotels, and other world cup-related facilities. In 2019, migrant workers were estimated to number 1.9 million. Most come from South Asia and Africa. The majority are from India (737,000) and Bangladesh (431,000).¹⁰

2.1

What are the working condition concerns?

There have been consistent complaints by international groups such as Amnesty International that migrant workers involved in the construction of world cup facilities have been exploited and lack protections. Amnesty has highlighted:

- **The kafala (“sponsorship”) system**, which required workers to have the permission of their employers to change jobs, leave the country, and renew residency permits (allowing them to work and live in Qatar). This gave substantial power to employers but was reformed in 2020—see section 2.3.
- **Delayed or reduced salaries**, often for several months. This put workers at risk of forced labour.
- **Barriers to obtaining justice for abuses** and the prohibition of migrant workers to join and form trade unions, further favouring employers.
- The **high number of worker deaths**—discussed in section 2.2.¹¹

The International Labour Organization (ILO), a UN agency, had previously held a complaint against Qatar from 2014 to 2017. This argued [the country had failed to maintain and enforce a sufficient legal framework to protect migrant workers from abuse and exploitation](#). This complaint was closed following the establishment of a cooperation programme between the ILO and Qatar in 2016, with the Qatari Government undertaking to improve its

¹⁰ UN Office of High Commissioner on Human Rights, [End of mission statement of the special representative on contemporary forms of racism, discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance](#), December 2019, para 22. All sources in this section accessed 21 April 2022 unless stated.

¹¹ Amnesty International, [Reality check 2021: A year to the 2022 world cup—The state of migrant worker's rights in Qatar](#), 16 November 2021, sections 2, 3, 4 and 5

labour standards.¹² This programme is set to continue to 2023,¹³ but Qatar's Government has requested a more permanent presence for the ILO in the country—the ILO says it will explore this with Qatar.¹⁴

FIFA has acknowledged there are concerns for migrant workers. The association said it shared the view of a 2019 Amnesty International report on the continuing risk of worker exploitation and urged Qatar to implement reforms to its labour laws.¹⁵ In 2018 the UK Government said there have been “clear examples” of the kafala system leading to exploitation.¹⁶

2.2 How many workers have died?

Assessments of how many workers have died in the construction of world cup stadiums and related facilities in Qatar vary, but independent assessments by the UN say the country is underestimating the numbers killed and injured in general construction work:

- In 2021, The Guardian newspaper reported that **6,500 migrant workers from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka had died in Qatar since 2010**. The deaths were reported by authorities in the five countries but did not categorise them by occupation or place of work (it therefore includes deaths beyond world-cup related activity).¹⁷
- Qatar said this figure is an overestimate. **Qatar's Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy for the tournament states there have been 39 deaths** from the start of construction on FIFA world cup construction sites to July 2021: Three work-related and the remainder non-work related.¹⁸
- In the same year, Amnesty International estimated **unexplained migrant worker deaths may constitute 70% of deaths since 2010**, with thousands of deaths insufficiently investigated. The estimate was based on the examination of death certificates and Qatari Government data.¹⁹

¹² ILO, [ILO governing body welcomes Qatar's commitment to bolster migrant worker rights](#), 8 November 2017

¹³ ILO, [ILO in Qatar](#)

¹⁴ ILO, [Labour reforms in the state of Qatar](#), October 2022, p3

¹⁵ BBC News, [World cup 2022: Qatar “falling significantly short” on reforms—Amnesty International](#), 6 February 2019

¹⁶ HC Deb, [14 March 2018](#), c406WH

¹⁷ The Guardian, [Revealed: 6,500 migrant workers have died in Qatar since world cup awarded](#), 23 February 2021; ILO, [One is too many](#), November 2021 (PDF), Box 4

¹⁸ FIFA, [Workers' recruitment: Enforcement of the workers' welfare standards](#), 'Health and safety'

¹⁹ Amnesty International, [Qatar: Thousands of migrant worker deaths uninvestigated](#), 25 August 2021

- The Qatari Government said the report was based on a “flawed” approach and argued it maintains statistics in line with international best practice.²⁰
- However, the International Labour Organization (ILO) said in November 2021 there are gaps in data collection on work-related deaths and injuries. **The ILO said during 2020 that 50 workers died and 500 were severely injured.** Its findings were compiled from data collected from medical institutions and are not limited to world cup sites.²¹

The Qatari Government welcomed the report and said it would continue its reforms, despite previously rejecting the Amnesty report making similar allegations of under-reporting.²²

2.3

What reforms has Qatar introduced?

Abolition of the kafala system

In 2020, Qatar abolished the [kafala \(“sponsorship”\) system](#).

All other Gulf states, other than Iraq, continue to operate a form of the kafala system.

In Qatar, the system had required migrant workers to obtain their employer’s permission before changing jobs, to renew residency and employment permits, and to enter or exit the country. This reduced worker mobility and increased their risk of exploitation by employers.²³

Reforms introduced in 2020 mean migrant workers no longer need their employers’ permission before changing jobs. Instead, employees need to provide written notice. They are also no longer subject to exit permit requirements.²⁴

Introduction of a minimum wage

In 2021, Qatar became the first country in the Gulf to implement a minimum wage for workers.

This applies to all workers, regardless of nationality or occupation. The law also requires employers to provide allowances for food and housing if they do

²⁰ Doha News, [Qatar slams Amnesty’s “sensationalist” claims over migrant worker deaths](#), 26 August 2021

²¹ ILO, [ILO publishes report on work-related deaths and injuries in Qatar](#), 18 November 2021

²² Al-Jazeera, [Qatar welcomes ILO report despite admitted data gaps](#), 20 November 2021

²³ Council on Foreign Relations, [What is the Kafala system?](#), updated 23 March 2021

²⁴ ILO, [Dismantling the kafala system and introducing minimum wage mark new era for Qatar labour market](#), 30 August 2020

not provide workers with this directly. A new commission to monitor implementation was also established.²⁵

Protection from heat stress

In 2021, Qatar expanded pre-existing legislation to prohibit working outside over the summer months and when temperatures rise above a certain level (32.1 degrees Celsius at wet-bulb global temperature). The legislation aims to protect workers from “heat stress,” which is when the body overheats.²⁶

The ILO had said in 2019 that people working outdoors in four summer months were potentially performing under “significant occupational heat stress.”²⁷

The right to organise

In 2019, Qatar’s Government also introduced joint employer-worker Dispute Resolution Committees which allow worker representatives to be elected to discuss grievances with their employers.²⁸

Supporting international monitoring

In 2016, Qatar’s Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy for the tournament signed a memorandum of understanding with the Building and Wood Workers’ International trade union to allow inspections on world cup sites from 2017.²⁹

Amnesty International and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) are also able to work without interference from authorities, who have been open to meetings and public events on topics such as labour rights.³⁰

During the tournament, Qatari authorities have said the state will allocate a team will monitor the implementation of human rights standards, including ensuring the protection of workers.³¹

²⁵ ILO, [Qatar adopts a non-discriminatory minimum wage](#), 20 August 2020

²⁶ ILO, [New legislation in Qatar provides greater protection to workers from heat stress](#), 27 May 2021

²⁷ ILO, [Assessment of occupational heat strain and mitigation strategies in Qatar](#), 11 October 2019, p2

²⁸ ILO, [Workplace cooperation in Qatar: Joint committees](#), 29 November 2020

²⁹ Qatar 2022, [Supreme Committee and Building and Wood Workers’ International sign memorandum of understanding for joint inspections on FIFA world cup stadiums](#), 15 November 2016

³⁰ US State Department, [2021: Country reports on human rights practices: Qatar](#), 2022, section 5

³¹ Raya, [Doha is committed to respecting and protecting human rights](#), 21 October 2022

2.4 What has FIFA done to promote human rights in Qatar?

FIFA has been accused by some rights groups as being slow to protect and promote human rights in Qatar.³²

In 2017, [FIFA launched a human rights policy](#) (PDF), in which it pledged to promote and protect human rights, and in 2019 a [Qatar 2022 sustainability strategy](#) (PDF).³³

In the strategy, FIFA pledged to “safeguard the rights and welfare of workers” engaged in the world cup preparations, by working with providers, suppliers, and others, in order to leave a “legacy of world-class standards and practices.”³⁴

In 2018, FIFA established a Qatar-based team to help implement the strategy. It rejects allegations it has taken a “hands off” approach to human rights, stating it has supported independent monitoring, inspections carried out by the Building and Wood Workers’ International trade union of world cup sites, and regularly engaged with Qatari authorities.³⁵

FIFA has also met with representatives of Amnesty to discuss concerns and committed to further improvements by the time of the tournament.³⁶

2.5 Have the reforms been implemented?

What does the International Labour Organization say?

The International Labour Organization (ILO) says the reforms have gained ground. However, the overall numbers benefitting from some of the reforms remain small in the context of a 1.9 million migrant workforce.

- **Abolition of the kafala system:** From November 2020 to 31 August 2022, there were over 348,000 successful applications to change jobs. However, in the same period there were 183,000 rejected applications to

³² Human Rights Watch, [10 questions journalists should ask FIFA and Qatari authorities about rights abuses](#), 29 March 2022

³³ FIFA, [FIFA’s human rights policy](#) (PDF), May 2017 edition and FIFA, [World cup Qatar 2022: Sustainability strategy](#) (PDF), August 2020

³⁴ FIFA, [World cup Qatar 2022: Sustainability strategy](#) (PDF), August 2020, foreword

³⁵ [FIFA to Amnesty International: Human rights and the FIFA world cup Qatar 2022](#) (PDF), 25 March 2021, p2

³⁶ FIFA, [FIFA President and Qatar Minister for Labour meet to discuss progress of labour rights](#), 15 March 2022

change jobs (associated with administrative difficulties and cancelled requests, among other reasons).

- **Minimum wage reform:** In March 2021, 280,000 workers (13% of the workforce) saw their wages rise due to the introduction of a minimum wage.
- **Worker representation:** As of October 2022, 600 workers' representatives had been elected to represent 50,000 employees in 70 enterprises.³⁷

The ILO's [Progress report on the technical cooperation programme between the Government and Qatar and the ILO](#), 2021, and [Labour reforms in the state of Qatar](#), 2022, provides more.

What do rights groups say about the reforms to date?

International human rights groups and other civil society organisations judge that the reforms, although welcome, need to be better implemented:

- In 2021, Human Rights Watch said Qatar's reforms remain inadequate and poorly enforced. It argues passport confiscations, delayed wages and forced labour remain, with an imbalance between employer and worker.³⁸
- In 2021, Amnesty also said reforms had stalled and workers continue to face challenges in changing jobs, meaning the kafala system effectively remains in place for some.³⁹
- The Fédération Internationale des Associations de Footballeurs Professionnels (FIFPRO), which represents more than 60,000 professional football players globally, also expressed concern that in 2022 workers "continue to be subjected to abusive practices" and feared the consequences of speaking out.⁴⁰

Qatari-based news-agency Al-Jazeera has previously reported many migrant workers have feared lodging complaints against their employers for fear of repercussions.⁴¹

³⁷ ILO, [Overview of Qatar's labour reforms](#) and ILO, [Progress report on technical cooperation programme between the Government of Qatar and the ILO](#), December 2021, p4 (for rejected requests) and ILO, [Labour reforms in the state of Qatar](#), October 2022, pp5, 7, 9, 16

³⁸ Human Rights Watch, [Q&A: Migrant worker abuses in Qatar FIFA world cup 2022](#), 18 December 2021

³⁹ Amnesty International, [Qatar: Labour reforms have stalled, with old abuses resurfacing](#), 16 November 2021

⁴⁰ FIFPRO, [The world cup and Qatar: An open letter](#), 30 March 2022

⁴¹ Al-Jazeera, [Qatar says reforms to labour law have "transformed" the market](#), 20 March 2021

2.6 How has the UK Government responded to Qatar's reforms?

In 2022, the Government welcomed the “concrete steps” Qatar has taken to improve workers’ rights. It has called for their full implementation.⁴²

It described the November 2021 International Labour Organization (ILO) report on worker deaths as an “important step” on the health and safety of migrant workers (see section 2.2, above). It expects “close cooperation” between Qatar, the ILO, and international trade unions.⁴³

The UK has provided staffing support to help Qatar prepare for the world cup. No further information has been published, but UK police will attend the tournament (see section 8, below).⁴⁴

2.7 What further work is needed to improve worker rights?

International Labour Organization and UN statements

The International Labour Organization (ILO) says more work is needed to improve migrant workers’ conditions, which is something Qatar acknowledges.⁴⁵

In 2022, the ILO cited examples of workers still experiencing challenges in changing jobs, with employers retaliating against those wishing to change, and “many companies” not paying workers “for months.”⁴⁶ In October 2022, the ILO said Qatar must now:

- Fully implement the kafala reforms to enable workers to change their jobs, with some reported instances of employers retaliating against those who have applied to change their jobs.
- Ensure wages are paid on time, with some workers continuing to make complaints of delayed wages and benefits.

⁴² HL Deb, [20 January 2022](#), cc257-8

⁴³ HL Deb, [30 November 2021](#), c1273

⁴⁴ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, [Gulf strategy fund programme summary](#), updated 24 June 2021 and [Gulf strategy fund](#), updated 26 August 2022

⁴⁵ Middle East Monitor, [Qatar committed to improving worker welfare says world cup 2022 organiser](#), 23 June 2021

⁴⁶ ILO, [Overview of Qatar's labour reforms](#), accessed 21 April 2022

- Protect the rights of domestic workers, particularly in the hours they work and the right to a weekly paid day off.⁴⁷

The UN Human Rights Committee in its March 2022 report on Qatar said it remained concerned about construction worker deaths in preparation for the world cup and cases of abuse against domestic workers. It said there is a need for Qatar to establish systems to properly investigate complaints.⁴⁸

As the tournament nears and there is less construction work left, the wellbeing of workers in the hospitality sector are now being raised. Examples of further areas of concern are discussed below.

Rights of domestic and hospitality workers

The Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, a UK-based NGO, surveyed hotel companies in 2021. It found that many workers were still not able to change jobs, and that worker voices were “severely suppressed.” The Qatari Supreme Committee said it was considering conditions in the sector, while FIFA said it was currently reviewing labour rights in hotels.⁴⁹

In March 2022, FIFA held meetings with Amnesty and Qatari officials. This focused on extending working protections to the service sector, particularly hospitality.⁵⁰

In 2020, Amnesty also highlighted instances of abuse against domestic workers, such as cleaners, drivers, childminders, and cooks, with a lack of effective monitoring.⁵¹ In response to the report, Qatar’s Government said domestic labour had “complex challenges” which it still needs to overcome, but minimum wage legislation and laws for a 10-hour working day in the sector were important steps.⁵²

Security workers

In April 2022, Amnesty also reported on abuses among security workers at the world cup. It cited examples of employers refusing rest days and security workers working excessive hours, under the threat of penalties if they did not do so.⁵³

⁴⁷ ILO, [Labour reforms in the state of Qatar](#), October 2022, p5, 9, 25

⁴⁸ UN Human Rights Committee, [Concluding observations on the initial report of Qatar](#), 30 March 2022, paras 22-25

⁴⁹ Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, [Checked out: Migrant worker abuse in Qatar’s world cup](#), 14 July 2021

⁵⁰ FIFA, [FIFA to discuss worker situation in Qatar with Amnesty International](#), 13 March 2022

⁵¹ Amnesty International, [Qatar: Domestic workers share harrowing accounts of abuse and exploitation](#), 20 October 2020

⁵² Doha News, [Amnesty International: “Ongoing abuse of domestic workers in Qatar.”](#) 20 October 2020

⁵³ Amnesty International, [Qatar: Security guards being subject to forced labour—major new report](#), 6 April 2022

Arrests and deportation of workers, August 2022

In August 2022, Qatar reportedly arrested and deported at least 60 foreign workers who protested for going several months without pay. It is unclear whether any were involved in world cup preparation.

Qatari authorities confirmed that several had been detained for breaching security laws and said that delayed salaries would be paid. The responsible company was already under investigation.⁵⁴

Further reading on worker rights

- Human Rights Watch, [FIFA/Qatar: Commit to compensate abused migrant workers](#), 12 August 2022. Qatar does not support such a fund: Al-Monitor, [Qatar rejects compensation fund for migrant workers](#), 2 November 2022
- Human Rights Watch, [10 questions journalists should ask FIFA and Qatari authorities about rights abuses](#), 29 March 2022. These relate to worker rights, deaths and wider human rights issues, such as LGBT+ rights.
- International Labour Organization (ILO), [Overview of Qatar's labour reforms](#), updated March 2022. Describe progress and ILO recommendations.
- ILO, [Four years of labour reforms in Qatar](#), 1 November 2022. Overview of progress and challenges
- Amnesty International, [Reality Check 2021: A year to the 2022 world cup—state of migrant worker's rights in Qatar](#), November 2021. Overview of issues such as unpaid wages, the right to organise, migrant worker deaths, and the kafala system.
- FIFA, [FIFA world cup 2022 first sustainability progress report](#), 2020. Pages 10 to 25 describe worker rights and FIFA's involvement/assessment.
- UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, [End of mission statement of the special rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance](#), December 2019. Discusses human rights violations on the basis of national origin.
- Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, [Qatar](#). Collects news, reports and responses to human rights issues in Qatar.

⁵⁴ AP News, [Qatar detains workers protesting late pay before world cup](#), 22 August 2022, accessed 25 August 2022

3 What is the situation for LGBT+ people in Qatar?

3.1 Same-sex sexual relations are illegal

Qatari law criminalises same-sex sexual relationships, with a penalty of between one- and three-years' imprisonment.

In addition, Qatari law is influenced by the Islamic legal system, Sharia law. Under Sharia, it is possible for men engaged in same-sex sexual acts to be sentenced to death.⁵⁵

However, the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) says, as of 2020, there have been no reports that the death penalty has been applied for this reason in Qatar.⁵⁶

3.2 How are LGBT+ people treated in Qatar?

In 2020, the ILGA said LGBT+ people continue to face an “extremely hostile context” in the country.⁵⁷

It also said LGBT+ people lack legal protections from discrimination and hate speech.⁵⁸

Because there are no state-recognised LGBT+ organisations, reports on discrimination for LGBT+ people in Qatar are sparse.

International groups such as Human Rights Watch have cited examples of individuals being subject to surveillance online, LGBT+ content in the media being censored, and people having to keep their LGBT+ identity a secret.⁵⁹

Human Rights Watch published a further report in October 2022, that said security officials had “arbitrarily arrested” LGBT+ people and subjected them to ill-treatment in recent years.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Human Dignity Trust, [Qatar](#). All sources in section 3 accessed 19 April 2022 unless stated.

⁵⁶ ILGA World, [State-sponsored homophobia report](#) (PDF), 2020, p68

⁵⁷ ILGA World, [State-sponsored homophobia report](#) (PDF), 2020, p68

⁵⁸ ILGA World, [State-sponsored homophobia report](#) (PDF), 2020, p328

⁵⁹ Human Rights Watch, [LGBT Qataris call foul ahead of 2022 world cup](#), 24 November 2021

⁶⁰ Human Rights Watch, [Qatar: Security forces arrest, abuse LGBT people](#), 24 October 2022

3.3 What advice is there on displays of public affection?

Qatar's tourism website states that regardless of sexual orientation or gender, attitudes towards public displays of affection are stricter than in the UK.

It advises that "showing overt affection and intimacy in public is frowned upon," and says many Qatari women will not shake hands with men, and many men will not shake women's hands.⁶¹ The UK Government adds that any intimacy in public between men and women may lead to arrest.⁶²

Qatari guidance on dress for all visitors

Qatar's tourism website states that all visitors are expected to show respect for local culture by "avoiding excessively revealing clothing in public." It cites examples of making sure knees and shoulders are covered.⁶³

3.4 What has Qatar said about welcoming LGBT+ people from abroad?

In 2019, Nasser Al Khater, Chief Executive of the 2022 world cup, said LGBT+ fans will be welcome at the tournament:

I would like to assure any fan, of any gender, (sexual) orientation, religion, [or] race to rest assured that Qatar is one of the most safe countries in the world—and they'll all be welcome here.

The Chief Executive also said security personnel are being trained to make sure all fans are safely treated. However, he cautioned: "Public displays of affection [are] frowned upon" across all social groups in the country.⁶⁴

The UK Government advises that there will be no restrictions on non-married friends or couples (including LGBT+ people) staying in the same room during the tournament.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Qatar Tourism, [Travel information: Coronavirus and travelling to Qatar](#).

⁶² GOV.UK, [Foreign travel advice, Qatar: local laws and customs](#)

⁶³ Qatar Tourism, [Travel information: Coronavirus and travelling to Qatar](#)

⁶⁴ France 24, [Transgender fans "welcome" at world cup says Qatar](#), 26 September 2019

⁶⁵ GOV.UK, [Foreign travel advice, Qatar world cup 2022](#)

3.5 Are there continuing concerns for LGBT+ fans at the world cup?

In March 2022, an international group of 16 organisations wrote to FIFA stating that progress on LGBT+ rights in Qatar had been “slow” and current protections in place for visitors are inadequate.

They laid out eight actions for FIFA and Qatari authorities to implement, including repealing discriminatory laws and providing guarantees against harassment or arrest.⁶⁶ FIFA has held discussions with Qatar on LGBT+ rights (see section 3.7).

In 2020, Qatari officials had confirmed they would [allow rainbow flags to be flown](#) during the competition, in line with FIFA rules.⁶⁷

However, in April 2022 the official overseeing security for the tournament, Major General Abdulaziz Abdullah Al Ansari, said fans raising the rainbow flag may have them confiscated “to protect” them.⁶⁸

3.6 What is the UK doing to ensure the safety of LGBT+ fans?

In December 2020, the Foreign Office said it had directly raised the welcoming of LGBT+ fans with the Qatari authorities. The Minister, James Cleverly, said Qatar had “engaged fully and properly” with the issue and was keen to “demonstrate to the world the progress they are making.”⁶⁹

In November 2022, the Government said it is continuing to engage with Qatar’s “everybody is welcome message.”⁷⁰

UK Government guidance for LGBT+ tourists

The UK has issued general advice for LGBT+ visitors abroad as [LGBT+ foreign travel advice](#). This recommends researching local laws and customs, and for those experiencing problems to contact the UK embassy for help.⁷¹

⁶⁶ BBC News, [World cup 2022: “Issues of concern” remain for LGBTIQ+ people in Qatar](#), 31 March 2022

⁶⁷ AP, [Qatar to allow rainbow flags at 2022 world cup](#), 8 December 2020

⁶⁸ AP, [Qatari official: Rainbow flags may be taken to protect fans](#), 1 April 2022

⁶⁹ HC Deb, [10 December 2020](#), c495W

⁷⁰ PQ 78814 [[Qatar: LGBT+ people](#)], 10 November 2022

⁷¹ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, [LGBT+ foreign travel advice](#), 5 March 2020

3.7

What are football organisations doing to protect LGBT+ fans?

“Kick it out,” English football’s equality and inclusion organisation, funded by the Premier League, the Football Association, and others, has launched a working group for Qatar 2022.

The group includes LGBT+ charities such as Stonewall. It is working to make sure LGBT+ voices are included in tournament preparations and that the world cup leaves a “positive legacy” for LGBT+ people in Qatar.⁷²

Football Against Racism in Europe (FARE) has also participated in talks between FIFA and Qatar. In December 2021, its Director, Piara Powar, said its “main question” for the tournament was about LGBT+ rights and Qatar’s criminalisation of homosexuality.⁷³

FIFA has also said hotels on its list of recommended accommodation for the Tournament must welcome guests in a “non-discriminatory manner” or face termination of their contracts.⁷⁴

The England Football Association (FA) have also been in talks with Qatari authorities. In September 2022, the FA chief executive, Mark Bullingham, said he had been reassured that LGBT+ fans will not be arrested for holding hands or kissing in public at the tournament.⁷⁵

⁷² Kick it out, [Kick it out announces Qatar 2022 world cup working group](#), 19 November 2021

⁷³ FIFA, [FIFA discusses human rights with political stakeholders and experts ahead of Qatar 2022](#), 14 December 2021

⁷⁴ The Guardian, [FIFA issues warning to Qatar 2022 hotels over LGBTQ+ discrimination](#), 13 May 2022, accessed 25 August 2022

⁷⁵ France 24, [FA chief says LGBTQ fans won't face arrest for kissing at world cup](#), 21 September 2022, accessed 18 October 2022

4 Will any teams boycott the tournament?

Although some footballers and national teams have called for a boycott of the world cup in protest of Qatar's human rights record, at the time of writing (October 2022) no country federation has formally decided to do so. No governments have said their officials will not attend.

This contrasts with the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, when the UK, Australia, the US, and Canada were among those not to send government officials to the games in protest at alleged human rights abuses in China.⁷⁶

4.1 UK Government opposes a boycott

In response to calls to boycott the Beijing Winter Olympics, in February 2021 the then Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, said it was the “long standing” position of the Government not to support sporting boycotts (where teams do not participate).⁷⁷

However, the Government supported a diplomatic boycott (where government officials do not attend) to highlight concerns with China's human rights record.⁷⁸

The Government has rejected calls for a boycott of the Qatari tournament. In January 2022, it said it would instead continue to press the Qatari Government on its concerns, such as worker rights. It said the participation of national teams was a matter for the relevant football association.⁷⁹

4.2 Welsh Government position

Wales has also qualified for the Men's world cup. In response to a question from the Leader of Plaid Cymru, Adam Price, on how the tournament will leave a legacy for workers and human rights in Qatar, the First Minister, Mark Drakeford, said in June 2022:

⁷⁶ Center for Strategic & International Studies, [The Biden boycott of the Beijing Winter Olympics](#), 18 January 2022. Questions 1 and 2. All sources in this section accessed 25 April 2022.

⁷⁷ HC Deb, [24 February 2021](#), c910

⁷⁸ HC Deb, [8 December 2021](#), c380

⁷⁹ HL Deb, [20 January 2022](#), c250GC

We are absolutely delighted that Wales will be represented at Qatar, but we should not look the other way from the reservations that we would have as a nation from some of those human rights issues that we see there. And when my colleague [Minister for the Economy] Vaughan Gething was in Qatar in May, he took the opportunity [...] to raise those human rights issues directly with Qatari authorities in the context of the World Cup.⁸⁰

4.3 No teams are planning to boycott

England

In March 2022, the England manager, Gareth Southgate, said [he was unsure what a boycott of the tournament would achieve](#):

It's possible, but it's not a decision that the players or myself would make [...]

Whatever we do we will be criticised but we will try to do our best. There are things which are cultural and religious which will be hard to change [...]

The biggest issue, which is non-religious and non-cultural, is what happened with the building of the stadiums - and there is nothing we can do about that either, sadly.

We have got to use our voice in the right way at the right time.⁸¹

In the same month, England captain [Harry Kane said he wanted to use the tournament to "shine a light" on human rights in Qatar](#). He planned to talk to other national team captains on how to best achieve this.⁸²

In response to the England team statements, Qatar 2022 CEO, Nasser Al Khater, said he would like a meeting with Southgate to discuss the treatment of migrant workers. He argued that the “majority of workers” had benefitted from Qatar’s reforms and that the country was safe for LGBT+ people.⁸³

Wales

Some staff of the Welsh national football team have said they will not travel to the tournament because of Qatar’s record on LGBT+ rights. The Football Association of Wales Chief Executive, Noel Mooney, says the Welsh team will use the event as a “platform” to discuss human rights in Qatar.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Senedd Cymru/Welsh Parliament, [7 June 2022](#), cc33-4

⁸¹ BBC News, [Qatar 2022 world cup: England boss Gareth Southgate unsure what boycott would achieve](#), 25 March 2022

⁸² BBC News, [England captain Harry Kane wants to “shine light” on Qatar issues](#), 23 March 2022

⁸³ Sky News, [Qatar 2022 CEO Nasser Al Khater wants meeting with England manager Gareth Southgate to discuss his concerns](#), 31 March 2022

⁸⁴ BBC News, [World Cup 2022: Wales staff boycott Qatar over gay rights](#), 12 June 2022, accessed 25 August 2022

Other teams

The German, Dutch and Danish teams have also criticised the awarding of the tournament to Qatar and the country's human rights record.⁸⁵

In March 2021, German, Dutch and Norwegian players held protests in their qualifying matches. However, both the German and Norwegian football associations argue a boycott is unlikely to advance human rights in Qatar.⁸⁶

In September 2022, the Danish team said they would wear “toned down” jerseys in protest of Qatar's human rights record. FIFA opposed the move as part of its ban on political messaging.⁸⁷

In October, [Australia issued a statement criticising Qatar for its human rights record](#), though acknowledged improvements in worker's rights.⁸⁸

OneLove campaign and No Discrimination armband

Ten teams planned to participate in the OneLove campaign at the World Cup. Initiated by the Netherlands, participants would wear an armband as a sign of support for inclusion in football. However, following the threat of players being booked the teams said they would not wear the bands.⁸⁹

The participating teams were: England, Wales, the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Denmark, France, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. The English Football Association say the campaign was a means to demonstrate its values while acknowledging progress made in Qatar since the awarding of the tournament.⁹⁰ The Welsh captain, Gareth Bale, says it would demonstrate a unified message against exclusion and discrimination.⁹¹

In response to the November 2022 decision, FIFA brought forward its “No Discrimination” campaign. This will allow team captains to wear a No Discrimination armband during the tournament.⁹²

⁸⁵ The Independent, [Danish national football team loses sponsor amid Qatar human rights row](#), 9 April 2021, BBC News, [Qatar world cup 2022: Louis van Gaal comments 'bland', says tournament chief Hassan Al-Thawadi](#), 24 March 2022

⁸⁶ DW, [World cup 2022 in Qatar: Buzz growing as threat of boycott dwindles](#), 18 November 2021.

⁸⁷ BBC News, [World cup 2022: Denmark has pro-human rights shirt request rejected](#), 10 November 2022

⁸⁸ Sky News, [Australia becomes first world cup team to criticise Qatar's human rights record](#), 27 October 2022

⁸⁹ BBC Sport, [World cup 2022: England, Wales and other European nations will not wear OneLove armbands](#), 21 November 2022

⁹⁰ England Football, [England join fellow nations for new campaign](#), 21 September 2022

⁹¹ Football Association Wales, [Cymru unite with other nations for #onelove campaign](#), 21 September 2022

⁹² BBC Sport, [World cup 2022: England, Wales and other European nations will not wear OneLove armbands](#), 21 November 2022

Sport boycotts: Further reading

- David Goldblatt in Prospect, [Do sporting boycotts work?](#), 20 May 2021. Assessment of past sporting boycotts at the Olympics and other events.
- Council on Foreign Relations, [The debate over boycotting the 2022 Beijing Olympics](#), 6 December 2021. Although focused on China, its arguments and explanation of alternatives to a sporting boycott provide parallels.

5 A carbon-neutral tournament?

5.1 What did Qatar pledge?

In its bid to host the tournament, Qatar pledged to deliver a carbon-neutral world cup. This means carbon emissions will be reduced, and that any carbon emissions will be balanced with the removal of carbon from the atmosphere.

The Qatar bid said the country would use a combination of renewable energy sources, carbon-neutral cooling systems for the stadiums and changes to transport and procurement practices to achieve this.⁹³

5.2 What has been done to achieve a carbon-neutral tournament?

Together with FIFA, in 2019 Qatar published a [Qatar 2022 sustainability strategy](#) (PDF). This sets out how it plans to meet the pledge.⁹⁴

Qatar cites several initiatives, including:

- Shipping containers used to construct Stadium 974, in Ras Abu Aboud. This will be dismantled and repurposed after the event.
- High rates of waste recycling during construction—up to 90% for the Al Janoub Stadium, for example.
- Constructing new metro lines and a fleet of electric buses.
- Constructing a new solar panel plant.

The compact nature of Qatar, which reduces the need for any internal flights, may also help the country meet the pledge.⁹⁵

The December 2020 [FIFA sustainability progress report](#) (PDF) provides further detail on these steps, on pages 44 to 55.

⁹³ FIFA, [Bid evaluation report: Qatar](#) (PDF), undated (2010?), pp4, 8, 11. All sources in this section accessed 27 April 2022

⁹⁴ FIFA, [World cup Qatar 2022: Sustainability strategy](#) (PDF), August 2020, pp64-77

⁹⁵ Visit Qatar, [Ten ways Qatar is reducing its carbon footprint in the lead-up to the FIFA world cup](#)

5.3 How much carbon dioxide will be emitted?

According to Our World in Data, in 2020 Qatar had the highest emissions of carbon dioxide per person in the world, at 37 tonnes. This compared to 14.2 tonnes in the US and 4.9 tonnes in the UK.⁹⁶

In July 2021, FIFA published an update report on the tournament's sustainability. This estimated that from 2011 (when preparation for the tournament began) and June 2023 (when all tournament activities will cease), it is on course to generate 3.6 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.

Carbon dioxide equivalent is a measure used to convert other gases to the equivalent amount of carbon dioxide based on their global warming potential.⁹⁷

96% of the carbon dioxide equivalent will be from three sources: Travel to the tournament (52%), infrastructure construction and operation (25%), and accommodation (20%) (total differs due to rounding).⁹⁸

5.4 Will emissions be offset?

Qatar's organising committee argues the tournament will "ultimately" be carbon-neutral thanks to carbon-offsetting. However, this is likely to occur after the emissions have been produced and the tournament has ended, such as through tree-planting.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Our World in Data, [Per capita CO2 emissions, 2020](#)

⁹⁷ BBC News, [Qatar 2022: World cup expected to produce 3.6m tons of CO2](#), 11 June 2021

⁹⁸ FIFA world cup Qatar 2022, [Greenhouse gas accounting report](#) (PDF), June 2021, p7

⁹⁹ DW, [Qatar touts dismantlable stadium for "sustainable" 2022 world cup](#), 25 November 2021

6 Will alcohol be allowed?

6.1 Ban on public consumption and drunkenness

Alcohol is not illegal in Qatar, but it is an offence to drink alcohol or be drunk in public. This can lead to a prison sentence not exceeding six months and/or a fine not exceeding 3,000 Qatari Riyals (around £630 at May 2022 [exchange rates](#)).¹⁰⁰

The UK Government says British nationals have previously been detained under these laws.¹⁰¹

6.2 Some places are allowed to serve alcohol

Alcohol is available at licensed restaurants and bars. The legal drinking age is 21 and establishments will ask for original photo ID.¹⁰²

6.3 Provisions for the tournament

Qatar's 2022 world cup committee has said alcohol is "not part of Qatari culture" but will be available in designated areas.¹⁰³

On 18 November FIFA said, following discussions with Qatar, that alcohol sales will be limited to select FIFA sites, not including stadium perimeters.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Qatar Legal Portal, [Law No 11 of 2004 issuing the penal code](#), Article 270 and HM Revenue and Customs, [May 2022: Monthly exchange rates](#), 29 March 2022. All section 6 sources unless accessed 25 August 2022 except exchange rates (6 May 2022).

¹⁰¹ GOV.UK, [Foreign travel advice: Qatar, local laws and customs](#)

¹⁰² GOV.UK, [Foreign travel advice: Qatar, local laws and customs](#)

¹⁰³ Qatar Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy website, [FAQs](#)

¹⁰⁴ FIFA, [FIFA statement](#), 18 November 2022

7 What support is the UK military support providing for the tournament?

Long-standing military relationship

The UK has a long-standing defence relationship with Qatar. UK forces are already based in the Gulf to protect shipping lanes and conduct operations against groups such as Daesh/Islamic State.

The RAF's Middle East Operational Headquarters is based in Qatar. Military cooperation has included two joint squadrons—11 Squadron and 12 Squadron.¹⁰⁵

Support announced for the tournament

In May 2022, the UK Government announced that the Ministry of Defence will support Qatar with military capabilities to counter terrorist and other threats to the tournament. This will include:

- Maritime support from the Royal Navy
- Advance venue search training and operational planning

There is already a joint Typhoon squadron (known as 12 Squadron) which is operated by RAF and Qatari Royal Air Force personnel. During the Tournament, the group will conduct air security operations. This will coincide with a pre-planned deployment in Qatar (they are based at RAF Coningsby).¹⁰⁶

In June 2022, the Ministry of Defence said the total cost of the Department for world-cup specific support is £800,000.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Commons Library, [UK forces in the Middle East region](#). Sources in this section accessed 25 August 2022.

¹⁰⁶ Ministry of Defence, [UK announces RAF and Royal Navy support to Qatar World Cup 2022](#), 29 May 2022

¹⁰⁷ PQ 13032 [[Qatar: Football](#)], 9 June 2022

8 What UK Government support is there for visitors?

UK police will attend

In November 2022, it was announced that [some UK police will be deployed to Qatar](#) for the tournament, including a team of 15 engagement officers. They will not have any powers or be responsible for enforcing local laws. Chief Constable Mark Roberts, the UK's national lead on football policing, has described their role:

Their primary focus is to liaise with the supporters and the police forces just to say 'look we're not saying you're wrong, but it's causing offence so you might want to moderate your behaviour before anyone else has to intervene.'¹⁰⁸

What consular support does the UK provide?

The [British Embassy in Doha](#), the capital of Qatar, provides services for British nationals visiting Qatar.

The type and level of assistance it can provide is dependent on individual circumstances, but may take the form of:

- Advice if individuals are ill or have been the victim of a crime.
- Providing local information, such as accessing lawyers or interpreters.
- Issuing emergency travel documents.
- Providing information on transferring money.¹⁰⁹

The Embassy cannot provide legal advice or advice in private disputes (eg, over property or employment).

Consular support can be reached on +974 4496 2000. The Embassy also [provides an online contact form](#).

The Government says the UK Police is also offering advice on engaging with fans attending from the UK.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ BBC News, [World Cup 2022: British officers sent to the tournament will act as "buffers" between fans and local police](#), 1 November 2022

¹⁰⁹ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, [Support for British nationals abroad: A guide](#), 1 January 2021, accessed 14 April 2022.

¹¹⁰ PQ HL1042 [[Football](#)], 30 June 2022

Where can I find out more?

The UK Government has published advice for individuals planning to attend the world cup on ticketing, accommodation, health, local laws, alcohol and drugs, and travel at [Qatar world cup 2022](#). The Government also advises individuals to:

- Sign up for email alerts on the UK's [Qatar travel advice page](#).
- Monitor FIFA's [Qatar 2022 pages](#).
- Visit FIFA's [main website](#).

The Government also provides guides on its [Support for British nationals abroad](#) (updated August 2022) and [World Cup travel tips](#) (October 2022).

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