

SOCCKER | WORLD CUP

Rights group urges FIFA, Qatar to compensate workers



FIFA President Gianni Infantino speaks in April before the 2022 World Cup draw in Doha, Qatar.

Associated Press
BEIRUT, Lebanon — With 99 days to go until the World Cup starts in Qatar, Human Rights Watch on Friday again urged FIFA and the host nation to improve compensation for migrant workers and their families.
The rights group called for a “comprehensive remedy program for workers who suffered serious harms, including deaths, injuries, and wage theft” while working on World Cup-related projects like stadiums, transport and hotels.
Qatar has spent tens of billions of dollars on infrastructure since being picked by FIFA as host in 2010, and faced intense scrutiny of its labor laws and treatment of

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hundreds of thousands of workers, many from south Asia, who were needed to come to the tiny emirate and build the projects.
“Qatar has compensated some migrant workers who have faced serious abuses in recent years, but for many, these programs were created too late and are still a major work in progress,” said Michael Page, HRW’s deputy director for the Middle East.

Since 2010, the agency claimed, the level of “uncompensated human rights abuses ... is significant.” In Qatar, a Workers’ Support Fund has since 2020 paid \$164 million in compensation to 36,373 workers from 17 different countries, HRW said citing data from Qatar’s Ministry of Labor.
The organization did not specify a figure for how much compensation is still needed,

though Amnesty International has suggested FIFA should pay \$440 million in reparations to workers — matching the sum soccer’s world body will pay in prize money to the 32 national federations whose teams are playing in Qatar.
FIFA and tournament organizers have long cited the World Cup as a catalyst to modernize laws and society in Qatar.
Responding to Amnesty in May, Qatari organizers pointed to “significant improvements ... across accommodation standards, health and safety regulations, grievance mechanisms, healthcare provision, and reimbursements of illegal recruitment fees to workers.”

Wallace

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Wallace had no intention of testing the free agent market because he believes his only future in NASCAR is with 23XI.
“I thought from Day 1 on joining this team that I wanted to make this where I retire and a place that I call home for a very long time,” Wallace said. “I’m just trying to do the best that I can and continue those efforts.”
The team expanded this season to add a second car, with veteran Kurt Busch as Wallace’s teammate. Busch will miss his fourth consecutive race on Sunday with concussion-like symptoms, which has put his playoff berth in jeopardy.
At the same time, Wallace is clawing toward his own spot in the 16-driver field. Wallace has never before made the Cup Series playoffs and heads into Sunday’s race at Richmond ranked a career-best 19th in the standings.
He’s coming off his first

pole of the season last week at Michigan International Speedway and then a second-place finish that left him nearly in tears over falling just short of his second career win.
“We haven’t had the best season, but we’ve been able to turn it around and really shown what we are capable of these last handful of races,” Wallace said. “We know the urge to win is high and I thought that was the best opportunity that we had all year long, and just me replaying the last restart and wondering what could I have done different?”
“I am in a much better place today; I see how incredible our team performed ... to put us in that position. So lots to be happy for and grateful for, but in that moment, the sign of defeat got me there for a second.”
Wallace has four consecutive finishes of eighth or better, but he needs a victory in the remaining three regular-season races to get into the playoffs. NASCAR races at Richmond, the road course at

Watkins Glen and then Daytona, where Wallace should be considering among the favorites.
Wallace earned his only career victory, the first for the 23XI organization, last fall at Talladega. At Daytona, Wallace has four top-five finishes in 10 career Cup starts. Three of those finishes were second.
“Without a doubt,” Wallace said when asked if he believes he can win in the regular season. “We’re really confident with what we’re bringing back for Sunday. Watkins Glen is just a race of survival, you never know what can happen. But then Daytona, I think we’re one of the favorites going into that. We just have to continue to do what we do like we’ve been doing the last four to five races.”
“It seems to be working. Don’t ask what it is. I can’t really tell you. But it’s working.”
The extension was announced a day after Wallace hosted more than 3,500 people at Richmond Raceway for the inaugural “Bubba’s Block Party,” which he hopes will

bring a younger, more diverse audience to NASCAR.
The event was one of the many initiatives Wallace has tackled as a key figure in diversity, equity and inclusion efforts with both 23I Racing and NASCAR. His “Live to be Different Foundation” allows Wallace to engage with the Charlotte-area community through backpack drives and the “Knowledge is Power Program” brings students to race tracks across the country.
Additionally, Wallace’s clothing design collaborations with both McDonald’s and Portland’s Columbia Sportswear Co. have brought NASCAR to a new audience.
Hamlin called Wallace “a key part of the early stages of 23XI” and said the team would continue pushing his career. “The goal was to help him take his career to a higher level, and we have done just that,” Hamlin said. “Bubba is continuing to get more competitive each week. We’re excited to see his growth as he and the team work toward achieving our goals.”



NASCAR driver Bubba Wallace outside Soldier Field in Chicago, near a statue of Walter Payton, in July, during a promotional visit to announce a Cup Series street race in the city, to be held July 2, 2023.

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