

ITV to show report on Qatar World Cup controversies in tournament opening coverage

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ITV's coverage of the opening match of the 2022 Qatar World Cup will feature a report on the controversies surrounding the tournament.

Presented by ITV News Sport Editor Steve Scott, the report, which will be shown as part of ITV1's highlights show of the curtain-raiser between Qatar and Ecuador, will include strident criticism of the tournament being hosted in a country where women and gay people's rights are restricted.

Felix Jakens from Amnesty International raises questions about the host authorities' reporting of migrant worker deaths during construction of World Cup stadiums in Qatar.

He said: "Around 6,000 migrant workers have died since 2010 but the Qatari authorities only claim that three people have died as a result of delivering the World Cup stadiums. Something has to be a little bit amiss there."

Jakens also attributes responsibility to FIFA for allowing the tournament to be hosted in a state where he claims conditions for workers are unacceptable.

He said: "FIFA decided that Qatar was an appropriate host, despite the fact that at the time they awarded it, they had a system close to indentured labour..."

"So workers unable to change jobs, their passports confiscated, can't change employers, no retribution if wages are withheld. So the fact that FIFA made that decision - they had to know that this was a likely consequence of doing so."

The report also includes a focus on the LGBTQ+ community, with criticism of FIFA choosing to host the World Cup in a country where same sex relationships are illegal.

Liz Ward, from Stonewall, said: "It's an incredible privilege to be awarded a World Cup and I think the way a World Cup is awarded should meet a minimum standard on what human rights exist within those nations, but when LGBTQ+ people are being beaten in the street for their existence that feels like beneath a minimum standard FIFA should be holding for these competitions.

"We are looking at two consecutive World Cups that have existed in countries where LGBTQ+ people are not able to be our true selves and the message that sends out to not just to the community in that country but to LGBT+ people around the world is a hurtful one and a painful one."

The ITV1 report also includes FIFA's defence of the criticism it has faced about its decision to host the World Cup in Qatar.

FIFA President Gianni Infantino said: "The first time after I was elected FIFA President, I went to see some of these workers' accommodation here and I said to the people here in Qatar, 'Well, this is not good, this is not right, need to do something about it.'

"And then the way has become an example in inclusion. I think for what we Europeans have been doing in the last three thousand years around the world, we should be apologising for the next three thousand years before starting to give moral lessons. Here in Qatar as well, of course, there are still things that don't work and that need to be addressed, but this moral lesson-giving, one-sided, it's just hypocrisy."

He addressed the criticism of hosting a World Cup in a country that prohibits same sex relationships, saying:

“I have been speaking about this topic with the highest leadership in the country several times, not just once. They have confirmed and I can confirm that everyone is welcome. They will tell me, ‘Yes, but these legislations, which prohibit that and, whatever, you have to go to jail,’ I don’t know what. Yes, this legislation exists in many countries in the world. So, again, like for the workers, these are processes. So, what do you want to do about it? You want to stay home and hammer and criticise and say how bad they are, these arabs, or these muslims, or whatever, because, it’s not allowed to be publicly gay? Of course, I believe it should be allowed, as FIFA President, but I went through a process. Don’t criticise Qatar, don’t criticise the players, don’t criticise anyone. Criticise FIFA, criticise me.

“We have a city that wants to welcome the world. Let’s please, please celebrate and hope that we can give some smiles to some people around the world.”

Steve Scott’s report features in ITV’s coverage of the FIFA World Cup 2022, which begins tonight at 10.50pm. Presenter Mark Pougatch is joined by pundits Ian Wright and Hal Robson-Kan to bring highlights of the tournament’s opening match between hosts Qatar v Ecuador.

Coverage continues tomorrow [Monday 21 November, with live coverage of Senegal v Netherlands at 3pm, followed in the evening by live coverage of USA v Wales from 6pm.

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