

EUROPE

French firm Vinci charged over alleged Qatar labor abuses

A French judge is set to probe the Vinci construction company over allegations it violated the rights of migrant workers in Qatar.

Le Monde with AFP

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A subsidiary of French construction giant Vinci has been charged with alleged labor abuses at work sites in Qatar, including projects linked to the football World Cup, a lawyer for the group said on Wednesday, November 9.

Vinci Constructions Grands Projets (VCGP) was charged by a French magistrate with "labor or housing conditions incompatible with human dignity", after complaints by NGOs and former Indian and Nepalese workers, Jean-Pierre Versini-Campinchi told Agence France-Presse (AFP).

Under French law, being charged implies the magistrate believes there is compelling evidence against the company, but the decision can be appealed and does not automatically mean the case will go to trial. The Paris-based group has denied using forced labor and taking part in human trafficking, as claimed by the plaintiffs.

Read more [French firm Vinci expects to be charged over Qatar building sites](#)

Two French NGOs – Sherpa and the Committee Against Modern Slavery – and seven former employees from India and Nepal who worked on Vinci building sites have filed a series of legal complaints against the company dating back to 2015.

They allege that employees working on sites linked to the football World Cup labored for 66 to 77 hours a week, had their passports confiscated and were forced to live in indecent accommodation.

In its statement on Monday, Vinci denied that the public transport sites in question were linked to the World Cup, saying the contracts were awarded before the football tournament was attributed to Qatar in 2010. Qatar has faced a barrage of criticism over migrant worker deaths and its labor law since being named World Cup host.

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It has introduced significant changes since the start of the French legal investigation, including ending its so-called "Kafala" labor system that meant workers could not change jobs or leave the country without permission from their employer.

Sandra Cossart, Sherpa's executive director, welcomed the decision to press charges, noting that Vinci's subsidiary was also accused of forced labor and servitude.

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