



Qatar 2022: FIFA Corruption Scandal

The surprising success of Qatar's bid to host the 2022 World Cup triggered scrutiny and prompted investigations by Swiss and US authorities resulting in one of the greatest corruption scandals in the history of FIFA. Due to Qatar's centrality in a geopolitical storm with Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain and the UAE, which accuse Doha of supporting and financing international terrorism, it is more important than ever to consider how Qatar uses and misuses its financial resources.

Mohamed Bin Hammam and Julio Grondona: Corruption Managers

Following the 2011 investigation by FIFA's ethics committee, FIFA suspended Qatar's Mohamed Bin Hammam, FIFA's presidential candidate, as well as President of the Asian Football Confederation, and FIFA vice-president Jack Warner pending an investigation into claims they both offered financial incentives to members of the Caribbean Football Union. Bin Hammam was found guilty of bribery and banned from all international and national football activities for life. This confirms a previous investigation by the Sunday Times which unveiled that former FIFA executive committee member Bin Hammam had made payments to football officials in return for votes for Qatar. In 2015, Swiss authorities raided FIFA headquarters, gathered data and documents for a separate investigation into allegations of criminal mismanagement and money laundering in connection with the allocation of the 2022 World Cup bid.

Qatar's involvement goes beyond Mohamed Bin Hammam's role within FIFA. Qatar was found to have employed corruption tactics including the sponsorship of the Confederation of African Football conference in Angola and the famous 2010 lunch attended by the son of the country's Emir at the time and current Qatar's ruler Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani with the then UEFA president Michel Platini, in an attempt to buy votes. The figure of Grondona, was crucial in exchanging money with votes in helping Qatar to secure the lucrative World Cup tournament. Several witnesses heard a conversation between Grondona and Qatari officials at FIFA in which the football executive was furious at news reports implicating him in corrupt dealings and insinuated he had been underpaid for his vote. Grondona also ensured the loyalty of South America's FIFA delegates to the Qatar 2022 cause, through series of meetings at hotels and restaurants in Buenos Aires starting in 2012. Julio Grondona helped strike deals for annual six-figure bribes for Maín, who replaced Teixeira as president of Brazil's soccer

federation; Burga, former president of Peru's soccer federation; and Napout, ex-head of Paraguay's soccer federation.

Qatar: A Global Football Powerhouse

The German newspaper Bild also unveiled other corruption cases related to the vote which led to Qatar's successful 2022 World Cup bid. Bild's report includes details of a \$2million sum paid to the 10-year-old daughter of a FIFA official. In addition, Bild revealed how three FIFA executive members were flown to a party in Rio in a private jet belonging to the Qatari federation before the vote for the 2022 World Cup's hosting rights. German journalists also claim that the State of Qatar created an ad hoc academy, the Aspire Academy in Qatar, which, by organising several events with prominent FIFA officials, was implicated in a decisive manner in the manipulation of FIFA members who had the right to vote.

Over the past few years the government of Qatar has been very active to position itself as one of the key players in elite football. Qatar's influence on global football goes deeper than the 2022 World Cup bid. Through a sports network that is present in Europe, North America, the Middle East and Asia, the Qatari government is also one of the major players in the lucrative business of sports broadcasting. BEIN Sports, previously known as Al-Jazeera Sport, entered the European market snatching the rights to the UEFA Champions League, the Europa League, and the 2012 and 2016 Euro making \$430 million a year. Government-backed Qatari Airways is also the main jersey sponsor for FC Barcelona, the world's second most valuable football team. They signed a 5-year deal worth \$38 million.

We at the Euro-Gulf Information Centre seek to increase public awareness regarding Qatar's meticulous plan to exchange the wealth derived from its vast natural resources for global influence. World football only constitutes a part of such plan.

By: Antonino Occhiuto

Date: 11 December 2017