

Should QMSU and BLSA boycott sporting or other entertainment events in their venues when there are human rights violations involved in the organisation or country hosting the event?

**Proposed by: Charlie Sellar (BLSA President, QMSU VP Barts and The London)
Seconded by: Radhika Thiagarajan (VP Communities), Joanna Croft (VP Welfare),
QM LGBT+ Soc, BL LGBT+ Soc, QMBL Transnetwork, Environmental Society, QM
LGBT+ Rep, BL LGBT+ Rep, Jules Buet, 'MJ'**

What do you want?

QMSU and BLSA should not screen/show any sporting or other entertainment events that have been associated with human rights violations. For example, the recent football World Cup matches should not be shown in QMSU and BLSA venues. This is to stand in solidarity with groups affected and condemn the human rights violations being committed.

If passed, this motion would:

- 1. Completely boycott the current 2022 World Cup in Qatar in QMSU/BLSA Venues.**
- 2. Kickstart a new process whereby any future sporting events where the parent organisation or country has a history of significant human rights abuse can and will be boycotted by the Union, at the discretion of QMSU Student Council.**

What is happening in the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar?

In the World Cup currently held in Qatar by FIFA, there have been over 6500 deaths of migrant workers from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and other countries, during construction work since Qatar was awarded the World Cup.

Furthermore, it is illegal to belong to the LGBTQIA+ community in Qatar and homosexuality is punishable by prison sentencing or even death. More importantly, in direct relation to this World Cup, former Qatari footballer and local ambassador of the 2022 World cup has described homosexuality as "a damage in the mind".

In the lead up to the World Cup, many members of the Qatari LGBTQIA+ community have been beaten and punched and detained in solitary underground prison for months and forced into conversion therapies.

Many LGBTQIA+ fans have declared that they cannot go to Qatar to watch the World Cup because it is not safe for them to attend.

Further injustice has been brought to this community with UK's Foreign Secretary James Cleverly, suggesting that LGBTQIA+ fans "show a little bit of flex and compromise at the World Cup", continuing the dangerous precedent that this community hide their identities and their fundamentals at will.

It is impossible to describe every human right violation that has occurred directly in connection with this World Cup, however, we have provided some sources for you for further reading:

<https://news.sky.com/story/being-gay-is-damage-in-the-mind-qatar-world-cup-ambassador-says-12741596>

<https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/sports/qatar-world-cup-ambassador-says-homosexuality-is-damage-mind-2022-11-08/>

<https://news.sky.com/story/lgbt-qataris-arrested-and-abused-just-weeks-before-start-of-world-cup-rights-group-claims-12729079>

<https://www.theguardian.com/football/2022/nov/08/qatar-world-cup-ambassador-homosexuality>

<https://metro.co.uk/2022/11/08/gay-mp-says-qatar-world-cup-is-not-safe-for-people-like-me-17720924/>

What needs to be done?

To stand in solidarity with groups affected and condemn the human rights violations being committed, QMSU and BLSA should not show or profit from screening the World Cup or similar sporting or entertainment events in its venues.

This shall not be limited to just the screening and showing of the 2022 FIFA World Cup, but also to all other similar sporting and entertainment events in the future where human rights have been violated.

Whilst QMSU and BLSA do not support these showings, it does not prevent students from watching the World Cup or other similar events on their laptops, televisions etc. or in their own accord as groups or individuals. Students are also free to watch the screenings and showings of such events by the University. This is a mandate for QMSU and BLSA as an organisation to not show or profit from such events.

Why do you want it?

QMSU and BLSA are charities/non-profit organisations, run for the welfare and benefit of all students including minority groups of students. Our fundamental values include being inclusive, supportive and welcoming. We believe that showing, promoting and profiting from the screening of the World Cup in our venues directly goes against these values. We would not be inclusive and supportive of our communities from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh and our LGBTQIA+ community if we broadcast and promote the World Cup. Whilst questions are being asked as to how not screening the World Cup does not really help the communities affected, this is untrue. By not showing the World Cup, we are sending a statement that as a political organisation, we will not benefit from, nor will we encourage, unethical events.

Furthermore, this motion would apply not just to this World Cup but to any future events that are associated with human rights violations, and this step will help us protect our marginalised communities who do not have a majority voice and will help support the welfare of these communities. For example, we have received feedback from many of our reps from the LGBT+ community and other society reps stating their concerns about airing the World Cup games in our spaces, and so in order to support these concerns, we as an organisation should not be screening the World Cup. We also want to

acknowledge the migrant workers who died whilst building the stadium, and the communities in which they belong.

There have been calls recently to show the World Cup and similar events and donate the proceeds to human rights charities that help and support these minority groups. Making this standpoint declares a significant conflict of interest, however, and whilst this benefits the minority groups affected, this would also still be supporting organisations and countries that do not align with QMSU and BLSA values through profit from ticket sales, licencing, and viewership statistics. Furthermore, it is beyond the scope and illegal under charity laws for QMSU and BLSA to make donations to external charities and therefore, this is not practically possible.

Finally, whilst QMSU and BLSA will not be showing these events, no one is restricted or stopped from watching these events as individuals or groups, in or outside of campuses. The University have decided to also screen these events. Given the ease at which these events can be accessed and viewed, there is no added benefit from QMSU and BLSA additionally screening these events.

Queen Mary Students' Union, and the BLSA as a subsidiary, are the SU for one of the most diverse Universities in the country, and as a result we must champion our core values and uphold them to the highest standard, if we are to ensure that every student feels at home at QMUL. By voting to boycott the World Cup and similar events down the line, we are putting the power back in our hands to decide what we as a political organisation want to endorse. Put simply, **by showing a Sporting Tournament, you are by extension supporting the values of the parent organisation or country.**

What impact will this have?

It will create a more inclusive environment in the SU venues and increase safe spaces on campus for minority communities.

It will ensure that the minority communities affected by this are protected.

It will create more awareness about the struggles faced by the affected minority groups.

It will also ensure that this organisation is run in accordance with its mission, vision and values statement and be an organisation open, safe and welcoming for all.