



## U.A. Resolution #6

### Requesting Specific Information on Labor Practices at Weill Cornell Medicine – Qatar

February 9, 2016

**Sponsored by:**

**Alexander Thomson, Graduate/Professional Student; Executive Vice Chair,  
University Assembly**

**Matt Indimine, Undergraduate; Undergraduate Representative, University  
Assembly**

**On behalf of:**

**Cornell Organization for Labor Action: Carunya Achar, Michael Ferrer,  
Allison Considine, Xavier Eddy, Deepa Saharia**

**Whereas,** Article III of the University Assembly Charter grants the University Assembly the authority to “examine, on its own initiative, matters which involve the interests or concern the welfare of a substantial segment of the campus community;”

**Whereas,** Recent protests have revealed among students, staff, and faculty a substantial interest in the labor practices and conditions at Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar (WCM-Q);

**Whereas,** WCM-Q shares not only the Cornell name, but also its common values, educational mission, excellence in research, and commitment to bettering the global community; furthermore, WCM-Q draws faculty from both the Ithaca and New York City campuses;

**Whereas,** WCM-Q contributes over \$88 million annually to Cornell’s operating budget, which directly affects the financial position of the university as a whole;

**Whereas,** Cornell’s practices both at home and abroad reflect upon the institution as a whole, impacting the prestige and the reputation of the broader Cornell community, including its administrators, faculty, staff, and students;

**Whereas,** Qatari labor practices enforce the *kafala* system, a migrant-labor monitoring process which requires all unskilled laborers to have an in-country sponsor, usually their employer, who is responsible for their visa and legal status. This system creates opportunities for employers to commit massive labor exploitation with minimal legal repercussions. Migrant workers compose 94% of the Qatari labor force and ubiquitously suffer under a system in which employer consent is required to change jobs, leave the country, get a driver’s license, rent a home, or open a checking account;



**Whereas,** an initial investigation into working conditions in Education City by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) - a global confederation of workers' organizations - found instances of forced labor, cramped living conditions, low wages, and passport confiscation. The results of this investigation were sent to the presidents of universities present in Education City in March of 2014, including Cornell, with only Georgetown responding to the letter;

**Whereas,** The 2022 World Cup will place Qatar in the global spotlight, likely exposing Education City, WCM-Q, and Cornell University to increased scrutiny by the media and viewers around the world;

**Whereas,** WCM-Q recognizes its positive role in society, stating in its mission a commitment "to provide the highest quality of care to the community;"

**Whereas,** Cornell University, as an institution, has a moral obligation to ensure that its community members are treated with dignity and afforded the same basic human rights, no matter where they are in the world or in what capacity they serve the university;

**Whereas,** Recent discussions about labor practices and conditions at WCM-Q have lacked sufficient detail for the University Assembly to objectively evaluate the issue;

**Be it therefore resolved,** that the University Assembly, in order to promote transparency, requests information about workforce policies and practices at WCM-Q, specifically:

- The composition of the workforce at WCM-Q, including the number of Cornell employees and contracted employees and the roles these worker groups fulfill (e.g. job group and job family analysis),
- The names and affiliations of third party employers contracted by WCM-Q,
- The policies and standards used by WCM-Q to choose third party employers,
- The specific worker protections stipulated in contracts between WCM-Q and third party employers, and Cornell's options for redress if those stipulations are violated,
- Any and all policies and practices WCM-Q uses to ensure Cornell's standards are being upheld, including the resources available to workers with grievances;

**Be it further resolved,** that the information in lines 67-78 be made publicly available and presented to the University Assembly by the May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016 meeting;

**Be it further resolved,** that the University Assembly requests the details of any and all previous labor investigations or audits conducted at WCM-Q by Cornell, including



the investigators, the date(s) of investigation(s), and the conclusions made by the investigation(s);

**Be it further resolved,** that the University Assembly requests the details, where known, of any and all previous labor investigations or audits conducted at WCM-Q by external organizations, including the investigators, the date(s) of investigation(s), and the conclusions made by the investigation(s);

**Be it further resolved,** that the University Assembly requests, where not in conflict with the law, the details of any and all contact regarding salaries, policies, and protections with contracted staff at WCM-Q;

**Be it further resolved,** that the University Assembly requests the protocols and results of any and all monitoring of the working conditions of contracted staff conducted by the WCM-Q administration;

**Be it further resolved,** that the University Assembly requests the details of any and all contact with vendors regarding benefits and protections mandated for contracted staff;

**Be it further resolved,** that the information requested in lines 83-103 be made publicly available and presented to the University Assembly during a regularly scheduled meeting no later than February 2017.

**Be it finally resolved,** that the University Assembly will maintain impartiality on the issue of labor conditions at Cornell's international facilities until further information becomes available.