

Gulflabor¹ is a coalition of artists, writers, curators, educators and others working to ensure that workers' rights are protected during the construction and maintenance of new cultural institutions on Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi. Our work was initiated in response to a Human Rights Watch report² on labor conditions on Saadiyat Island.

In 2010, and after months of inconclusive conversations with the Guggenheim Foundation in New York, Gulflabor initiated an artist boycott³ of the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi.

In 2011, Gulflabor's actions eventually led Abu Dhabi's Tourism, Development & Investment Company (TDIC) to appoint PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) as monitor.⁴

In September 2012, PwC published its first annual monitoring report.⁵

Gulflabor reviewed this report and issued a public response.⁶

Today, Gulflabor calls on all academic and cultural institutions building on Saadiyat Island to seek uniform and enforceable human rights protections for the workers working on their sites.⁷ These protections should specifically address:

1. Recruitment fees and relocation costs paid by workers.
2. Poor and unsafe housing and living conditions, even in the Saadiyat Construction Village that is meant to embody the highest standards for worker welfare upheld by TDIC.⁸
3. Lack of freedom to form trade unions for collective bargaining or to change jobs.
4. Lack of open platforms for workers to express grievances or abuses without fear of recrimination or dismissal.

We urge the Guggenheim Foundation to publicly respond to PwC's report, and we continue to call on all parties in the region to publicly commit themselves to the welfare and fair working conditions of those who will be constructing these cultural institutions.

In our consultations with the Guggenheim Foundation, we have highlighted the "Dhaka Principles," devised by the Institute for Human Rights and Business⁹ as a potential source for realistic guidelines that abide by internationally recognized standards of human rights.

Given the Guggenheim Foundation's global program (particularly its recently launched Guggenheim UBS Global Map Art initiative¹⁰ which is currently focused on contemporary art from South and Southeast Asia) and its own stated goals "to bring together artists, curators, and

¹ <http://gulflabor.wordpress.com>

² 2009 report: <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2009/05/18/island-happiness-0>; 2012 follow-up report: <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2012/03/21/island-happiness-revisited-0>

³ <http://gulflabor.wordpress.com/sign-the-petition/>

⁴ <http://www.tdic.ae/en/news/media-center/news/tdic-to-appoint-pwc-to-monitor-saadiyat-island-contractors-performance-in-the-area-of-worker-welfare.html>

⁵ <http://www.tdic.ae/en/article/property-1/the-epps-2012-annual-independent-monitoring-report.html>

⁶ http://gulflabor.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/gulflabor_updateresponsetopwc_nov_2012.pdf

⁷ In 2011 and 2012, between 10,000 and 19,000 migrants worked on Saadiyat Island. Their numbers are expected to increase in the next building phase. See PwC report page 10.

⁸ <http://www.tdic.ae/en/article/property-1/saadiyat-island-construction-village.html>

⁹ <http://www.dhaka-principles.org>

¹⁰ <http://www.guggenheim.org/guggenheim-foundation/collaborations/map>

supporters of the arts across geographic boundaries to engage more deeply in the exponential expansion of the art world," Gulflabor encourages the Guggenheim to take a leading role along with its future neighbors in Abu Dhabi (Louvre Abu Dhabi, Zayed National Museum,¹¹ New York University Abu Dhabi, among others) in promoting the introduction and observance of international standards of labor and human rights for all workers on Saadiyat Island.¹²

Sincerely,

Gulflabor Working Group:

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¹¹ The Zayed National Museum is developed with the advice and counsel of the British Museum.

¹² For more information on cultural institutions on Saadiyat Island, see:
<http://www.saadiyatculturaldistrict.ae/en/saadiyat-cultural-district/partners/>