

Gulf Labor Coalition Timeline (2010-2016)

2009

- Human Rights Watch (HRW) publishes report [The Island of Happiness: Exploitation of Migrant Workers on Saadiyat Island, Abu Dhabi](#), following 2006 [Building Towers, Cheating Workers](#) on Dubai

2010

- Middle East Institute releases report: [Labor Camps in the Gulf States](#). A nucleus of artists working in the region study and discuss this report.
- NYU students launch campaign [“Who’s Building NYU Abu Dhabi?”](#) demanding NYU protect workers rights on the “first world-class, liberal arts university in the Middle East.”
- NYU announced labor provisions which [HRW praised as “breaking new ground.”](#) However NYU students insisted that “Unless a monitor is empowered to make random visits to work sites and maintain a relationship independent of employer influence, violations will persist and continue to be under-reported”
- GulfLabor held meetings with HRW about their 2009 report. NYU faculty and students also shared their efforts to secure protections for workers building NYU Abu Dhabi campus.
- June 2010: Letter signed by 43 artists sent to the Guggenheim Foundation requesting that the Foundation obtain contractual guarantees that will protect the rights of workers employed in the construction and maintenance of its new branch museum in Abu Dhabi. We followed our letter with meetings with Richard Armstrong and Nancy Spector at the Guggenheim. They assured us that the Foundation is committed to fair labor standards and requested some time to pursue the development of employment policies with their partners in Abu Dhabi, TDIC (The Abu Dhabi Tourism and Development Investment Company). We agreed not to make our letter public at this time.
- September 2010: TDIC’s [Employment Practices Policy \(EPP\)](#) are made public, followed by the TDIC/Guggenheim Statement of Shared Values. The released statements made public commitments by TDIC and the Guggenheim Foundation to uphold workers’ rights protections. However, the released documents did not address independent monitoring of employers’ compliance with human rights standards, and about effective enforcement mechanism.
October 2010: Artist group sends letter to the Guggenheim Foundation, urging them to address the issue of independent monitoring, and considering other provisions related to the payment of recruitment fees, freedom of movement for workers, health and safety provisions, accommodations, monitoring of wage payments, and rest and leisure time for workers.

2011

- March 2011: Six months after our letter to Guggenheim, GulfLabor coalition noted little progress on issues. We moved to make the initial letter public, and called for [a boycott of Guggenheim Abu Dhabi](#).
- March 2011: A group of members of GulfLabor visited a labor camp on Saadiyat Island and had discussions with TDIC officials.
- April-May 2011: GulfLabor held meetings with Guggenheim in New York. We recommended an independent rights monitor be chosen from a list of recommendations by HRW. GulfLabor sent an [update to all signatories](#).
- May 2011: Jadaliyya and Samar public Ahmed Kanna’s [“The Arab World’s Forgotten Rebellions: Foreign Workers and Biopolitics in the Gulf”](#)
- May 2011: GulfLabor contacted Institute for Human Rights & Business and shared with Guggenheim IHRB’s newly released [Dhaka Principles for Migration with Dignity](#). We introduce IHRB’s Salil Tripathi to Guggenheim and request they take a meeting with him. The museum does not contact Tripathi.
- June 2011: TDIC announces appointment of Price Waterhouse Coopers (PwC) as independent monitoring firm. PwC was not on HRW’s recommended list. GulfLabor released a public statement [critical of the choice of PwC](#).

2012

- March 2012: HRW releases second report [The Island of Happiness Revisited](#).
- September 2012: PwC releases [monitoring report](#) on labor conditions on Saadiyat Island.

- November 2012: [Frank Gehry discusses plans](#) for Guggenheim Abu Dhabi at Abu Dhabi Art Fair
- November 2012: GulfLabor [responds to Price Waterhouse Coopers report](#)

2013

- January 2013: GulfLabor calls on ([GulfLabor PublicStatement 1.7.13](#)) all cultural institutions on Saadiyat, including Louvre and NYU, to publicly take steps for migrant labor rights. The Public Statement included the following 4 key provisions: *1. Recruitment fees and relocation costs paid by workers. 2. Poor and unsafe housing and living conditions, even in the Saadiyat Construction Village. 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.*
- January 2013: ArabTec chosen for the **\$654 million Louvre Abu Dhabi contract**. ArabTec made labor rights headlines in 2011 for [deporting 70 Bangladeshi workers](#) who led 5,000 workers on a [two-week strike](#) against non-payment of wages at [Burj Dubai](#) and [other ArabTec sites](#).
- May 21, 2013: ArabTec workers in Abu Dhabi and Dubai [go on strike](#). Workers at the Saadiyat Island Construction Village are part of the strike.
- May 25, 2013: The National reports that [at least 460 workers are deported](#) back to home countries after the strike is brought to an end. Other reports on deportations [here](#) and [here](#).
- August 22, 2013: [Violence](#) in Saadiyat Construction Village, [40 hospitalised](#), [workers](#) were protesting deportations of Bangladeshi workers in May, replaced by Pakistani workers.
- October 2013: “[52 Weeks of Gulf Labor](#)” begins
- December, 2013: PwC’s Tourism, Development, and Investment Company – Employment Practices Policy [Annual Report](#) (TDIC) – (EEP) was released

2014

- January, 2014: TDIC responds to labor disputes, allegations, and Gulf Labor efforts in a [Press Release](#)
- February, 2014: Gulf Labor responds to PwC’s Report on TDIC Employment Practices with a [Press Release](#)
- February, 2014: GULF, MTL, and members of Gulf Labor stage [protest](#) inside the Guggenheim New York. [Guggenheim responds to protest](#). [GULF Protest Continue](#). [Joining Forces with NYU](#). [G.U.L.F. Calls Guggenheim a 1% Global Museum with a 1% Board](#). [Guggenheim Responds to G.U.L.F.’s new demands and discoveries](#). [G.U.L.F. Responds to Guggenheim, Calls on Museum to Open Its Doors to Free Public Assembly](#)
- February, 2014: [NYU Abu Dhabi Responds to Migrant Labor Situation](#)
- February, 2014: Head of Marketing for TDIC Invites Gulf Labor Coalition Members to visit Saadiyat as part of response to PwC Report criticism.
- March 2014: [GULF performs second/follow up action by projecting images onto the facade of the Guggenheim](#)
- March 2014: [GULF launches fake Global Guggenheim website in order to make a point about the Guggenheim’s attitude towards sustainable practices](#)
- March 2014: [GULF continues their second action at the Guggenheim](#)
- March, 2014: Gulf Labor and GULF Members visit Saadiyat Island after accepting TDIC’s invitation, members visit and report on Saadiyat Accommodation Village and off-site camps, Richard Armstrong (Director of Guggenheim) requests meeting with GL members.
- March 2014: Guggenheim responds to GULF’s second action, claims they are attempting to ensure fair labor practices
- March 2014: Gulf Labor continues dialogue with TDIC/Bassem Tarkawi after members return from Saadiyat
- April 2014: [Gulf Labor releases their report](#) and [press release](#) on labor conditions in Saadiyat Island after core group undertakes independent field research.
- May 2014: TDIC responds to Gulf Labor report with their own [press release](#). NYU Abu Dhabi responds to Gulf Labor report
- May 2014: New York Times publishes [article](#) critical of NYU Abu Dhabi Labor on front page and confirms GL findings/report. [NYU officials say they will investigate claims of worker abuse](#)
- May 2014: [GULF stages their 4th Action](#).

- May 2014: Gulf Labor releases a [press release](#) in response to TDIC's reaction to the GL report, asking for a proper response to all their recommendations.
- April 2014: Gulf Labor meets with members of the ILO to discuss the situation on Saadiyat Island.
- June 2014: [NYU Abu Dhabi attempts to find a new and truly independent monitor](#) in the wake of the NYT investigative report.
- June 2014: Gulf Labor releases their [most recent letter to the Guggenheim](#). Members of Gulf Labor and GULF meet with key Guggenheim management including Richard Armstrong and Nancy Spector.
- August 2014: Creative Time publishes "[Who's happy on the 'Island of Happiness?'](#)"
- September 2014: GULF and [The Next Helsinki](#) launch a [counter/alternative competition](#), following a [press release](#)
- September 2014: [ITUC calls for UN/ILO to investigate slave labor conditions in UAE during construction of projects including Guggenheim and Louvre](#)
- October 2014: [52 Weeks of Gulf Labor](#) ends, "COUNTDOWN" announced.
- November 2014: Guggenheim gala dinner [met with renewed protests](#).
- December 2014: Calls grow for end to [kafala visa system](#)
- December 2014: Report says UAE's [new terrorism law aims to stifle critics](#)

2015

- January 2015: UAE launches [aggressive attacks on critics, human rights activists](#)
- February 2015: HRW issues [third report on Saadiyat Island](#)
- March 2015: [Gulf Labor sends three-point proposal to the Guggenheim](#), Guggenheim does not respond.
- March 2015: [UAE bans Gulf Labor member and NYU professor Andrew Ross](#)
- April 2015: [Guggenheim sends a letter to GLC stating that our actions are "neither accurate nor helpful to our shared aims."](#)
- April 2015: The [Nardello Report](#) (an independent investigator into allegations of labor and compliance issues at NYU Abu Dhabi) is published, making clear that [protection for around 10000 workers failed on several counts.](#)
- GLC asks for response to three point proposal but does not receive it.
- May 2015: After two months elapse since the three-point demand, members of [GULF and Gulf Labor occupy the Guggenheim to demand action on migrant labor abuse](#)
- May 2015: [Gulf Labor, arts groups occupy the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice.](#) Guggenheim holds emergency meeting with occupiers and promise meetings with Board Members in New York. Receiving this reassurance, occupiers peacefully leave the museum.
- May 2015: [Gulf Labor's Ashok Sukumaran denied entry into UAE; Gulf Labor's Walid Raad barred from entering UAE](#)
- May 2015: 12th Sharjah Biennial Artists write letter to the Guggenheim, the Louvre and other cultural institutions in the UAE, questioning the travel bans on fellow artists. Other letters of support follow from [L'Internationale](#), AMCA and others.
- June 2015: [60+ international curators](#) ask UAE institutions to push for removal of the travel bans
- June 2015: Gulf Labor members meet with William Mack (chairman), Jennifer Stockman (president) of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation Board of trustees and Richard Armstrong (director), Hanan Worell (Senior Guggenheim representative in Abu Dhabi).
- June 2015: Guggenheim insists that "no construction has begun", Gulf Labor [disagrees](#)
- July 2015: Gulf Labor writes an [open letter to the Louvre](#)
- July 2015: Gulf Labor releases [2015 report](#), launches "[The Gulf: High Culture/ Hard Labor](#)", and hosts a program of panel discussions as part of their participation at the Venice Biennale.
- July 2015: [Six Documenta curators](#) write to the UAE Govt, Louvre, Guggenheim and British Museum

2016

- February 2016: An NGO consortium and GLC meet with Guggenheim. GLC follows up with a letter with three-point proposals, and a deadline of end of March 2016.
- March 2016: Gulf Labor research [cited by ILO](#) in report on forced labor in UAE
- April 2016: Guggenheim unilaterally announces end of all meetings with GLC and NGO consortium.