

ADVOCACY DOSSIER

MALCOLM BIDALI

مالكولم بيدالي

At liberty **Qatar**

A Kenyan security guard and blogger detained in Qatar for documenting migrant worker rights abuses. Held in solitary confinement for nearly a month, then fined for spreading false news. He left Qatar in August 2021.

HuMENA.

Prepared by HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement · 8 November 2026

Case reference HM-QA-2026-036

01

THE CASE AT A GLANCE

A Kenyan security guard and blogger detained in Qatar for documenting migrant worker rights abuses. Held in solitary confinement for nearly a month, then fined for spreading false news. He left Qatar in August 2021.

STATUS	**At liberty**
ARRESTED	**4 May 2021**
COUNTRY	**Qatar**
SENTENCE	**Fine of 25,000 Qatari riyals (approximately 5,883 euros), confiscation of mobile phone, and blocking of social media accounts on Twitter and Instagram.**
CHARGES	**Broadcasting and publishing false news with intent to endanger the public system of the state** **Offences related to payments received by a foreign agent for the creation and distribution of disinformation**

WE CALL ON THE AUTHORITIES TO:

WHAT WE ASK

01 Immediately lift the travel ban imposed on Malcolm Bidali and on any family members affected by the same order.

02 Restore valid travel documents and remove any border-watch flags placed in connection with peaceful human rights work.

03 Comply with the ICCPR Article 12 guarantee of freedom of movement.

Latest updates on this case
Scan the code or visit:
https://humena.org/defenders/malcolm-bidali/

02

DOCUMENTED VIOLATIONS

	INTERNATIONAL STANDARD
Arbitrary detention	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9
Criminalisation of solidarity	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 21, 22 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 5
Enforced disappearance	International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, Article 2 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 9, 16
Inhumane detention conditions	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 10 UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules)
Press freedom violation	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 19
Threats and intimidation	UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 12
Travel ban	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 12
Unfair trial	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 14
Unlawful surveillance	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 17

03

HOW THE CASE UNFOLDED

4 May 2021

ARREST

Detained by Criminal Investigation Dept

Malcolm Bidali's employer delivered him to the Criminal Investigation Department in Doha following a request from Qatari authorities. He was detained without prior warning, days after participating in an online panel on labour rights.

20 May 2021

SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IMPOSED

First family contact after 16 days

After intervention by the Kenyan Embassy, Malcolm Bidali was permitted a ten-minute phone call with his mother. Two guards were present. He disclosed he was in solitary confinement and had been threatened.

29 May 2021

CHARGE FILED

Charges announced publicly

The Qatari Government Communication Office announced charges of offences related to payments from a foreign agent for creating and distributing disinformation. The case was transferred to the Public Prosecutor.

31 May 2021

RELEASE

Released from detention

Malcolm Bidali was released after about four weeks in solitary confinement and barred from leaving Qatar pending the case. Front Line Defenders gives the release date as 2 June 2021.

31 May 2021

TRAVEL BAN IMPOSED

Barred from leaving Qatar

On his release he was barred from leaving Qatar until the case was settled.

14 July 2021

CONVICTION

Fined by a criminal order without trial

A criminal order issued without a trial or hearing convicted him of publishing false news with intent to endanger the public system, under the cybercrime law. He was fined 25,000 Qatari riyals, his phone was confiscated and his Twitter and Instagram accounts were ordered blocked. He learned of the order weeks later.

16 August 2021

TRAVEL BAN LIFTED

Allowed to leave Qatar after the fine was paid

A migrant rights organisation paid the fine and he left Qatar.

04

THE FULL STORY

Background and Work

Malcolm Bidali is a labour rights defender and blogger from Kenya who worked as a security guard in Qatar. His human rights work centred on exposing the exploitation and abuses faced by migrant workers in the Gulf state, a population that forms the majority of Qatar's workforce yet remains largely without legal protections or public voice.

He wrote under a pseudonym for Migrant-Rights.org, an advocacy platform focused on labour conditions across the Gulf. His articles and social media posts detailed the working and living conditions of migrant labourers, overcrowded housing, wage delays, unsafe worksites, and the Kafala sponsorship system that binds workers to their employers and restricts their ability to change jobs or leave the country. In a context where foreign workers face severe reprisals for criticising employers or the state, his willingness to document these realities publicly made him a rare and visible advocate.

The Arrest

On 4 May 2021, Malcolm Bidali's employer received a request from Qatari authorities to deliver him to the Criminal Investigation Department in Doha. The company complied. He was driven to the facility and detained without advance warning. The arrest occurred days after he participated in an online panel discussion on labour rights in Qatar, an event that drew attention to ongoing abuses in the lead-up to the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

He disappeared into detention with no public acknowledgment from the authorities and no contact with his family. For more than two weeks, his whereabouts and condition remained unknown.

Detention Conditions and Communication

Malcolm Bidali was held in solitary confinement. On 20 May 2021, following intervention by the Kenyan Embassy in Qatar, he was permitted a ten-minute phone call with his mother, his first contact with family since the arrest. Two security guards were present throughout the call. He told her he was in solitary confinement and had been subjected to threats, though he did not specify their nature.

Charges and Legal Proceedings

On 29 May 2021, the Qatari Government Communication Office issued a public statement announcing that Malcolm Bidali had been charged with "offences related to payments received by a foreign agent for the creation and distribution of disinformation within the State of Qatar." The statement claimed that his case had been transferred to the Public Prosecutor following "a thorough investigation" and that he was receiving legal advice ahead of a court hearing, though no hearing date was disclosed.

He was released from detention on 31 May 2021, after nearly a month in custody, and barred from

leaving Qatar. On 14 July 2021, a criminal order issued without a trial or hearing convicted him of "broadcasting and publishing false news with the intent of endangering the public system of the state." The court ordered him to pay a fine of 25,000 Qatari riyals (approximately 5,883 euros), confiscated his mobile phone, and mandated the blocking of his Twitter and Instagram accounts.

A migrant rights organisation paid the fine and he left Qatar on 16 August 2021.

Context and Restrictions on Defenders

Human rights defenders in Qatar operate under severe constraints. Freedom of expression is tightly controlled, particularly regarding labour conditions, governance, and the rights of the majority-migrant workforce. Defenders face harassment, travel restrictions, and arbitrary detention. The legal framework criminalises speech deemed critical of the state under broadly worded national security and cybercrime laws.

Malcolm Bidali's detention and prosecution form part of a broader pattern of silencing those who document labour abuses in Qatar, especially in the years leading up to the 2022 World Cup when international scrutiny of migrant worker conditions intensified. His case underscores the risks faced by defenders who use digital platforms to amplify marginalised voices.

05

SAMPLE LETTER

Copy it, adapt it and send it from your own address.

Your Excellency,

I am writing to demand the immediate lifting of the arbitrary travel ban imposed on Malcolm Bidali, labour rights defender, blogger, and security guard; documented exploitation and human rights violations against migrant workers in Qatar.

In brief: A Kenyan security guard and blogger detained in Qatar for documenting migrant worker rights abuses. Held in solitary confinement for nearly a month, then fined for spreading false news. He left Qatar in August 2021.

I respectfully urge your authorities to:
1. Immediately lift the travel ban imposed on Malcolm Bidali and on any family members affected by the same order;
2. Restore valid travel documents and remove any border-watch flags placed in connection with peaceful human rights work;
3. Comply with the ICCPR Article 12 guarantee of freedom of movement.

I will continue to monitor this case until Malcolm Bidali's freedom of movement is restored.

Respectfully,

[Your name]
[Your city, country]
8 November 2026