

Dubai, a morally bankrupt dictatorship built by slave labour

Пише: Johann Hari

субота, 28 новембар 2009 00:50

(The Independent, Friday, 27 November 2009)

Dubai is finally financially bankrupt – but it has been morally bankrupt all along. The idea that Dubai is an oasis of freedom on the Arabian peninsular is one of the great lies of our time.

Yes, it has Starbucks and Dunkin' Donuts and the Gucci styles, but beneath these accoutrements, there is a dictatorship built by slaves.

If you go there with your eyes open – as I did earlier this year – the truth is hidden in plain view. The tour books and the bragging Emiratis will tell you the city was built by Sheikh Mohammed, the country's hereditary ruler.

It is untrue. The people who really built the city can be seen in long chain-gangs by the side of the road, or toiling all day at the top of the tallest buildings in the world, in heat that Westerners are told not to stay in for more than 10 minutes. They were conned into coming, and trapped into staying.



In their home country – Bangladesh or the Philippines or India – these workers are told they can earn a fortune in Dubai if they pay a large upfront fee. When they arrive, their passports are taken from them, and they are told their wages are a tenth of the rate they were promised.

They end up working in extremely dangerous conditions for years, just to pay back their initial

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debt. They are ringed-off in filthy tent-cities outside Dubai, where they sleep in weeping heat, next to open sewage. They have no way to go home. And if they try to strike for better conditions, they are beaten by the police.

I met so many men in this position I stopped counting, just as the embassies were told to stop counting how many workers die in these conditions every year after they figured it topped more than 1,000 among the Indians alone.

Human Rights Watch calls this system "slavery." Yet the Westerners who have flocked to Dubai brag that they "love" the city, because they don't have to pay any taxes, and they have domestic slaves to do all the hard work. They train themselves not to see the pain.

But Dubai's bankruptcy does not end there: it is ecologically bust. This is a city built in the burning desert, where everything shrivels up and blows away if it is not kept artificially cold all the time. That's why it has the highest per capita carbon emissions on earth – some 250 percent higher even than America's. The city has to ship in desalinated water – which is more costly than oil. When it runs out of cash, it will run out of water.

Today Dubai will be bailed out by the United Arab Emirates, the oil-rich country of which it is only one state. But the oil will not last forever. More importantly, there is no Bank of Morality that could provide a bailout for this sinister mirage in the desert.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/commentators/johann-hari/johann-hari-a-morally-bankrupt-dictatorship-built-by-slave-labour-1828754.html>