

# GUGGENHEIM

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## **Statement from the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation**

We acknowledge today's publication of the Human Rights Watch report, *Migrant Workers' Rights on Saadiyat Island in the United Arab Emirates*.

Construction of the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi has not yet begun, nor has a contractor been selected. However, in preparation for these milestones, the Guggenheim has been working with our partner, the Tourism Development & Investment Company (TDIC), and other authorities and stakeholders inside and outside of the UAE to continue to advance progress on conditions for workers.

As we have from the start – as evidenced by our contributions to the TDIC Employment Practices Policy (EPP) – we seek to implement meaningful and verifiable actions. Significant and documented progress has been made by TDIC in a number of areas, including dedicated workers' accommodations, access to medical coverage, and retention of passports. Representatives of the Guggenheim have visited the Saadiyat Accommodation Village on several occasions and have observed firsthand its elevated standards and TDIC's attention to continuous improvement.

TDIC is in the process of selecting a contractor for the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi and is carefully assessing each potential contractor's commitment to respecting the rights of the workers and adhering to the EPP. We look forward to the next revision of the EPP that TDIC is expected to release later this year, which will include improvements such as clarifying the contractor's responsibility to pay recruitment fees and relocation costs. We also note TDIC's establishment of a new Compliance Team charged with monitoring adherence to the EPP and dedication of additional resources to monitoring and enforcement, including at the subcontractor level.

To further the progress we have made together, Guggenheim leadership met with TDIC representatives in September 2014 in New York and in Abu Dhabi in November 2014 and plan to hold additional meetings throughout this year. We are encouraged by TDIC's continued commitment to advancing enforceable, measurable protections for workers' rights on the project, which can serve as a regional model for the construction industry.

Areas for improvement remain. The complex issue of recruitment, in particular, will require action on several fronts, including international cooperation among countries of both origin and destination.

We believe the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi project presents an opportunity for a dynamic exploration of contemporary art and culture, and to chart a more inclusive and expansive view of art history. These efforts at real action will take time to become a reality on the ground. Nonetheless, we understand that this endeavor comes with great responsibility and we are committed to advocating for change that befits the transformative nature of the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi.

February 10, 2015