



**Convention on the Elimination  
of All Forms of Discrimination  
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination  
against Women**

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**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under  
article 18 of the Convention**

**List of issues and questions in relation to the second periodic  
report of Qatar**

**Addendum**

**Replies from Qatar\***

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\* *Note:* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



**Constitutional framework and discriminatory laws**

1. The State of Qatar acceded to the international Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on 24 March 2009. On 23 June 2009, it issued Decree No. 28 of 2009 approving accession to the Convention. Article 1 of that Decree provides that the Convention has the force of national law in accordance with article 68 of the Permanent Constitution of the State Qatar. Accordingly, the provisions of the Convention have the force of national laws adopted by the Government.

2. The State has taken numerous steps to ensure equality between women and men. The Qatari Constitution affirms that all citizens, regardless of their sex, have equal rights and duties under the law. Thus, women are afforded protection from all forms of discrimination, inasmuch as they enjoy equality of opportunity which enables them to build their capacities, protects and promotes their rights and fosters their constructive participation in the development of society. National legislation has sought to bolster women's rights, to eliminate discrimination between women and men, and to establish rules governing gender equality in diverse areas. Generic wording is used in national legislation when stipulating rights or determining obligations of persons to whom provisions are applicable, so that no distinction can be made between men and women. Any language directed towards men is automatically considered to be directed towards women as well, unless explicitly stated otherwise. The following are some examples of legal provisions that have been repealed or amended because they discriminated against women:

- Act No. 19 of 2008 establishes that women have the right to receive the same amount of blood money (*diyah*) as men in cases of manslaughter; women used to receive half as much as men.
- Act No. 5 of 2009 amends the Passports Act No. 14 of 1993 so that the condition whereby a woman could only be issued a passport with her guardian's consent was revoked. The condition requiring a guardian's consent to be provided before a passport could be issued to a person with diminished or no legal capacity was retained.
- Act No. 2 of 2007, concerning the housing scheme, had provisions limiting access to the scheme to men repealed, and the scheme was extended to include members of both sexes. Council of Ministers Decision No. 17 of 2007 concerning priorities and regulations on access to the housing scheme provides that unmarried citizens, both men and women, have been given the right to benefit from the scheme, provided that they are over 35, or are under 35 but the main breadwinner in the family. That right had previously been restricted to men and denied to women.
- Decree-Law No. 19 of 2007 promulgated the Traffic Act, under which the same conditions for obtaining a driver's license are applied to both men and women.

3. Legislation regulating the labour market in the State of Qatar has also adopted an approach in line with the permanent Constitution. It is free of any negative discrimination against women. It does not provide for any differentiation between men and women in salaries or employee benefits.<sup>1</sup> Act No. 38 of 1995 on social security, with subsequent amendments, contains provisions ensuring access to social security benefits for a number of groups, including widows, divorcees and deserted wives.

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<sup>1</sup> See paragraph 53 of our second report (CEDAW/C/QAT/2).

4. Our review of laws that discriminate against women and girls has yielded the following conclusions:

- The Qatari Family Act (No. 22 of 2006) does not contain any provisions that discriminate against women. The State of Qatar accepts the text of article 1 of the Convention provided that, in accordance with the provisions of Islamic law and Qatari legislation, the phrase “irrespective of their marital status” is not intended to encourage family relationships outside legitimate marriage.
- The Qatari Penal Code issued by Act No. 11 of 2004 does not contain any provisions discriminating against women. On the contrary, it criminalizes violence of all kinds and imposes deterrent penalties. It provides for various protections for persons in general and women in particular. For example, it criminalizes violent acts committed against women because they are women (gender-based violence), including rape, sexual assault, exploitation for prostitution and abortion. Article 279 of the Penal Code deals with the crime of rape, for which it provides for a penalty of up to capital punishment or life imprisonment. If the perpetrator is an ascendant of the victim, the penalty is capital punishment only. Article 286 of the Penal Code provides for imprisonment of not more than 15 years for the sexual assault of any person against their will, whether through coercion, threat or deceit. Article 288 provides that if the victim is underage, there is a legal presumption that it was against the victim’s will, and that presumption is not open to legal challenge. Qatari law also addresses the subject of psychological violence against women. Article 291 of the Qatari Penal Code penalizes insulting the modesty of a woman in any way, by word, gesture or deed, and imposes a penalty of imprisonment for no more than a year and a fine of no more than 5,000 riyals.
- Article 41 of the Permanent Constitution states: “The law defines Qatari nationality and the rules relating thereto. These rules have constitutional status.” The Nationality Act (No. 38 of 2005), regulates the acquisition, granting, withdrawal and restoration of nationality without discriminating between women and men, with the exception of the case of a Qatari woman married to a non-Qatari. Nationality may not be granted to the spouse of a Qatari woman or her children, because granting nationality is sovereign matter subject to the discretion of the State. The rules on granting Qatari nationality are applied in such a way as to give priority to children of Qatari mothers. A Qatari woman does not lose her nationality when she marries a non-Qatari. However, if it is proven that she has taken the nationality of her husband, she can only regain Qatari nationality by renouncing the other nationality.

It is worth mentioning here Act No. 10 of 2018 on granting permanent residence to a number of groups, including the children of Qatari women married to foreigners. Individuals holding permanent residency cards will enjoy a number of privileges in the fields of education and health care, as well as privileges related to military and civil service appointments and the right to own property.

### **Reservations**

5. From time to time, the State of Qatar reviews its reservations to international human rights conventions. No time frame has been set for reviewing our reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.<sup>2</sup>

6. With regard to training courses for institutions that exercise authority over Islam, the National Human Rights Committee has held a series of training sessions on human rights principles for mosque preachers, which include coverage of the

<sup>2</sup> See paragraph 34 of our second report (CEDAW/C/QAT/2).

Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The sessions were held from 2011–2015, during which time some 80 preachers received the training. Some of the mosque preachers requested that the training session be repeated and expanded to include a larger number of preachers and staff from the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs. Such sessions will be included in the action plan of the National Human Rights Committee for this year in May 2019.

7. The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs is trying to use Friday mosque pulpits to raise awareness of the struggle against gender discrimination based on the Islamic principle that women are the sisters of men. Weekly Friday sermons cover topics having to do with combating violation against women and domestic violence. The Ministry has also issued some publications addressing those topics.

### **Definition of discrimination**

8. The State's legal framework, meaning the Constitution and national laws, is in line with the definition of discrimination against women provided in article 1, paragraph 1, of the Convention. Qatar has tried to accede to international conventions and protocols on the protection of the rights of women and combating violence against women in all its forms, and on combating human trafficking. It has acceded to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the 2009 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children. Qatar has issued legislation protecting women from all causes harm, violence or trafficking, including the Qatari Family Act of 2006 and the Anti-Human Trafficking Act of 2011.

### **National machinery for the advancement of women**

9. With regard to the information requested on resources allocated with the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs to gender equality-related matters, we can tell you that the Department of Family Affairs has approximately 250 staff, including an expert on women's, children's and disabled persons' affairs. The Department receives adequate support to carry out its activities, including those having to do with gender equality-related issues.

10. With regard to efforts and activities pursued by the Department of Family Affairs during the 2016–2018 period, we can tell you that the Department achieved notable progress in the struggle for gender equality with the adoption of a number of programmes and initiatives.<sup>3</sup>

11. We note that most civil society organizations in the State of Qatar are affiliated with the Qatar Social Work Foundation, which was launched with a view to developing civil society organizations that operate under its umbrella, strengthening their capacities and enhancing their role in society. It focuses on human rights principles and international instruments and agreements related to social work. The role and mandate of the Qatar Social Work Foundation is demonstrated by the degree to which it is involved with the State, as exemplified by the following:

- It is a member of a number of national committees relating to the Foundation's work, such as the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking.
- It has signed some 22 memorandums of understanding with various governmental and non-governmental bodies in the State.

12. The Qatar Foundation for Social Work and its affiliated social work centres have contributed to drafting the eight sectoral strategies of the Second National Development Strategy (2017–2022). It has supervised the drafting of plans,

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<sup>3</sup> See paragraph 40 of our second report (CEDAW/C/QAT/2).

programmes and projects at its affiliated centres, which include around 55 institutional and development projects that deal with issues in various fields, such as disability, family counselling and combating violence. The Foundation has concluded memorandums of understanding with the League of Arab States on boosting technical cooperation in order to achieve the goals of the Arab Decade of Civil Society Organizations, as well as a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations Population Fund to promote joint cooperation.

13. With regard to implementation and evaluation of the impact of Qatar National Vision 2030, in accordance with its obligations under the Convention and the Sustainable Development Goals, it should be noted that Qatar National Vision 2030 aims to build a society that promotes justice and equality. That reflects the principles of the Permanent Constitution of the State of Qatar, which protects public and private freedoms, moral and religious values, and cultural customs, traditions and identity, and guarantees security, stability and equal opportunities. Qatar National Vision 2030 sets forth a number of goals relating to family cohesion and the empowerment of women, including the following:

- Strong and cohesive families that care for their members, and preserve religious and ethical values and the highest human ideals;
- The maintenance of strong and cohesive families whose members nurture and comply with religious and ethical values and the highest ideals;
- The development of a sound social infrastructure and the building of effective public institutions and active and robust civil society organizations;
- Building an effective social protection system for all Qataris that takes account of their civil rights, values their active participation in the development of society, and ensures sufficient income to maintain their dignity and health;
- Enhancing women's capacities and empowering them to participate economically and politically, especially when it comes to decision-making;
- Training courses and workshops for women's empowerment and development.

14. The family cohesion and women's empowerment component also identified eight major development outcome targets along the three axes of family cohesion, social welfare and women's empowerment as a means to achieve the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030. The desired results will be achieved through 12 linked projects, whose objectives are as follows:

- Strengthen the role of the Qatari family as a pillar of society;
- Increase the responsibility of parents and reduce reliance on domestic workers;
- Reduce domestic violence rates and establish a system for the protection and support of domestic violence victims;
- Provide support systems for families in special situations, such as those containing disabled persons or juvenile delinquents;
- Reduce the exposure of Qatari families to economic and social risks and improve management of their financial affairs;
- Promote the health, well-being and protection of children;
- Increase support for working families, and especially support for women;
- Increase the number of women in leadership posts and political decision-making positions;

- Counter prevalent stereotypes concerning the roles and responsibilities of women.

15. Family cohesion projects are categorized by major sectoral outcomes, which include the reduction of domestic violence and protection and support for families affected by it. The following is a brief summary of the most important elements of the family cohesion and women's empowerment component as it relates to reducing domestic violence, and the progress achieved since 2011:

- Sectoral outcome 3: Reduction of domestic violence and protection and support for families affected by it. Domestic violence is contrary to human morals and upright behaviour. It is a practice that damages the effort to establish basic human rights and eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and children along the lines provided for in foundational national documents and international instruments ratified by the State of Qatar. Taking into account the penalties for domestic violence, the national strategic development plan has adopted two major projects to achieve the desired result.
- Project 3.1: A comprehensive system of protection from domestic violence. This project consists of eleven actions, which include the following: review of the collection of current data on violence, including the concept of domestic violence; adoption of legislation criminalizing domestic violence through the Penal Code; development and adoption of a legal mechanism to protect persons who report cases of violence and the victims; development and adoption of a follow-up mechanism for coordination with police to protect victims of violence; establishment of integrated centres and units to provide protection against domestic violence in different regions; establishment of a formal mechanism for reporting and monitoring; launch of a training programme on violence related to gender; launch of a community awareness programme/campaign on domestic violence; establishment of special units and a hot line to facilitate the receipt of reports; establishment of shelters (safe houses for victims that meet global standards); and continued support programmes for the rehabilitation and reintegration of victims of violence into society.
- Project 3.2: A system for early detection of child abuse and neglect. This consists of three activities, which are as follows: increase the number of social workers in schools and develop their knowledge and skills in the area of abuse, violence and neglect suffered by children; develop an awareness programme for students on violence and protection from it; and provide a hotline for schools to report cases of violence.

16. With regard to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals as they relate to women's affairs, the Qatar Foundation for Social Work convened the Arab Conference on the Role of Civil Society in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It was held in Doha in April 2016 in collaboration with of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the United Nations Population Fund, the League of Arab States and the Gulf Cooperation Council. Representatives of 21 Arab States took part in the Conference. Among the Conference outcomes was the "Doha Declaration on the role of civil society in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". The Conference aimed to stimulate innovative ideas and listen to voices from various sectors of civil society and stakeholders across the Arab region on the challenges and opportunities facing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and try to draft a road map at the national level to promote the role of civil society in implementing it and build a responsible partnership among

development actors as an approach to planning, implementation, monitoring and review.

17. In keeping with paragraphs 6 and 10 of the above-mentioned Doha Declaration adopted by Arab Conference on the Role of Civil Society in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a memorandum of understanding was concluded between the Qatar Social Work Foundation and the Regional Office for Arab States of the United Nations Population Fund on strengthening joint cooperation. Measures are currently being finalized for the conclusion of a memorandum of understanding between the Foundation and the League of Arab States on supporting technical cooperation to implement the objectives of the Arab Decade for civil society organizations in support of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

### **Temporary special measures**

18. Although the section of the Qatari Constitution that provides for the elected Shura Council does not reserve a percentage of seats for women, the State has made sure to take numerous proactive measures to pave the way for women to gain employment in the judiciary and the office of public prosecutor. In the executive branch, they have served in ministerial posts and diplomatic posts, and some have recently been appointed to the Shura Council, which is the country's legislative authority. Such steps could be viewed as proactive special measures to accelerate full and equal participation by women in all spheres of life covered by the Convention, and politics in particular.

19. Despite improvements in perceptions about women in society and the importance of their presence and participation, certain negative stereotypes remain entrenched. In municipal council elections in 1999, six women ran and not one was elected. In 2015, five women ran and two were elected. That is even though 40 per cent of the voters were women. A survey showed that 62 per cent of participants preferred to have men rather than women as their representatives on the central municipal council. That was the preference of about 50 percent of women.<sup>4</sup>

20. It is evident that women are occupying decision-making posts that were previously reserved for men. However, that is the result of special measures taken by the Government to promote gender equality as a requirement of the modern age in response to its international commitments. It did not come about because of social pressures or demands.

### **Stereotypes and harmful practices**

21. Qatari women can take part in development on an equal footing with men. When it comes to employment and education, gender stereotypes have been almost entirely eliminated. Qatari women have a presence in a number of non-traditional professions and jobs, including flying civilian aircraft, the police and military corps, and other areas.

22. The National Human Rights Committee has observed a trend towards greater equality of opportunity in training and development. For example, in 2017, some 4504 staff members of Government agencies took part in training programmes for the development of human resources at the Ministry of Labour. Men accounted for 41 per cent and females 59 per cent of those trainees.

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<sup>4</sup> Qatar's Fourth Human Development Report.

23. With regard to information the impact of the activities <sup>5</sup> carried out by the Wifaq Centre to counter stereotypes of female domestic workers and raise awareness and promote the implementation of the Convention, the Wifaq Centre offers guidance programmes on reliance on domestic workers to raise children. The programme promotes division of family responsibilities between husband and wife by regulating reliance on servants and raising awareness of their negative impact on the family. It aims to accomplish the following:

- Define the role of domestic workers in the education of children;
- Raise awareness of the need for family members to share responsibility;
- Strengthen family relations within the household;
- Protect children against assault or harassment;
- Achieve parental reconciliation;
- Provide training in self-management;
- Reduce reliance on domestic workers.

24. The Qatar Foundation for Social Work has conducted a number of initiatives to combat stereotypes of women, including the following:

- Six awareness-raising advertisements on family safety have been produced. They were broadcast during Ramadan on Qatar State channels and on social media.
- The Women in Media Forum has been organized with the participation of the Gulf Cooperation Council Joint Program Production Institution. The goal is to improve the image of women in Gulf dramas and not relegate them to stereotypical roles.
- An interactive event entitled “Through empowerment we can combat violence” was organized to raise awareness of the extent of the problems experienced by women around the world resulting from violence and to promote mechanisms for eliminating it.

25. With regard to the impact of the joint Qatar Television and National Human Rights Committee’s weekly programme to raise awareness about women with disabilities, that programme continued to be broadcast once a week through the 2016–2017 period. The programme was coordinated with the National Human Rights Committee’s 2016–2017 action plan to monitor the State’s implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. One of the themes of that plan is the role of media in changing stereotypes about persons with disabilities, and especially women. The programme has hosted experts, guardians and persons with disabilities. It has discussed important issues at the national level, such as the right to accessibility, national registration for persons with disabilities, and the right of women with disabilities to take part in cultural life and sports.

26. With regard to the inquiry regarding how revealing or indecent clothes are defined, we should like to clarify that such assessments are made in the light of what is acceptable in Qatari society and the Arab and Muslim communities. It should be noted that we do not create any problems in this regard for any other expatriate communities. The records of the relevant security services do not show any entries relating to revealing or indecent clothes for the period from 2015 through the end of 2018.

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<sup>5</sup> See annexed table 1 listing guidance workshops on reliance on domestic workers for raising children offered by the Wifaq Centre during the 2017–2018 period.

27. The use of face coverings such as the niqab, burka or hijab with mask is not a harmful practice, nor does it perpetuate anti-woman stereotypes. It is merely a mode of dress that is part of the national and religious identity of Muslim women in general, not just Qatari women. Nor is there any discrimination based on the way a woman dresses in the State. Every woman has the freedom to wear what she wants as long as it does not offend public modesty.

#### **Gender-based violence against women**

28. Qatar does not have a crime called marital rape. However, any assault by a husband on his wife is criminalized under the Penal Code. The Penal Code imposes a penalty of anywhere from capital punishment to seven years in prison for anyone committing a sex crime against a woman. To protect women further, penalties are harsher if the perpetrator is an ascendant or guardian. Acts involving offences to public modesty, solicitation of women for prostitution or violations of public morals are criminalized. To protect women and ensure safe pregnancies, assaults against pregnant women and deliberate abortion are criminalized.

29. The Code imposes stiffer penalties on the perpetrator of criminal fornication when the victim, whether male or female, is a child. Articles 318 and 322 of the Penal Code prohibit crimes infringing on a person's freedom or dignity. Such crimes include unlawful abduction, detention, confinement, or any other unlawful deprivation of liberty, as well as forced servitude or labour, whether paid or not.

30. With regard to the information requested on domestic violence and sexual harassment, there were 20 cases of violence against women domestic workers in 2017, all of which were referred to the courts. There was one case of rape of a woman domestic worker in 2017. No cases of sexual harassment have been found for the year 2017.

31. The centres affiliated with the Qatar Social Work Foundation offered counselling and legal support for women to ensure that they are protected against violence and that such violence is prevented and prosecuted. They are provided with all relevant information about that crime, and all possible assistance. They are also informed of the outcomes of investigations and the role they might play in them. The prosecution is supplied with a report on the health impacts of the crime, including psychological and social effects. Victims are informed of the time and location of legal proceedings and are assisted in attending hearings if they wish, when they are staying at a shelter.

32. To ensure perpetrator accountability and access to justice the Centre opened a branch in the Public Prosecutor's Office to receive victims and refer them to the competent prosecutor to eliminate any fear on the part of the victim during the investigation and interview and to ensure that the victim is treated with decency and dignity. The branch also provides rehabilitation sessions as needed by the victim (medical, psychological or social), which vary by the victim and the nature of the crime. Pro bono attorneys are engaged to defend the victim if needed.

33. With regard to information requested on preventive services provided by the Community Policing Department of the Ministry of the Interior, in the middle of 2018, the Department dedicated a hotline for a trial period. The following table shows the number and nature of incoming calls to the department over that hotline:

Table 2.  
**Number of incoming calls to the hotline of the Community Policing Department**

<i>Domestic dispute</i>	<i>Assault</i>	<i>Marital infidelity</i>	<i>Expulsion from home</i>	<i>Theft</i>	<i>Total</i>
97	13	7	3	12	132

Source: Ministry of the Interior.

34. The Community Policing Department operates on the basis of community partnership to maintain security on the principle of “Security is the responsibility of all”. It tries to spread a network of cooperative interactive relationships that includes families, civil society organizations, State institutions and local communities. Among its activities are the following:

- It arranges visits to women’s councils in all parts of the State, with a view to becoming acquainted with problems and issues that affect the inhabitants of each region. It submits reports on the outcomes of those visits to the appropriate parties so that they can be addressed.
- It arranges visits to men’s civic councils the same purpose.
- The Community Policing Department implements decisions emanating from family courts in its capacity as the relevant implementing authority.

35. With regard to systematic and sustained activities to raise the awareness of the general public of the criminal nature of violence against women and the possible consequences thereof, the Community Policing Department plays a notable role as follows:

- Awareness campaigns in participation with parties involved in ending violence against women;
- Training workshops for different segments of society on legal steps that should be taken in cases of abuse to ensure that women victims of violence are protected if they choose to report it;
- Awareness lectures to instil a culture the encourages battered women to report abuse.

36. The Protection and Social Rehabilitation Centre provides protection and rehabilitation for groups in the State of Qatar that are vulnerable to violence, such as domestic workers. The Centre receives cases of women and children who have been victims of or been exposed to violence through various channels, including the Public Prosecutor’s Office, security centres, health agencies and cases that present directly to the Centre.

37. The Protection and Social Rehabilitation Centre provides a range of support to women and children victims of violence, such as protection, rehabilitation, integrated care regardless of the nationality of the victim. That is stipulated in article 4 of the amended statute of the Protection and Social Rehabilitation Centre. The Centre’s action strategy focuses on protecting vulnerable categories from violence and its ill effects, in addition to providing counselling services and comprehensive treatment and rehabilitation programmes in order to ensure integrated care for vulnerable categories. The Centre provides medical, psychological and rehabilitation services, as follows:

- Early diagnosis of psychological disorders by means of a medical examination and appropriate tests, and provision of medical and psychological assistance and care;

- Provision of a therapeutic environment that helps the beneficiary to achieve agreed goals and objectives in the treatment plan;
- Psychological therapy and rehabilitation aimed at preventing the disorder from turning into a chronic medical complaint and from developing complications;
- Placing the case in an environment which encourages the person to agree to join a long-term integrated treatment programme;
- Encouraging cases to continue to discharge both their work and family responsibilities after receiving treatment and rehabilitation; instead of isolating cases from society, enabling them to solve their own problems by themselves; and helping them to avoid being become repeat victims of violence.

38. The Protection and Social Rehabilitation Centre offers an integrated rehabilitation programme, with staff that specializes in the rehabilitation of women victims of violence, aimed at ensuring their recovery and reintegration into society. The Centre provides basic care services (shelter services) by providing shelter for the protection of victims where they can enjoy recreational and quality-of-life services and sports activities, and take part in national activities and events. It also provides training and rehabilitation on a daily basis. The Centre provides follow-up and continuing care services. It provides social services by means of communication with the family and field visits to the relevant authorities and social follow-up with the individual concerned. It also provides outreach services aimed at ensuring rapid intervention and direct guidance to both children and women victims of violence in hospitals and security facilities.

#### **The Aman Centre**

39. The Aman Centre takes part in a number of measures to provide counselling, treatment and rehabilitation services for women victims of violence, including the following:

(a) Counselling services, social and psychological support, and legal services, which it provides in the following ways:

- Via telephone communication with specialists at the Centre through a dedicated 919 hotline and call centre established to facilitate reporting and the filing of complaints relating to any form of violence – psychological, physical, sexual – and access to the service regardless of nationality;
- In person at the Centre’s external offices in hospitals, security departments and the Public Prosecutor’s Office, to facilitate access to the Centre’s services;
- It also provides guidance services and referrals to the appropriate agency to help the woman resolve the problem or gain access to the appropriate services.

(b) Rehabilitation services

40. The Centre contributes to providing multi-faceted rehabilitation services – psychological, social, legal and professional – through an integrated interdisciplinary team. It provides rehabilitation services for women according to their needs, whether they are residing at the Centre’s shelter facilities or through external care provided on a daily basis.

(c) Shelter services

41. Dar al-Aman was launched to provide comprehensive services to victims of violence. Shelter services are offered that provide for quality-of-life, social and

educational needs. The necessary rehabilitation services are provided for reintegration into society.

(d) Reintegration services

42. Follow-up care and continuing support services are provided for women after they have finished their temporary stay at the shelter to ensure that they are protected, reintegrated into society, and enabled to exercise the rights guaranteed to them by the State in coordination with support agencies and partners.

### **The Wifaq Family Counselling Centre**

43. The Wifaq Centre has conducted a number of activities to strengthen family responsibility and avoid domestic disputes.

(a) Strengthening family responsibility<sup>6</sup>

44. The Wifaq Family Counselling Centre provides numerous awareness-raising activities that serve implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It offers a programme on achieving a balance between work and family responsibilities is changing stereotypes about the roles of women and men in the family. That programme aims to achieve the following:

- Identify skills to optimize the balance between work and family;
- Identify proactive approaches to effective communication with a view to achieving a reasonable balance;
- Identify proactive approaches to dealing with the pressures of work to help achieve a reasonable balance;
- Identify ways that family dialogue can help to achieve work-family balance;
- Identify criteria for successful harmony between spouses.

(b) Avoiding family conflict and raising the awareness of families on the verge of conflict

## **I. Prevention<sup>7</sup>**

45. Preventive programmes offered by the Wifaq Family Counselling Centre aim to meet unfulfilled family needs, alert vulnerable groups to problems they might encounter, demonstrate ways that families should behave when faced by certain adverse situations that the preventive programme warns against, and identify the steps that should be taken in case such problems are encountered. Several programmes fall under this category, including the following:

- Training efforts to qualify vulnerable persons in some skill. They are directed at the public outside of the Centre. Examples are: training family counsellors, training psychological specialists, or training persons about to get married.<sup>8</sup>
- Outreach efforts on almost a daily basis (marital, psychological, educational, legal and sharia awareness-raising efforts) aimed at raising the awareness of the

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<sup>6</sup> See annex, table 2, for a full list of workshops and programmes on achieving a balance between work and family responsibilities offered by the Wifaq Centre during the 2017–2018 period.

<sup>7</sup> See table 3 for a full list of workshops and lectures to raise awareness of the dangers of divorce offered by the Centre during the 2017–2018 period.

<sup>8</sup> See annex, table 4 for a full list of training programmes offered by the Wifaq Centre during the 2017–2018 period.

public about issues they may have to confront. People are made aware of such issues, so they will be able to think clearly about them and understand them correctly. Attention is also paid to raising public awareness about potential crises or problems, and how to avoid them. Examples include family awareness-raising or programmes to raise awareness of the risks of divorce.

- Educational efforts aimed at educating the public about certain issues. Awareness programmes focus on harmful diseases or other potential problems. People are warned against them and made aware of their dangers. Educational programmes focus on useful topics that people should be exposed to for their own benefit. They are encouraged to pursue them and made aware of the benefits. They are given ideas about how to make use of them in their family lives.<sup>9</sup>

## II. Treatment (interventions)

46. Services under this heading are offered to solve individual and family problems, treat psychological and social illness, confront existing problems, train vulnerable groups in approaches to treatment, make them aware of the different kinds of treatment available, show them how to find solutions to their problems, try out recommended solutions, propose new approaches and solutions to their various problems, and change their behaviour with a view to improving their lives and changing their situations. The sub-areas included are as follows:

- Psychological, social and educational counselling: this sub-area deals with modifying undesirable concepts, ideas, psychological trends and behaviours among individuals and families.
- Family reconciliation: this concerns reconciling divergent viewpoints, creating the potential for reconciliation and focusing on common ground to serve as the foundation for the reconciliation process.
- Sharia guidance: this sub-area concerns making families aware of the sharia-related family issues and the consequences of a member's sharia issue for the rest of the family.
- Legal guidance: this sub-area is concerned with making all family members aware of their legal rights and duties and providing them with guidance on how to litigate objectively before the courts in a manner that is befitting the sanctity of the family, preserves its members' dignity, and leaves behind some good will even in the case of a split. This is what is referred to in this study as a "peaceable divorce".
- Guidance for cases of amicable divorce: this sub-area is concerned with family guidance for couples that have decided on divorce by mutual agreement without dispute before the courts.

47. This type of guidance is provided in three stages, which are as follows:

Stage 1: Steps are taken prior to divorce with a view to avoiding it. These include the following:

- Education and awareness-raising on the factors and causes that lead to family breakdown;
- Assistance to families in solving the problems are undergoing;

<sup>9</sup> See table 5 for a full list of educational workshops and lectures on avoiding family conflict offered by the Centre in 2017.

- Techniques to avoid divorce and all its consequences.

Stage 2: Guidance efforts geared towards reconciliation and not taking divorces proceedings all the way to their completion. If that is impossible, and one or both parties is determined to divorce, then guidance efforts are made to nudge them in the direction of “peaceable divorce”. The guidance process focuses on the following:

- Educational counselling for the parties to ensure that children are not used as pawns in their dispute;
- Awareness-raising about the rights of children and duties of parents in order ensure continued sharing of responsibility for them;
- Psychological rehabilitation for divorce applicants so as to prevent a psychological chasm from opening between them, to ensure constructive cooperation and the bare minimum of a civil relationship after divorce;
- Awareness-raising about the procedures for a “peaceable divorce”, should divorce become inevitable.

Stage 3: To be implemented in cases that are referred to the courts after divorce, as follows:

- Psychological preparation for both parties for their new social status following divorce;
- Making the parties aware of custody and visitation procedures;
- Psychological preparation of the child for custody and visitation procedures;
- Psychological preparation for the postponement of the implementation of custody and visitation arrangements until the child has been psychologically prepared.

### **III. Parental care: guidance to occur before or during dispute before the courts**

48. The parental care component seeks to offer psychological and educational welfare programmes to children of divorce. It is implemented as follows:

- Psychological preparation for parents and children to avoid fallout from disputes;
- Avoidance of fallout from the divorce for parents and children;
- Clarification of the rights and obligations of both parties to the dispute, both during the dispute and after, including setting the times of visits to children in the custody of one of the parents during a period of temporary separation;
- Psychological care for the children in order to ensure psychological stability during visitation;
- Provision of visitation facilities within the Centre equipped with items and equipment to facilitate constructive interaction between parent and child, and to create a safe and calm space for visitation;
- Full supervision of the child during custody or visitation;
- Observation of the parents’ behaviour and instruction of parents during visitation to avoid anything that might affect the feelings of the child or threaten its psychological security or emotional stability;

- Design of treatment plans for children suffering from psychological distress or educational problems because of the divorce;
- Implementation of treatment plans in the day care division under the direct oversight of a competent supervisor.

#### IV. Follow-up

49. The follow-up process aims to stabilize the new changes, maintain vigilance about the recurrence of old problems, prevent the emergence of new problems, and expand the relationships of the families and individuals with the Centre. People are advised to visit the Centre during the follow-up process. The follow-up procedures include the following:

- Following up individual cases whose treatment at the Centre is finished;
- Following up families that have completed their counselling programme;
- Following up families where the couple has been reconciled and signed a reconciliation agreement;
- Following up families that agreed to visitation outside the Centre.

Table 3.

#### Counselling provided through the Centre categorized by type of counselling, year and end result for the 2017–2018 period

Year	Category	Outcome				Total
		Outcome successful		Desired outcome not achieved		
		Number	%	Number	%	
2017	Marital disputes	467	81.5	106	18.5	573
	Divorce counselling	0	0	0	0	0
	Family conflicts	69	87.3	10	12.7	79
	Disputes among community members	0	0	0	0	0
	Disputes over child visitation	0	0	0	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>536</b>	<b>82.2</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>17.8</b>	<b>652</b>
2018	Marital disputes	710	88.3	94	11.7	804
	Divorce counselling	0	0	0	0	0
	Family conflicts	118	90.1	13	9.9	131
	Disputes among community members	0	0	0	0	0
	Disputes over child visitation	0	0	0	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>828</b>	<b>88.6</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>935</b>

Source: Qatar Social Work Foundation

Note: Percentage is calculated only for cases that completed the therapy sessions. Cases that did not enter the treatment stage are excluded.

#### The Dreama Centre for the Care of Orphans

50. In order to contribute to the realization of human and social development in the State, the Dreama Centre for the Care of Orphans was established in 2002 to provide the necessary care to vulnerable persons whose parents are deceased or unknown, and who have been temporarily or permanently removed from a natural family

environment. It also ensures that they are stable within their foster families and integrated into society. Since 2013, the Centre has operated under the umbrella of the Qatar Social Work Foundation.

51. The Centre cooperates and coordinates with ministries, public institutions and other Government agencies and civil society organizations to achieve the objectives of the Centre. It has held seminars and training sessions on topics relating to the goals and domain of the Centre. It publishes pamphlets, guides and periodicals relevant to the goals and mandate of the Centre. It obtains the required authorizations for the competent agencies to engage in activities in pursuit of its goals.

52. The Centre is one of the most important mechanisms to have been established in the State. As a private institution operating in the public interest it addresses the affairs of orphans who have been deprived of a natural family environment. It tries to provide a range of care, support and quality-of-life services to beneficiaries of both sexes. It tries to find suitable alternative environments or offer services to people who are unable to live in a family environment. It does so without discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity, colour, language or religion. It always takes into account the best interest of the child.

53. The Centre has arranged a number of partnerships with relevant parties within the State and abroad to enhance the capacities and develop the skills of its personnel and provide them with training on the elimination of all forms of gender discrimination.

54. The Centre has also established a hotline to receive cases, complaints and reports from vulnerable groups, or anyone who needs to receive any of the Centre's services. It takes in cases that need shelter, accepts application from families wishing to foster a child, and provides a range of legal, social, psychological and health services without discrimination on the basis of gender.

55. Over the past two years, it has been working on a family stability project, which is one of the basic projects through which the Dreama Centre's social services department empowers orphans. It works with foster families to provide direct services to orphans and the families fostering them. The projects aims to achieve the following:

- Foster families, and foster mothers in particular, are helped to recognize positive qualities in themselves and the children.
- The fitness of potential foster fathers and mothers applying to be foster parents is verified, without discriminating between them, by giving each of them the same psychological tests. That serves as a basic guarantee that members of the vulnerable group will grow up in a healthy and sound family environment that ensure that they will become productive members of society.
- Mothers and fathers applying to be foster parents must, without discrimination between them, take awareness-raising courses that explain their roles, the stages of natural development of children, and their psychological needs, and train them on the basic needs of the foster child over the course of the foster period. Those are the essentials of the project.
- The project also involves evaluating the foster family (father and mother alike) as a basis for achieving the Centre's strategic goal of minimizing the incidence of orphans returning to the Centre or having conflicts with their families. A procedure is followed for informing the child that he or she is adopted. The foster family is instructed in the suitable ways to inform the child and the appropriate timing.
- Training and educational opportunities are provided to fathers and mothers alike in the areas of foster care, foster families, protecting children from psychological crises, and raising a child in a secure and stable family

environment, with a view to minimizing the severe psychological distress that a child might suffer from because of his or her harsh situation, which is the source of most family conflicts.

- Foster mothers are assisted, supported and empowered through training sessions to increase their self-esteem by helping them view themselves in a different way that would help bring about the kind of changes that can occur when a woman relies on the abilities she naturally possesses, such as her ability to build an intimate relationship with the foster child, or by learning new skills.
- Foster mothers are offered psychological support to help them carry out their tasks and roles in life and do their best by the foster child and their families.
- We believe that prevention is better than treatment. We are trying through this project to prepare the foster mother psychologically to assist her in facing and overcoming life's pressures without them affecting her productivity in society.
- The foster mother's capacities are strengthened so that she is able to educate her foster child and provide basic health, educational and economic services.
- She is assisted and empowered to overcome obstacles to the exercise of her natural rights, so that she can acquire self-confidence, be empowered to make decisions, and gain control over resources that will help her confront anything that obstructs her role in the development of her family and community.
- Foster parents are assisted in sharing responsibilities relating to the education and care of the foster child.
- Foster families are included in joint outreach activities for both women and men, which yields positive results.
- Systematic opportunities are provided for the family to cooperate through partnerships with institutions active in the community, which are of benefit in empowering the foster mother.

#### **Trafficking and exploitation for prostitution**

56. The State of Qatar ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime by Decree No. 15 (2009) and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish human trafficking, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and, consequently, Act No. 15 (2011) on combating human trafficking was promulgated. In that connection, the Cabinet issued Decision No. 15 (2017) establishing the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking. The Committee is chaired by the Minister of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs and its membership includes a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who serves as vice-chair, and representatives of the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Public Health, the Office of the Public Prosecutor, the Government liaison office, the National Human Rights Committee and the Protection and Social Rehabilitation Centre. The National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking serves as the national coordinator for the monitoring, prevention and combating of human trafficking by working with the relevant stakeholders. In order to fulfil that role, the Committee shall:

- Set out the national plan to combat human trafficking and develop programmes and mechanisms to implement it, in coordination with the relevant State authorities;
- Develop a database of international legislation relating to human trafficking, trafficking methods and relevant studies;
- Review relevant national laws and ensure that they are consistent with the international conventions and covenants that the State has ratified;

- Prepare and publish an annual report on the efforts of the State to prevent, monitor and combat human trafficking;
- Study regional and international reports on preventing, monitoring and combating human trafficking and take appropriate action in relation thereto;
- Collaborate with the competent authorities and the entities concerned with protecting and providing support to victims of human trafficking, including through the protection and rehabilitation programme, with a view to facilitating their social reintegration;
- Promote awareness of issues relating to human trafficking by organizing conferences and seminars, preparing publications, designing training courses and taking other action that can help the Committee to attain its objectives;
- Share information and experiences and strengthen ties with national Arab, regional and international organizations and committees concerned with combating human trafficking;
- Participate, together with the relevant State authorities, in international conferences and forums on human trafficking.

57. In June 2017, the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking adopted the National Plan to Combat Human Trafficking for the period 2017–2022. The Plan serves as the guiding light and foundational document of the Committee and other competent bodies in their efforts to monitor and prevent human trafficking in all its forms. The plan includes the following components: prevention, protection, prosecution, and regional and international cooperation.

### **Prosecution**

58. The Office of the Public Prosecutor has begun investigating 109 cases of forced labour. It is also investigating 28 trafficking cases, including facilitation of prostitution and abusive employment practices. It should be noted that in many cases involving trafficking of women and girls, including the case of Ms. *nun alif*, who claims that was sexually exploited, the victim was given shelter and legal support up to the time that she travelled back to her country, having received due compensation. Prosecutors have charged 19 companies for violating various articles of the Labour Code, including non-compliance with restrictions on working hours, failure to grant a mandatory day of rest and non-payment of additional wages due.

59. In 2017, the Government continued to enforce more strictly the law prohibiting the seizure of passports; 361 cases were investigated and 53 were referred to the Office of the Public Prosecutor. The courts heard 48 such cases and imposed fines.

### **Legal aid**

60. The Government has provided legal aid to human trafficking victims in their dealings with law enforcement agencies. The authorities are required to provide such assistance under Act No. 15 (2011) on combating human trafficking. The authorities have also helped some victims secure compensation for the harm that was done to them.

### **Protection**

- (a) Providing shelter to and reintegrating victims

61. The Government continued to use the national referral system for victims to coordinate efforts to identify victims and referrals between Government authorities and non-governmental organizations. The system covers the provision of shelter, health care and legal aid to victims of trafficking.

62. In addition, the Qatar Social Work Foundation has opened the Dar al-Aman al-Shamil, which is part of the “Aman” Social Protection and Rehabilitation Centre, one of the entities that operates under the umbrella of the Foundation. It provides shelter and social and health services that include protection and rehabilitation services for targeted groups, inter alia victims of human trafficking. Dar al-Aman al-Shamil is a complex of more than 30 housing units that have been equipped to provide residents with comprehensive shelter on a temporary basis as part of a carefully studied rehabilitation plan. Six of the units in the complex are specifically for trafficking victims, men and women alike, with each unit having capacity for 20 persons.

63. The overall process has four phases. The first is the reception phase, which consists of an initial evaluation of each case and a needs assessment. That is followed by the admission phase in which residents are informed of their rights and duties and of the conditions of accommodation. Next is the rehabilitation plan phase, in which a detailed framework for rehabilitation is set out. That is followed by the family reintegration phase, in which residents are returned to their natural familial and social environments. Victims always able to access the shelter, even if the employer has made accusations against them, and retain their right to leave the shelter unattended.

(b) Training and rehabilitation

64. The National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking signed a memorandum of understanding with the regional office of the United Nations on Drugs and Crime to organize a number of courses and workshops for law enforcement official, judges and police officers on the hallmarks of human trafficking and the national referral system. The following sessions were organized:

- Training workshop on combating human trafficking for journalists, members of the media and mass media students from 26 to 28 February 2018. Some 25 journalists, members of the media and mass media students were trained.
- A capacity-building session on combating human trafficking was organized for the staff members of employment and labour entities. Some 25 persons were trained.
- A capacity-building session on the national system to support the victims of human trafficking was organized for the relevant agencies. Some 25 persons were trained.

65. From 2016 to the end of 2018, the Ministry of the Interior organized several courses on combating human trafficking for law enforcement officials. Below is a detailed table prepared by the Police Training Institute on training delivered. It should be noted that training will continue to be offered, depending on the needs of the security agencies.<sup>10</sup>

**Participation in political and public life**

66. The State of Qatar wants to see women take up leadership positions and supports their involvement in the administration of the State, including the exercise of political rights, inter alia the right to vote and to stand as candidates for municipal councils, in accordance with international standards, in particular the instruments pertaining to women that Qatar has ratified, the most important of which is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

67. Qatari women have held several senior leadership positions and other leadership and supervisory positions at the State level. Women have held ministerial positions in the Ministries of Health, Education and Information Systems, and they have served as deputy ministers, assistant ministers and department heads in ministries and other

<sup>10</sup> See annexes, table 6, for information on training courses on combating human trafficking that were organized by the Police Training Institute in the period 2016–2018.

government agencies. They have also served as judges, chief prosecutors and prosecutors (see the reply under article 8 in the report of Qatar).

68. With regard to when the Shura Council elections will be held, ministerial committees are currently making preparations for those elections, as His Highness the Amir stated at the opening of the forty-seventh session of that Council. No date has yet been set.

69. The Committee posed questions regarding the low number of women candidates in municipal council elections and what measures have been taken to ensure that sufficient funding is available to women who are campaigning and to raise awareness of the importance of the participation of women in elections. We would like to stress that men and women are free to nominate themselves and that there are no restrictions in respect of the nomination of women as candidates for membership of municipal councils. In other words, there is no discrimination on the basis of sex with respect to right to be nominated as a candidate. The number of women candidates depends on the desire of the individual to be nominated. The Elections Department of the Ministry of the Interior is raising awareness of the importance of women's participation in the electoral process by delivering lectures on the matter at universities and to various social groups.

70. The following tables provide statistics on the number of Qatari women working in the Ministry of the Interior:

Table 4.

**Women employed by the Ministry broken down by job type (up to 2018)**

<i>Type of post</i>	<i>Military</i>		<i>Civilian</i>
	<i>Commissioned officer</i>	<i>Non-commissioned officer</i>	
Number	70	909	3 705
		979	3 705
Total			4 684

Source: Ministry of the Interior.

Table 5.

**Women employed by the Ministry broken down by occupational category (up to and including 2018)**

<i>Job type</i>	<i>Number</i>
Department head (decision-maker)	12
Specialized posts	759
Office posts	3 097
Technical posts	147
Field posts	7
Support posts	28
Military posts	634
<b>Total</b>	<b>4 684</b>

Source: Ministry of the Interior.

**Civil society and non-governmental organizations**

71. The State of Qatar does everything it can to facilitate the establishment and operation of private associations and institutions, provided that this is done in accordance with the provisions of Act No. 12 (2004).

**Education**

72. With regard to the question concerning the discrepancy between the number of men and women enrolled in banking studies and business administration, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education has issued clear instructions that annual informational visits to the Qatar Banking Studies and Business Administration Secondary School for Girls should be organized, in order to raise awareness and stimulate interest among ninth grade students and to encourage them to enrol in the specialized schools. With the support of the National Bank of Qatar and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, financial rewards are available to students who pursue specialized studies, in order to promote this type of specialization. The amount of the reward increases with each level, with a view to increasing enrolment in the specialized schools. It should be noted that there is not a significant disparity between the number of male and female students enrolled in this type of specialized school. Based on the plan in place, the number of students stands at 150, in accordance with clearly defined requirements and ratios, with a view to ensuring excellence in this type of school. There are 102 students enrolled in the girls' school and 124 students in the boys' school. Gender equality is a component of the acceptance policy for students in banking studies and business administration, and there is a school for each sex. However, the relative discrepancy in the number of females and males enrolled in these schools is due to the student's desires and inclinations when it comes to choosing a field of study. Students in Qatar have other choices available to them, such as State schools, which offer educational pathways that provide students with a greater number of and more diverse options for completing university education. Several measures have been taken to encourage women to pursue this type of education, including offering monthly financial allowances; conducting annual awareness-raising campaigns for female secondary school students, in order to familiarize them with this type of school and encourage them to pursue this type of education; and providing jobs for female graduates.

73. With regard to the question concerning measures taken to ensure that the children of migrant women have access to affordable high-quality education, the Qatar National Vision 2030 and the national education and training strategies stress that all children must be enrolled in education. Qatar strives assiduously to provide education for the children of all migrant workers. Those children are able to attend either government or private schools, in accordance with the wishes of their guardians. International schools, private national schools and schools for different communities have also been opened. In total, there are 359 such schools and 220 kindergartens. Non-Qataris make up 67 per cent of all students enrolled in education.

74. Population mobility is increasing every year in Qatar. As a result, more schools, whether public or private, are being opened every year, in order to address the need for education. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education strives to provide suitable educational opportunities for all students in Qatar, without discrimination. Following are some of the concessions that the Ministry offers to private schools:

- (i) Waiver of electricity and water charges.
- (ii) Customs clearance.
- (iii) Awarding plots of land to schools that have obtained national, local or international accreditation.

- (iv) The Ministry oversees every aspect of the registration of foreign students after the registration deadline. It expedites administrative procedures and provides them with counselling, in order to ensure that educational services are available to all.
- (v) The Ministry coordinates and works with the Zakat Fund in order to support education for children from low-income families and make it easier for them to be educated.
- (vi) Community schools are allowed to operate morning and evening shifts, in order to enable as many children as possible to pursue their education.

### **Employment**

75. In practice, there is no requirement for the wife to present a letter from her guardian in order to obtain employment, because that would be unconstitutional. Moreover, no jobs have been affected by the prohibition on the employment of women in work that is hazardous or arduous. Men and women are remunerated equally, whether in the public or private sector, provided that they have equivalent experience and qualifications.

### **Health**

76. There are no so-called women migrant workers and *bidoun* women in Qatar. All women who are in Qatar have a residence or visit permit and are therefore covered by the law regulating medical treatment in the country, in particular article 4 thereof.

77. Under Act No. 11 (2018) regulating political asylum, the State guarantees migrant women the right of political asylum. Article 9 of that Act provides that political refugees are protected by the State and that they enjoy, without prejudice to their status as refugees, the following benefits and rights:

- The right to obtain a travel document, unless reasons related to national security or public order preclude that;
- The right to work, except in jobs relating to national security;
- The right to receive monthly financial assistance, until work becomes available;
- The right to health care;
- The right to education;
- The right to housing;
- The right to worship and perform religious ceremonies freely;
- Freedom of movement and travel;
- The right of recourse to the courts.

Political refugees may be authorized to bring their spouses and immediate family members. On the recommendation of the Minister, the Cabinet will establish conditions and controls in relation to the privileges and rights set out in the present article.

78. With regard to the question concerning sexual and reproductive health care, and abortion services in cases of rape, a specialized medical committee has been established to consider requests to carry out abortions for health reasons.

79. With regard to what steps have been taken to amend the legislation on abortion, we believe that the existing laws, under which abortions are carried out for medical reasons, are sufficient.

80. A study is being conducted on the policy of mandatory HIV/AIDS testing for pregnant women and migrant workers and the extent to which it can be applied, taking into account social conventions, traditions and customs.

81. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education strives assiduously to educate students and introduce them to the concept of sexual and reproductive health. A general framework has been established for a values-based curriculum that promotes those values that govern how individuals relate to themselves, others or society, and that takes into account the physical, mental, existential and spiritual aspects. Those values include respecting the family and others. Primary school activities include understanding the roles of various family members and the various stages of life. The family education curriculum is closely linked to other subject matters, in particular social studies and values-based education. The aim of that curriculum is to prepare students to be effective members of society and individuals, promote and encourage positive behaviour with respect to themselves, their families and others, and change negative attitudes and behaviours with respect to themselves, their families and others. Sexuality and sexual activity is one of the seven areas that make up the curriculum. Sex education is presented within a clear framework that is based on Islamic values, and particular emphasis is placed on the importance of awareness of the laws governing sexual behaviour and patterns of family life, such as marriage and parenthood. Students are taught about growth and development, human reproduction and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, and how to take responsibility for their actions and behaviour, and their safety and the safety of others. Sexual health concepts are also taught as part of the Islamic studies and science curriculum, starting at the sixth-grade level. The specialized agencies of the State contribute to this effort by addressing these subjects in the awareness-raising and educational presentations that they make to students.

#### **Women migrant domestic workers**

82. Act No. 15 (2017) on domestic workers was adopted as part of the State's commitment to ensure that all groups, including domestic workers, enjoy legal protection without discrimination. With the adoption of that law, those workers now enjoy legal protection. The aforementioned Act regulates the relationship between employers and domestic workers and its provisions accord with International Labour Organization Convention No. 189 concerning decent work for domestic workers. In addition, it prohibits the employment of domestic workers until they have obtained a permit to work in the country, and the employment of domestic workers of either sex who are under 21 or over 60 years of age.

83. Domestic workers must be employed for a paid probationary period, the duration and conditions of which are established by a decision of the relevant minister. In that connection, the Minister of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs has issued a decision establishing the duration of the probationary period for domestic workers and the conditions of employment that apply during that period.

#### **Commitment to decent work for domestic workers**

84. The law obliges employers and those who reside with them to provide domestic workers with suitable accommodations and food. It also obliges them to provide domestic workers with medical care, medications and medical equipment should they be taken ill or injured while doing or because of their work, without imposing any financial burden on workers. Employers are also required to treat domestic workers well and in a manner that safeguards their dignity and physical well-being, and they must not endanger workers' lives or health, and they must not harm them, either physically or psychologically, in any way whatsoever. Employers must not make

domestic workers work when they are on sick leave or taking their daily breaks or weekly rest days.

#### **End-of-service compensation**

85. The law provides that domestic workers are entitled to paid leave of three weeks, along with paid travel tickets, for each year of service according to the Gregorian calendar. The law also obliges employers to pay end-of-service compensation to domestic workers at the end of their employment, as well as any other amounts due to them. It stipulates that domestic workers' end-of-service compensation shall be equal to three weeks wages for each year of service.

#### **Termination of contract by the domestic worker**

86. The law enables domestic workers to terminate their contracts early while retaining their entitlement to end-of-service compensation in the following cases:

- Where the employer has failed to fulfil his obligations under the employment contract or the law;
- Where the employer or his representative have deceived the domestic worker regarding the conditions of employment;
- Where the employer or a member of his family assaults a domestic worker and causes the worker physical harm or places his/her life in danger;
- Where the employer or a person residing with him was aware of a grave danger that threatened the worker's safety or health and failed to take action to eliminate that danger.

#### **Dispute resolution**

87. Disputes that arise between the employer and the domestic worker as a result of the application of the provisions of the law are subject to the provisions of the chapter on labour disputes of the Labour Code (law No. 14 of 2004), and its amendments, concerning recourse to labour dispute settlement committees. The law also stipulates that domestic workers must be compensated for injuries sustained at work, in accordance with the Labour Code. Under the law, both domestic workers and employers have the right to settle any dispute that arises through the competent department of the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs, which will take the measures needed to settle the dispute amicably.

#### **Penalties**

88. The law prescribes a financial penalty of between 5,000 and 10,000 Qatari riyals, should its provisions be violated.

#### **Model contract for domestic workers**

89. Guided by the provisions of the Domestic Workers Act, the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs drafted a model contract for domestic workers, which was distributed to employers, recruitment agencies and the embassies of the countries from which domestic workers hail. The Ministry has worked with the embassies of labour-sending countries to have the model contract translated into the native languages of workers.

#### **Campaigns to raise awareness of the Domestic Workers Act**

90. The Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs, has organized several seminars and activities to raise awareness on the new law and its

provisions. The text of the law was sent to domestic workers and the model contract to the embassies of labour-sending countries.

### **Other forms of protection for domestic workers**

91. Article 52 of the Constitution provides that “[e]very person who is a legal resident of the State of Qatar shall enjoy the protection of his person and property in accordance with the provisions of the law.” In addition, the security services provide legal protection in accordance with the provisions of the Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure. As indicated in the previous report (November 2016), domestic workers can file grievances through the justice and confidence-building programme that is run by the Department of Human Rights of the Ministry of the Interior. This group is also afforded protections under the Penal Code, which was promulgated as Act No. 11 of 2004. The Penal Code provides that anyone who physically abuses, treats in a cruel manner or economically exploits a vulnerable person shall be punished.

### **Abolition of the *kafalah* (sponsorship) system**

92. Act No. 21 (2015) introduced important and fundamental changes to the previous legislation. That Act abolished the *kafalah* system and replaced it with a normal labour relationship. Articles 21 and 22 of the Act set out the situations in which a migrant worker is permitted to change employment, namely:

- Prior to the expiration of the contract by mutual consent of the worker and the employer;
- Immediately following the expiration of a fixed-term contract or after five years’ employment, if the contract is indefinite;
- In the event of the death of the employer or the dissolution of the legal entity for any reason;
- On a temporary basis, in the event of judicial proceedings between the worker and his employer;
- Where abuse of the worker by the employer has been established or where allowing the worker to change employer is in the public interest.

### **Time spent working for the employer before the promulgation of the new law**

93. Among the positive aspects of Act No. 21 (2005) is the fact that it takes into accounts all days worked by the worker for his employer prior to the entry into force of the Act on 13 December 2016. This was done in order to enable the worker to change employers.

### **Granting workers three months to secure a new employment contract**

94. Under article 24 of Act No. 21, migrant workers have three months to complete procedures for a new contract and move to another employer.

### **Abolition of the requirement that a worker must remain outside the country for two years before being eligible for new employment**

95. As the Committee of Legal Experts states in its report of February 2016, one of the positive aspects of Act No. 21 is the abolition of the requirement that a worker must remain outside the country for two years before being eligible for a new residence visa. Under the new law, a migrant worker whose residence visa was cancelled and had left Qatar may take up a new job in Qatar immediately upon obtaining a new job opportunity, without waiting for the two-year period to expire.

That two-year period that was in effect under the Act No. 4 (2009) was abolished by the new law.

**Requiring the employer to provide a bank security**

96. Under article 20 of Act No. 21, an employer is required to provide a bank security in order to ensure that he fulfils his obligations to the migrant worker. This has significantly strengthened respect for the financial rights of migrant workers in Qatar.

**Increased penalties for seizure of passports and identification cards**

97. Article 8 of Act No. 21 obliges employers to return workers' passports or travel documents following the completion of the procedures for obtaining or renewing their residence permits. Pursuant to article 39 of that Act, confiscating a migrant worker's passport or travel document is a criminal offence. Any person who commits the offence of confiscating a worker's passport or travel document shall be fined up to 25,000 riyals. That penalty represents an increase from the penalty prescribed in article 52 of Act No. 4 (2009), which had set out a maximum fine of 10,000 riyals.

**Applicability of the provisions of Act No. 21 (2015) and its amendments to domestic workers**

98. All the provisions of this law apply, without discrimination, to domestic workers, including those that relate to the right to change employers, freedom to leave the country and the prohibition on the confiscation of passports.

**The requirement to conclude an employment contract between the worker and the employer before an entry visa is granted**

99. Article 4 of the Act provides that an entry visa may not be granted to a foreign worker for the purposes of employment unless the worker has concluded an employment contract with his employer that has been approved and certified by the competent State authorities, in accordance with established terms and regulations. This contract protects the worker against certain forms of misconduct, including such practices as signing a contract in the labour-sending country that is then replaced by another upon the worker's arrival in Qatar.

**Assistance provided by the Government to facilitate change of employer**

- The Government has lifted restrictions on changing employer, which had been imposed on migrant workers who had been granted work visas for specific projects. Such visas were known as restricted visas. Now, workers who have been given visas that are tied to a specific project have the right to change employer, if they fulfil certain conditions.
- The Government has placed no restrictions or conditions on changing employer other than that the new employer should comply with the provisions of the Labour Code.
- An office has been established to follow up and review procedures for migrant workers wishing to change employer.

**Procedures for changing employer**

100. Workers register themselves on the website of the Ministry of the Interior using their personal identification numbers. This enables them to have access to the electronic notification feature, which contains their personal information. The electronic notification feature is linked to databases maintained by the Ministry of

Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior. Workers select the reason for notification, whether change of employer or permanent departure from the country, and then they attach a certified copy of the employment contract along with evidence that the contractual relationship with the employer has been terminated by mutual consent or because of abuse on the part of the employer. In cases of abuse, the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs will follow up on the request submitted by the worker.

101. The Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs has launched an electronic notification service, which workers can use if they transfer from one employer to another or if they wish to leave the country permanently.

**Awareness-raising campaign conducted by the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs to inform migrant workers of their rights under the new law**

102. The Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs launched a campaign to raise awareness of the rights of migrant workers, either directly or through newspapers, television, and social media (e.g., Facebook and Twitter). As part of the ongoing campaign to raise awareness of Act No. 21, the Ministry held a series of workshops that were aimed at informing foreign workers and employers about their rights and duties under the law.

**Activities carried out by the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs in the first phase of the awareness-raising campaign**

- The Ministry, in cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior, held weekly sessions (on Tuesday of every week) to raise awareness among officials responsible for applying the provisions of the law.
- The Ministry held awareness-raising seminars for members of the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and employers before and after the entry into force of the law. It also held an informational session on the new law in cooperation with the Embassy of the United States to Qatar and the United States Chamber of Commerce.
- The Ministry held a meeting with labour attachés from the embassies of labour-sending countries and another meeting with representatives of the embassies of European Union member States to explain and clarify provisions of the new law.
- Specialists from the Ministry held workshops at workers' places of employment and residence to raise awareness of the provisions of the new law. In addition, seminars on the subject were held for the various labour communities in the country.

**Vulnerable groups of women**

103. Under Act No. 2 (2007) on the housing system, no distinction is made between men and women, whether employed or not, with regard to right to benefit therefrom, in accordance with the controls established by law and the executive decisions issued in that regard, which were mentioned earlier.<sup>11</sup> The Act provides that Qatari nationals, regardless of sex, have the right to benefit from the housing system. The Cabinet has issued decisions regarding the conditions governing access to housing for needy persons (free housing). This benefit was previously available to Qatari women, but they were only able to use it to build homes for themselves that are annexed to the home of their parents. Under the new law, Qatari women are entitled to an

<sup>11</sup> See paragraph 4 of the present report.

independent housing unit or a rental allowance. Women are eligible for the housing mortgage programme. Under that programme, Qatari nationals are granted a parcel of land at no cost and given a subsidized loan for construction.

104. The Housing Department of the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs considers the requests that it receives on the basis of the relevant regulations and resolutions. The Department considers such requests by reviewing the documents submitted by the applicant and by looking into the circumstances of each case.

After the required funding has been secured, the law provides that priority should be given to persons who support others, married persons or those who are truly in need of housing.

105. The Housing Department considers and reviews requests for access to the housing system, verifies that the requisite data and documents have been provided and makes recommendations in respect of such requests for subsequent adoption.

- An unmarried man or woman can access the housing system if he or she meets one of the following conditions: (i) He or she is supporting either a parent or a sibling, or a person that he or she is obliged to support by law; is more than 35 years old; or a widow or divorced woman who is more than 35 years old and has no children; (ii) Neither he nor she, nor the persons that he or she supports, have suitable accommodations. Where there are multiple beneficiaries, they will all be accommodated in a single home if they are first- or second-degree relatives.
- Disabled persons, divorced women and widows who do not work and are eligible to access the housing system (needy persons) can change their application from housing for a needy person to housing funded by mortgage.
- However, they are required to have a relative who is a Qatari national to serve as the guarantor. The monthly payment is deducted from the salary of the relative.
- Housing for needy persons is provided free of charge and is owned by the State.
- Housing funded by mortgage belongs to the beneficiary. A deed made out in the beneficiary's name will be drafted 15 years after the construction of the house.

106. The Housing Department disburses rental allowances to needy beneficiaries whose requests have been approved in accordance with the conditions set out in the Housing Act and the relevant executive decisions. Such allowances are disbursed until the Qatar Development Bank makes housing available.

When the Qatar Development Bank provides housing, the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs leases the housing units and allocates them to beneficiaries. The Housing Department provides a monthly rental allowance to persons whose cases have been approved, from the time of approved and until the Bank has delivered the housing units.

107. The unjust blockade imposed on Qatar has affected the ability to enjoy human rights. However, we should like to emphasize that Qatar has taken no action against either the male or females nationals of blockading States who reside Qatar. The Constitution, domestic law and the measures that the State took before the Gulf crisis began are sufficient to maintain and safeguard human rights and ensure that the rights of women residing in Qatar who are originally from one the blockading States are respected, without discrimination.

108. The status of expatriate workers residing in Qatar has remained stable in the wake of the crisis, which has not had any adverse effects on their lives, constrained

their movement and communication, threatened their security, personal freedom and freedom of expression, or undermined their right to live in dignity with their families. The aforementioned rights are guaranteed by the Constitution.

109. No complaints have been received about female workers who have not concluded legal contracts with their employers. However, should it come to light that there are female workers residing in the State who are performing work for their employers without having signed written employment contracts, those workers will not lose their legal and constitutional right to litigate and establish their rights by all legal means.

**Equality before the law and in civil matters**

110. With regard to the question on the need for women to obtain permission to travel outside the country or study abroad on a government scholarship, please note that the pertinent procedure is regulated by special instructions issued by the competent department of the Ministry of the Interior.

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