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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 8, PARAGRAPH 1, OF THE OPTIONAL PROTOCOL TO THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD ON THE INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT

Initial reports of States parties due in 2004

QATAR *

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* Annexes can be consulted in the files of the Secretariat.

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Initial report on the measures taken by the Qatari armed forces to guarantee the non-recruitment and non-involvement of children in hostilities

Introduction

1. The Qatari armed forces, in accordance with the rules and laws governing their work, abide by the fundamental principles of children's rights, most importantly the non-involvement of children in armed conflict. This is consistent with the moral and religious principles that hold sway in Qatari society, as well as the implementation of international children's rights conventions and other relevant treaties to which Qatar is a party.

2. In order to throw light on the measures that the Qatari armed forces have taken in this domain, we have divided the subject into three parts as follows: first, the recruitment process in the Qatari armed forces; second, the annual training programme for schoolchildren; and, third, the programme for students removed from day schools and private schools.

I. The recruitment process in the Qatari armed forces

3. At the outset, we must underline two key facts about recruitment in the Qatari armed forces:

(a) There is no such thing as compulsory recruitment in the Qatari armed forces. The recruitment regulations are founded on voluntarism in accordance with the regulations and directives in force; and

(b) The regulations and laws governing the Qatari armed forces make no mention of the direct or indirect involvement in hostilities of members of the Qatari armed forces below 18 years of age. Aggressive military action is prohibited under article 71 of the Qatari Constitution.

4. The recruitment process in the Qatari armed forces, which guarantees the non-recruitment and non-involvement of children in hostilities, is described below:

(a) The voluntary recruitment process in the Qatari armed forces is implemented under the direct supervision of officers with responsibility for recruiting civilians wishing to volunteer for military service and in conformity with the regulations and conditions set forth in legislation relating, inter alia, to proof of age, military medical board reports attesting fitness for military service, and the candidate's fulfilment of professional or operational criteria;

(b) With reference to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and measures to guarantee its implementation in the Qatari armed forces:

Regarding article 1, concerning information about measures to ensure that members of the armed forces who have not attained the age of 18 years do not take a direct part in hostilities:

With reference to the regulations and laws governing the Qatari armed forces, there is no law or legislation that provides for the direct or indirect participation of members of the armed forces below 18 years of age in hostilities. The Qatari armed forces do not have a system of compulsory military service and their members are all volunteers who join up of their own accord and in conformity with the regulations in force in the Qatari armed forces, as mentioned in the two key facts outlined above; and

No one below 18 years of age has ever been forced to take a direct part in hostilities in the Qatari armed forces;

Regarding article 2, concerning measures to ensure that persons who have not attained the age of 18 years are not compulsorily recruited into the armed forces:

Service in the Qatari armed forces is not based on compulsory recruitment. There are no provisions in Qatari regulations and laws allowing for compulsory recruitment. Therefore, persons who have not attained the age of 18 years are not compulsorily recruited; and

There are no legal provisions which allow the age of compulsory recruitment to be lowered in exceptional circumstances (such as a state of emergency), since there is no system of compulsory recruitment;

Regarding article 3, concerning the minimum age for voluntary recruitment into the armed forces:

The human resources of the Qatari armed forces are managed on the basis of voluntary recruitment alone. The armed forces have defined conditions for voluntary admission into their ranks with age being the most important criterion;

With reference to officers serving in the Qatari armed forces, article 4, paragraph 2, states: "Anyone appointed as an officer in the armed forces must be over 18 years, which is the minimum age for appointment";

With reference to recruitment of other ranks in the Qatari armed forces, the recruitment criteria stipulate, inter alia, that candidates must not be below 18 or above 25 years of age;

Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 above are perfectly consistent with the obligations set out in the Optional Protocol;

With regard to article 3, paragraph 3, the voluntary recruitment process is based on the criteria and documentation shown in the table below:

Recruitment conditions	Documentation required
Must be a Qatari national Must not be under 18 or over 25 years of age Must be of sound character and have no convictions for immoral offences or dishonesty Must not have been discharged from military service Must have preparatory school certificate or above Must be medically fit	Photocopy of identity card Photocopy of birth certificate Attestation issued by Ministry of Civil Service Affairs stating that the person does not work in any government agency Educational certificate endorsed by government agencies Four (4) colour photographs of candidate

With regard to proof of age for recruitment, documentary requirements are defined in the recruitment announcement (photocopy of identity card - photocopy of birth certificate - educational certificate endorsed by government agencies - a personal photograph);

With regard to article 3, paragraph 5, the minimum age for enrolment in armed forces schools is the age of recruitment, which is not below 18 years. Regarding armed forces schools, the Ahmad Bin Mohammed Military College trains prospective officers with a view to producing graduates at the rank of second lieutenant. The Armed Forces' Training Institute trains officers and noncommissioned officers in various subjects, and provides foundation training for new entrants. Human rights and humanitarian principles have been added to the academic curriculum, in coordination with the National Human Rights Committee, at armed forces schools;

Regarding article 4, cases such as those described in this article do not occur in the State of Qatar;

Regarding article 5, with regard to domestic legislation, international instruments and applicable international humanitarian law, Qatar has acceded to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and its two Protocols of 1977. It is taking steps to implement international humanitarian law, beginning with the armed forces and extending to the State of Qatar as a whole. (Annex A outlines the conditions and documents required for voluntary recruitment, as well as the legal and procedural requirements.)

II. Annual schoolchildren's training programme

5. With regard to articles 3 (d) and (e), concerning encouraging under-18-year-olds to enrol in practical programmes run by the Qatari armed forces consistent with the State's general policies on child protection and in pursuance of the aims of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the rights of families in general, the Qatari armed forces run incentive programmes for schoolchildren below 18 years of age.

6. The programme is run every year for Qatari boys enrolled in school in Qatar up to the end of the secondary stage and for those enrolled in morning study. The students are given a monthly stipend in order to protect them and make sure that they receive a well-rounded cultural, moral and civic education based on a carefully designed programme that takes account of the provisions and safeguards set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the two optional protocols.

7. Enrolment in the training course is voluntary. Students are accepted under the following conditions:

- (a) They must be Qatari nationals;
- (b) They must be medically fit;
- (c) They must not be below 14 years of age;
- (d) They must be a regular day pupil at a Qatari school;
- (e) The guardian must give his or her consent and sign the enrolment agreement;
- (f) They must pass a personal interview.

(Annex B outlines the armed services' annual training programme for schoolchildren which includes international legal aims and safeguards for the protection of children.)

III. Scheme for students removed from day and private schools

8. The scheme for students removed from day and private schools was established to complement the efforts of the armed forces to develop and foster children's abilities along the lines set down in children's rights legislation. The purpose of the scheme is to absorb the educational deficit without prejudice to the terms and safeguards set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the optional protocols.

9. The following table shows the conditions for enrolment in the scheme:

Conditions of enrolment	Documents required
Must be a Qatari national	Copy of identity card or passport
Must not be below 14 years of age	Copy of birth certificate
Must be of good character and conduct	Educational certificate for current year
Must be a regular student at a Qatari school	Four personal photographs
Must have guardian's consent and attend summer training	

(Annex C outlines the scheme for students removed from day school and private school.)

IV. Conclusion

10. Voluntarism and the student's free desire to join the ranks of the Qatari armed forces are keys to participation in these forces. Recruitment is based on an announcement inviting civilians of 18 years and over to join. The laws and regulations make no provision for a system of compulsory service that obliges civilians to join the ranks of the fighting forces of the State of Qatar.

11. Therefore, the Qatari armed forces have no members below 18 years of age. They apply the provisions of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and comply with this principle, because they believe that today's children are tomorrow's leaders and due account must be taken of their psychological and humanitarian welfare.
