



**Statement of Qatar Foundation for Social Work at the UPR Pre-Session  
State of Qatar Review**

**33<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review  
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**Presented by**

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## **Introduction:**

1. I have the pleasure and honour to address you on behalf of Qatar Foundation for Social Work (QSW). We welcome this opportunity to engage in a constructive dialogue with the UN member States with regard to the situation of human rights in the State of Qatar from the civil society organizations' perspective. I thank UPR Info for the effort they are making to render this process and the UPR mechanism a great success.
2. QSW was established in 2013 as a private foundation for public benefit (an NGO) with the aim to promote the civil society organizations (CSOs) operating under its umbrella, namely: Protection and Social Rehabilitation Center (AMAN); Family Consultations Center (WIFAQ); Orphans Care Center (DREAMA); Elderly Empowerment and Care Center (IHSAN); Shafallah Center for Persons with Disabilities (SHAFALLAH); Social Development Center (NAMAA); and Best-Buddies Initiative-Qatar.
3. QSW has been in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 2017.
4. In its capacity as a civil society organization, QSW contributes along with the public and private sectors to the State of Qatar's ability to meet its obligations under the international human rights conventions to which it is party.
5. QSW closely follows-up observations and recommendations issued by UN human rights mechanisms following the consideration Qatar's periodic reports, whether under treaty-based or charter-based mechanisms such as the UPR. QSW contributes with submissions that enable these mechanisms to comprehend the views of civil society in Qatar on major issues related to human issues.

## **Progress since the last review:**

6. During its second review in May 2014 the State of Qatar received 183 recommendations, out of which 145 recommendations were accepted.

7. In this statement I will address three main issues relevant with these recommendations and the third review of the State of Qatar as follows:
- Enhancement of legislative framework which includes accession to international human rights treaties, and promulgation of domestic legislation,
  - Rights of women, children and persons with disabilities,
  - Current context and main challenges.

**First: Enhancement of legislative framework:**

A. Accession to international human rights treaties:

8. During the second review, a number of recommendations were addressed to the State of Qatar regarding accession to international human rights treaties. Fifteen States recommended Qatar to accede to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). These recommendations were accepted by the State of Qatar, and on 21 May 2018 the State of Qatar completed the accession procedures.
9. Qatar Foundation for Social Work believes that this significant legislative development contributes to domestic consolidation of a large number of human rights since the two covenants, together with the Universal Declaration for Human Rights (UDHR) constitute the international bill of human rights. However, the accession to these two covenants entails taking up several measures at the national level in order to fulfill the obligations contained therein.
10. In this regard we propose the following recommendations:
- To develop a plan of action to review the consistency of the national legislation with the obligations of the State of Qatar under the two Covenants.
  - To raise awareness about the provisions of the two covenants and build and develop national capacities of government and non-government bodies to give effect to the provisions of the two covenants.

B. Promulgation of national legislation:

11. The reporting period witnessed the adoption of a number of national legislations related to human rights, for example:

- Law No. (21) for the year 2015 regulating the entry and exit of expatriates and their residence, under which the sponsorship system was abolished and replaced by a contractual system.
- Law No. 15 of 2017 on domestic workers.

12. In this regard we propose the following recommendations:

- To raise awareness of these laws and to disseminate them on a wide scale so that beneficiaries can easily have access to them with a view to knowing their rights and duties.
- To conduct training and capacity-building programs for personnel in state agencies relevant with the implementation of these laws.
- To establish national mechanisms to follow up the implementation of these laws.

## **Second: Promotion and protection of the rights of women, children and persons with disabilities:**

13. The State of Qatar received a number of recommendations regarding the rights of women and children during the previous cycle of review, which were among the accepted recommendations. The Government also accepted a number of recommendations on the protection of women and children from violence. Although the Qatari Penal Code has generally addressed the criminalization of physical and sexual abuse, the prevention of violence requires further steps.

14. In this regard we propose the following recommendations:

- To adopt legislation to protect women from violence and criminalize all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence, and violence on women expatriate workers, as well as the inclusion of provisions on protection of women with disabilities and severing punishment of perpetrators of violence against them.

- To adopt legislation on the rights of the child, with specific provisions on the protection of children against violence, provisions relating to the rights of children with disabilities, and raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility.
- To continue to implement programs aimed at raising awareness of the rights of women and children and preventing all forms of violence against them.

### **Third: Current context and challenges:**

15. This cycle of the UPR takes place at a time when the State of Qatar and the Qatari people are undergoing extraordinary circumstances created by the unilateral coercive measures imposed by four Arab States in the region since June 5, 2017.
16. These measures were applied on a wide scale and with a great negative impact on human rights and fundamental freedoms of many individuals and families.
17. One of the most serious consequences of these measures is the dismantling of social fabric of mixed Gulf families whose members were separated due to restrictions on freedom of movement and residence. The right to education for Qatari students studying in these States were also affected by their sudden and unwarranted expulsion. Many Qatari nationals have been denied access to their property in these countries. These measures have also affected the right of individuals to practice religious rites such as Hajj and Umrah, as well as the right to health, and the right to freedom of opinion and expression.
18. These measures have placed heavy burden on QSW capacity to deal with the direct social, psychological and economic impacts on a large number of affected families and individuals. QSW had to double its pace of work and its budget in order to cope with the continuous increase in cases received by its affiliated Centers.
19. The human rights violations resulting from these unilateral coercive measures were evidently documented by the OHCHR Technical Team which visited Doha in the period 17-24 November 2017 and issued its detailed Report in December 2017.
20. In this regard we propose the following recommendations:

- For the state of Qatar to continue with the same positive and humane approach in non-discriminating against the citizens of the four countries and guaranteeing their rights within national territory.
- For the government of the State of Qatar to continue to support the QSW to play its role in mitigating the effects of unilateral coercive measures on those affected.
- For the government of the State of Qatar to continue the measures taken to alleviate the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures imposed on citizens and residents of Qatar.

End of Statement