

Universal Periodic Review (33rd session, April-May 2019)
Contribution of UNESCO

Qatar

I. Background and framework

Scope of international obligations: human rights treaties which fall within the competence of UNESCO and international instruments adopted by UNESCO.

<i>Title</i>	<i>Date of ratification, accession or succession</i>	<i>Declarations /reservations</i>	<i>Recognition of specific competences of treaty bodies</i>	<i>Reference to the rights within UNESCO's fields of competence</i>
<i>Convention against Discrimination in Education 1960</i>	Not a State Party to this Convention	Reservation to this Convention shall not be permitted		Right to education
<i>Convention on Technical and Vocational Education 1989</i>	Not a State Party to this Convention			Right to education
Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage 1972	12/09/1984 Acceptance			Right to take part in cultural life
Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage 2003	01/09/2008 Ratification			Right to take part in cultural life
Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions 2005	21/04/2009 Accession			Right to take part in cultural life

II. Promotion and protection of human rights on the ground

Right to Education

1. The **Constitution** adopted in 2003¹ enshrines the right to education for all citizens and states that the “State shall endeavor to make general education compulsory and free of charge” (article 49). Moreover, the Constitution prohibits discrimination “whatsoever on grounds of sex, race, language, or religion” and ensures equality (article 35). Education is more specifically regulated by the **Compulsory Education Law No.25** adopted in 2001 and amended in 2009². It states that education is free of charge and compulsory for all children from the beginning of the primary stage to the end of the preparatory stage or upon reaching the age of 18 years³.

Freedom of opinion and expression

➤ Constitutional and Legislative Framework:

2. Article 47 of Qatar’s Constitution ensures freedom of expression and opinion according to circumstances and conditions prescribed by law.⁴⁵ Article 48 stipulates that freedom of the press, printing, and publishing is guaranteed according to the law.⁶

3. The Press and Publication Law (1979) regulates all press issues. Under Article 46 it is a crime to criticize the Emir of Qatar or to attribute any statement to him without the express permission of his office. Any violation carries up to six months in prison.⁷ Under Article 47 of the law, journalists may not publish material that causes any damage to the supreme interests of the country, and it bans anything that would imply offense to the public morals. The article also prevents the publication of any statement that may cause confusion with the economic situation in the country.⁸

4. Defamation is considered criminal under Qatar’s [Penal Code](#) (2004).⁹ Article 326 of the Penal Code imposes up to two years imprisonment or a fine of 20,000 Riyals for defaming someone.

5. The government, the Qatar Radio and Television Corporation, and customs officers are authorized to censor both domestic and foreign print and broadcast media for religious, political, and sexual content prior to distribution.¹⁰

6. A freedom of information law does not currently exist in the country.

➤ Implementation of Legislation:

7. Broadcasting and internet is regulated by the Communications and Regulatory Authority, which was established by virtue of Emiri Decree (42) in 2014. The Authority regulates the

¹ <http://www.unesco.org/education/edurights/media/docs/b279a535dfddd38cf5273377f767efbc539ae3a0.pdf>

² <http://www.unesco.org/education/edurights/media/docs/9350610e35789c668c689a08be001a2835969362.pdf>

³ Qatar, National report submitted to the CRPD Committee, CRPD/C/QAT/1, 9 July 2014, para.165

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRPD%2fC%2fQAT%2f1&Lang=en

⁴ http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file_id=225298

⁵ https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Qatar_2003?lang=en

⁶ https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Qatar_2003?lang=en

⁷ <http://www.almeezan.qa/LawView.aspx?opt&LawID=414&language=en>

⁸ http://www.academia.edu/3385121/Media_Laws_and_Regulations_of_the_GCC_Countries

⁹ <http://portal.www.gov.qa/wps/wcm/connect/8abaea8046be1deaae97ef70b3652ad8/Penal+Code.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&useDefaultText=0&useDefaultDesc=0>

¹⁰ http://www.academia.edu/3385121/Media_Laws_and_Regulations_of_the_GCC_Countries

Telecommunications and Information Technology sector, Postal sector and access to digital media.¹¹

8. All publications also are subject to government licensing and regulatory requirements. In January 2017, referring to decree No. 16 of 1993 the Ministry of Culture and Sports requested any business operating in the field of “press and publications” in Qatar to get the necessary permits from the Ministry.¹²

➤ Safety of Journalists:

9. UNESCO recorded no killing of journalists in Qatar between 2008 and 2012.

III. Review and specific recommendations

10. A number of recommendations was addressed to Qatar during the last UPR cycle concerning the integration of human rights in the curricula and the guarantee of universal access to quality education, including for girls and women, as well as persons with disabilities.

New ratifications of human rights treaties:

- Since the last UPR cycle, Qatar ratified some major human rights treaties, including the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)** and the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)** in May 2018.
- Qatar also recently informed UNESCO’s Secretariat that Qatar was currently considering ratification of the **UNESCO 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education**. In the context of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on education, it should be noted that the ratification of these instruments will provide Qatar with a supportive legal environment for all efforts made towards providing and ensuring “inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all”.

Universal access to quality education:

- In 2015, a committee was created to monitor cases of school dropout, identify and understand the reasons, and formulate practical proposals and recommendations to re-enrol students who have abandoned school.¹³
- Slightly more than 70% of children of primary school age reached grade 4 and learned the basics in reading. Around 20% of children of primary school age reached grade 4 but did not learn the basics in reading¹⁴.
- The system of professional licensing for teachers was established to ensure that teachers’ level of competence meets national professional standards.¹⁵

¹¹ <http://cra.gov.qa/en/about-us/about-cra>

¹² <https://dohanews.co/ministry-cracks-media-related-activities-qatar/>

¹³ Qatar, Report submitted for the 9th Consultation of Member States on the implementation of the 1960 Recommendation against Discrimination in Education, p.12 (unofficial translation)
<http://www.unesco.org/education/edurights/media/resources/file/QATAR.pdf>

¹⁴ UNESCO, *EFA Global Monitoring Report*, 2014. p.193 <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002256/225660e.pdf>

¹⁵ Qatar, Report submitted for the 9th Consultation of Member States on the implementation of the 1960 Recommendation against Discrimination in Education, p.20 (unofficial translation)

- Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)¹⁶ data highlights that children born into poor households risk learning less than other students¹⁷.

Girls' and women's education:

- Official data show very close enrolment rates for females and males in compulsory education¹⁸, as well as similar literacy rates for both sexes among adults aged 15 years and older¹⁹.
- There is a plan to open other technical and specialized schools, such as a school of science and technology²⁰.
- Official data reveals that men mainly occupied leadership positions in Qatar University²¹. Similarly, almost no women hold leadership positions in corporations and governments²².

Education of persons with disabilities:

- According to information provided by Qatar, educational buildings meet the requirements of persons with special needs and notably include.
- The **Department of Special Education and Care for Talented Students and Rou'a Assessment Advice and Support Centre** were also established. The latter provides assessment, advice and support and monitors the services provided to special needs students in schools.
- The Ministry of Education and Higher Education seeks to provide additional special educational services for students with special needs who require services unavailable at school. Thus the ministry's first kindergarten for special needs children was established with the goal of providing early intervention for such children to facilitate integration at school²³.
- Nevertheless, concerns were expressed over the lack of "reasonable accommodation to all students with disabilities in mainstream schools" and "about the absence of a strategy for quality, inclusive education"²⁴.
- During the school year 2010/2011, 1487 students with disabilities were enrolled in mainstream schools, 5886 students with disabilities were registered in the country's 10 learning centers for persons with disabilities²⁵.

Pre-primary education:

- Qatar almost doubled enrolment to reach near-universal participation in 2015²⁶.

¹⁶ Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

¹⁷ UNESCO, *EFA Global Monitoring Report*, 2014. p.201

¹⁸ Qatar, National report submitted to the CEDAW Committee, CEDAW/C/QAT/2, 16 February 2018, para.96
https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2fC%2fQAT%2f2&Lang=en

¹⁹ Qatar, National report submitted to the CEDAW Committee, CEDAW/C/QAT/2, 16 February 2018, para.115

²⁰ Qatar, National report submitted to the CEDAW Committee, CEDAW/C/QAT/2, 16 February 2018, para.98

²¹ Qatar, National report submitted to the CEDAW Committee, CEDAW/C/QAT/2, 16 February 2018, para.121

²² UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report*, 2016, p.71 <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002457/245752e.pdf>

²³ Qatar, Report submitted for the 9th Consultation of Member States on the implementation of the 1960 Recommendation against Discrimination in Education, pp.21-22 (unofficial translation)

²⁴ CRPD Committee, Concluding Observations on the initial report of Qatar, CRPD/C/QAT/CO/1, 5 October 2015, para.43
https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRPD%2fC%2fQAT%2fCO%2f1&Lang=en

²⁵ Qatar, National report submitted to the CRPD Committee, CRPD/C/QAT/1, 9 July 2014, para.168-169

²⁶ UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report*, 2017, p.140 <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0025/002593/259338e.pdf>

- However, according to available information, no legal framework guarantees access to pre-primary education as a right.

Financing of education:

- In 2015, Qatar was among the countries that spent less than the recommended international benchmarks – 4% of GDP and 15% of total public expenditure – on education²⁷.

Human rights education:

- A series of measures has been taken to help promote human rights. This takes the form of a “human rights programme designed to instruct teachers, school administrators and students at all stages [...]”²⁸

Learning environment:

- A policy of assessment of student behaviour was formulated and amended in school year 2014-2015 on the premise that school is the place which promotes responsibility, respect and academic achievement in a safe teaching and learning environment where all students, teachers, administrators, parents and guardians are entitled to feel safe.²⁹

IV. Specific recommendations

11. Qatar should be encouraged to continue its efforts in ratifying the UNESCO 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education and in seeking UNESCO’s support in this process
12. Qatar should be encouraged to continue its efforts to submit regularly national reports for the periodic consultations on UNESCO’s education-related standard-setting instruments.
13. Qatar should be encouraged to continue its efforts to improve the quality, relevance and outcomes of education, and to ensure more strongly that children learn and achieve equally, regardless of their economic or social background.
14. Qatar should be encouraged to continue its efforts towards gender equality in education, and notably to continue to diversify the educational and vocational choices of girls and boys, and to adopt a relevant strategy to promote women’s access to all areas of study at the tertiary education level and to ensure equal career opportunities.
15. Qatar should be encouraged to strengthen the inclusion of all children and learners in the mainstream educational system and ensure the right to inclusive education for learners with disabilities.
16. Qatar should be encouraged to adopt legal measures to ensure that at least one year of quality pre-primary education is provided on a compulsory basis and free of charge, in accordance with the commitments of SDG4-Education 2030.
17. Qatar should be encouraged to improve its public investment in education and to raise it in accordance with international benchmarks.

²⁷ UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report*, 2017, pp.264-265

²⁸ Qatar, Report submitted for the 9th Consultation of Member States on the implementation of the 1960 Recommendation against Discrimination in Education, p.23 (unofficial translation)

²⁹ Qatar, Report submitted for the 9th Consultation of Member States on the implementation of the 1960 Recommendation against Discrimination in Education, p.20 (unofficial translation)

18. Qatar should be encouraged to continue its efforts to integrate a human rights approach in its study plans and educational programmes.
19. Qatar should be encouraged to share with UNESCO any relevant information to update its country profile on UNESCO's Observatory on the Right to Education³⁰.

Freedom of opinion and expression

20. Qatar is further recommended to decriminalize defamation and place it within a civil code that is in accordance with international standards.
21. Qatar is encouraged to introduce a freedom of information law that is in accordance with international standards and to ensure progress on Sustainable Development Goal 16.10 concerning public access to information and fundamental freedoms.
22. The Government of Qatar is encouraged to assess the appointment system for the broadcast licensing authority to ensure that this body is independent.
23. Qatar is recommended to implement reforms to bring its laws and practices into line with international standards for press freedom and freedom of expression.

Cultural rights

24. As a State Party to the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)³¹, the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)³² and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005)³³, Qatar is encouraged to fully implement the relevant provisions that promote access to and participation in cultural heritage and creative expressions and, as such, are conducive to implementing the right to take part in cultural life as defined in article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In doing so, Qatar is encouraged to give due consideration to the participation of communities, practitioners, cultural actors and NGOs from civil society as well as vulnerable groups (minorities, indigenous peoples, migrants, refugees, young people and people with disabilities), and to ensure that equal opportunities are given to women and girls to address gender disparities.

Freedom of scientific research and the right to benefit from scientific progress and its applications

25. **Qatar** has not submitted its National Report on the implementation of the Recommendation on the Status of Scientific Researchers (1974) for the Second Consultation covering the period from 2013 to 2016

³⁰ <http://www.unesco.org/education/edurights/index.php?action=home&lng=en>

³¹ Periodic Report available at: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/activities/851>

³² Periodic Report not available

³³ Periodic Report not available

(<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0025/002592/259256e.pdf>). Therefore **Qatar** is encouraged to report to UNESCO in future on the implementation of the newly adopted Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers (2017), which supersedes the 1974 Recommendation, on any legislative or other steps undertaken by it with the aim to ensure the application of this international standard-setting instrument paying a particular attention to the legal provisions and regulatory frameworks which ensure the implementation of human rights of scientific researchers, as well as human rights obligations related to the Right to Science, the principle of non-discrimination, including urging active promotion of women and girls entering scientific careers, as well as the scientists' rights of autonomy, freedom of research, expression and publication.