

# QATAR

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Qatar is a constitutional monarchy in which Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani exercises full executive power. The population is approximately 1.76 million, of whom approximately 250,000 are citizens. The 2005 constitution provides for hereditary rule by the Emir's male branch of the al-Thani family. Sharia (Islamic law) is a primary source of legislation. Security forces reported to civilian authorities.

The principal human rights problems were the inability of citizens to peacefully change their government, restriction of fundamental civil liberties, and pervasive denial of workers' rights. Despite the constitution's establishment of the right of association, the monarch-appointed government prohibited organized political life and restricted civil liberties, including freedoms of speech, press, and assembly and access to a fair trial for persons held under the Protection of Society Law and Combating Terrorism Law.

Other continuing human rights concerns included restrictions on freedom of religion and movement, as foreign laborers could not freely travel abroad. Trafficking in persons, primarily in the labor and domestic worker sectors, was a problem. Legal, institutional, and cultural discrimination against women limited their participation in society. The unresolved legal status of "Bidoons" (stateless persons with residency ties) resulted in social discrimination against these noncitizens.

The government took steps to prosecute those who committed abuses, and there were no cases of impunity reported.

### **Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:**

#### **a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life**

There were no reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings.

#### **b. Disappearance**

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

### **c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment**

The constitution and law prohibit such practices, and there were no reports that government officials employed them. The government conducted training for law enforcement and military personnel that focused on the prohibition of torture.

The government interprets Sharia as allowing corporal punishment for certain criminal offenses. Courts ordered flogging prescribed by interpretation of Sharia in cases of alcohol consumption and extramarital sex by Muslims. On appeal the court typically reduced this sentence to imprisonment or fine. Authorities reportedly did not carry out corporal punishment during the year.

### **Prison and Detention Center Conditions**

Prisons and detention centers generally meet international standards, including clean sanitation facilities and potable water. Prisoners and detainees generally had access to visitors, although prison officials limited access to family and legal counsel at the state security prison. According to past reports of detainees at the state security prison and visits by the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) chairman, “security” prisoners did not face significantly different conditions from those of the general population. Authorities allowed prisoners and detainees to submit complaints to judicial and administrative authorities without censorship and to request investigation of credible allegations of inhumane treatment. According to authorities they investigated allegations, but the results were not public.

The government permits monitoring visits in accordance with the standard modalities to all facilities except the state security prison by independent human rights observers and international bodies. The last reported visit by an international human rights organization to a Qatari detention center was by the International Red Cross to the Deportation Detention Center (DDC) in July. The government occasionally provided embassies access to state security prisoners at separate locations. The government-appointed NHRC conducted regular visits to all facilities. Ombudsmen cannot serve on behalf of prisoners and detainees.

There were approximately 600-700 prisoners at the Central Prison, the principal facility for convicted criminals, and 500 detainees awaiting trial in various detention centers throughout the country. The NHRC reported that the DDC held an estimated 1,100 male and 300 female detainees. Separate facilities exist for

men and women, pretrial detainees and convicted prisoners, and juveniles and adults. The Ministry of Social Affairs has authority over juvenile detainees and held them separately under the supervision of a social worker. There was an average of only five or six juveniles held at any given time. Conditions for women prisoners were the same as those for men. In certain cases, fines, community service, and probation are used for nonviolent offenders in lieu of prison sentences. There were no reported efforts to improve record-keeping in the prison system.

#### **d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention**

The constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, and the government generally observed these prohibitions. Authorities may detain individuals in the state security prison for indefinite periods under the Protection of Society and Combating Terrorism Law. Processing speed for deportations increased for most DDC detainees during the year, with the period of detention ranging from two days to two months. On July 12, the government announced a limit of two months' detention for all DDC detainees except those facing additional criminal charges.

#### **Role of the Police and Security Apparatus**

Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the police under the Ministry of Interior and state security forces, and the government employed effective mechanisms to investigate and punish abuse and corruption. There were no reports of impunity involving the security forces during the year.

#### **Arrest Procedures and Treatment While in Detention**

Criminal law requires that persons be apprehended openly with warrants based on sufficient evidence and issued by a duly authorized official, be charged within 24 hours, and be brought before a court without undue delay. Authorities generally respected this in practice for criminal law cases. The state security service can arrest and detain suspects for up to 30 days without referring them to the public prosecutor.

However, the Protection of Society Law and Combating Terrorism Law provide exceptional procedures that permit detention without charge for as long as 15 days, renewable for up to six months. The Protection of Society Law permits an additional six months' detention without charge with approval of the prime minister, who can extend the detention indefinitely in cases of threats to national security. This law empowers the minister of interior to detain persons suspected of

crimes related to national security, honor, or impudence. Decisions under this law are subject to appeal by the prime minister only. Although generally unused, a provision of this law permits the prime minister to adjudicate complaints against these detentions. The Combating Terrorism Law permits a second six-month period of detention with approval from the Criminal Court, which can extend the detention indefinitely with review every six months.

In most cases a judge may order a suspect released, remanded to custody to await trial, held in pretrial detention pending investigation, or released on bail. Although suspects are entitled to bail (except in cases of violent crimes), it was used infrequently in practice. Authorities were more likely to grant citizens bail than noncitizens. Noncitizens charged with minor crimes may be released to their citizen sponsor, although they cannot leave the country until the case is resolved.

The accused is entitled to legal representation throughout the process and prompt access to family members in non-security cases. There are provisions for state-funded legal counsel for indigent prisoners in criminal cases, and this requirement was generally honored in practice. Authorities generally afforded suspects detained under the Protection of Society Law and Combating Terrorism Law access to counsel but delayed access to family members.

All suspects except those detained under the Protection of Society Law or the Combating Terrorism Law must be presented before the Public Prosecutor within 24 hours of arrest. If the Public Prosecutor finds sufficient evidence for further investigation, a suspect can be detained for up to 16 days before charges must be filed in the courts. Judges may also extend pretrial detention for one month, extendable by one month at a time up to six months, to provide authorities additional time to conduct investigations.

Arbitrary Arrest: The law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention and, with few exceptions, the government observed these prohibitions. There were reports of individuals detained without formal charges by security agencies on allegations of terrorist financing as stipulated by the Counter-Terrorism Law.

Pretrial Detention: With few exceptions, nearly all suspected criminals go to trial within a month of arrest. The Permanent Committee on Examining the Conditions of Inmates at the DDC is charged with reviewing and acting on the cases of those in custody for two months or longer.

Amnesty: During Ramadan and on Qatar's National Day, the Emir granted amnesty to 140 prisoners, including 37 citizens and 103 noncitizens. Unlike in previous years, there were no reports that the Emir pardoned prisoners on National Human Rights Day.

#### **e. Denial of Fair Public Trial**

Although the constitution provides for an independent judiciary, the Emir, based on the recommendation of the Supreme Judicial Council, appoints all judges, who hold their positions at his discretion. Approximately 75 percent of the judges were foreign nationals dependent on residency permits. During the year there were no reports of influence or corruption in the courts. Suspects held in pre-trial detention under the Protection of Society Law and Combating Terrorism Law had limited access to the legal system, including a fair trial.

#### **Trial Procedures**

The law provides for the right to a fair trial for all citizens, and the judiciary generally enforced this right, except for suspects held under the Protection of Society Law and Combating Terrorism Law.

The law provides defendants the presumption of innocence. Trials are by jury and open to the public, but the presiding judge can close the courtroom to the public if he deems the case to be sensitive.

Defendants are entitled to legal representation at public expense throughout the pretrial and trial process. In matters involving family law, Shia and Sunni judges may apply their interpretations of Sharia for their groups. There were 164 Sunni judges, in addition to one Shia judge for the small Shia population.

Defense attorneys have access to government-held evidence relevant to their cases, once the case has been filed in the court. Defendants have the right to confront and question witnesses against them and to present witnesses and evidence on their own behalf. Defendants have the right of appeal within 15 days of a decision, and use of the appellate process was common in practice.

The high fee for appealing to the Court of Cassation in practice restricted the right to appeal. In some cases the courts waived the appellate fees if the appellant demonstrated financial hardship.

## **Political Prisoners and Detainees**

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

## **Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies**

There are civil remedies available for those seeking damages for, or cessation of, human rights violations, but there were no cases reported during the year. The law specifies circumstances that necessitate a judge's removal from a case for conflict of interest, and these laws were observed in practice.

### **f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence**

The constitution and the criminal procedures code prohibit such actions, and the government generally respected these prohibitions in practice; however, police and security forces reportedly monitored telephone calls and e-mails. The government prohibits membership in political organizations.

Citizens must obtain government permission, which was generally granted, to marry foreigners. Male citizens may apply for residency permits and citizenship for their foreign wives, but female citizens can apply only for residency for their foreign husbands, not citizenship.

## **Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:**

### **a. Freedom of Speech and Press**

#### **Status of Freedom of Speech and Press**

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and press in accordance with the law, but the government limited these rights in practice.

Freedom of Speech: Citizens individually discussed sensitive political and religious issues, but not in public forums or as part of political associations, which do not exist. Members of the much larger foreign population did not express themselves publicly on sensitive topics. During the year the government-supported Qatar Foundation continued to fund the "Doha Debates," a series of public debates broadcast by the BBC featuring citizens and noncitizens speaking about international (but not domestic) topics, such as whether NATO or Arabs should deal with Libya and whether the Arab revolutions will produce different dictators.

Freedom of Press: The law provides for restrictive procedures on the establishment of newspapers, closure, and confiscation of assets of a publication. It also criminalizes libel and slander, including injury to dignity. All print media were owned by members of the ruling family or proprietors who enjoyed close ties to government officials. There were no independent broadcast media, and state-owned television and radio reflected government views. The government owned the Doha-based, Arabic-language al-Jazeera satellite television network, which carried international news and local news with an international component. Although al-Jazeera management and the government claimed that the channel was free of government influence, the government funded it, controlled content, and hired and fired the management.

Violence and Harassment: In at least one case, the authorities contacted a reporter with a warning after the reporter published an article critical of the government.

Censorship or Content Restrictions: Journalists and publishers continued to self-censor due to political and economic pressures when reporting on government policies or material deemed hostile to Islam, the ruling family, and relations with neighboring states. The Qatar Radio and Television Corporation and customs officials censored material. There were no specific reports of political censorship of foreign broadcast news media or foreign programs. The government reviewed and censored foreign newspapers, magazines, and books for objectionable sexual, religious, and political content. Local news vendors reported that Egyptian newspapers, such as *al-Ahram*, “were critical of Qatar and were occasionally censored or not allowed in the country.”

## **Internet Freedom**

The Ministry of Culture restricted the peaceful expression of views via the Internet and censored the Internet for political, religious, and pornographic content through a proxy server, which monitored and blocked Web sites, e-mail, and chat rooms through the state-owned Internet service provider. For example, the government blocked access to the popular blog “Ikhbareya,” which at times published articles critical of the government. A user who believed a site was mistakenly censored could submit the Web address to have the site reviewed for suitability; there were no reports that any Web sites were unblocked based on this procedure. The Ministry of Culture is responsible for monitoring and censoring objectionable content on the Internet. There was no evidence that the government prosecuted or punished anyone or attempted to collect, request, obtain, or disclose the personally

identifiable information in connection with persons' peaceful expression of political, religious, or ideological opinion or belief.

### **Academic Freedom and Cultural Events**

The constitution provides for freedom of expression and scientific research according to the conditions and circumstances stipulated by law. In practice instructors at Qatar University noted that they often exercised self-censorship. Instructors at foreign-based universities operating in the country reported enjoying academic freedom. There were no reported government restrictions on cultural events, although some groups organizing cultural events reported that they exercised self-censorship. Films were censored for political, religious, and sexual content and for vulgar and obscene language.

### **b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association**

#### **Freedom of Assembly**

The constitution provides for, but strictly regulates, freedom of assembly. Organizers must meet a number of restrictions and conditions to acquire a permit for a public meeting. For example, the Director General of Public Security at the Ministry of Interior must give permission for a meeting, a decision which is subject to appeal to the minister of interior, who has the final decision. There were no demonstrations by citizens, but Egyptian, Libyan, and Syrian expatriates demonstrated peacefully near their embassies in conjunction with the "Arab Spring." Authorities approved permits for these protests and did not intervene.

#### **Freedom of Association**

The constitution provides for the right to form groups, defined by the Consultative Council as professional associations and private institutions, but the government limited this right in practice. A total of 23 professional and private organizations existed, the majority of which were charities. They are prohibited from engaging in political matters or affiliating internationally and must obtain approval from the Ministry of Social Affairs, which can deny their establishment if it deems them a threat to the public interest. There are no organized political parties or politically oriented associations.

Administrative obstacles, including the slow pace of procedures required to form such associations and institutions and strict conditions on their establishment,

management, and function restricted the recognition of these groups. The Minister of Social Affairs must approve applications, and the number of noncitizens cannot exceed 20 percent of the total membership without approval by the ministerial cabinet. Only one organization applied to form a professional society during the year; the application was pending at year's end. During the year the government approved one new nongovernmental organization (NGO), a charitable organization.

Professional societies must pay 50,000 riyals (approximately \$13,750) in licensing fees, 10,000 riyals (\$2,750) in annual fees and, since 2010, must have 10 million riyals (\$2.75 million) in capital funds. Private institutions must also have 10 million riyals in capital funds, but this requirement can be waived by the Council of Ministers. Registrations expire after three years, after which an association must reregister.

Informal organizations, such as community support groups and activity clubs, operated without registration, but they may not engage in activities deemed political.

### **c. Freedom of Religion**

See the Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report* at [www.state.gov/j/drl/irf/rpt](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/irf/rpt).

### **d. Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons**

The constitution provides for freedom of movement within the country, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, but the government did not fully respect this right in practice. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) generally did not ask the government to assist internally displaced persons, refugees, returning refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and other persons of concern.

In-country Movement: The only restrictions on in-country movement for citizens concerned sensitive military, oil, and industrial installations. Although there was less emphasis on setting and enforcing "family times" at entertainment areas in Doha, several local malls and souks continued to restrict access to certain areas to foreign workers on weekends. Police also restricted foreign workers' access to National Day celebrations on the corniche.

Foreign Travel: The government prevents the travel of its citizens only when they are involved in ongoing court cases. The government severely restricted foreign travel for noncitizens, which principally affected foreign workers. All noncitizens require an exit permit from their employers to leave the country. Although the law provides an administrative procedure for obtaining an exit permit without an employer's approval, the process was burdensome. Foreign embassies reported that the process was ineffective, and they continued to receive requests to mediate disputes concerning exit permits between foreign workers and their sponsors. The law outlaws the practice of employers withholding workers' passports, but it remained a common problem due to insufficient enforcement.

### **Protection of Refugees**

Access to Asylum: The law does not explicitly provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status, but in practice the government occasionally accepted such individuals as "guests." The small number of persons granted residence on humanitarian grounds were legally classified as immigrants.

Nonrefoulement: The constitution prohibits the extradition of political refugees. The government generally provided protection against the expulsion or forcible return of refugees to countries where their lives or freedom would be threatened on account of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

However, on June 2, a Libyan woman was forcibly deported to Benghazi, Libya; she had fled after allegedly being gang-raped by Libyan progovernment forces in Tripoli in March. A spokesman for the UNHCR, which had recognized her as a refugee, said that it considered her forced return a violation of international law by Qatar. The UNHCR was ready to transport her to a safe facility in Europe. Government officials ignored requests from the UNHCR and diplomatic representatives to avoid returning her to Libya. Government officials offered no public explanation for the deportation other than to note that she overstayed her visa.

### **Stateless Persons**

Citizenship derives solely from the father. Women do not transmit citizenship to their children, even if the parents are married and the child is born in the country.

A woman must obtain permission from authorities before marrying a foreign national, but she does not lose citizenship upon marriage.

According to the NHRC, there were approximately 300-400 “Bidoon” residents (stateless persons with residency ties) in the country. They suffered social discrimination, but not legal discrimination, based upon their lack of nationality. The Bidoon were able to register for public services such as education and health care.

The government provides a legal means for long-term residents to acquire citizenship; in practice, restrictions and uneven application of the law prevented stateless persons from acquiring citizenship. The law allows a maximum of 50 noncitizen residents per year to apply for citizenship after residing in the country for 25 consecutive years.

### **Section 3. Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government**

The constitution provides for hereditary rule by the Emir's branch of the al-Thani family and does not provide citizens the right to change their government peacefully through elections. The Emir exercises full executive powers, including appointment of cabinet members. The Consultative Council, whose members the Emir appointed, plays an advisory role only. The constitutional provision for initiation of legislation by the Consultative Council remained unimplemented. The influence of family and tribal traditions was strong, and the government did not permit political parties or opposition groups.

#### **Elections and Political Participation**

Recent Elections: On May 10, citizens elected the 29 members of the fourth Central Municipal Council to four-year terms. The Council advises the Minister of Municipality and Urban Affairs on local public services. Diplomatic missions noted no apparent irregularities in the elections. There were an estimated 120,000 eligible voters, but only 41 percent of the 32,700 registered voters participated.

Voting is open to all citizens who are at least 18 years of age and who have been naturalized for at least 15 years.

In November, the Emir announced national elections would be held in late 2013 for 30 of the 45 members of the Consultative Council after its current term ends.

Political Parties: The government did not permit the organization of political parties.

Participation of Women and Minorities: Although traditional attitudes and roles continued to limit women's participation in politics, women served in public office as chair of the Qatar Foundation, vice president of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs (SCFA) with ministerial rank, secretary general of the SCFA, head of the General Authority for Museums, ambassador to the UN mission in Geneva, and president of Qatar University. One woman served on the Central Municipal Council and there were two female judges on the Court of First Instance.

#### **Section 4. Official Corruption and Government Transparency**

The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption and the government generally implemented these laws effectively. There were no reported cases of government corruption during the year. Public officials were not subject to financial disclosure laws.

The National Committee for Accountability and Transparency has been responsible for combating corruption since its establishment in 2007. On December 2, the Emir announced the creation of a new Administrative Control and Transparency Authority, headed by a deputy prime minister, to track ministries and probe claims of abuses of power or funds. Its mandate entails probing the misuse of public funds and investigating complaints against government officials. The agency may also have access to banking details, in cases that allege money laundering activities.

The law does not provide for access to government information beyond the requirement that the government publish laws in the official gazette. Information on the government such as on the budget, expenditures, or draft laws was generally not available.

#### **Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights**

The three NGOs operating in the country whose charters indicated an interest in human rights were all funded by the government and responsive to its influence. These included the NHRC, Qatar Foundation for Combating Human Trafficking (QFCHT), and Qatar Foundation for Protecting Women and Children (QFPWC).

They cooperated with the government, rarely criticized it, and did not engage in political activity.

No international NGO focusing on human rights or humanitarian issues was registered in the country.

Government Human Rights Bodies: The government-funded and -appointed NHRC investigated local human rights conditions. The NHRC reported that it handled 296 petitions for assistance during the preceding 12 months, 182 of which were from Qataris and 114 from non-Qataris. During the year the NHRC issued a report on the status of human rights covering 2010.

## **Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons**

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on nationality, race, language, religion, and disability but not gender or social status. In practice, Qatari custom outweighed government enforcement of nondiscrimination laws, and legal, cultural, and institutional discrimination existed against women, noncitizens, and foreign workers.

### **Women**

Rape and Domestic Violence: The law criminalizes rape, but does not address spousal rape. There were publicized cases of rape involving foreigners, but none were reported involving citizens. The penalty for rape is life imprisonment, regardless of the age or gender of the victim. If the perpetrator is a relative, teacher, guardian, or caregiver of the victim, the penalty is death. The government enforced the law against rape, but victims feared social stigma and underreported the crime.

There is no specific law criminalizing domestic violence. According to the NHRC, domestic violence may be prosecuted under the criminal law that provides a general prohibition against violence. According to the quasi-governmental QFPWC, domestic violence against women continued to be a problem. There were neither arrests nor convictions for family domestic violence among citizens publicized in the press, although there were reports of cases involving noncitizens. During the year, 406 cases of domestic abuse against women were reported to the foundation. There was no reported data on sexual abuse provided by foreign embassies.

The SCFA operated a shelter under the supervision of the QFPWC to accommodate abused women and children. During the year the shelter accommodated 20 women and six children. The shelter provided a variety of services, including financial assistance, legal aid, and psychological counseling.

Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment is illegal and carries penalties of imprisonment or fines. In some cases sponsors sexually harassed and mistreated foreign domestic servants. Most domestic servants did not press charges for fear of losing their jobs. The QFCHT reported seven cases of sexual harassment, four of which were ultimately resolved outside of court, one that was dismissed by prosecutors, and two that were pending before the court. When the domestic employees brought harassment to the attention of authorities, the employees were occasionally deported and no charges were filed against the employer.

Reproductive Rights: There were no reports of government interference in the right of couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so free from discrimination or coercion. There was no direct government support for access to means of contraception, but contraceptives were freely available without a prescription. Licensed medical professionals attended mothers at birth, and maternal care was readily available. Men and women had equal access to treatment for sexually transmitted diseases.

Discrimination: The constitution asserts the principle of equality between citizens in rights and responsibilities, but legislation such as the Housing Law and the Nationality Law undermine this principle of equality with regard to women. The law governing the generous government housing system was generally applied fairly in practice and provides significant protection to women, with the exception of citizen women divorced from noncitizen men. The Housing Law requires the passage of five years' residency from the date of divorce for these citizen women to obtain their housing entitlement. Under the Nationality Law, citizen women faced legal discrimination in obtaining and transmitting citizenship for their noncitizen husbands and their children, respectively.

Traditions and interpretation of Sharia also significantly disadvantage women in family, property, and inheritance law and in the judicial system generally. For example, a non-Muslim wife does not have the automatic right to inherit from her Muslim husband. She receives an inheritance only if her husband wills her a portion of his estate, and even then is eligible to receive only one-third of the total estate. The proportion that women inherit depends upon their relationship to the

deceased; in the cases of siblings, sisters inherit only one-half as much as their brothers. In cases of divorce, young children usually remain with the mother, regardless of her religion, unless she is found to be unfit. Women who are granted guardianship over their children by law receive their financial rights and associated right of residence.

Women may attend court proceedings and may represent themselves, but a male relative generally represented them. In cases involving financial transactions, the testimony of two women equals that of one man, but courts routinely evaluated evidence according to the overall credibility of the witness and the testimony being offered and not on the basis of gender.

A non-Muslim woman is not required to convert to Islam upon marriage to a Muslim, but many make a personal decision to do so. Children born to a Muslim father are considered Muslims. Men may prevent adult female family members from leaving the country, but only by seeking and securing a court order. During the year, there were no reports that women older than 18 years of age were prevented from traveling abroad.

According to the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry, women constituted approximately 13 percent of business owners, mainly operating design companies, fashion establishments, training centers, and beauty centers. Women served in the workforce as university professors, public school teachers, and police. Women served as professionals in government service, education, health, and private business. Women received equal pay for equal work, but often lacked access to some positions and did not receive equal allowances for transportation, housing, and subsistence.

There is no specialized government office devoted to women's equality, but the SCFA and NHRC continued their efforts to improve the status of women and the family under both civil and Islamic law. The councils contributed to a number of national and international conferences, studies, and reports on the status of women in the country, as well as the drafting of legislation affecting women and children. During the year the SCFA and NHRC made a recommendation to the ministerial council to provide equal rights to children of female citizens married to noncitizens in the areas of health, education, employment, and housing.

## **Children**

Birth registration: Citizenship is derived from one's father. The government generally registered all births immediately.

Education: The government provides more for the welfare of citizen than noncitizen children. Education was free and compulsory for all citizens through the age of 18 or through nine years of education, whichever comes first. Education is compulsory for noncitizen children, but they pay a nominal fee.

Child Abuses: There was no societal pattern of child abuse, although there were some cases of family violence and physical and sexual abuse. The QFPWC reported that, during the year, it received 172 cases involving abuse of children.

Child Marriage: The minimum age for marriage is 18 years for boys and 16 years for girls. Marriage of persons below these ages is not permitted except in conformity with Qatari religious and cultural norms. These norms include the need to obtain consent from the legal guardian to ensure that both prospective partners consent to the union and apply for permission from a competent court. There were rare instances of child marriage in the Bedouin community.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: There is no specific law establishing a minimum age for consensual sex. By law, sex is prohibited outside of marriage (see Child Marriage above). In the criminal law, the penalty for sexual relations with a person younger than 16 years old is life imprisonment. If the individual is the relative, guardian, caretaker, or servant of the victim, the penalty is death. There is no specific law prohibiting child pornography as all pornography is prohibited, but the antitrafficking in persons law passed in October specifically criminalizes the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

The QFPWC conducted awareness campaigns on the rights of the child and maintained a special hotline that allowed both citizen and noncitizen children to call with questions and concerns ranging from school, health, and psychological problems to concerns about sexual harassment. This hotline operated in conjunction with the family abuse hotline; statistics on use were not available.

International Child Abductions: The country is not a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction.

## **Anti-Semitism**

The country does not have an indigenous Jewish community; the few Jews in the country were foreigners with no restrictions on traveling or working. On occasion, in response to political events in the region, some of the country's privately owned Arabic-language newspapers carried cartoons depicting offensive caricatures of Jews and Jewish symbols and editorial comparisons of Israeli leaders and Israel to Hitler and the Nazis. These occurred primarily in the daily newspapers *al-Watan*, *al-Sharq*, *al-Arab*, and *al-Raya* and drew no government response.

### **Trafficking in Persons**

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at [www.state.gov/j/tip](http://www.state.gov/j/tip).

### **Persons with Disabilities**

The law prohibits discrimination against and requires the allocation of resources for, persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities in employment, education, access to health care, and other state services or other areas. There was no underlying pattern of abuse at education facilities, mental health facilities, or prisons. The government is charged with acting on complaints from individuals and the NHRC and enforcing compliance. The law requires that 2 percent of jobs in government agencies and public institutions be reserved for persons with disabilities. Private sector businesses employing a minimum of 25 persons are required to hire persons with disabilities. Employers who violate these employment provisions are subject to fines. There were no reports of violations during the year.

Private and independent schools in general provided most of the required services for students with disabilities, but government schools did not. Few public buildings met the required standards of accessibility for persons with disabilities, and new buildings generally did not comply with standards. The SCFA is charged with ensuring compliance with the rights and provisions mandated under the law, but compliance was not effectively enforced.

### **National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities**

Legal and social discrimination against noncitizen workers was a problem. The government distinguished between citizens and noncitizens in employment, education, housing, and health services. Noncitizens were required to pay for electricity, water, and some secondary and higher education (services provided

without charge to citizens). Noncitizens were eligible for medical coverage at a nominal fee. Noncitizens generally could not own property, but the law provides for property ownership in three designated areas. Cultural, linguistic, and religious differences and divergent economic status accentuated social discrimination between citizens and migrant workers. “Bidoons” also endured social discrimination.

### **Societal Abuses, Discrimination, and Acts of Violence Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity**

The law prohibits same-sex sexual conduct between men but is silent on same-sex relations between women. Under the criminal law, a man convicted of having sexual relations with another man or boy younger than 16 years old is subject to a sentence of life in prison. A man convicted of having same-sex sexual activity with another man older than 16 is subject to a sentence of seven years in prison. There were an unknown number of cases before the courts during the year. There were no lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) organizations in the country. During the year, no violence was reported against LGBT persons, but there was an underlying pattern of discrimination toward LGBT persons based on cultural and religious values prevalent in the society.

### **Other Societal Violence or Discrimination**

There was discrimination against HIV-infected patients. HIV-positive foreigners, whose condition was typically diagnosed during their medical examinations upon arrival in the country, were deported. HIV-positive citizens were quarantined and received treatment.

## **Section 7. Worker Rights**

### **a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining**

The law permits worker organizations in private enterprises that have 100 citizen workers 18 years of age and older. The law grants these workers the rights to strike and bargain collectively. The law prohibits those working in the public sector from forming and joining unions. However, the law also makes the exercise of these rights difficult. Noncitizens are not eligible to form worker committees, and foreign workers may only be members of joint labor-management committees.

The labor code allows for only one trade union: the General Union of Workers of Qatar, which consisted of general committees for workers in various trades or industries. A general committee must have 100 or more members. These trade or industry committees in turn are composed of worker committees at the individual firm level. The law forbids worker organizations from affiliating with groups outside the country.

Although the law recognizes the right to strike, restrictive conditions made the likelihood of a legal strike extremely remote. Civil servants and domestic workers cannot strike; the law also prohibits strikes at public utilities and health or security service facilities, which include the gas, petroleum, and transport sectors. The law requires approval for a strike by three-fourths of a company's workers committee. Such committees are composed of an equal number of representatives from management and labor, making it practically impossible for labor to gain a strike authorization. The Labor Department of the Ministry of Civil Service must rule on all industrial disputes before workers can call a strike. Foreign embassies reported several cases in which they intervened to resolve labor disputes reported by their nationals working in the country.

In the past the government responded to labor unrest by dispatching large numbers of police to the work sites or labor camps involved; the strikes generally ended peacefully after these shows of force. In most cases the government summarily deported the workers' leaders and organizers.

The government circumscribed the right to bargain collectively through control over the rules and procedures of the bargaining and agreement processes. Employees could not freely practice collective bargaining, and there were no workers under collective bargaining contracts.

Local courts handled disputes between workers and employers. In practice foreign workers avoided drawing attention to problems with their employers due to fear of retaliation and deportation. The Human Rights Office at the Ministry of Interior served as the point of contact for the complaints of foreign workers, who were mostly from South and South East Asia.

## **b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor**

On October 23, the government enacted an antitrafficking in persons (TIP) law prohibiting all forms of forced or compulsory labor, with up to 15 years' imprisonment for the most serious offenses. The QFCHT conducted training for

law enforcement officials on applying the new anti-TIP law, including methods of investigation and identifying victims.

Reports of forced labor continued, especially in the construction and domestic labor sectors, which disproportionately affected migrant workers. Some foreign workers who voluntarily entered the country for work found themselves working under circumstances indicative of forced labor, such as withholding of passports and travel documents, refusal to grant exit permits, and working under conditions to which they had not agreed.

On March 1, the QFCHT issued a National TIP Action Plan 2010-15 that aims to prevent the spread of human trafficking, provide protection for TIP victims, and punish traffickers. According to the QFCHT, at year's end the government had implemented 95 percent of the plan's programs and projects for 2010-11 and 80 percent for 2011-12.

In 2010 the Ministry of Labor conducted 20,872 regular monthly inspections and 3,030 spot inspections during the year. There was no new information on inspections in 2011. Companies found in violation of labor laws were generally given several weeks to correct their actions. A company's second violation would result in its placement on a strictly enforced government "blacklist," which prohibits companies from obtaining additional visas or hiring additional foreign workers.

Also see the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at [www.state.gov/j/tip](http://www.state.gov/j/tip).

### **c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment**

The law sets the minimum age for employment at 16. The law stipulates that minors between the ages of 16 and 18 can work with parental or guardian permission. Minors may not work more than six hours a day or more than 36 hours a week. Employers must provide the Labor Department with the names and occupations of their minor employees and obtain permission from the Ministry of Education to hire a minor. The Labor Department may prohibit the employment of minors in jobs judged dangerous to the health, safety, or morals of minors.

### **d. Acceptable Conditions of Work**

There is no minimum wage. The median wage of noncitizen workers did not provide a decent standard of living for a worker and family. The law prescribes a 48-hour workweek with a 24-hour rest period, but most government offices followed a 36-hour workweek. Employees who worked more than 48 hours per week or 36 hours per week during the holy month of Ramadan are entitled to overtime pay of at least a 25 percent wage supplement. Government offices and major private sector companies adhered to this law, while employers often ignored the law with respect to unskilled laborers, construction workers, and domestic and personal employees, the majority of whom were foreigners. Domestic workers are not covered under the labor law. Many such workers frequently worked seven days a week and more than 12 hours a day with few or no holidays, no overtime pay, and no effective means to redress grievances.

There are laws regarding worker safety and health, but enforcement--a combined responsibility of the Ministry of Energy and Industry, Ministry of Health, and Labor Department--was uneven due to insufficient training and lack of personnel. Violators faced penalties of up to 6,000 QR (\$1,648) and 30 days' imprisonment in the most serious cases, but labor observers reported that most safety and health violations were handled through administrative fines or blacklisting. The Labor Department opened an office in Doha's Industrial Area, where most unskilled laborers resided, to receive complaints about worker safety or nonpayment of wages.

Diplomatic representatives visited labor camps and found many unskilled foreign laborers living in cramped, dirty, and hazardous conditions, often without running water, electricity, or adequate food. The Labor Inspection Department conducted monthly and random inspections of labor camps; when it found them below minimum standards, the operators received a warning, and authorities ordered them to remedy the violations within one month. If they did not remedy the violations, the Labor Department referred the matter to the public prosecutor for action, and some cases went to trial.

During the year inspectors conducted a total of 24,107 observations of work and labor housing sites. Inspectors found 20,669 acceptable and 1,531 unacceptable, the latter of which resulted in bans on the companies in question; 493 remained under investigation at year's end. Foreign labor officials reported that conditions at most labor camps in the country remained below international standards. A foreign embassy reported acceptable conditions at multiple camps that housed its nationals, and embassy staff visited on a regular basis. A recent survey of low-skilled laborers revealed that the average foreign laborer worked 9.7 hours per day

and that 96 percent of laborers worked six or seven days a week. Other studies concluded that low-skilled laborers earned an average of 14,000 QR (\$3,846) annually.

According to foreign diplomats and some individual migrant workers, the Ministry of Labor's Department of Labor Affairs was widely perceived to be objective within its narrow mandate when dealing with the nonpayment of wages. The department claimed that it resolved 80 percent of the 3,630 complaints filed by workers between January and September. The ministry referred 292 cases to the labor courts for judgment. A limited number of labor complaints were referred to the criminal courts, but statistics were not publicly available.