QATAR 2022 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Qatar is a constitutional monarchy in which Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani exercises absolute executive power. The constitution provides for hereditary rule by men in the emir's branch of the Al Thani family. The country held elections in October 2021 for the Shura (Consultative) Council, a legislative body with limited authorities, which were the first such elections in the country's history. Voters chose 30 representatives of the 45-member body, with the Emir appointing the other 15 members. Observers considered these elections free and fair with 63 percent turnout, but with election laws that disenfranchised some tribal groups. The emir appoints all cabinet members, including the prime minister.

The national police and Ministry of Interior forces maintain internal security and are responsible, among other matters, for preventing terrorism, cyberattacks, and espionage. The national police oversee general law enforcement. Civilian authorities maintained effective control over security forces. There were infrequent reports of abuses committed by security forces.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: serious restrictions on free expression, including the existence of criminal libel laws; substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, including overly restrictive laws on the organization, funding, or operation of nongovernmental organizations and civil society organizations; restrictions on migrant workers' freedom of movement, access to justice, and vulnerability to abuses, including forced labor; inability of citizens to change their government peacefully in free and fair elections; serious and unreasonable restrictions on political participation, including a complete prohibition on political parties; lack of investigation and accountability for gender-based violence; existence of laws criminalizing consensual same-sex sexual conduct; and prohibitions on independent trade unions.

The government took limited steps to prosecute those suspected of committing human rights abuses or engaging in corruption. The government did not make

public statistics on prosecutions related to human rights, including forced labor. The government took some steps to address forced labor, but there were numerous reports of impunity, including excessive lengths of time for labor dispute resolution and acts of reprisal against migrant workers through bringing false charges of absconding from employment contracts.

Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person

a. Arbitrary Deprivation of Life and Other Unlawful or Politically Motivated Killings

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

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of disappearances by or on behalf of government authorities.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and Other Related Abuses

The constitution and law prohibit torture and other inhuman or degrading treatment and punishment. There were no reports of torture during the year.

The country operates under sharia. The government interprets sharia as allowing corporal punishment such as court-ordered flogging for certain criminal offenses, including alcohol consumption and extramarital sex. No statistics were available regarding rates of corporal punishment during the year.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

There were no significant reports regarding prison or detention center conditions that raised human rights concerns.

Administration: Authorities conducted investigations into credible allegations of mistreatment. No statute allows ombudsmen to advocate for prisoners and detainees.

Independent Monitoring: The government permitted monitoring visits by independent human rights observers and international bodies to all facilities except the state security prison. The government routinely provided foreign diplomats access to state security prisoners. Qatar's National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) released its annual report covering visits from the previous year. The NHRC reported conducting 50 field visits to detention and interrogation facilities in 2021, down from 82 in 2020.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention and provides for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of his or her arrest or detention in court. The government generally observed these requirements. Human Rights Watch (HRW) alleged in October that Ministry of Interior forces arbitrarily detained lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) Qataris and residents for up to two months without charge.

Labor laws permit employers to report "absconding" laborers. International rights groups have reported several cases of employers reporting employees fleeing abusive working conditions as "absconders," leading to arrests and detention. International human rights groups have also reported cases of migrant workers being arrested after their employers filed false absconding reports as a form of reprisal for complaining about working conditions.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

The law requires that persons be apprehended with warrants based on sufficient evidence and issued by an authorized official. By law 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, authorities may detain a suspect for up to 15 days with the approval of a judge, renewable for similar periods not to exceed 45 days, before charges must be filed in the courts. Judges may also extend pretrial detention for one month, renewable for one-month periods not to exceed one-half the maximum punishment for the accused crime. Authorities typically followed these procedures differently for citizens than for

noncitizens. The law does not specify a time limit on preventive detention; the government has not acted on recommendations made by the NHRC in 2019 and 2021 to set such a time limit.

The law permits the prime minister to extend detention indefinitely in cases of threats to national security and to adjudicate complaints involving such detentions. The state security service may arrest and detain suspects for up to 30 days without referring them to the public prosecutor.

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 release on bail except in cases of violent crimes, judges infrequently ordered such release on bail.

Authorities were more likely to grant bail to citizens than to noncitizens. Noncitizens charged with minor crimes may be released to the custody of their employer (or a family member for children) pending trial, although they may not leave the country until the case is resolved.

By law in nonsecurity-related cases, the accused is entitled to legal representation throughout the process and prompt access to family members. There are provisions for government-funded legal counsel for indigent prisoners in criminal cases, and authorities generally honored this requirement.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

Although the constitution provides for an independent judiciary, the emir, based on recommendations from the Supreme Judicial Council, appoints all judges, who retain their positions at his discretion. Foreign detainees had access to the legal system, although some complained of opaque legal procedures and complications, mostly stemming from language barriers. Foreign nationals did not uniformly receive translations of legal proceedings, although interpretation was generally provided within courtrooms. In December 2021 the Court of Appeal upheld the conviction against Jordanian national Abdullah Ibhais, former communications director for the country's 2022 men's FIFA (Federation international de football association) World Cup organizers, the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, on charges of misusing public funds. Ibhais received a three-year

sentence. He claimed that the trial was in retaliation for his internal criticism of the handling of a migrant workers' strike in August 2019. Ibhais said his interrogators deprived him of the right to consult a lawyer and coerced him to sign a confession statement. International human rights organizations considered the trial unfair and retaliatory.

The government established the Labor Dispute Settlement Committees in 2018 to increase the efficiency and speed of decision making in the overloaded labor courts and included court translators at all hearings. The existence of these committees reportedly has not shortened the time from complaint to resolution, nor has the Supreme Judicial Council's 2020 establishment of a branch of the Enforcement Court to facilitate implementation of the committees' verdicts. Some employers facing lawsuits from non-Qatari employees were able to avoid justice by filing false absconding charges and canceling work contracts, causing workers to lose their legal status. This lack of sponsorship opened workers to deportation before a civil trial could take place.

Trial Procedures

The law provides for the right to a fair and public trial for all residents, and the judiciary generally enforced this right.

The law provides defendants the presumption of innocence, and authorities generally inform defendants promptly of the charges brought against them, except for suspects held under the Protection of Society Law and Combating Terrorism Law. The defendant may be present at his or her trial.

Defendants are entitled to choose their legal representation or accept it 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 religious groups. The law approves implementing the Shia interpretation of sharia upon the agreement and request of the parties involved in the dispute. In family law matters, a woman's testimony is deemed one-half of a man's testimony.

Defendants usually have free language interpretation as necessary from the moment charged through all appeals, while court documents are provided only in Arabic. Defendants have access to government-held evidence, have the right to

confront prosecution or plaintiff witnesses and present one's own witnesses and evidence, and have the opportunity to give a statement at the end of their trial. Defendants have the right to appeal a decision within 15 days; use of the appellate process was common.

The Court of Cassation requires a fee to initiate the appeals process. In some cases, courts waived fees if an appellant demonstrated financial hardship.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

Civil remedies are available for those seeking damages for, or cessation of, human rights abuses, but no cases were reported during the year. The law specifies circumstances that necessitate a judge's removal from a case for conflict of interest, and authorities generally observed this provision.

f. Arbitrary or Unlawful Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The constitution and the criminal procedures code prohibit such actions. Police and security forces, however, reportedly monitored telephone calls, emails, and social media posts.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties

a. Freedom of Expression, Including for Members of the Press and Other Media

The constitution provides for freedom of expression, including for members of the press and other media, in accordance with the law, but the government limited these rights. Self-censorship was prevalent.

Freedom of Expression: Citizens did not regularly discuss sensitive political and religious matters in public forums, but they did so in private and on social media. The law prohibits criticism of the emir. Members of the majority foreign

population exercised self-censorship on sensitive topics. The law penalizes by up to three years in prison damaging, removing, or expressing hatred and contempt toward the country's flag, the Gulf Cooperation Council flag, or the flag of any international organization or authority. The use of the national flag without formal permission from authorities, displaying a damaged or discolored flag, or changing the flag by adding photographs, text, or designs to it are also criminalized.

In May the First Instance Criminal Court sentenced four prominent members of the al-Murra tribe to life imprisonment for their involvement in staging protests and posting a series of tweets and videos expressing dissatisfaction with the elections law and criticizing the Emir. Local lawyers who attended the trial hearings considered the trial to be fair and transparent while international organizations deemed the trial "unfair." The Court of Appeal upheld the convictions in October.

Censorship or Content Restrictions for Members of the Press and Other Media, Including Online Media: The law includes restrictive procedures on the establishment of newspaper outlets and grants the government the power to close outlets and confiscate assets of a publication. Members of the ruling family or proprietors who enjoyed close ties to government officials owned all print media. Both private and government-owned television and radio reflected government views, although call-in shows allowed for some citizen criticism of government ministries and policies. While broadcast media generally did not criticize authorities or the country's policies, specific ministries and even individual ministers were regular targets of criticism in print media. The government owned and partially funded the Doha-based al-Jazeera satellite television network, which carried regional, international, and special-interest programming. The government also partially funded other media outlets operating in the country. Some observers and former al-Jazeera employees alleged the government influenced the content produced by that news outlet. The Qatar Media Corporation, the Ministry of Culture, and customs officials censored material. The government reviewed, censored, or banned foreign newspapers, magazines, films, and books for objectionable political, sexual, and religious content. Journalists and publishers continued to self-censor due to political and economic pressures when reporting on government policies or material deemed denigrating to Islam, the ruling family, and relations with neighboring states.

Libel/Slander Laws: The law criminalizes libel and slander, including "insult to dignity." A journalist may be fined and imprisoned for up to five years for defamation or reporting "false news." The law restricts the publication of information deemed insulting to the emir or heir apparent; blasphemous or defamatory to the Abrahamic faiths; harmful to the national currency or the economic situation; or infringing upon the dignity of persons, the proceedings of investigations, and prosecutions in relation to family status, and it punishes violators with up to seven years' imprisonment. There were instances of such laws being acted upon during the year including the referral of a citizen for criminal prosecution charges for libel for criticizing the Shura Council on social media.

Internet Freedom

The cybercrime law prohibits any online activity that threatens the safety of the state, its general order, or local or international peace. It also criminalizes the spread of "false news," forces internet providers to block objectionable content, and bans third-party publication of personal or family information. Violation of the cybercrime law can lead to a sentencing of up to three years in prison and a substantial fine.

The law requires internet service providers to block objectionable content upon request from judicial or executive authorities. Internet providers also are obligated to maintain long-term electronic records and traffic data on users, which must be furnished to the government upon request. The government-controlled internet service provider, Ooredoo, censored political, religious, and pornographic internet content through a proxy server, which monitored and blocked websites, email, and voice over internet protocol (VoIP) platforms, including Skype and FaceTime. Users who believed authorities had mistakenly censored a site could request that the site be reviewed by the Ministry of Transportation and Communication for suitability; there were no reports that any websites were unblocked based on this procedure.

In January the Cyber Crimes Department at the Ministry of Interior summoned a citizen for interrogation for posting several messages on Twitter that were critical of the Shura Council's performance. The Ministry of Interior referred the individual to the Public Prosecution Office for further investigation on charges of

libel. The individual's social media post had described council members as "bandits." Following an investigation, the individual announced that the interrogation was instigated by an official complaint from the Shura Council against him. Later, he posted a series of videos broadly condemning the council for targeting critics "rather than representing the voice of the people." The videos generated wide reactions by Qataris on social media, the majority of whom stated their support for freedom of expression and disparaged the Shura Council for suing a citizen.

Restrictions on Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

The constitution provides for freedom of expression and scientific research. Instructors at Qatar University noted they sometimes exercised self-censorship. Instructors at foreign-based universities operating in the country, however, reported they generally enjoyed academic freedom. There were occasional government restrictions on cultural events, including denial of permits without explanation, and some groups organizing cultural events reported they exercised self-censorship. Authorities censored books, films, and internet sites for political, religious, and sexual content and for vulgar and obscene language.

b. Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The government limited freedoms of peaceful assembly and association.

Freedom of Peaceful Assembly

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly, but this right is restricted by law, including the Public Meetings and Demonstrations Law and the Associations and Private Institutions Law. Noncitizens, including long-term resident migrant workers, are not protected by constitutional provisions on freedom of assembly. Organizers of public meetings must obtain approval from the Ministry of Interior to acquire a permit.

In August migrant workers employed by Qatari-owned international construction firm al-Bandary International Group staged a protest in front of the company's Doha headquarters over allegations that months of wages had not been paid. The protests blocked traffic in the area and dozens of workers were arrested in

connection with the demonstration. An unknown number of those arrested were later deported for having "breached security laws," according to security authorities. The government reported that the company was already under investigation for nonpayment of wages and that the government would pay delayed wages to all those involved in the protest as well as others whose wages had not been paid. There was no publicly available information by year's end that such payments had been made, however. The government reported that company executives had been arrested for fraud.

Freedom of Association

The constitution provides for the right to form groups, defined by the law as professional associations and private institutions, but the government significantly limited this right. Noncitizens, including long-term resident migrant workers, are not afforded constitutional or other protections on freedom of association. There were no reports of attempts to organize politically. There were no organized political parties, and authorities prohibited politically oriented associations. The government prohibited professional associations and private institutions from engaging in matters deemed political or affiliating internationally. Civil society organizations must obtain approval from the Ministry of Social Development and Family, which may deny their establishment if it deems them a threat to the public interest. Informal organizations, such as community support groups and activity clubs, operated without registration, but they were not permitted to engage in activities deemed political.

c. Freedom of Religion

See the Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report* at https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/.

d. Freedom of Movement and the Right to Leave the Country

The constitution provides for freedom of movement within the country, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, but the government did not fully respect these rights.

In-country Movement: Restrictions on in-country movement for citizens existed

around sensitive military, oil, and industrial installations. Although the practice of setting and enforcing "family-only" times at entertainment areas in Doha was no longer common, several local malls and markets continued to prevent access to certain commercial areas by foreign workers on weekends.

Foreign Travel: The government prevented the travel of citizens when they were involved in pending court cases. Women faced gender-based restrictions on foreign travel. Single women younger than 25 require permission from their male "guardian" to travel outside the country, and male relatives may prevent married or single adult female family members from leaving the country by securing a court order.

e. Protection of Refugees

The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in providing protection and assistance to refugees and to assist refugees in other countries. The government provided aid and assistance to tens of thousands of Afghan refugees transiting the country.

Access to Asylum: The law provides for the granting of asylum or refugee status. A committee within the Ministry of Interior handles asylum requests. According to the NHRC, the Committee for Political Refugee Affairs received 30 political asylum applications in 2021 but approved none. If granted political asylum, the asylee and that individual's family may access a range of free services provided by the government, including travel documents, jobs, monthly allowances, medical and educational services, and housing.

f. Status and Treatment of Internally Displaced Persons

Not applicable.

g. Stateless Persons

Qatar contributes to statelessness through discrimination against women in nationality laws.

There were approximately 2,500 *Bidoon* in Qatar – persons with Arab heritage

who were born in the country but whose families were not included as citizens at the time of the country's independence or shortly thereafter. The Bidoon were able to register for public services such as education and health care. They were unable to own property, however, and could not travel without a visa to other Gulf Cooperation Council countries. Official documents do not recognize the term Bidoon but rather refer to these persons as "individuals with temporary Qatari identification documents."

The law allows long-term residents to apply for citizenship after living in the country for 25 consecutive years, but the citizenship applications were by law capped at 50 per year and were rarely approved by the government. Restrictions and inconsistent application of the law prevented stateless persons from acquiring citizenship, which confers the right to own property, open businesses without local partners, and receive free education and health services. Generally, the government did not approve marriage requests between Qatari women and stateless men.

Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process

The constitution does not provide citizens the ability to choose their government in free and fair periodic elections held by secret ballot and based on universal and equal suffrage. The government did not allow the formation of political parties or opposition groups. The emir exercises full executive powers, including the appointment of cabinet members. The law categorizes Qataris into "genuine" citizens who obtained their nationality before 1930 and "naturalized" citizens who became citizens after 1930. There were no official statistics publicly available on the number of "genuine" and "naturalized" citizens. Only "genuine" citizens have the right to run and vote in Shura Council elections.

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: In October 2021, citizens voted to choose 30 members in the first-ever partially elected Shura Council, while the emir appointed the remaining 15 in the 45-member consultative body. Approximately 63 percent of eligible voters cast ballots in the election, although many Qatari citizens were unable to vote, such as members of the al-Murra tribe, due to restrictions in the citizenship

laws that categorized them as "naturalized." This status is hereditary; children of naturalized fathers are considered naturalized.

Political Parties and Political Participation: The government did not permit the organization of political parties, and there were no attempts to form them during the year. Voting is open only to citizens at least 18 years old who can prove that their family resided in the country before 1930 or that their grandfather was born in Qatar.

Participation of Women and Members of Minority Groups: Traditional attitudes and societal roles continued to limit women's participation in politics, but women served in various roles in public office. In October 2021, the emir appointed women to serve in the roles of minister of social development and family and minister of education and higher education. Including the minister of public health, the cabinet has three women members – the highest number in the country's history. Women also occupied top positions such as the permanent representatives to the United Nations offices in New York and Geneva, assistant foreign minister, chair of the Qatar Foundation, head of the Qatar Museum Authority, chair of the National Human Rights Committee, and ambassadorships. In October 2021, the emir appointed two women to the Shura Council, one of whom was elected vice speaker. Noncitizen residents are banned from voting or otherwise participating in political affairs, although they served as judges and staffers at government ministries.

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, and the government generally implemented the law effectively. There were isolated reports, however, of government corruption.

The law gives the State Audit Bureau financial authority and independence and allows it to publish nonconfidential findings.

Corruption: In June the country's Court of Appeal upheld a 2020 ruling against six local defendants, including the Ministry of Interior's former Traffic Department

director and a member of the ruling family, on charges of money laundering and embezzlement of 60 million riyals ($16.5 million) in public funds. The convicts received a range of penalties including imprisonment of up to 10 years and fines of five million riyals ($1.4 million). The case began in 2020 when the authorities removed the Traffic Department director from office and referred him to prosecution on charges of giving away "special number" license plates as gifts to other officials.

Section 5. Governmental Posture Towards International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Abuses of Human Rights

Researchers from international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as Amnesty International and HRW, and international unions such as the Building and Wood Workers' International and the International Trade Union Confederation, continued to visit and report on the country without interference from authorities. The government was often responsive to requests for meetings and jointly participated in public events hosted by human rights groups, including on sensitive topics such as labor rights.

Several quasi-governmental organizations were under a single entity, the Qatar Foundation, led by Sheikha Hind Al Thani, the sister of the emir. These organizations cooperated with the government, rarely criticized it, and did not engage in political activity. Some international NGOs had offices in the country and focused on labor rights with the permission of the government.

Government Human Rights Bodies: Under a mandate from the cabinet, the Human Rights Department at the Ministry of Interior and the Human Rights Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are responsible for observing, reporting on, and providing training on human rights matters. The cabinet mandates the NHRC, whose members by law have immunity and operate as an independent body, to issue an annual report on human rights conditions in the country. The 2021 NHRC report provided a list of 20 recommendations on developing civil and political rights, including amending the penal code's articles on freedom of expression, improving prison conditions, and signing the

International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. As of year's end, none of these recommendations had been enacted by the government. The NHRC liaised with relevant government institutions on petitions submitted by citizens.

Section 6. Discrimination and Societal Abuses

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: The law criminalizes rape but does not specifically recognize rape of men. There is no standalone law against spousal rape. Sexual assault and other gender-based crimes were rarely reported, mostly due to social taboo. The penalty for rape is life imprisonment, regardless of the age or gender of the survivor. If the perpetrator is a nonspousal relative, teacher, guardian, or caregiver of the survivor, the penalty is death. The government enforced the law against rape; however, a survivor of rape can face criminal prosecution for extramarital sexual conduct if authorities decide the survivor may have consented at any point during the crime. Survivors may be forced to produce witnesses to prove they were raped in cases where the survivor knows their rapist.

No specific law criminalizes domestic violence, whether against spouses or other members of a household, including domestic workers. According to the NHRC, authorities may prosecute spousal violence as "general" violence under the criminal law.

Extramarital sex is punishable by up to seven years in prison, flogging (for unmarried persons), or the death penalty (for married persons). A woman who gives birth out of wedlock receives a 12-month jail sentence, on average, and may also be subject to corporal punishment (floggings) or, in the case of foreign residents, deportation. Press reports indicated jail sentences and flogging were rare in such cases, however.

Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment is illegal and carries penalties of imprisonment or fines. In some cases, sponsors sexually harassed and mistreated foreign domestic workers.

Reproductive Rights: There were no reports of coerced abortion or involuntary

sterilization on the part of government authorities.

There were no reports of government interference in the rights of married couples to decide the number, spacing, and timing of their children.

Women were routinely required to present a marriage certificate when seeking prenatal care. Unmarried individuals who reported pregnancies risked prosecution for extramarital sexual relations. Although hospitals generally assisted in the birth of children of unwed mothers regardless, there were cases of hospitals reporting unwed mothers to authorities. Emergency contraception was not available as part of clinical management of rape.

Discrimination: The constitution asserts equality between citizens in rights and responsibilities, but social and legal discrimination against women persisted. Sharia as implemented in the country discriminates against women in judicial proceedings, freedom of movement, marriage, child custody, and inheritance.

In line with local social norms, male relatives generally represented female relatives in court, although women have the legal right to attend court proceedings and represent themselves. Judges have discretion to consider a woman's testimony as equal to one-half of a man's testimony.

Under the Nationality Law, female citizens face legal discrimination since they, unlike male citizens, are not permitted to transmit citizenship to their noncitizen spouses or to children born from marriage to a noncitizen. Female citizens are unable to pass citizenship to their offspring. The law allows children of citizen mothers to gain permanent status in country, even if the father is not a Qatari national. Qatari women must apply for citizenship for their children in cases where the father is not a Qatari citizen, however, and applications are typically rejected. Citizens must obtain government permission to marry foreigners, which is sometimes not granted for female citizens. Male citizens may apply not only for residency permits but also for citizenship for their foreign wives; female citizens may apply only for residency for their foreign husbands and children, not for citizenship. A non-Muslim wife does not have the automatic right to inherit from her Muslim husband, only receiving an inheritance if her husband wills her a portion of his estate, and even then, she is eligible to receive only one-third of the

total estate. A female heir generally receives one-half the amount of an equivalent male heir; for example, a sister would inherit one-half as much as her brother. In cases of divorce, children generally remain with the mother until age 13 for boys and 15 for girls, at which time custody reverts to the father's family, regardless of the mother's religion.

To receive maternity care, a woman is required to present a marriage certificate.

The housing law, which pertains to the government housing system, also discriminates against divorced women and women married to noncitizen men. While Qatari men were entitled to government-provided plots of land, divorced women were eligible for lands only after five years without remarrying. Women married to noncitizen men were not entitled to such privilege.

A non-Muslim woman is not required to convert to Islam upon marriage to a Muslim, but many do so. The government documents children born to a Muslim father as Muslims, regardless of the religion of the mother.

Single women younger than age 25 require the permission of their male "guardian" to travel outside the country. Male relatives may prevent married or single adult female family members from leaving the country by seeking and securing a court order.

Adult women customarily were not allowed to leave their homes without approval from a male "guardian," including to work outside the home; however, the requirement was rarely enforced.

There was no specialized government office devoted to women's equality.

Systemic Racial or Ethnic Violence and Discrimination

The constitution stipulates that "all persons are equal before the law and there shall be no discrimination whatsoever on grounds of sex, race, language, or religion," although the 2005 electoral law restricts eligibility to vote in Shura Council elections (see section 3). The government enforced the law effectively. There were no reports of violence stemming from tribal, racial, or ethnic discrimination.

Discrimination in employment, particularly based on national origin, is not

explicitly prohibited in labor laws and conventions.

Children

Birth Registration: Children derive citizenship only from the father and the law automatically grants citizenship to the children of Qatari men regardless of the nationality of the child's mother. Citizen mothers are unable to transmit citizenship to their children. The government generally registered all births immediately. Due to legal prohibitions and social stigma surrounding sex outside of marriage, obtaining documentation for children born out of wedlock was typically not possible.

Education: Education is free and compulsory for all citizens through age 18 or nine years of education, whichever comes first. Education is compulsory for noncitizen children, but they pay a nominal fee. Islamic instruction is compulsory for Muslims and non-Muslims attending state-sponsored schools.

Child Abuse: The law criminalizes child abuse. There were limited cases of reported child abuse, family violence, and sexual abuse of children.

Child, Early, and Forced Marriage: By law the minimum age for marriage is 18 for boys and 16 for girls. The law does not permit marriage of persons younger than these ages except with consent from the legal guardian and with permission from a judge. Underage marriage was rare.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: No specific law prohibits child pornography because all pornography is prohibited, but the law specifically criminalizes the commercial sexual exploitation of children. No specific law sets a minimum age for consensual sex. The law prohibits sex outside of marriage. The penalty for sexual relations of an adult with a person younger than 16 is life imprisonment. If the individual is the nonspousal relative, guardian, caretaker, or servant of the victim, the penalty is death.

Antisemitism

The country does not have an indigenous Jewish community, and there was no official data on the number of Jewish foreign residents in the country. Cartoons,

opinion articles, and certain news coverage in local newspapers and other media outlets periodically carried antisemitic content.

Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/.

Acts of Violence, Criminalization, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity or Expression, or Sex Characteristics

Criminalization: The law prohibits consensual same-sex sexual conduct between men but does not explicitly prohibit same-sex sexual relations between women. The law was not systematically enforced. A man convicted of having consensual same-sex sexual relations may receive a sentence of seven years in prison. Under sharia, homosexuality is punishable by death; there were no reports of executions for this reason.

In addition to banning sex outside marriage for all persons, the law provides penalties for any male, Muslim or not, who "instigates" or "entices" another male to commit an act of "sodomy" or "immorality." Under the penal code, "leading, instigating, or seducing a male by any means for sodomy or dissipation" and "inducing or seducing a male or a female by any means to commit illegal or immoral actions" is punishable by up to three years' imprisonment.

Violence against LGBTQI+ Persons: In October HRW released a press release that claimed LGBTQI+ persons had been subjected to verbal harassment and physical abuse while in the custody of security forces.

Discrimination: LGBTQI+ persons faced discrimination under the law and in practice. There were no government efforts to address potential discrimination, nor are there antidiscrimination laws to protect LGBTQI+ individuals targeted on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

HRW published a press release alleging arbitrary detention of LGBTQI+ persons by the police. LGBTQI+ persons largely hid their sexual orientation, gender

identity, or gender expression, due to an underlying pattern of societal and legal discrimination against LGBTQI+ persons.

Information was not available on official or private discrimination in employment, occupation, housing, statelessness, or access to education or health care based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Availability of Legal Gender Recognition: Legal gender recognition is not available.

Involuntary or Coercive Medical or Psychological Practices Specifically Targeting LGBTQI+ Individuals: According to the October HRW release, some LGBTQI+ Qataris detained by security forces were required to attend so-called conversion therapy at a government funded "behavioral healthcare" center as a condition of their release.

Restrictions of Freedom of Expression, Association, or Peaceful Assembly: Due to social and religious conventions, there were no LGBTQI+ organizations, pride marches, or LGBTQI+ rights advocacy events.

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, the judicial system, and other government services or other areas. According to the law, persons with disabilities have the right to equal access to education, health services, public buildings, and transportation. The government is charged with acting on complaints from individuals; the NHRC has responsibility for enforcing compliance and generally did so. Few public buildings met the required standards of accessibility for persons with disabilities, and new buildings generally did not comply with standards.

There are 34 entities in the country offering services to children with disabilities. Private and independent schools generally provided most of the required services for students with disabilities. Government schools did not, with the exception of a public nursery for children with disabilities that Ministry of Education and Higher

Education opened in October.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

There was discrimination against HIV-positive individuals. Authorities deported foreigners found to be HIV-positive upon arrival. Mandatory medical examinations were required for residents. Since health screenings are required for nonresidents to obtain work visas, some HIV-positive persons were denied work permits prior to arrival. The government quarantined HIV-positive citizens and provided treatment for them.

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law does not provide for the right of workers to form and join independent unions, conduct legal strikes, and bargain collectively, which made the exercise of these rights difficult.

The law permits the establishment of voluntary "joint committees" with an equal number of worker and management representatives to deal with a limited number of workplace problems. Foreign workers may be members of these joint labor-management committees. The law offers a means to file collective disputes. If disputes are not settled internally between the employees and employer, the Ministry of Labor may mediate a solution. A 2017 agreement between the ministry and the International Labor Organization (ILO) includes provisions to create these committees with ILO supervision and assistance. In November the ILO published a report stating that over 70 companies had established joint committees, with 613 workers representing over 40,000 employees. Following the formation of joint committees, the ILO provided extensive training to the committee members on how to manage committees, establish open channels of communication with workers and management, and submit complaints to the competent authorities.

The law requires approval by the Ministry of Labor for worker organizations to affiliate with groups outside the country. The government did not respect freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining outside of the joint committees.

Given the absence of independent trade unions, there were no reports of government enforcement of laws respecting their establishment or operation. For those few workers covered by the law protecting the right to collective bargaining, the government circumscribed the right through its control over the rules and procedures of the bargaining and agreement processes. The labor code allows for only one trade union, the General Union of Workers of Qatar (General Union), which was composed of representative groups known as general committees for workers in various trades or industries. Trade or industry committees were composed of worker committees at the individual firm level. The law excludes all noncitizens and government employees from the right to join general committees that then consolidate into the General Union, effectively banning these workers from bargaining collectively or legally striking. The General Union did not operate during the year.

Employees could not freely practice collective bargaining, and there were no workers under collective bargaining contracts. On the rare occasions when labor unrest occurred, mostly involving the country's overwhelmingly migrant workforce, the government reportedly responded by dispatching large numbers of police to the work sites or labor camps involved; the government also requested the assistance of the embassies for the nationals involved. Strikes generally ended after these shows of force and the involvement of embassies to resolve disputes. In some cases, the government summarily deported the migrant workers' leaders and organizers to punish them and to deter future labor rights activism.

Although the law recognizes the right to strike for some workers, restrictive conditions made the likelihood of a legal strike extremely remote. The law requires approval for a strike by three-fourths of the general committee of the workers in the trade or the industry, and potential strikers also must exhaust a lengthy dispute resolution procedure before a lawful strike may be called. Civil servants and domestic workers do not have the right to strike; the law also prohibits strikes at public utilities and health or security service facilities, including in the gas, petroleum, and transportation sectors. The Complaint Department of the Ministry of Labor, in coordination with the Ministry of Interior, must preauthorize all strikes, including approval of the time and place.

In August security forces arrested an unidentified number of expatriates who

staged a protest in front of the headquarters of al-Bandary International Group in Doha, demanding the company pay them several months' outstanding wages (see section 2.b.).

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits and criminalizes all forms of forced or compulsory labor. International media and human rights organizations alleged numerous abuses against foreign workers, including withheld wages, unsafe working conditions, poor living accommodations, and employers who routinely confiscated workers' passports. The law prohibits employers from confiscating workers' passports and penalizes employers who do so, but noncitizen community leaders and officials from labor-exporting countries stated that passport confiscation remained a widespread problem. The government made efforts to prevent and eliminate forced labor, but enforcement of the law and prosecution of labor abuses remained insufficient. Some elements of the *kafala* employer-based sponsorship system – such as the exit requirement and no objection certificate – were abolished in 2020, but the sponsorship system gives employers broad control over foreign workers and challenges remain in implementing these reforms and ensuring access to justice.

A 2020 legal change eliminated exit visa requirements for 95 percent of government workers and all domestic workers. The abolishment of the no-objection certificate was effective immediately; however, media sources and NGOs reported several instances of employers retaliating against employees who initiated a transfer by canceling their visa or filing an absconding charge, rendering the worker illegal and at increased risk of exploitation, detention, or deportation. Employers may request the Ministry of Interior require up to 5 percent of the company's employees to obtain approval before leaving the country due to their type of work. These workers who are still required to seek their employers' permission to leave the country may request an exemption from a grievance committee jointly operated by the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Labor in cases where an employer refuses to grant permission.

In 2020 the country introduced a monthly minimum wage, which came into force in March 2021. These reforms have not yet been fully implemented and enforced,

exposing migrant workers, especially domestic workers, to potential abuse.

The law allows employees in the private sector to switch employers without having to first obtain their employer's permission. According to the law, workers should provide advance notice to their employer of their intent to change jobs by means of an electronic system run by the Ministry of Labor. Employees may also switch employers in cases of nonpayment of wages, breach of contract, mutual agreement, filing a legal case in court, and bankruptcy or death of employer, without any notice period. Between January and September, the Ministry of Labor approved 128,210 requests to change employment – approximately 68 percent of the total requests – and rejected 58,459. The ministry explained that reasons behind rejecting transfer requests could be workers voluntarily dropping the requests; new employers were blacklisted; or failure on the part of the workers or new employers to provide required documents. Regarding the employment transfer requests for domestic workers, the ministry stated that it approved 11,590 requests and rejected 12,128, representing 48 and 51 percent respectively, with the remainder still pending.

There were continuing indications of forced labor, especially among migrant workers in the construction and domestic labor sectors. Exorbitant recruitment fees incurred abroad entrapped many workers in long-term debt, making them more vulnerable to exploitation. Over the year some foreign workers who voluntarily entered the country had their passports, automated teller machine (ATM) cards, and pay seized by employers, and worked under conditions to which they had not agreed. A government electronic contracting system existed in several foreign countries from which workers are hired; labor-sending countries reported that this system helped to significantly reduce contract substitution and the number of workers who arrived in Doha without contracts. There are also continuing indications of wage theft in the private sector due to "pay when paid" policies, whereby laborers were denied their salary for months if the subcontractors for which they work were not themselves paid by their employing contractors. As a result, insolvency problems were passed down to low-wage workers.

Also see the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/.

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The law prohibits and criminalizes all the worst forms of child labor and provides for the protection of children from exploitation in the workplace, including limitations on working hours, occupational safety, and health restrictions. The law sets the minimum age for employment at 16 years and stipulates children between the ages of 16 and 18 may work with parental or guardian permission. Children may not work more than six hours a day or more than 36 hours a week. Employers must provide the Ministry of Labor with the names and occupations of their child employees and obtain permission from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education to hire a child. The education ministry may prohibit the employment of children in jobs judged dangerous to their health, safety, or morals. The government generally enforced the applicable law, but penalties for violations were not commensurate with those for analogous serious crimes, such as kidnapping.

d. Discrimination with Respect to Employment and Occupation

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, color, sex, language, ethnicity, and religion, but not political opinion, national origin, social origin, disability, sexual orientation, age, or HIV-positive status. Local custom, however, outweighed government enforcement of nondiscrimination laws. Penalties were not commensurate with laws related to civil rights. Discrimination in employment, particularly based on national origin, is not explicitly prohibited in labor laws and conventions. International human rights groups and the ILO have strongly urged explicit language in labor codes outlawing discrimination in employment.

Legal, cultural, and institutional discrimination existed against women, noncitizens, and foreign workers. The labor law does not allow women to work in jobs deemed hazardous, dangerous, or morally inappropriate, or in jobs specified by the Ministry of Labor.

By law women are entitled to equal pay for equal work but did not always receive it, and they often lacked access to decision-making positions in management of private companies and in the public sector. Gender-based violence and harassment occurred in the workplace. The government discriminated against noncitizens in employment, education, housing, and health services (see section 6).

The law requires reserving 2 percent of jobs in government agencies and public institutions for persons with disabilities, and most government entities appeared to conform to this law. Private-sector businesses with 25 or more employees also are required to hire persons with disabilities as at least 2 percent of their staff. Employers who violate these employment provisions are subject to moderate fines. There were no reports of infractions or enforcement of the hiring quota requirement during the year.

The government prohibited lower-paid male workers from residing in specific "family" residential zones throughout the country. In October authorities sent out dozens of eviction notices to single individuals living in informal group labor accommodations within the boundaries of Doha ordering them to vacate their residences or face legal consequences for violating a law designating certain neighborhoods for families only. For cultural and religious considerations, single expatriates are not allowed to commingle with families in residential areas, transportation, or health clinics. The sudden eviction notices caused disturbance to workers especially after the government abruptly cut off electricity to these accommodations, forcing workers to vacate immediately and find alternative accommodations away from the city.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

Wage and Hour Laws: The labor law provides for a 48-hour workweek with a 24-hour rest period and paid annual leave days. The labor law and provisions for acceptable conditions of work, including overtime pay provisions, do not apply to workers in the public sector or agriculture, or to domestic workers. Some employers did not pay workers for overtime or annual leave. Penalties for abuses were less than those for similar crimes, such as fraud.

Occupational Safety and Health: Occupational safety and health (OSH) standards were appropriate for the main industries in the country, such as construction, but the government generally did not enforce them. Responsibility for laws related to acceptable conditions of work fell primarily to the Ministry of Labor as well as to the Ministry of Municipality and the Ministry of Public Health. In November 2021 the ILO published a detailed report regarding OSH conditions in the country and urged the government to exert more efforts in collaboration with

employers to meet OSH standards and develop mechanisms to collect data on work injuries and fatalities. The law does not provide workers the right to remove themselves from a hazardous workplace without jeopardizing their employment, with the exception of a 2020 ministerial decision allowing workers to leave worksites in case of heat stress. Authorities did not effectively provide protection to employees exercising this right.

Wage, Hour, and OSH Enforcement: The government did not effectively enforce standards in all sectors. Working conditions for citizens were generally adequate because government agencies and the major private-sector companies employing them generally followed the relevant laws. The government sets restrictions on working during the hottest hours of the day during the summer and general restrictions related to temperature during the rest of the day as well. Employers often ignored working-hour restrictions and other laws with respect to domestic workers and unskilled laborers, the majority of whom were migrants. Penalties for violations of occupational safety and health laws were less than those for crimes like negligence. The government took limited action to prevent abuse. If a company had not brought conditions up to standard within one month of being notified of the need for action, the Ministry of Labor imposed fines, blacklisted the company, and on occasion referred the matter to the public prosecutor for action. Blacklisting is an administrative hold freezing government services such as processing new visa applications from a company or individual. Firms must pay a moderate fine to be removed from the list, even if the dispute is resolved, and the ministry reserves the right to keep companies on the list as a punitive measure after the fine is paid.

Ministry of Labor personnel continued to conduct inspection visits to work and labor housing sites. Officials from the ILO joined labor inspectors on several inspections. A strategic plan for strengthening the Labor Inspections Unit, developed with ILO assistance, went into effect in 2020 and focuses on upgrading inspectors' skills in evaluating living accommodations and raising awareness regarding heat stress. Employers must pay their employees electronically to provide a digital audit trail for the Ministry Labor. Employers who failed to pay their workers faced penalties, but the government did not effectively enforce these laws, and penalties were less than those for similar crimes. Infractions of wage,

overtime, and safety and health standards were relatively common, especially in sectors employing foreign workers in which working conditions were often poor. The government continued to serve eviction notices to property owners whose buildings were not up to code. Throughout the year international media reported the existence of abusive working conditions, including work-related deaths of young foreign workers, particularly in the construction sector.

The most recent ILO statistics on OSH conditions in the country were published in a 2021 report and stated that in 2020 there were 50 fatalities, 506 severe injuries, and 37,601 mild or moderate injuries.

The Labor Relations Department at the Ministry of Labor received a total of 21,147 complaints until September, mostly on financial disputes between workers and employers such as end of service compensation, delayed wages, and overtime pay. The ministry amicably resolved 12,895 complaints; 2,500 were still in process; and 5,752 complaints were referred to the Labor Dispute Settlement Committees.

The Labor Dispute Settlement Committees received 6,389 cases from January to September, and issued final verdicts in 7,413 cases, reflecting a backlog; 4,735 cases were still under deliberation. Capacity concerns at labor dispute courts remain, as recommended timeframes for adjudication are not often met.

Labor inspectors paid 30,938 visits until September and recorded 2,656 violations at work sites and 908 violations at labor accommodations. The ministry stated that 4,582 companies were involved in violations of the Wage Protection System in the same period.

Per the ILO, the government used the Workers' Support and Insurance Fund to disburse substantial outstanding financial entitlements through September 30. The ILO characterized the significant uptick in disbursements as "demonstrat[ing] the scale of the issue of unpaid wages."

The government arrested and prosecuted business owners and executives for suspected labor law infractions. The Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Interior, and the NHRC conducted training sessions and distributed multilingual, written explanations of migrant workers' rights under local labor and sponsorship laws.

To combat late and unpaid wages, the government mandated that employers pay wages electronically to all employees covered by the labor law, through a system subject to audits by an inspection division at the Ministry of Labor called the Wage Protection System. Compliance by employers is lacking in attaching contract terms and rapid access to data when addressing labor disputes. Employers who failed to pay their workers faced penalties, but enforcement was inconsistent.

Informal Sector: The law prohibits employers from withholding workers' passports and penalizes employers who do so, but noncitizen community leaders and officials from labor-exporting countries stated that passport confiscation remained a widespread problem with insufficient enforcement of penalties. Employers housed many unskilled foreign laborers in cramped, dirty, and hazardous conditions, often without running water, electricity, or adequate food. Domestic workers often faced unacceptable working conditions. 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 limited means to redress grievances. Some employers denied domestic workers food or access to a telephone, including their own cell phones, according to news reports and foreign embassy officials. NGOs found that foreign workers faced legal obstacles and lengthy legal processes that prevented them from seeking redress for abuses and exploitative conditions. Noncitizen community leaders also highlighted migrant workers' continued hesitation to report their plight due to fear of reprisals. This included threats by employers to report workers as "absconding" and not renew local identification documents, forcing workers out of legal status and raising their risk of being deported.