

**QUESTIONNAIRE: UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS
DEFENDERS**

Opportunities

Cognitive vision, represented in Qatar National Vision 2030:

Qatar National Vision 2030 ensures four pillars with developmental objectives of the first millennium including:

- 1) **Human Resources:** development of advanced health and educational systems providing the best services and manpower development.
- 2) **Social development:** development of a just and safe society with empowerment of women.
- 3) **Economic development:** development of a diversified, competitive, and sustainable economy, with optimum use of oil and gas income within a context of proper economic management.
- 4) **Environmental development:** balancing current needs with the requirements to preserve the environment, where an ad hoc ministry has been established for this purpose.

To this end, Qatar has developed the first National Development Strategy.

- a- **Adoption of democracy** to regulate mechanisms of power acquisition on firm basis of free will with direct and transparent elections to support and maximize public participation and power. The Consultative Assembly is the legislative authority in Qatar composed of 45 members. After the Qatar Legislative Elections 2013, the Consultative Assembly shall consist of 30 elected and 15 appointed members.

- b- **Establishment of civil society** and assignment of optimized roles for NGOs, i.e. public interest institutions practicing human rights activities (i.e. women, labor, elderly, children, etc.) and NHRC.
- c- **Rule of law and anti-corruption mechanisms:** The "Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption Centre" was established in partnership with the United Nations in 2012. As Qatar is aware of anti-corruption approaches, it has exerted all efforts for a long time to confront corruption and achieve transparency. This approach was very clear in formulating a commission for a permanent constitution to have independent powers which result in independent judicial powers. The independence of legislative, executive and judicial powers is a goal meant to be very clearly free from any issues similar to those existing in most of the world's countries, which see confusion and grey zones between executive and judicial powers. Then, the National Committee for Integrity and Transparency (NCIT) was established in commitment to United Nations Convention against Corruption, followed recently by establishment of Administrative Control and Transparency Authority, under chairmanship of the Prime Minister caring for and following up transparency, integrity and related issues.
- d- **Role of NHRC as human rights defender:**
- National institutions play a significant role in proposing amendments to national legislation to align with international principles of human rights. Countries are encouraged to join international conventions.
 - NHRC is currently encouraging governments to execute the two international conventions on civil and political rights on one hand, and the economic, social and cultural rights on the other hand.
 - The process guides government commitment to international obligations towards achievement of equality and remedying discrimination. NHRC has submitted parallel reports to treaty

bodies including the Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee Against Torture (CAT).

- National institutions are sources of information for transparency and integrity of elections.
- National institutions are responsible for outreach and education of the public with civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, side by side with official executive and judicial authorities of the state. NHRC has held dozens of courses, lectures and workshops addressing the concept of citizenship, democracy, rule of law and protection of human rights defenders, etc.

It is noteworthy that Article (11) of the Law on the Establishment of NHRC stipulates that: "Ministries, governmental bodies, authorities and public institutions shall cooperate with NHRC through providing necessary information and data to carry out its mission".

NHRC, with a free hand without any harassment or pressure from government, was able to address critical issues in Qatar (i.e. sponsorship regulations, nationality law, marriage of foreigners and repatriation detention), via media means, or annual reports addressing human rights issues published on the NHRC website, freely adopting democratic ways of discussion with governmental parties.

e- Challenges

New legislation was enacted, including Law No. (12) of 2004 on private societies and institutions, Law No. (18) of 2004 on public meetings and marches, and Decree-Law No. (21) of 2006 on private public interest institutions. These laws contain some restrictions and breaches to be avoided to facilitate practice of rights and freedoms contained in the Constitution.

There is increasing interest globally in human rights in Qatar after Qatar won the right to host World Cup 2022, where several sport facilities will be developed, posing challenges concerning the rights of laborers who contribute to the development of the Qatar infrastructure necessary for the occasion.

Human rights defenders play a significant role at the national level. This occurs through participation in all governmental committees assigned with development of proposals and submitting draft laws and regulations on protection of labor rights to maintain the best terms and conditions.

3

There are no explicit legal texts on the rights of human rights defenders in Qatari law. However, in 2012 the Arab Declaration Project for Human Rights Defenders was developed to provide confession, protection and support for individuals, groups and organizations leading efforts made to improve and protect human rights.

Comparing the two declarations: the global and the Arab; they are almost identical. However, Article (1) of the Arab Declaration defined human rights defenders with exceptions to individuals and groups calling for or encouraging violence.

NHRC is of the opinion that the Arab Declaration for Protection of Human Rights Defenders has developed legal representations enabling the practice of rights contained in the declaration which are in compliance with related international criteria. In addition, the declaration stipulates all freedoms and rights related to collection, publication and exchange of information on human rights and basic freedoms, as well as the right of peaceful gathering, formulating organizations or societies, and contacting NGOs or international governmental organizations.

The most important in the declaration is entitlement of compensation by judicial or any other independent or integrated competent legal authority, in case of breach against the rights and freedoms of individuals. Competent authorities authorized to review human rights violations and resolve rulings concerning compensation still do not exist in our Arab World.

NHRC strives towards Qatar's approval of the Arab Declaration for Human Rights Defenders as it aims at development of ethical rules for protection of human rights defender becoming part of Qatar's national legislation.

4

The principle to be applied should be "Principles on Business and Human Rights", an application of the United Nations framework entitled "Protection, Respect and Remedy".

5

Countries shall practice sufficient control to satisfy its international obligations towards human rights at time of contracting with commercial entities or to enact legislation to provide services that may affect human rights practices.

We believe that human rights defenders are real partners with government to provide control. They should be provided with support, facilities and protection.