

## QUESTIONNAIRE TO STATES ON ANTI-MUSLIM HATRED AND DISCRIMINATION

1. Qatar has a population of 2.7 million as of August 2020<sup>1</sup>. Religious demographics for the entire population is currently unavailable. However, a rough estimate indicates that Muslims constitute less than half the population as reported in the U.S Embassy to Qatar's International Religious Freedom Report 2019<sup>2</sup>. Yes, there are multiple Muslim groups in Qatar. Qatari citizens constitute 12 per cent of which most are Sunni Muslims (of which most follow Hanbali law<sup>3</sup>) and the rest are Shia Muslims<sup>4</sup>.
2. a) Yes, on June 8, 2004, the Father Amir decreed the Permanent Constitution of the state of Qatar to be ratified after a public referendum overwhelmingly approving the below, "The Constitution upholds personal liberty; safeguards equal rights, duties and opportunities for all citizens; and protects private ownership. It protects the freedoms of expression, the press and religion, as well as the right to education."<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, Article 35 states, "All persons are equal before the Law and there shall be no discrimination whatsoever on grounds of gender, race, language or religion."<sup>6</sup>

Qatar Law also protects the freedom to religious practice as it specifies in Article 50, "Freedom to practice religious rites shall be guaranteed to all persons in accordance with the Law and the requirements of the maintenance of public order and morality."<sup>7</sup>

The state of Qatar has recognized and registered the following religious groups: Sunni and Shia Muslims; Roman Catholic, Anglican, Greek Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, Coptic, Maronite, evangelical Protestant, and the Inter-Denominational Christian Churches. All other denominations in practice come under the Anglican Church<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Government of Qatar, *Qatar Monthly Statistics August 2020*, Issue 80, Doha: Planning and Statistics Authority, 2020. <https://www.psa.gov.qa/en/Pages/default.aspx> (Accessed November 10, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> U.S Embassy in Qatar, *International Religious Freedom Report 2019*, Doha: U.S. Embassy, 2. <https://qa.usembassy.gov/our-relationship/official-reports/> (Accessed November 10, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> Government of Qatar, *Religion and Community*, Hukoomi - Qatar e-Government. <https://portal.www.gov.qa/wps/portal/topics/Religion+and+Community?searchText=religion%20law> (Accessed November 10, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Government of Qatar, *About Qatar - The Constitution*, Hukoomi - Qatar e-Government. <https://portal.www.gov.qa/wps/portal/about-qatar> (Accessed November 10, 2020).

<sup>6</sup> Government of Qatar, *The Permanent Constitution of the State of Qatar*, Al Meezan – Qatar Legal Portal. <https://www.almeezan.qa/LawArticles.aspx?LawArticleID=25788&LawID=2284&language=en> (Accessed November 10, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> Government of Qatar, *The Permanent Constitution of the State of Qatar*, Al Meezan – Qatar Legal Portal. <https://www.almeezan.qa/LawArticles.aspx?LawArticleID=25803&LawID=2284&language=en> (Accessed November 10, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> U.S Embassy in Qatar, *International Religious Freedom Report 2019*, 3.

In a move to address the religious needs of its majority migrant and expatriate population, the Qatari government permitted the opening of its first church in 2008<sup>9</sup>. The National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) states in the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Human Rights Report 2018 that, “All Christian denominations practice their religious rites within an ecumenical complex in full freedom and they conduct social and educational activities for their followers. The government allows non-Muslim religious groups to import sacred books and other religious materials for personal or collective use. The Doha Centre for Interfaith Dialogue is a private institution of public interest which actively contribute to promoting a culture of dialogue and coexistence.”<sup>10</sup>

Concerning religious groups outside Islam and Christianity, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, the government permits the use of private property to practice their faith<sup>11</sup>. Qatar has also been an active proponent of interfaith dialogue since 2013 through the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue (DICID) with programs designed to also bring awareness in the public sphere<sup>12</sup>. There are also restrictions however to the freedom of speech in public when discussing matters pertaining to religion. By law, any citizen or resident who defames any of the three monotheistic faiths: Islam, Christianity or Judaism, will be subject to a seven-year long prison sentence<sup>13</sup>.

Despite Qatar being one of forty-three countries that maintains a state religion<sup>14</sup>, it does not however, impose religion, in this case Islam, as a basis of national identity<sup>15</sup>. Walsh also noted that Qatar, unlike Saudi Arabia, does not forcibly impose religious customs and behavior on its citizens or residents as well<sup>16</sup>. In this way, Qatar creates a space for people of all religions; making it an environment of peaceful co-existence and tolerance. In the meantime, it also places restrictions on the public worship and public symbols of non-Islamic faiths and on proselytization by non-Muslims<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Walsh, Pamela. “Becoming a Knowledge Society: State of Qatar Rationales for the Importation of a North American Branch Campus Model of Higher Education in Qatar.” PhD Diss., University of Calgary (Canada), 2011.

<sup>10</sup> The National Human Rights Committee, *14th Annual Human Rights Report 2018*, Doha; NHRC, 2018, 28. <https://nhrc-qa.org/en/annual-reports/#2019> (Accessed November 11, 2020)

<sup>11</sup> U.S Embassy in Qatar, International Religious Freedom Report 2019, 6.

<sup>12</sup> Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue, “Community Participation 2016.” Accessed October 17, 2019. <http://www.dicid.org/2016-2/>.

<sup>13</sup> U.S Embassy in Qatar, International Religious Freedom Report 2019, 3.

<sup>14</sup> Pew Research Center, “Many Countries Favor Specific Religions.” Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project, October 3, 2017. <https://www.pewforum.org/2017/10/03/many-countries-favor-specific-religions-officially-or-unofficially/>.

<sup>15</sup> Government of Qatar, “Religion.” Hukoomi - Qatar e-Government. Accessed August 24, 2019. [https://portal.www.gov.qa/wps/portal/topics/Religion and Community/Religion](https://portal.www.gov.qa/wps/portal/topics/Religion%20and%20Community/Religion).

<sup>16</sup> Walsh, Pamela, University of Calgary (Canada), 2011.

<sup>17</sup> U.S Embassy in Qatar, International Religious Freedom Report 2019, 4.

b) The State does not restrict the right of Muslims to manifest their freedom of religion on an individual level.

c) There have been no recorded attacks on Muslim places of worship in Qatar.

d) Yes, there are contemporary Islamic cultural sites such as the Abdullah Bin Zaid Al Mahmoud Islamic Cultural Center. Yes, the state does support such centers under the The Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs.

e) Yes, Islamic education is offered at the school and university level. Islamic Education in Qatar is offered as ‘Islamic Studies’ in private and national schools as an obligatory subject for Qatari and Muslim students only, while non-Muslim students are not required to study Islamic Studies at school<sup>18</sup>. Outside of school, several centers fall under The Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs (Awqaf) that mainly offers Quran Memorization programs. These centers fall under the supervision of the Awqaf and function only with Awqaf approval however, they do not finance most centers. At the university level, Islamic Studies and Quran Studies are offered at two institutions; College of Sharia & Islamic Studies under Qatar University, the national university of Qatar and the College of Islamic Studies under Hamad Bin Khalifa University, a partner of Qatar Foundation. Both institutions are recognized and accredited by the State however operate independent from State control. The former however is funded entirely by the state while the latter is funded by Qatar Foundation, a subsidiary of the State<sup>19</sup>. Quran Teachers tested and approved by Awqaf can only conduct official Quran Classes with approval of Awqaf.

3. a) From the NHRC 2018 Annual Report, the following discriminations have been reported:

- “All residents of Qatar are entitled without discrimination to obtain health cards once residency cards are issued, enabling them to benefit from free government health services and medicines. However, some low-wage workers suffer from employers’ disrespect of their health rights, lack of health cards, and therefore inability to benefit from the services of government health centres except in emergencies.”<sup>20</sup>
- “Although the State of Qatar has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, it has expressed its reservation towards several

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<sup>18</sup> Supreme Education Council. “Licensing a Private School in the State of Qatar.” Doha, 2015.

<sup>19</sup> Khoury, Issam Elias, “Unbridled Globalization: The Transformation of Higher Education in Qatar.” PhD Diss., The Pennsylvania State University, 2013, 58.

<sup>20</sup> The National Human Rights Committee, *14th Annual Human Rights Report 2018*, 10.

rights, most notably the right to a nationality. Qatari women continue to be denied the right to grant their nationality to their non-Qatari husband and children.”<sup>21</sup>

- “The NHRC has not noted or received any complaints concerning discrimination or harassment of followers of any religion or sect within the State of Qatar during 2018.”<sup>22</sup>

b) Laws below protect against discrimination irrespective of one’s religion.

- Article 35 of the Permanent Constitution of the State of Qatar as mentioned earlier.
- Article 326 under Law No. 11 of 2004 Issuing the Penal Code.

Except the single law below in the interest of the State religion i.e., Islam.

- Under Law No. 11 of 2004 Issuing the Penal Code, Article 256,  
“Whoever commits the following acts shall be punished with imprisonment for a term not exceeding seven years:

- 1- Insulting Allah through writing, drawing, gesturing, in any other way, or through any other means.
- 2- Offending, misinterpreting or violating the Holy Quran.
- 3- Offending the Islamic religion or any of its rites and dictates.
- 4- Cursing any of the divine religions according to the regulations of Islamic law.
- 5- Insulting any of the prophets through writing, drawing, gesturing or in any other way or through any other means.
- 6- Sabotaging, breaking, damaging or violating sites or their contents if they are made to perform religious rites for one of the divine religions according to the regulations of Islamic law.”

And in the same regard, Article 263 which states,

“Whoever produces, sells, exposes for sale or circulation, or possesses products, merchandise, prints or tapes, including drawings, slogans, words, symbols, signals or anything else that may offend the Islamic religion or other divine religions according to the dictates of Islamic law, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year and a fine not exceeding one thousand Qatari Riyals (QR 1.000).

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 28.

The same penalty shall be imposed on any person who uses disks, computer programs or magnetized tapes to offend Islam or other divine religions according to the dictates of Islamic law”.

c) Yes, Qatar guarantees equal rights regardless of religion or belief in terms of access to education, healthcare, housing and employment as seen in Article 35 of the Permanent Constitution of the state of Qatar.

d) Not Applicable

e) According to Article 50 of the Qatari Permanent Constitution “ Freedom to practice religious rites shall be guaranteed to all persons in accordance with the Law and the requirements of the maintenance of public order and morality”.

f) Yes to all.

g) Yes, Article 256 under Law No. 11 of 2004 Issuing the Penal Code applies to all residents and citizens.

h)

i) Qatar law against incitement of hate and violence is as follows and applies to all irrespective of motive:

- Article 325 under Law No. 11 of 2004 Issuing the Penal Code states, “Whoever threatens to hurt someone or to damage their wealth or reputation, or to hurt someone and distort the reputation or wealth of someone in whom they have a vested interest, whether the threat is orally or in writing or through acts intended to hurt someone or distort the reputation and wealth by coercing the victim to commit or omit an act, shall be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years in prison and a fine not exceeding ten thousand Qatari Riyals (10.000QR), or one of these two penalties. The perpetrator shall be punished with imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years If the threats involve death threats.”
- Article 329, 330 and 331 protect resident and citizens from hate speech and violence in Qatari law.
- The Law No. 8 of 1979 on Publications and Publishing, in the article 47 - f, states: “Any ridicule of or contempt toward any of the religions or their doctrines, including any motivation of sectarian, racial or religious trends.” Will not be published. Article (2) of the Minister of Information and Culture No. 11 of 1992 on rules and rules of censorship states that: "No control body of the Ministry of Information and Culture shall devote itself printed, audio-visual or audio-visual works, or to post or announce an act, if the "representation of any human race" or an

ethnic group is ridiculed, unless it is necessary to create a positive impression of a noble cause, such as "against racism".

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- j) Not Applicable
- k) Not Applicable

4.

- a) Not Applicable
- b) DICID operates in tandem with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is solely dedicated to interfaith dialogue and works to counter stigmatization and negative stereotyping of Muslims and incitement of hatred. DICID was founded in 2007 and has since been active in removing barriers between followers of different religions, both locally and internationally. DICID works towards promoting a culture of peace and coexistence through the Interfaith International Annual Conferences, organizing Dialogue workshops and training programs for school, university students as well as specially-abled students, the United Nations Alliance of Civilisations fellowship programme, organizing Youth Dialogue Forums, Roundtable discussions, Annual Ramadan gatherings, organizing talks and lectures for the public on interfaith related issues and lastly the publication of a dedicated journal "*Religions*" to interfaith topics and contemporary issues<sup>23</sup>.
- c)
- d)
- e) The State provides avenues as mentioned earlier through institutions such as DICID, Qatar University and Hamad Bin Khalifa University, to discuss all matters concerning religion and religion in relation to other arenas in open debate and dialogue. These avenues are in line with the rights to freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief, freedom of opinion and expression and non-discrimination.

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<sup>23</sup> <http://www.dicid.org/>