

## Freedom of Religion or belief

- 1) The promotion and protection of human rights, including freedom of religion or belief, is strategic choice for the State of Qatar and its constitutes the corner stone for the country's comprehensive reform policy.

The State of Qatar is going through a distinct phase in its development and is making rapid strides towards full and comprehensive development. Qatar Vision 2030 and the National Development Strategy provide the road map and the framework for this comprehensive development.

Freedom of religion or belief has been accorded constitutional and legislative protection, and additionally, Qatar has acceded and ratified to several international and regional human rights treaties that protect the right to freedom of religion or belief. In May last year Qatar has acceded to International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

The constitutional protection has been enhanced and strengthened by the establishment of several institutions, both at the governmental and non-governmental level, including, the National Human Rights Committee, which was established in 2003 in accordance with the Paris principles and it has A status from the International Accreditation Committee (ICC), and the Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue, which was established in in 2008 and aims to promote and spread culture of dialogue and peaceful coexistence. The Centre annually organizes the Doha Conference on Interfaith Dialogue, and continues to engage domestically and internationally to promote interfaith dialogue.

- 2) The Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue gives a platform for leaders of religious minorities to voice out, create awareness and connect with other religious communities via roundtables, publications and conferences organized by the center'.For example, the Archbishop Makarios Mavrogia nnakis of Qatar isinvolved in the Center's publications and talks concerning

Christianity and society in Qatar, creating awareness and a culture of co-existence.

1. 3)

2. The Government plays an important role in securing religious freedom to non-Muslim communities. It permits several Christian denominations to worship at a government-provided area known as "Church City". Christian church leaders reported that the government made significant efforts to facilitate the construction of new worship space and improve roads and other infrastructure at Church City, giving thousands more Christians the opportunity to practice their faith. The infrastructure improvements at Church City have also made it

easier for disabled worshippers to participate. Hindus, Buddhists, Baha'is, and other religious groups who do not have authorized facilities in which to practice their religions, are permitted to worship privately in their homes and with others, as well as in workplaces.

3. Qatar has been active party to Istanbul Process of Resolution 16/18 for Combating advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, and hosted in March 2014 the Fourth Meeting, which focused on advancing religious freedom through interfaith collaboration.
4. COVID-19 has affected all religious communities, minorities as well as the majority, as restrictions on gathering continues. Churches and Mosques were closed down during the first phase of the lockdown in March 2020". However, with gradual ease in restrictions, Churches are now operating at 15 % capacity<sup>4</sup>. Churches and Mosques only open briefly during prayer times only<sup>5</sup>. Vulnerable groups such as Adults over the age of 60 and individuals with chronic conditions are advised to refrain from Religious gathering in addition to pregnant women.<sup>6</sup> No gatherings before or after the ceremony/event/prayer and the prayers are kept to a minimum period. Choir ensemble is to be avoided since it poses high risk for infection<sup>7</sup>.

The Peninsula. "From Lockdowns to Sanitisation, Round up of Qatar's Fight against Coronavirus: Latest Updates." March 17 2020. <https://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/17/03/2020/From-lockdowns-to-sanitisation-round-up-of-Qatar-s-fight-against-coronavirus-Latest-Updates>.

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