



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

### **Written statement\* submitted by Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association, a non- governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[29 May 2023]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



## **Right to Peaceful Assembly and Formation of Associations and Trade Unions in Qatar**

### **First: Peaceful Assembly in Qatar**

The Qatari authorities imposed restrictions on peaceful assembly rights, whether exercised by Qatari citizens or regular migrants. Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association documented all peaceful assemblies accompanied by violations of the right to peaceful assembly. Qatari security forces attacked these gatherings and protestors were not allowed to demonstrate. Although these attacks on protestors did not lead to killings, some of the protest leaders were subjected to arbitrary detention and forced arrest. (1)

Among the examples that Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association documented in March 2023 is a video clip showing the gathering of the Internal Security Forces known as "Lokhia" in Qatar during a peaceful meeting of the Al Marra tribe council. These forces attacked an old man from the Al Marra tribe(2). The video, which Maat examined, shows many security men, may exceed 100 security personnel, surrounding a group of tribe members and carrying firearms. At the same time, Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association could not confirm the shooters identity. These attacks contradict the protection of the right to peaceful assembly of non-violent assemblies for expression, according to the general comment of the Human Rights Committee No. 37 of 2020 on the right to peaceful assembly(3).

During the World Cup in Qatar, a group of retired soldiers with whom Qatar contracted to maintain security during the events, went out protesting the violation of the agreement between them and the company. According to information received by Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association, the leaders of this demonstration were threatened by the police forces, and the Qatari media described these protests as riots.

More than 5,000 retired Jordanian officers have contracted with a private company to work for a specific period in providing security services, which expires after the conclusion of the World Cup period. The Qatari authorities terminated the contracts due to protests led by these retirees, in a breach of the contracts concluded(4). The Qatari government also restricted migrant workers' exercise of their right to peaceful assembly. On August 14, 2022, for example, about 500 migrant workers in a contracting, building, and construction company gathered in front of the company headquarters in the Al Sadd area of Doha to protest the delay in wages due from 4 to 6 months, in addition to cutting off electricity to the workers' housing in the industrial area(5). On the same day, the security forces detained about 300 demonstrators of different nationalities, including workers from Nepal, India, the Philippines, and Bangladesh(6), under the pretext of violating public security laws. Detained and deported workers described the prison conditions as poor and inhumane. The Qatari authorities put between 25 and 30 people into a single room without ventilation and at an extremely high temperature, in contravention of Rule 42 of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners(7).

The company's dealings contradict the principle of due responsibility for respecting human rights stipulated in the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Migrant workers have the right to peaceful assembly under the interpretation of the Human Rights Committee of the article on the right to peaceful assembly in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; that Qatar ratified. The Qatari authorities take advantage of Law No. 18 of 2004 regulates public meetings and gatherings to suppress peaceful assemblies. The law stipulates the need to obtain prior permission from the Ministry of the Interior to organize any meeting. This law contradicts the article on peaceful assembly and the organization of meetings in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

## **Second: Right to Form Labor and Professional Associations and Unions**

Law No. 12 of 2004 and its amendments impose restrictions on the right to form associations in Qatar. The Ministry of Social Development and the Family should approve association formation by giving a license. The Ministry has the right to reject the request to form an association within a month of applying. After the passage on one month without a response from the Ministry, this is considered an implicit refusal of the request to form the association under Article 7 of the previous law, amended by Law No. 10 of 2010(8). If the submitted application is rejected, the association has the right to file a grievance from the date of notifying it of the rejection, and the decision issued by the Council of Ministers to decide on this grievance is final and not subject to appeal. In the context of restrictions on the association's formation, Law No. 201 of 2020 granted the Minister of Social Development and the Family the right to dissolve civil associations according to administrative decisions(9).

For example, On February 27, 2023, the Minister of Social Development and the Family issued Decision No. 6 of 2023 to dissolve the Qatar Astronomical Society for violating the provisions of Decree-Law No. 21 of 2020 regarding private associations and institutions and their articles of association. These obstacles contradict Article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 35 of the Arab Charter on Human Rights, which are texts that Qatar has committed to implement(10).

According to the information Maat received, Qatar is still imposing a travel ban on the founders of the National Campaign Group for Those Banned from Traveling; the Qatari authorities have not allowed them to communicate with international and human rights organizations; the founders established this campaign on July 12, 2022.

A week after announcing the campaign's activity, all of the founders were arrested before they were released with the validity of their travel ban. Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association noticed that some independent personalities in Qatar have called for amending Law No. 12 of 2014 to enable non-Qataris to have the right to join trade and professional unions. But the Shura Council did not discuss amendments to the law until the writing of this intervention. Article 45 of the Qatari Constitution stipulates the right to freedom of association. However, migrants and foreigners, who make up 90% of the population of Qatar, are not entitled to form independent associations and unions.

Concerning trade unions and joining them, the Qatari constitution does not expressly refer to the right to form and join trade unions. But it allows the formation of professional associations. In Qatar, The labor unions or committees establishment need complex procedures. A labor union/ committee can not establish unless the number of Qatari workers is not less than 100 workers. Given the limited presence of Qatari nationals in the private sector. So it is difficult to form trade unions or labor committees. A trade union institution may be dissolved if its work conflicts with what is prohibited by the law, and the articles permitting the dissolution of trade unions were drafted in terms and phrases that are easy to interpret according to what the executive authority deems appropriate. Also, the law does not include procedures for appeal and grievance if the minister dissolves the trade union institution by a ministerial decision.

The Qatari Labor Law No. 14 of 2004, according to Article 116 of it, completely prohibits non-citizens in Qatar from forming or joining labor unions, which deprives approximately 94% of the labor force in Qatar and about 90% of the population, according to the previous law, from forming independent unions or joining it, which means excluding any independent entities that act as representatives of foreign workers and defend their rights, in contradiction with Paragraph No. 1 of Article 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and contravention of Recommendation No. 30 of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which indicated that as long as An employment relationship began with migrant workers and until this relationship ends, these workers have the right to freedom of assembly and association.

- (1) Qatar expels Nepali migrant workers for joining protest, <https://bit.ly/3o9ElKT>
- (2) Lekhwiya force raided the Al Marra tribe council, <https://bit.ly/432uXY7>
- (3) General comment No. 37 (2020) on the right of peaceful assembly, <https://bit.ly/42BGP3E>
- (4) A retired officer tells the details of what happened in Qatar (video), <https://bit.ly/3MvK4nH>
- (5) Qatar deports migrant workers after wage protest, <https://bbc.in/3W6iFMn>
- (6) Ibid, <https://bit.ly/3o9ElKT>
- (7) United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, Rule 42, <https://bit.ly/32o6zkJ>
- (8) Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, <https://bit.ly/3pMN1HB>
- (9) Law No. (12) of 2004 regarding private associations and foundations, <https://bit.ly/3IbHiBC>
- (10) Decree-Law No. (21) of 2020 regarding private associations and institutions, <https://bit.ly/3MyobEq>