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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD  
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**WRITTEN REPLIES SUBMITTED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF QATAR  
TO THE LIST OF ISSUES (CRC/C/OPAC/QAT/1) TO BE TAKEN UP IN  
CONNECTION WITH THE CONSIDERATION OF THE INITIAL REPORT  
OF QATAR SUBMITTED UNDER ARTICLE 8 (1) OF THE OPTIONAL  
PROTOCOL TO THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD  
ON THE INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT  
(CRC/C/OPAC/QAT/1)**

[Received on 30 July 2007]

## **A. Introduction**

1. The State of Qatar is committed to the implementation of the basic provisions and principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. These principles govern all aspects of life and are duly observed in the areas of health, education, social affairs, culture, etc. This approach is reflected in the legislation in force in the State.
2. The fact that the State of Qatar acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict confirms its attachment to the general provisions and principles of the Convention.
3. The implementation of the Optional Protocol, the provisions of which supplement the provisions and principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, has helped to consolidate respect for those provisions and principles and ensure that they continue to be applied fully in all the domains mentioned above.
4. Qatar submitted its initial report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child under article 8 (1) of the Optional Protocol.
5. On 22 June 2007, Qatar received the list of issues to be taken up by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, at its forty-sixth session held from 17 September to 5 October 2007, in connection with the Committee's consideration of the initial report of Qatar.
6. In consideration of the issues set out in the list, the Committee requested that there be no repetition of the information and statistical data contained in the initial report.

## **B. Replies to the list of issues**

***Q1. Please provide information on the competent governmental departments or bodies responsible for the coordination and implementation of the Optional Protocol. Please also indicate if there is any mechanism available for monitoring and periodically evaluating its implementation.***

7. The State of Qatar accords great and growing importance to the question of the promotion and protection of human rights, which is the cornerstone of the comprehensive reform policy on which the State has embarked. The State has therefore turned its attention to the institutional framework, establishing the following governmental organizations to deal with human rights in general, the rights of children and families in particular, and the implementation of the Optional Protocol:

- (a) The Supreme Council for Family Affairs and its institutions:
  - The National Bureau to Combat Human Trafficking;
  - The Qatari Foundation for the Protection of Children and Women;
- (b) The human rights bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;

(c) The human rights office of the Ministry of the Interior;

(d) The National Human Rights Committee established by an Amiral decree on 12 November 2002.

***Q2. Does the State party's executive work plan for childhood for 2008-2013 cover the issues of the Optional Protocol and does it provide for its implementation?***

8. The executive work plan for the national strategy for childhood for 2008-2013 was adopted based on the results of a study on childhood which was carried out by the Supreme Council for Family Affairs in the context of the formulation of a national strategy for childhood.

9. Since the results of the study failed to indicate that there was a problem of involvement of children in armed conflict in the State of Qatar, the executive work plan does not include the issues covered by the Optional Protocol. The Supreme Council merely focuses on existing legislative arrangements and related laws and the measures taken by the Qatari armed forces to prevent the recruitment of children into the armed forces.

***Q3. Please provide information on education, including the presence in the school curricula of courses about human rights and humanitarian law, and training on the provisions of the Optional Protocol. Please also describe other measures taken to disseminate information on the Optional Protocol.***

10. School curricula and textbooks for the three stages of education (primary, intermediate and secondary) include texts which contain information designed to make children aware of their rights in particular and of human rights in general. The curricula and textbooks cover several human rights themes and concepts, including political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights; the right to social security; and the rights of children, women, older persons and persons with special needs. Account is taken of these rights in teaching methods and teaching and learning materials, bearing in mind the continuous changes made to curricula and textbooks to keep pace with new developments in the area of human rights.

11. Various programmes to incorporate the concepts underpinning human rights and children's rights into educational programmes have been run, such as the programme for the dissemination of a culture of children's rights in schools. Ministerial Decision No. 1 of 2004 established the Higher Committee for the Dissemination of a Culture of Children's Rights in State Schools. The Committee, working together with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), drew up a national action plan involving the design of teaching manuals which discuss, in simplified terms, the rights and principles embodied in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and which use quotations from chapters of the Koran and the *Hadith* of the Prophet to link these rights to the rights of children under Islam. The manuals also include teaching aids that use real-life stories and coloured illustrations to explain rights and violations to children. The plan provides for the holding of workshops to train teaching staff to use the teaching manuals in classroom and extra-curricular activities. In the academic years 2003-2004 and 2004-2005, the training was given to some 60 trainees from the teaching staff of 11 schools. The organizers of the programme are working with UNESCO to design self-teaching manuals that can reach a wider cross-section of State schools. The decision has been taken to use these manuals in the next academic year (2007-2008).

12. In addition to the above, other programmes, such as the educational values programme, have been set up to incorporate the concepts of human rights and children's rights into teaching programmes. Ministerial Decision No. 5 of 2004 established a committee to strengthen educational values in schools. The committee was tasked with designing a matrix of educational values and applying it to the educational domain.

13. A series of extra-curricular student activities - underpinned by human rights concepts - have been organized. Student councils, for example, provide a new framework for making students aware of their role, giving them the right to express their views and develop their abilities and skills in the handling of dialogue and discussions, and for giving effect to the principles of democracy, most notably the principle of awareness of one's rights. These councils help to train national leaders who are capable of contributing to the renaissance of their country. Every school has a student council made up of student representatives who are directly elected by the student body. Tasks are divided up among the members and there are regular meetings between representatives of the student councils in the different stages of education. The councils discuss and seek solutions for students' problems and have regular and quarterly meetings with officials in order to convey their ideas and their needs to them. The student councils operate at several different levels (the classroom, the school, the educational stage and the Ministry). The duties of the student councils include: disseminating information about all school activities; examining school and students' problems and proposing solutions for them; contributing positively to the resolution of problems; using all means to cement the relationship between students, teachers and parents; organizing schemes for exchanges of visits between student councils; taking part in celebrations and various special occasions in the State; and helping school management with the running of all programmes and activities. The date 12 April has been set aside as a day for self-management and the exercise of democracy in schools. The purpose is to spread and apply democratic principles in schools, to train student leaders on student councils to perform leadership tasks, to manage themselves, to discover and refine leadership skills, and to boost the role of elected student councils.

***Q4. With regard to education provided at the Qatari armed forces, including specialized training provided to personnel to be deployed to international peacekeeping operations, please provide more detailed information on the human rights education available, in particular regarding the scope of application of the Optional Protocol.***

14. We should point out that there are no soldiers below 18 years of age in the Qatari armed forces. The Military Service Act No. 31 of 2006 does not allow recruitment below this age. It sets the minimum age for appointment as an officer in the armed forces at 20 years (art. 11), while the age for other ranks is 18 years (art. 13). The Qatari armed forces therefore comply with the rule on non-recruitment of children below 18 years of age and their advertisements for voluntary enlistment in the armed forces stipulate that candidates must not be under 18 years of age. They therefore act in conformity with the relevant terms of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and we see no pressing need for educational activities in this domain, given this situation of compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol.

15. On the other hand, educational programmes on international humanitarian law and human rights issues in time of armed conflict are offered to administrative staff in the Qatari armed forces. The following educational activities have been carried out in this regard; some courses have been designed covering basic subjects relating to international humanitarian law, including: the fundamental principles and norms of international humanitarian law; protection of the civilian population and civilian objectives during armed conflict; the conduct of combatants in the field; the protection of, and provision of humanitarian assistance to, prisoners of war and wounded persons who cannot participate in the hostilities; the protection of humanitarian personnel and respect for their official emblems; and other subjects covered by the Geneva conventions of 12 August 1949 and the two additional protocols of 8 June 1977. These courses are made available to military leaders and units for training and use in the field. An international humanitarian law library has been set up at the Department of Legal Affairs as a reference library for all matters relating to international humanitarian law.

16. Several officers have attended training courses in various foreign States, including intensive, advanced-level programmes and lectures for international experts on human rights and international humanitarian law. The objective is to train them to teach these subjects to the Qatari armed forces and expand courses on international humanitarian law and human rights with a view to the proper dissemination of this culture. The law of armed conflict has been introduced into the curricula taught at the military college and into military courses taken by soldiers of different ranks. Work is being done to expand and deepen knowledge in this area.

***Q5. Please provide information on whether the provisions of the Optional Protocol have been fully incorporated into domestic laws and if not, please provide information on the measures required to do so. In particular, please indicate whether there is any legal provision criminalizing forced recruitment or involvement in hostilities of a person under the age of 18.***

17. Qatar's military laws have been updated to take account of developments in the domestic and international arenas. The Military Service Act No. 31 is in keeping with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Under article 11 of the Act, the minimum age for appointment as an army officer is 20 years and, under article 13, candidates for other ranks must be not less than 18 years old. The same rule applies to non-Qatari soldiers (art. 16).

18. The above-mentioned Act contains no provisions or references to reducing the minimum age for military service to under 18 in the event of war and general conscription.

***Q6. Please provide detailed information as to whether Qatar assumes extraterritorial jurisdiction over the war crime of conscripting or enlisting children under the age of 15 into the armed forces or using them to participate actively in hostilities. Also in relation to extraterritorial jurisdiction, please indicate whether Qatari courts can establish their jurisdiction in case of forced recruitment or involvement in hostilities of a person under 18 if committed outside Qatar, by or against a Qatari citizen. Please also clarify whether, in the case that extraterritorial jurisdiction has been assumed, there is a requirement of double criminality for such offences.***

***Q7. Please provide further information on the status of children enrolled in the annual schoolchildren's training programme as well as in the scheme for students removed from day and private schools run by the Qatari armed forces.***

19. The annual training programme for schoolchildren is designed to encourage individuals below 18 years of age to enrol in practical programmes run by the Qatari armed forces, consistent with the State's overall policy of protecting children and furthering the aims of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

20. The programme is held every year for Qatari boys enrolled in school, up to the end of the secondary school stage, and for boys enrolled in the morning study scheme. The participants receive a monthly stipend intended to protect them. A carefully-designed programme has been created to improve their cultural, moral and civic awareness, taking due account of the concepts and safeguards set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Enrolment in the training programme is voluntary and the admission of students to these schools is effected in coordination with the Ministry of Education. This is just one of the opportunities available to students; it is not the only one. These programmes are temporary and do not entail any military duties or require students to board at the school. The students are transported to and from their homes every day. Any schoolboy who applies for admission to the programme must satisfy the following criteria:

- (a) He must be a Qatari national;
- (b) He must be medically fit;
- (c) He must not be below 14 years of age;
- (d) He must be a regular student enrolled in daytime education at a school in Qatar;
- (e) His parent must give his consent and sign the enrolment agreement;
- (f) He must have the right kind of personality.

21. It is worth noting that the students in these courses do not have any military or paramilitary status. They are still civilians and secondary school students. The entire arrangement is implemented in accordance with the terms and safeguards set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol. In addition, while attending courses, the students are not subject to military discipline or any disciplinary measures; instead, deductions are made from their monthly stipends for unauthorized absence from the course, depending on the length of the absence.

22. There are also a number of schools run by the armed forces, namely:

- (a) The Ahmad Bin Mohammed Military College: this college specializes in training officer cadets for the armed forces;
- (b) The Armed Forces Training College: this college specializes in providing training on different subjects to officers and non-commissioned officers. Its aim is to enhance the technical and military knowledge and expertise of the members of the armed forces attending its courses;

(c) The Foundation Training Centre for Military Recruits: training of military recruits includes instruction on the military hierarchy and training in the art of combat and the use of weapons designed to equip them with first-rate skills for membership in the armed forces (weapons training is reserved for persons over the age of 18).

***Q8. Please inform the Committee whether Qatar intends to become a party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court which criminalizes conscripting or enlisting children under the age of 15 years into the national armed forces or using them to participate actively in hostilities as a war crime (art. 8, para. 2 (b) (xxvi)).***

23. The State of Qatar has not yet signed or become a party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. However, by virtue of Decree No. 54 of 1995, it acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 38, paragraph 3, of which provides: "States Parties shall refrain from recruiting any person who has not attained the age of fifteen years into their armed forces. In recruiting among those persons who have attained the age of fifteen years but who have not attained the age of eighteen years, States Parties shall endeavour to give priority to those who are oldest." The State of Qatar, pursuant to Decree No. 29 of 2001, furthermore acceded to the ILO Convention concerning the worst forms of child labour (No. 182) of 1999, article 1 of which stipulates: "Each Member which ratifies this Convention shall take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour" and article 3 of which stipulates, that for the purposes of the Convention, the term "worst forms of child labour" includes "forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict". The Military Service Act of Qatar issued in Decree No. 31 of 2006 stipulates that anyone appointed as an army officer must not be under 20 years of age and that anyone appointed to any other rank must not be under 18.

***Q9. Please provide disaggregated data (including by sex, age and country of origin) covering the years 2004, 2005 and 2006 on the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children coming to Qatar from areas experiencing conflict or in post-conflict situations.***

24. Qatar is not essentially affected by the problem of children seeking refuge in the State. This does not imply, however, that Qatar has not included this issue in its applicable laws or taken separate legislative initiatives in this regard. We guarantee that children in such a situation obtain child refugee status, especially as Qatar is in the process of drafting a children's law which is guided by and takes as its basic legal reference the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the two optional protocols thereto. The articles of the draft law are consistent with the Convention so as to guarantee the rights of child refugees in the future.

25. The State of Qatar devotes considerable attention to the issue of refugees in other countries affected by this problem. It has launched several initiatives and provided material assistance and logistical support in the educational, health and social domains for refugees and affected populations in many countries. For example, the "Reach Out to Asia" organization was set up as a non-governmental organization operating under the auspices of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development and Qatar launched the "Atfaluna" (Our Children) campaign to help children in Lebanon and Palestine.

***Q.10. With regard to the legal protection of asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children, including those who may have been recruited or used in hostilities contrary to the Optional Protocol, please inform the Committee whether Qatar is considering becoming a party to the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol.***

26. Article 22, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Rights of the Child provides: “States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure that a child who is seeking refugee status or who is considered a refugee ... shall receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance in the enjoyment of applicable rights set forth in the present Convention and in other international human rights or humanitarian instruments to which the said States are Parties.” For this purpose, States parties are required to provide, as they consider appropriate, cooperation in any efforts by the United Nations and other competent intergovernmental organizations or non-governmental organizations cooperating with the United Nations to protect and assist such a child.

***Q11. With reference to article 7 of the Optional Protocol, please provide information on rehabilitation, social reintegration and other services provided to children recruited or used in hostilities who entered the State party for refuge or asylum. Please provide information on the measures taken to identify, at the earliest possible stage, children recruited or used in hostilities who enter the State party for refuge or asylum. Please also indicate whether the State party is engaged in any activity of regional and/or international cooperation in this regard.***

27. Bearing in mind that the State of Qatar is not affected by the presence of any armed conflicts, in the context of its respect for the rules of international humanitarian law on armed conflicts as they relate to children, the State has taken measures to prevent the recruitment of children below 18 years of age into the armed forces. This is a basic condition of recruitment and enlistment in the Qatari armed forces.

28. Attention should be drawn to two basic facts about recruitment into the Qatari armed forces, namely:

(a) There is no system of conscription into the Qatari armed forces. Enlistment is voluntary according to the rules and regulations in force;

(b) The regulations and laws on the Qatari armed forces make no reference to the direct or indirect involvement of members of the armed forces under 18 years of age in hostilities. Wars of aggression are prohibited under article 71 of the Qatari Constitution.

29. As for reintegration services for children recruited or used in hostilities who enter the State party for refuge and asylum, we have no information or statistics on such cases in Qatar. There are, however, a number of civil society institutions that deal in general with the social reintegration of children, such as the Welfare Home for Orphans, the Qatari Institute for the Protection of Children and Women, the Department of Juvenile Welfare and the Qatari Home for Housing and Humanitarian Welfare.



30. One of the most important projects carried out in this connection is the Qatari refuge for the welfare, treatment and social reintegration of child victims of violence and abuse. The project offers rehabilitation programmes and activities which take account of children's need for a normal life and for treatment programmes based on reintegration of the children into society and the family, bearing in mind the age of each child and his or her psychological needs. The refuge comprises 25 living units which are equipped for children of different ages and nationalities.

***Q.12. Has the State party provided financial support or any other assistance through its multi- or bilateral activities to address the rights of children involved in armed conflict elsewhere and to promote the full implementation of the Optional Protocol?***

31. The State of Qatar devotes considerable attention to the issue of refugees in other countries affected by this problem. It has launched several initiatives and provided material assistance and logistical support in the educational, health and social domains to refugees and affected populations in many countries. For example, the "Reach Out to Asia" organization was founded as a non-governmental organization operating under the auspices of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development and Qatar launched the "Atfaluna" (Our Children) campaign to help children in Lebanon and Palestine.

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