



**CAIRO INSTITUTE
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS STUDIES**
Institut du Caire pour les études des droits de l'homme
مركز القاهرة لدراسات حقوق الإنسان

United Nations Human Rights Council: 27th Session

Oral Intervention: Item 6 – UPR Qatar

Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)

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Thank you Mr. President,

CIHRS, in cooperation with the Gulf Center for Human Rights, commends Qatar for accepting several recommendations to improve the condition of migrant workers.

However, we are highly dismayed by the refusal of the government of Qatar to accept a large majority of recommendations put forward, including almost all recommendations calling for respect of freedom of expression, including internet, media and press freedoms, freedom of assembly and freedom of association.

As highlighted in several of the stakeholder reports to the UPR the government enforces authoritarian control over society through a web of highly repressive laws that are enforced by a judicial system that lacks basic independence from the executive authority of the ruling family.

Journalists that investigate human rights violations disappear, poets that insult the Emir serve decades in prison, human rights defenders are harassed, threatened and imprisoned on a regular basis. Almost any criticism of the ruling family or the government is severely punished. Public freedoms of association and assembly are effectively outlawed. No independent civil society organizations exist in the country.

Only a couple days ago a cybercrimes law was passed that provides heavy fines and long prison sentences for anyone that is found "[jeopardizing] the safety of the state, its general order, and its local or international peace" by spreading or publishing "false news through any means."

Qatar's response to these deeply troubling issues during the UPR has been to refuse to either acknowledge a problem, or simply reject outright that they plan to reform on these issues. Moreover, it has issued a blanket refusal to accept any recommendations to sign or ratify international human rights treaties, most of which it has yet to sign.

CIHRS believes this unwillingness to begin a process of addressing these grave human rights violations or increasing its commitment to international human rights norms should cast doubt on Qatar's qualifications to be a member of the Human Rights Council.

We urge Qatar to reconsider its position on these issues, and in particular to guarantee in all circumstances that human rights defenders in Qatar are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.

Thank you Mr. President