



Qatar

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Submission by CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, NGO in General
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And

Gulf Centre for Human Rights

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1. Introduction

- 1.1** CIVICUS is a global alliance of civil society organisations (CSOs) and activists dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society around the world. Founded in 1993, CIVICUS has members in more than 170 countries.
- 1.2** The Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR) is an independent, non-profit CSO founded in April 2011. GCHR provides support and protection to human rights defenders (HRDs) in the Gulf region and neighbouring countries to promote human rights, including the freedoms of association, peaceful assembly and expression
- 1.3** In this document, CIVICUS and GCHR examine the Government of Qatar’s compliance with its international human rights obligations to create and maintain a safe and enabling environment for civil society. Specifically, we analyse Qatar’s fulfilment of the rights to the freedoms of association, peaceful assembly and expression, and unwarranted restrictions on HRDs, since its previous UPR examination. To this end, we assess Qatar’s implementation of recommendations received during the 2nd UPR cycle relating to these issues and provide follow-up recommendations.
- 1.4** During the 2nd UPR cycle in 2014, the Government of Qatar received 31 recommendations relating to the space for civil society (civic space), including recommendations to ratify international human rights protocols. Of these recommendations, 24 were accepted and seven were noted, including to “release all prisoners of conscience, including the poet Mohamed Al-Ajami, and to respect the rights of all individuals to freedom of expression.” An evaluation of a range of legal sources and human rights documentation addressed in subsequent sections of this submission demonstrate that the Government of Qatar has not implemented 13 recommendations relating to civic space, and has partially implemented one. While the government has made significant strides in signing international human rights treaties, such as those related to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, these have been done with reservations that limit the application of these. Further, Qatar has persistently failed to address unwarranted restrictions of civic space since its last UPR examination and acute implementation gaps were found with regard to the rights to the freedoms of peaceful assembly and expression, and the treatment of HRDs.

- 1.5** CIVICUS and GCHR welcome Qatar’s decision to accede to two core UN human rights treaties, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, despite formal reservations depriving women and migrant workers of protection under the treaties.¹ Further, it is recognised that since 2017 Qatar has begun a process of addressing a number of unwarrantedly restrictive laws, such as those relating to labour standards for migrant workers, as well as instituting a minimum wage within its revised Law No. 15 on service workers in the home (the Domestic Workers Law).
- 1.6** However, CIVICUS and GCHR are deeply concerned by continued restrictions facing HRDs, including a travel ban on human rights lawyer Dr Najeeb Al-Nuaimi. There are also concerns surrounding the continued hurdles put in place for CSOs to register under Law No. 12 of 2004, which gives the Minister of Civil Service Affairs and Housing undue powers to dissolve associations. CIVICUS and GCHR note with concern the absence of any independent media outlets in Qatar and the continued restrictions faced by local and foreign journalists seeking to work in Qatar.
- 1.7** As a result of these concerns, civic space in Qatar is currently rated as 'repressed' by the CIVICUS Monitor, indicating the existence of heavy constraints on civil society’s fundamental rights.²
- Section 2 of this submission examines Qatar’s implementation of UPR recommendations and compliance with international human rights standards concerning the freedom of association.
 - Section 3 examines Qatar’s implementation of UPR recommendations and compliance with international human rights standards relating to the protection of HRDs, civil society activists and journalists.
 - Section 4 examines Qatar’s implementation of UPR recommendations and compliance with international human rights standards concerning the freedom of expression, independence of the media and access to information.
 - Section 5 examines Qatar’s implementation of UPR recommendations and compliance with international human rights standards relating to the freedom of peaceful assembly.
 - Section 6 makes recommendations to address the concerns listed.
 - An annex lists the implementation of recommendations received by Qatar in the 2nd UPR cycle that are referenced in this submission.

¹ ‘Qatar Joins Core Human Rights Treaties’, Human Rights Watch, 25 May 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/05/25/qatar-joins-core-human-rights-treaties>.

² CIVICUS Monitor: Qatar, <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/qatar>.

2. Freedom of association

- 2.1** During Qatar’s examination under the 2nd UPR cycle, the government received four recommendations on the right to the freedom of association and creating an enabling environment for CSOs. Among other recommendations, the government committed to ensuring that it would “Strengthen the judicial framework, including due process, freedom of expression and freedom of association” and “Take active steps to reform its labour laws in order to improve working conditions for foreign workers, to give female domestic workers the necessary legal protection and to address the recent ruling by ILO on forced labour and freedom of association and collective bargaining.” Of the recommendations received, the government accepted two and noted two, specifically noting recommendations on revisions to the Law on Associations and Institutions to reduce restrictions for establishing associations, including CSOs. However, as evidenced below, the government has not implemented any of these recommendations.
- 2.2** Article 45 of the 2004 Constitution guarantees the right to the freedom of association. Article 22 of the ICCPR, to which Qatar is a state party as of May 2018, also guarantees the freedom of association. However, despite these commitments, the government has continued unwarrantedly to undermine the right to the freedom of association, including through the imposition of undue registration requirements for CSOs and the granting of sweeping powers to the authorities to dissolve CSOs.
- 2.3** Article 8 of Law No. 12 of 2004 requires that an application for registration to establish any association, including CSOs, must be approved by the Minister of Social Affairs. The registration process requires the payment of 1,000 Riyals (approx. US\$275) and states that the registrants must be Qatari nationals, with good reputation and conduct – an ambiguous requirement that lacks clarity. The restrictions in Law No. 12 of 2004 do not permit registrants of associations to be non-Qatari, limiting the scope for non-nationals to engage in civic space.
- 2.4** Further restrictions on the freedom of association indicate that the state continues to place undue limitations on cooperation between domestic CSOs and foreign organisations. According to Article 31, associations may not fundraise without permission from the Minister of Social Affairs, and their activities will be subject to the supervision of the Ministry. This is done to “ensure their compliance with the law.”³

³ Law No. 12 of 2004 on Private Associations and Foundations 12 / 2004, Qatar Ministry of Social Affairs, 2004, http://www.icnl.org/research/library/files/Qatar/7_Qatar_PrivAssoc_2004.pdf.

- 2.5** Further, Article 35 of Law No 12. of 2004 stipulates that the Minister of Social Affairs has the power to dissolve CSOs and may do so in the event that a CSO engages in political activities – a term not defined in the law and subject to ambiguity. This closes civic space by discouraging activities that the state deems political, with severe consequences for dissenters.
- 2.6** The right to the freedom of association and to collective bargaining is further curtailed under the Qatari Labour Law No. 14 of 2004. The Code stipulates that the establishment of independent unions is strictly prohibited, and that all union activity should be conducted under the auspices of the General Union of Workers of Qatar, a union established and supervised by the government. Under Article 3 of Labour Law No. 14 of 2004, several categories of workers are strictly excluded from joining the General Union of Workers, including people employed by the government, members of the armed forces, police personnel and all domestic and agricultural workers. In addition, migrant workers, who make up 94 per cent of Qatar’s workforce, are completely precluded from joining the union. Further, Qatar’s estimated 1,500 stateless Bidun people are denied citizenship rights, including to hold employment legally, thereby depriving them of the right to join or form unions.⁴
- 2.7** Revisions have been made to Qatar’s Kafala (sponsorship) system, which previously required foreign workers to have a Qatari sponsor to obtain permission to exit Qatar. Article 7 of Law No. 21 of 2015 was amended to Law No. 1 of 2017, removing exit visa requirements on migrant workers. However, Qatar continued to place limitations on the rights of migrant workers to join unions or participate in peaceful strike action, as highlighted in 2.6 above.⁵ Further, Article 119 stipulates that workers’ organisations are prohibited from participating in any political or religious activities and distributing material that is insulting to the state.
- 2.8** As a result of these and other restrictions there are no independent CSOs in Qatar dedicated to researching human rights violations, which makes it difficult for international CSOs and journalists to find sources and research material. Further, there is little information available to the local population on human rights violations, and as a consequence little impetus for civil society action. Indeed, neither CIVICUS nor GCHR have CSO partners within Qatar, but rely on individual HRDs, whose numbers are few as well. While CSOs exist in Qatar, they do not focus on civic space issues, and primarily focus on healthcare, housing and access to water.

⁴ ‘World Report 2013: Qatar’, Human Rights Watch, 2013, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2013/country-chapters/qatar>.

⁵ Law No. 14 of 2004 on the promulgation of Labour Law 14 / 2004, State of Qatar, 2004, http://www.icnl.org/research/library/files/Qatar/19_Qatar_LaborLaw_2004.pdf.

3. Harassment, intimidation and attacks against human rights defenders, civil society activists and journalists

- 3.1** Under Qatar’s previous UPR examination, the government received one recommendation on the protection of HRDs, civil society activists and journalists. It did not accept the recommendation to “Release all prisoners of conscience, including the poet Mohammed Al-Ajami, and respect the rights of all individuals to freedom of expression,” although Al-Ajami was later released. HRDs working in Qatar continue to face serious threats to their safety while conducting their human rights work. Indeed, HRDs interviewed by GCHR for a report on civil society would only speak anonymously for fear of “their immigration status being altered and therefore being effectively removed from Qatar.”⁶
- 3.2** Article 12 of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders mandates states to take the necessary measures to ensure protection to HRDs. The ICCPR further guarantees the freedoms of association, peaceful assembly and expression. The Constitution of Qatar also has provisions that should protect HRDs, including Articles 44 to 48, which recognise the rights to freedoms to assemble, establish associations and address public authorities, as well as the freedom of expression and freedoms of press and publication. However, in practice, these constitutional provisions are loosely applied relative to the Penal Code, which imposes severe restrictions on HRDs for engaging in human rights work that the state may deem too political.
- 3.3** The Protection of Society Law and Combating Terrorism Law both allow for prolonged pre-trial detention and include unclear terminology that can be unduly used to target HRDs. For example, Article 3 of the Combating Terrorism Law imposes unwarranted restrictions on any person who coordinates a “terrorist crime,” without any clear definitions of what constitutes such a crime. Under Article 18, the law stipulates that the state also has the scope to extend detention indefinitely in the interest of an investigation or by order of the court⁷ – an unlawful detention practice as per Articles 2(3) and 9(1) of the ICCPR. Similarly, the Protection of Society Law permits that a sentence can be extended by six months without charge, as long as this extension is approved by the prime minister. Under this law, if the prime minister perceives the detainee to be a threat to society, he can extend the sentence indefinitely.⁸ A report by the US Government detailed how suspects, unnamed in the report, detained under the Protection of Society Law and the Combatting Terrorism Law had “limited access to the legal system, including a fair trial” while in pre-trial detention.⁹

⁶ ‘Qatar, civil society and human rights: Lack of civil society space hinders work of human rights defenders’, GCHR, 3 March 2016, <https://www.gc4hr.org/report/view/39>.

⁷ Law No. 3 of 2004 on Combatting Terrorism, State of Qatar, 2004, [http://www.qfcra.com/en-us/legislation/Laws/Law%20No%20\(3\)%20of%202004%20on%20Combating%20Terrorism.pdf](http://www.qfcra.com/en-us/legislation/Laws/Law%20No%20(3)%20of%202004%20on%20Combating%20Terrorism.pdf).

⁸ Law No 17 of 2002 on Protection of Community 17 / 2002, State of Qatar, 2002, <http://www.almeezan.qa/LocalPdfLaw.aspx?Target=116&language=en>.

⁹ ‘Qatar Report’, US State Department, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/186656.pdf>.

- 3.4** On 28 April 2018, Dr Najeeb Al-Nuaimi, a well-known human rights lawyer who voluntarily defends prisoners of conscience in Qatar, received the latest in a series of travel bans. The travel bans are due to his human rights litigation and peaceful views expressed on Twitter that are critical of the government.¹⁰ On 26 June 2017, the Capital Security Administration informed Al-Nuaimi that his travel bans from 6 January 2017 had been renewed, despite the fact that the Court of Appeal had overturned the ban on 30 May 2017.¹¹ The latest ban comes without any prior notification or justification.
- 3.5** On 28 May 2017, Qatari authorities deported Saudi HRD Mohammed Abdullah Al-Otaibi to Saudi Arabia after arresting him on 25 May 2017 at Hamad International Airport in Qatar. He was en route to Norway, where he had been granted political asylum and was expected to receive travel documents and a humanitarian visa from Norway. On 25 January 2018, Al-Otaibi was sentenced to 14 years on charges of “forming an unlicensed organization” for his role in establishing the Union for Human Rights in 2013.¹² The forcible return to Saudi Arabia violated Al-Otaibi’s rights to a fair trial and principles of non-refoulement, and subjected him to prolonged arbitrary detention, in violation of Qatar’s international obligations.
- 3.6** After five years in prison, Mohamed Rashid Al-Ajami was released on 15 March 2016 under an amnesty granted by the Prince of Qatar, Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. On 29 November 2011, he had been sentenced to life in prison, later reduced to 15 years, for insulting the Emir of Qatar and allegedly “inciting to overthrow the ruling state” after publication of his poem, Jasmine Uprisings, which criticised governments across the Gulf region in the wake of the ‘Arab Spring’ uprisings.

¹⁰ ‘Qatar: Lift arbitrary and unexplained travel ban on Dr Najeeb al-Nuaimi’, Amnesty International, 9 February 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE2256712017ENGLISH.pdf>.

¹¹ ‘Travel Ban Imposed on Human Rights Lawyer Najeeb Al-Nuaimi’, Front Line Defenders, 10 February 2017, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/travel-ban-imposed-human-rights-lawyer-najeeb-al-nuaimi>.

¹² ‘Mohammed Al-Otaibi Forcibly Deported to Saudi Arabia’, Front Line Defenders, 29 May 2017, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/mohammed-al-otaibi-forcibly-deported-saudi-arabia>.

4. Freedom of expression, independence of the media and access to information

- 4.1** Under the 2nd UPR cycle, the government received 11 recommendations relating to the freedom of expression and access to information. For example, the government pledged to “Guarantee freedom of expression by protecting journalists, bloggers and media professionals from arbitrary arrest and detention and from censorship, including by amending those provisions in the Criminal Code and the draft media law that are inconsistent with international standards of freedom of expression.” Of the 11 recommendations received, 10 were accepted and one was noted. However, as discussed below, the government failed to implement any of the recommendations.
- 4.2** Article 19 of the ICCPR guarantees the right to the freedoms of expression and opinion. Article 47 of the Constitution also guarantees the right to the freedom of expression and Article 48 guarantees the freedom of the press and media. However, in spite of these protections, Article 134 of the Penal Code continues to criminalise legitimate forms of expression, providing prison sentences up to five years to anyone who publicly criticises the authorities or the Emir. Article 130 of the Penal Code also includes sentences for those whom the state deems intent on the overthrow of the ruling regime and criticism of the Emir.
- 4.3** The 2014 Cybercrimes Prevention Law makes provisions for those who commit violations to be fined up to a maximum of 500,000 Riyals (approx. US\$137,500) and receive prison sentences ranging from one to 10 years. The law prohibits any online activity that “threatens the safety of the state, its general order, and its local or international peace.” It also criminalises the spread of “false news,” forces internet providers to block objectionable content and bans the “publication of personal or family information, even if true.” It expects internet service providers (ISPs) to block objectionable content based on judicial requests. They are also meant to maintain long-term electronic records and traffic data for the government. Government-controlled ISPs restrict access to political and religious content and censor this. The government also monitors websites and email content through a proxy server.¹³
- 4.4** In 2018, Human Rights Watch reported that the private publishing partner of the New York Times, Dar Al Shariq, had repeatedly removed articles in the international print edition of the New York Times specifically related to LGBTI rights.¹⁴ Citing Section 47 of the 1979 Press and Publication Law, the Qatari government responded that Dar Al Shariq engaged in self-censorship in line with local cultural standards and expectations.

¹³ Cybercrime Prevention Law, State of Qatar, 2014,

http://chato.cl/blog/files/QatarCybercrimeLaw_unofficial_translation.pdf.

¹⁴ ‘Qatar: Censorship Ignores Rights, FIFA Rules’, Human Rights Watch, 3 August 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/08/03/qatar-censorship-ignores-rights-fifa-rules>.

- 4.5** In March 2016, a German sports reporter and his colleagues were arrested by security forces for filming migrant workers without permission. Their equipment was confiscated and their footage deleted. In May 2016, four BBC journalists were temporarily arrested while traveling to interview migrant workers.¹⁵ On 5 May 2016, Qatari security forces detained three journalists working for the Danish Broadcasting Corporation. The three journalists entered Qatar to report on migrant workers ahead of the 2022 World Cup and drove to Labor City, on the outskirts of Doha, to film the Workers' Cup, a football tournament for migrant workers. Shortly after arrival, they were detained and accused of filming without permission, despite receiving formal permission from the government's Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy. They had also informed the Government Communications Office of their intent to film the tournament. Reports indicate that the reporters were forced to sign confessions that they had filmed without permission and trespassed, and required to handwrite statements promising not to record interviews with workers or film stadiums under construction without state permission. They were released after 10 hours but were not allowed to take their memory cards from their cameras.¹⁶
- 4.6** The only independent news website in Doha, Doha News, was blocked in December 2016. Doha News has operated in Qatar for eight years and reports on topics that the authorities deem controversial or political, including the treatment of migrant workers and homosexuality. In 2016, the website called for amendment of the 2014 Cybercrime Prevention Law, including its provisions that criminalise "false news" on the internet and impose a three-year prison sentence on anyone convicted of posting online content that "violates social values or principles" or "insults or slanders others." Access to the Doha News website was blocked by ISPs Oredoo and Vodophone, and attempts to launch a second domain by Doha News were blocked by the authorities shortly after. In July 2016, a Doha News journalist was reportedly detained overnight after a person convicted of a serious crime complained about an article that he claimed had harmed his reputation.¹⁷

¹⁵ Qatar: Freedom of the Press 2016', Freedom House, 2016, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2016/qatar>.

¹⁶ 'Danish television crew detained by Qatari authorities', Committee to Protect Journalists, 19 May 2016, <https://cpj.org/2016/05/danish-television-crew-detained-by-qatari-authorit.php>.

¹⁷ 'Qatar blocks prominent Doha News', IFEX, 6 December 2016, https://www.ifex.org/qatar/2016/12/06/doha_news_blocked.

4.7 As of 2018, all print media is owned by members of the ruling family or those close to government.¹⁸ Even Al Jazeera, which is funded and partially owned by the ruling family and comments freely on some Middle East and North African (MENA) countries, refrains from criticising the Qatari Government and its allies. For example, according to GCHR, Al Jazeera did not report on Saudi HRDs until Qatar found itself in a diplomatic dispute with the Saudi government and its allies. Both Qatar and Iran have been accused, by Saudi Arabia and other countries in the MENA region, of supporting the Muslim Brotherhood and terrorist activities.¹⁹ It appears that the diplomatic dispute has resulted in Qatar making provisions for Al Jazeera to cover human rights violations in other Gulf countries,²⁰ such as reporting on the arrests of dozens of HRDs, including women’s rights activists, in May 2018.²¹

5. Freedom of peaceful assembly

5.1 During Qatar’s examination under the 2nd UPR cycle, the government received one recommendation on the right to the freedom of peaceful assembly, that the government should “Revise Law No. 18 of 2004 in order to remove restricting conditions for acquiring permission for a public demonstration and take other steps to guarantee the full enjoyment of the right to freedom of assembly and the right of association.” However, this recommendation was only noted and there has been no improvement on the right to peaceful assembly in Qatar.

5.2 Article 21 of the ICCPR guarantees the freedom of peaceful assembly. Article 44 of the Constitution also guarantees this right. However, in practice and policy, Law No. 18 of 2004 on Public Meetings and Demonstrations requires in Article 9 that public meetings do not violate “the tenets of religion, public order and public morals” and should “prevent anything that defames the reputation of the State or other states.”

5.3 The right to peaceful assembly in Qatar is seldom exercised because of the requirements of pre-approval from the Director General of Public Security, and the strict preconditions for assembly. In 2014, migrant workers, originally from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka engaged in a strike, demanding better pay and working conditions. Police responded by arresting over 100 workers, with reports indicating that they were threatened with deportation.²²

¹⁸ ‘Qatar, Your Media is Letting You Down’, Victoria Scott, Doha News, 20 July 2017, <https://dohanews.co/qatar-your-media-is-letting-you-down>.

¹⁹ ‘Saudi official hints at plan to dig canal on Qatar border’, Reuters, 31 August 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-qatar-canal/saudi-official-hints-at-plan-to-dig-canal-on-qatar-border-idUSKCN1LG13H>.

²⁰ Interview with Khalid Ibrahim, Independent research conducted for GCHR, 2018.

²¹ ‘Concern over Saudi arrests of women’s rights activists’, Al Jazeera, 30 May 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/05/concern-saudi-arrests-women-rights-activists-180530100241047.html>; ‘Qatar’, Reporters Without Borders, 2018, <https://rsf.org/en/qatar>.

²² ‘More than 100 migrant workers may be deported after Qatar strike’, Middle East Eye, 26 November 2014, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/over-100-migrant-workers-threatened-deportation-after-three-day-strike-qatar-2081152951>.

6. Recommendations to the Government of Qatar

CIVICUS and GCHR call on the Government of Qatar to create and maintain, in law and in practice, an enabling environment for civil society, in accordance with the rights enshrined in the ICCPR, the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and Human Rights Council resolutions 22/6, 27/5 and 27/31.

At a minimum, the following conditions should be guaranteed: the freedoms of association, peaceful assembly and expression, the right to operate free from unwarranted state interference, the right to communicate and cooperate, the right to seek and secure funding and the state's duty to protect. In the light of this, the following specific recommendations are made:

6.1 Regarding the freedom of association

- Take measures to foster a safe, respectful and enabling environment for civil society, including by removing legal and policy measures that unwarrantedly limit the right to association.
- Remove all undue restrictions on the ability of CSOs to receive domestic and international funding, in line with best practices articulated by the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.
- Abolish criminal responsibility for organising and participating in the activities of non-registered organisations and lift the ban on the activities of non-registered organisations.
- Amend Law No. 12 of 2004 and the Labour Law to guarantee that undue restrictions on the freedom of association are removed, bringing their provisions into compliance with Articles 21 and 22 of ICCPR.
- Guarantee the effective and independent functioning of autonomous trade unions by removing proscriptions on the formulation of independent labour unions and undue limitations on the right to strike.

6.2 Regarding the protection of human rights defenders

- Provide a safe and secure environment so that civil society members, HRDs and journalists are able to carry out their work, including by conducting impartial, thorough and effective investigations into all cases of attacks against and harassment and intimidation of them, and bringing the perpetrators of such offences to justice.
- Ensure that HRDs are able to carry out their legitimate activities without fear or undue hindrance, obstruction or legal and administrative harassment.

- Initiate a consolidated process of repeal or amendment of legalisation and decrees that unwarrantedly restrict the legitimate work of HRDs, in line with the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.
- Amend the Protection of Society Law, the Penal Code and the Combating Terrorism Law suitably, in accordance with the ICCPR and the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.
- Refrain from detaining HRDs, including journalists and bloggers, for exercising their fundamental rights to the freedoms of association, peaceful assembly and expression.
- Systematically apply legal provisions that promote and protect human rights and establish mechanisms that protect HRDs by adopting a specific law on the protection of HRDs, in accordance with UN Human Rights Council resolution 27.31.

6.3 Regarding the freedom of expression, independence of the media and access to information

- Review the 1979 Press and Publications Law, Penal Code and Cybercrime Law in order to ensure that this legislation is in line with best practices and international standards in the area of the freedom of expression.
- Reinstate all media outlets unwarrantedly closed.
- Cease the practice of confiscating and censoring print media.
- Reform defamation legislation, including the 2014 Cybercrime Prevention Law and Law No. 18 of 2004, in conformity with Article 19 of the ICCPR.
- Ensure that journalists and writers may work freely and without fear of retribution for expressing critical opinions or covering topics that the government may find sensitive.
- Guarantee unfettered access for all people in Qatar to domestic and foreign media information, both offline and online.

6.4 Regarding the freedom of peaceful assembly

- Adopt best practices on the freedom of peaceful assembly, as put forward by the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association in his 2012 annual report, which calls for procedures in which there is simple notification of assemblies being held, rather than explicit permission being needed to assemble.
- Amend Law No. 18 of 2004 in order to guarantee fully the right to the freedom of peaceful assembly.
- Provide recourse for judicial review and effective remedy, including compensation, in cases of unlawful denial of the right to the freedom of peaceful assembly by state authorities.

6.5 Regarding access to UN Special Procedures mandate holders

- Extend a standing invitation to all UN Special Procedure mandate holders and prioritise official visits by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.

6.6 Regarding state engagement with civil society

- Implement transparent and inclusive mechanisms of public consultations with CSOs on all issues mentioned above and enable the more effective involvement of civil society in the preparation of law and policy.
- Include CSOs in the UPR process before finalising and submitting the national report.
- Systematically consult with civil society on the implementation of UPR recommendations, including by holding periodical comprehensive consultations with a diverse range of civil society.
- Incorporate the results of this UPR into action plans for the promotion and protection of all human rights, taking into account the proposals of civil society, and present a midterm evaluation report to the Human Rights Council on the implementation of the recommendations of this session.

Recommendation	Position	Complete list of themes	Evaluation /comments on the level of implementation
Theme: H1 Human rights defenders			
<p>N – 124.1: Ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Rome Statute, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (France)</p>	Noted	Human rights defenders	<p><u>Partially Implemented</u></p> <p>Qatar has ratified two UN human rights treaties, namely the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, despite formal reservations depriving women and migrant workers protection under the treaties (see paragraph 1.5)</p>
<p>A - 124.2: Consider ratifying those international human rights instruments to which the State is not yet a party (Nicaragua)</p>	Accepted	Human rights defenders	<p><u>Partially Implemented</u></p> <p>Qatar has ratified two UN human rights treaties, namely the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, despite formal reservations depriving women and migrant workers protection under the treaties (see paragraph 1.5)</p>
<p>A - 124.3: Consider acceding to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Turkmenistan)</p>	Accepted	Human rights defenders	<p><u>Partially Implemented</u></p> <p>Qatar has ratified two UN human rights treaties, namely the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, despite formal reservations depriving women and migrant workers protection under the treaties (see paragraph 1.5)</p>
<p>A - 124.4: Consider acceding to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and adopt a new media law that respects freedom of expression (United States of America)</p>	Accepted	Human rights defenders Freedom of Expression	<p><u>Partially Implemented</u></p> <p>Qatar has ratified two UN human rights treaties, namely the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, despite formal reservations depriving women and migrant workers protection under the treaties (see paragraph 1.5)</p>

Recommendation	Position	Complete list of themes	Evaluation /comments on the level of implementation
A - 124.5: Consider ratifying the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Optional Protocols thereto (Rwanda)	Accepted	Human rights defenders	<u>Partially Implemented</u> Qatar has ratified two UN human rights treaties, namely the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, despite formal reservations depriving women and migrant workers protection under the treaties (see paragraph 1.5)
A - 124.6: Consider ratifying the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as recommended during the first cycle (Slovenia)	Accepted	Human rights defenders	<u>Partially Implemented</u> Qatar has ratified two UN human rights treaties, namely the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, despite formal reservations depriving women and migrant workers protection under the treaties (see paragraph 1.5)
A - 124.7: Consider early ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Japan)	Accepted	Human rights defenders	<u>Fully Implemented</u> Qatar has ratified two UN human rights treaties, namely the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, despite formal reservations depriving women and migrant workers protection under the treaties (see paragraph 1.5)
A - 124.8: Ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Montenegro)	Accepted	Human rights defenders	<u>Partially Implemented</u> Qatar has ratified two UN human rights treaties, namely the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, despite formal reservations depriving women and migrant workers protection under the treaties (see paragraph 1.5)
A - 124.9: Ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Tunisia)	Accepted	Human rights defenders	<u>Partially Implemented</u> Qatar has ratified two UN human rights treaties, namely the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, despite formal reservations depriving women and migrant workers protection under the treaties (see paragraph 1.5)

Recommendation	Position	Complete list of themes	Evaluation /comments on the level of implementation
A - 124.10: Ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as fundamental documents in the area of human rights (Russian Federation)	Accepted	Human rights defenders	<u>Partially Implemented</u> Qatar has ratified two UN human rights treaties, namely the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, despite formal reservations depriving women and migrant workers protection under the treaties (see paragraph 1.5)
A - 124.11: Accede to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural (Germany)	Accepted	Human rights defenders	<u>Fully Implemented</u> Qatar has ratified two UN human rights treaties, namely the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, despite formal reservations depriving women and migrant workers protection under the treaties (see paragraph 1.5)
A - 124.12: Accede to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Australia)	Accepted	Human rights defenders	<u>Partially Implemented</u> Qatar has ratified two UN human rights treaties, namely the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, despite formal reservations depriving women and migrant workers protection under the treaties (see paragraph 1.5)
N - 124.13: Ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Optional Protocol thereto, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Optional Protocols thereto (Portugal)	Noted	Human rights defenders	<u>Partially Implemented</u> Qatar has ratified two UN human rights treaties, namely the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, despite formal reservations depriving women and migrant workers protection under the treaties (see paragraph 1.5)
N - 124.15: Ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (Maldives)	Noted	Human rights defenders	<u>Partially Implemented</u> Qatar has ratified two UN human rights treaties, namely the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, despite formal reservations depriving women and migrant workers protection under the treaties (see paragraph 1.5)

Recommendation	Position	Complete list of themes	Evaluation /comments on the level of implementation
<p>N - 124.16: Consider ratifying the following international instruments: The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the second Optional Protocol thereto; the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, implementing the national preventive mechanism (Uruguay)</p>	Noted	Human rights defenders	<p><u>Partially Implemented</u></p> <p>Qatar has ratified two UN human rights treaties, namely the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, despite formal reservations depriving women and migrant workers protection under the treaties (see paragraph 1.5)</p>
<p>N - 124.17: Ratify the human rights treaties listed in section I A of the compilation of OHCHR, notably the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, as well as the Optional Protocols to the Convention against Torture, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Ghana)</p>	Noted	Human rights defenders	<p><u>Partially Implemented</u></p> <p>Qatar has ratified two UN human rights treaties, namely the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, despite formal reservations depriving women and migrant workers protection under the treaties (see paragraph 1.5)</p>
<p>A - 124.33: Equip the government committee established to consider accession to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights with adequate power and resources to accelerate the process and reach a practical outcome (Viet Nam)</p>	Accepted	Human rights defenders	<p><u>Partially Implemented</u></p> <p>Qatar has ratified two UN human rights treaties, namely the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, despite formal reservations depriving women and migrant workers protection under the treaties (see paragraph 1.5)</p>

Recommendation	Position	Complete list of themes	Evaluation /comments on the level of implementation
Theme: D43 Freedom of opinion and expression			
<p>A – 122.59: Encourage freedom of expression of opinion and strengthen cooperation and coordination with civil society and non-governmental organizations (Norway)</p>	Accepted	<p>Freedom of Expression</p> <p>Freedom of Association</p>	<p><u>Not implemented</u></p> <p>Qatar’s legal framework continues to restrict the freedom of expression. Article 134 of the Penal Code continues to criminalise legitimate forms of expression, providing prison sentences up to five years to anyone who publicly criticises the authorities or the Emir. It also includes sentences for those whom the state deems intent on the overthrow of the ruling regime and criticism of the Emir (see paragraph 4.2)</p> <p>The Cybercrimes Prevention Law makes provisions for violations to be fined to a maximum of 500,000 Riyals (approx. US\$137,500) and prison sentences ranging from one to 10 years. The law prohibits any online activity that “threatens the safety of the state, its general order, and its local or international peace.” (see paragraph 4.3)</p> <p>Qatari officials have also violated the right to freedom of expression by detaining journalists (see paragraph 4.5):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In May 2016, four BBC journalists were temporarily arrested while traveling to interview migrant workers. - On 5 May 2016, Qatari security forces detained three journalists working for the Danish Broadcasting Corporation. <p>Independent news website Doha News was blocked in December 2016 after the website called for amendment to the 2014 Cybercrime Prevention Law. In July 2016, a Doha News journalist was reportedly detained overnight after a person convicted of a serious crime complained about an article that he claimed had harmed his reputation. (see paragraph 4.6)</p>

Recommendation	Position	Complete list of themes	Evaluation /comments on the level of implementation
<p>A - 124.47: Respect the right to freedom of opinion and expression, as accepted during the previous UPR cycle, and refrain from imposing any undue restriction on this right, including with regard to the new draft media law (Germany)</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>Freedom of expression</p>	<p><u>Not Implemented</u></p> <p>Qatar’s legal framework continues to restrict the freedom of expression. Article 134 of the Penal Code continues to criminalise legitimate forms of expression, providing prison sentences up to five years to anyone who publicly criticises the authorities or the Emir. It also includes sentences for those whom the state deems intent on the overthrow of the ruling regime and criticism of the Emir (see paragraph 4.2)</p> <p>The Cybercrimes Prevention Law makes provisions for violations to be fined to a maximum of 500,000 Riyals (approx. US\$137,500) and prison sentences ranging from one to 10 years. The law prohibits any online activity that “threatens the safety of the state, its general order, and its local or international peace.” (see paragraph 4.3)</p> <p>Qatari officials have also violated the right to freedom of expression by detaining journalists (see paragraph 4.5):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In May 2016, four BBC journalists were temporarily arrested while traveling to interview migrant workers. - On 5 May 2016, Qatari security forces detained three journalists working for the Danish Broadcasting Corporation. <p>Independent news website Doha News was blocked in December 2016 after the website called for amendment to the 2014 Cybercrime Prevention Law. In July 2016, a Doha News journalist was reportedly detained overnight after a person convicted of a serious crime complained about an article that he claimed had harmed his reputation. (see paragraph 4.6)</p>

Recommendation	Position	Complete list of themes	Evaluation /comments on the level of implementation
<p>A - 124.48: Implement fully legal guarantees for freedom of expression as stipulated in the Constitution, thus allowing Qatari citizens to exercise their freedom of expression and opinion and enabling independent media in the country (Slovenia)</p>	Accepted	Freedom of expression	<p><u>Not Implemented</u></p> <p>Qatar’s legal framework continues to restrict the freedom of expression. Article 134 of the Penal Code continues to criminalise legitimate forms of expression, providing prison sentences up to five years to anyone who publicly criticises the authorities or the Emir. It also includes sentences for those whom the state deems intent on the overthrow of the ruling regime and criticism of the Emir (see paragraph 4.2)</p> <p>The Cybercrimes Prevention Law makes provisions for violations to be fined to a maximum of 500,000 Riyals (approx. US\$137,500) and prison sentences ranging from one to 10 years. The law prohibits any online activity that “threatens the safety of the state, its general order, and its local or international peace.” (see paragraph 4.3)</p>

Recommendation	Position	Complete list of themes	Evaluation /comments on the level of implementation
<p>A - 124.49: Guarantee freedom of expression by protecting journalists, bloggers and media professionals from arbitrary arrest and detention and from censorship, including by amending those provisions in the Criminal Code and the draft media law that are inconsistent with international standards of freedom of expression (France)</p>	Accepted	Freedom of expression	<p><u>Not Implemented</u></p> <p>Qatar’s legal framework continues to restrict the freedom of expression. Article 134 of the Penal Code continues to criminalise legitimate forms of expression, providing prison sentences up to five years to anyone who publicly criticises the authorities or the Emir. It also includes sentences for those whom the state deems intent on the overthrow of the ruling regime and criticism of the Emir (see paragraph 4.2)</p> <p>Qatari officials have also violated the right to freedom of expression by detaining journalists (see paragraph 4.5):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In May 2016, four BBC journalists were temporarily arrested while traveling to interview migrant workers. - On 5 May 2016, Qatari security forces detained three journalists working for the Danish Broadcasting Corporation. <p>Independent news website Doha News was blocked in December 2016 after the website called for amendment to the 2014 Cybercrime Prevention Law. In July 2016, a Doha News journalist was reportedly detained overnight after a person convicted of a serious crime complained about an article that he claimed had harmed his reputation. (see paragraph 4.6)</p>
<p>A - 124.50: Decriminalize defamation as recommended by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Ghana)</p>	Accepted	Freedom of Expression	<p><u>Not Implemented</u></p> <p>The Cybercrimes Prevention Law makes provisions for violations to be fined to a maximum of 500,000 Riyals (approx. US\$137,500) and prison sentences ranging from one to 10 years. The law prohibits any online activity that “threatens the safety of the state, its general order, and its local or international peace.” (see paragraph 4.3). It also criminalises the spread of “false news,” forces internet providers to block objectionable content and bans the “publication of personal or family information, even if true.” (see paragraph 4.3)</p>

Recommendation	Position	Complete list of themes	Evaluation /comments on the level of implementation
<p>A - 124.51: Refrain from adopting any laws providing for censorship or undue control over the content of the media (Czech Republic)</p>	Accepted	Freedom of Expression	<p><u>Not Implemented</u></p> <p>Qatar’s legal framework continues to restrict the freedom of expression. Article 134 of the Penal Code continues to criminalise legitimate forms of expression, providing prison sentences up to five years to anyone who publicly criticises the authorities or the Emir. It also includes sentences for those whom the state deems intent on the overthrow of the ruling regime and criticism of the Emir (see paragraph 4.2)</p> <p>The Cybercrimes Prevention Law makes provisions for violations to be fined to a maximum of 500,000 Riyals (approx. US\$137,500) and prison sentences ranging from one to 10 years. The law prohibits any online activity that “threatens the safety of the state, its general order, and its local or international peace.” (see paragraph 4.3)</p>
<p>A - 124.52: Amend those articles of the draft media law and the draft cybercrime law that are inconsistent with international standards of freedom of expression (Austria)</p>	Accepted	Freedom of Expression	<p><u>Not Implemented</u></p> <p>Qatar’s legal framework continues to restrict the freedom of expression. Article 134 of the Penal Code continues to criminalise legitimate forms of expression, providing prison sentences up to five years to anyone who publicly criticises the authorities or the Emir. It also includes sentences for those whom the state deems intent on the overthrow of the ruling regime and criticism of the Emir (see paragraph 4.2)</p> <p>The Cybercrimes Prevention Law makes provisions for violations to be fined to a maximum of 500,000 Riyals (approx. US\$137,500) and prison sentences ranging from one to 10 years. The law prohibits any online activity that “threatens the safety of the state, its general order, and its local or international peace.” (see paragraph 4.3)</p>
<p>A - 124.53: Take immediate measures to ensure that the national regulations pertaining to the Internet guarantee freedom of expression (Sweden)</p>	Accepted	Freedom of Expression	<p><u>Not Implemented</u></p> <p>The Cybercrimes Prevention Law makes provisions for violations to be fined to a maximum of 500,000 Riyals (approx. US\$137,500) and prison sentences ranging from one to 10 years. The law prohibits any online activity that “threatens the safety of the state, its general order, and its local or international peace.” (see paragraph 4.3)</p>

Recommendation	Position	Complete list of themes	Evaluation /comments on the level of implementation
<p>A - 124.54: Ensure that the judicial and law enforcement system is not abused to harass individuals for expressing their political or religious views, including on the Internet (Czech Republic)</p>	Accepted	Freedom of Expression	<p><u>Not Implemented</u></p> <p>Qatari officials have also violated the right to freedom of expression by detaining journalists (see paragraph 4.5):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In May 2016, four BBC journalists were temporarily arrested while traveling to interview migrant workers. - On 5 May 2016, Qatari security forces detained three journalists working for the Danish Broadcasting Corporation. - On both occasions, journalists who were detained had their equipment confiscated and footage deleted. <p>Independent news website Doha News was blocked in December 2016 after the website called for amendment to the 2014 Cybercrime Prevention Law. In July 2016, a Doha News journalist was reportedly detained overnight after a person convicted of a serious crime complained about an article that he claimed had harmed his reputation. (see paragraph 4.6)</p>
Theme: A42 Institutions & policies -General			
<p>N - 124.55: Amend the relevant national legislation, including the Law on Associations and Institutions, to reduce restrictions on procedures for establishing associations (Ireland)</p>	Noted	Freedom of Association	<p><u>Not Implemented</u></p> <p>Qatar’s legislation continues to restrict the establishment of associations, including CSOs, including through Law no. 12 of 2004, which requires (see paragraph 2.3):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approval from the Minister of Social Affairs for registration of associations, - Payment of 1,000 Riyals (approx. US\$275) for registration. <p>Law no. 12 of 2004 also does not permit registrants of associations to be non-Qatari and restricts cooperation between Qatari CSOs and foreign organisations. Associations may not fundraise without permission from the Minister of Social Affairs, who also has the power to dissolve CSOs for what he deems are political activities (see paragraph 2.3)</p>

Recommendation	Position	Complete list of themes	Evaluation /comments on the level of implementation
<p>A - 124.62: Take active steps to reform its labour laws in order to improve working conditions for foreign workers, to give female domestic workers the necessary legal protection and to address the recent ruling by ILO on forced labour and freedom of association and collective bargaining (Norway)</p>	Accepted	Freedom of Association	<p><u>Partially Implemented</u></p> <p>Working conditions for foreign workers have improved, as they no longer require permission from their employers to leave Qatar (see paragraph 2.7)</p> <p>However, under Law No. 1 of 2017, migrant workers are still not permitted to join unions or participate in peaceful strike action (see paragraph 2.5 and 2.7).</p>
<p>N - 124.82: Adopt legal provisions that guarantee migrant workers the right to join trade unions (Spain)</p>	Accepted	Freedom of Association	<p><u>Not implemented</u></p> <p>Law No. 1 of 2017, migrant workers are still not permitted to join unions or participate in peaceful strike action (see paragraph 2.7).</p>
<p>A - 124.45: Strengthen the judicial framework, including due process, freedom of expression and freedom of association (Australia)</p>	Accepted	<p>Freedom of Association</p> <p>Freedom of Expression</p>	<p><u>Not Implemented</u></p> <p>Qatar’s legislation continues to restrict the establishment of associations, including CSOs, including through Law no. 12 of 2004, which requires (see paragraph 2.3):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approval from the Minister of Social Affairs for registration of associations, - Payment of 1,000 Riyals (approx. US\$275) for registration. <p>Law no. 12 of 2004 also does not permit registrants of associations to be non-Qatari and restricts cooperation between Qatari CSOs and foreign organisations. Associations may not fundraise without permission from the Minister of Social Affairs, who also has the power to dissolve CSOs for what he deems are political activities (see paragraph 2.3)</p> <p>Qatar’s legal framework continues to restrict the freedom of expression. Article 134 of the Penal Code continues to criminalise legitimate forms of expression, providing prison sentences up to five years to anyone who publicly criticises the authorities or the Emir. It also includes sentences for those whom the state deems intent on the overthrow of the ruling regime and criticism of the Emir (see paragraph 4.2)</p> <p>The Cybercrimes Prevention Law makes provisions for violations to be fined to a maximum of 500,000 Riyals (approx. US\$137,500) and prison sentences ranging from one to 10 years. The law prohibits any online activity that “threatens the safety of the state, its general order, and its local or international peace.” (see paragraph 4.3)</p>

Recommendation	Position	Complete list of themes	Evaluation /comments on the level of implementation
Theme: D44 Right to peaceful assembly			
<p>N - 124.56: Revise Law No. 18 of 2004 in order to remove restricting conditions for acquiring permission for a public demonstration, and take other steps to guarantee the full enjoyment of the right to freedom of assembly and the right of association (Czech Republic)</p>	Noted	<p>Freedom of peaceful assembly</p> <p>Freedom of association</p>	<p><u>Not Implemented</u></p> <p>The right to peaceful assemble in Qatar is seldom exercised because of the requirements of pre-approval from the Director General of Public Security, and the strict preconditions for assembly. In 2014, migrant workers, originally from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka engaged in a strike, demanding better pay and working conditions. Police responded by arresting over 100 workers, with reports indicating that they were threatened with deportation (see paragraph 5.3)</p> <p>Qatar’s legislation continues to restrict the establishment of associations, including CSOs, including through Law no. 12 of 2004, which requires (see paragraph 2.3):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approval from the Minister of Social Affairs for registration of associations, - Payment of 1,000 Riyals (approx. US\$275) for registration. <p>Law no. 12 of 2004 also does not permit registrants of associations to be non-Qatari and restricts cooperation between Qatari CSOs and foreign organisations. Associations may not fundraise without permission from the Minister of Social Affairs, who also has the power to dissolve CSOs for what he deems are political activities (see paragraph 2.3)</p>