



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

Qatar

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - [2007](#)

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Qatar is a hereditary emirate ruled by the Al-Thani family, headed by Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani. The population is approximately 900,000, of whom approximately 200,000 are citizens. The emir exercises full executive power. The 2005 constitution provides for continued hereditary rule by the emir's male branch of the Al-Thani family. Shari'a (Islamic law) is a main source of legislation, and the emir legislates by issuing a decree, generally after consultation with leading citizens, an arrangement institutionalized in the appointed 35-member Advisory Council (Majlis al-Shura) that assists the emir in formulating policy. On April 1, citizens elected the 29 members of the advisory Central Municipal Council. Monitoring by the government-appointed Qatar National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) and informal observations by diplomatic missions uncovered no apparent irregularities. Political parties are forbidden by law. The civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of the security forces.

Citizens lacked the right to change their government peacefully. There were judicially sanctioned corporal punishments and arbitrary and prolonged detentions in overcrowded and harsh facilities. The government continued to restrict civil liberties, such as freedoms of speech (including the Internet), press, assembly, and association. Some limitations on religious freedom existed. There were also some restrictions on foreign travel, as well as arbitrary deportations, sometimes after detention for several years. Trafficking in persons, primarily in the labor and domestic worker sectors, was a problem. Legal and cultural discrimination against women limited their full participation in society. The unresolved legal status of "Bidoons" (Arabic for "without" meaning "without citizenship;" stateless persons with residency ties) resulted in discrimination against these noncitizens. Worker rights were severely restricted, especially for foreign laborers and domestic servants.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

There were no reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The constitution and the law prohibit such practices. While there were allegations that police investigators regularly abused incarcerated suspects during interrogations to elicit confessions, no cases were investigated during the year. Documentation of abuses was very limited, due partly to hesitancy by alleged victims to make public claims of torture or abuse.

A July 2006 UN Committee Against Torture report called into question the country's overall implementation of its obligations under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, and Degrading Treatment or Punishment, citing the lack of a comprehensive definition of torture in domestic law and the absence of training and education for law enforcement, medical personnel, and public officials about the prohibition.

During December 2006 trial proceedings for illicit relations, an Indian expatriate alleged that authorities intentionally burned his hands and legs with cigarettes during interrogation to result in his confession. The allegation was dismissed because of a lack of medical evidence.

The government administered corporal punishment (lashes) prescribed by its interpretation of Islamic law in cases of alcohol consumption. In one example, on April 18, the court sentenced an Arab expatriate to 40 lashes after he confessed to drunk driving. According to local lawyers, the law against alcohol consumption is not applied fairly, since the law does not prescribe a certain level of alcohol to be present in the blood in order to be charged. Although the law allows stoning and amputation, no cases were pursued. Punishments were not administered publicly.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

According to a 2005 report by the government-funded NHRC, despite efforts at improvement, prison and detention center conditions were deficient in terms of parole, medical release, overcrowding, and food. There were no visits by independent human rights observers. Although notification was often delayed, consular visits to detainees were permitted. Additional requests by diplomatic representatives to visit the Deportation Detention Center (DDC), the Central Prison, the State Security Prison, and police detention centers were not approved. The NHRC conducted at least eight visits to prisons and detention centers during the year but did not request to visit the State Security Prison.

The Capital Police Detention Center (CPDC) held a large number of detainees in cells without beds; mattresses were placed on the floor. Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) citizen detainees were held separately from foreigners and under better conditions. The State Security Prison was used to hold prisoners convicted of security crimes. The conditions in the State Security Prison were generally better than those at the Central Prison. Some men and women awaiting civil or criminal trial as plaintiffs were held with others awaiting deportation at the DDC. Some male and female defendants awaiting trial were held with criminals at the Central Prison because of overcrowding at the CPDC.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention; however, these rights were restricted in practice. Thousands of noncitizens were apprehended and held at the DDC without charges or legal justification awaiting deportation, some for more than three years. Although individuals may be detained at the State Security Prison for indefinite periods under the 2002 Protection of Society Law and 2004 Antiterrorism Law, there were no reported cases during the year. There were an unknown number of reported cases of individuals held for up to 30 days without charges in accordance with the 2003 State Security Law. This law allows an exception to the Criminal Law, by which a person accused of one of the crimes that fall under the jurisdiction of the State Security Department may be held up to 30 days before being referred to the Public Prosecutor's Office.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the state security and internal security forces, police, coast guard, border police, fire department, and immigration authorities. The government has mechanisms to investigate and punish abuse and corruption. While there were allegations that abuse was regularly used by police investigators during interrogations, no cases were investigated during the year, resulting in a climate of impunity.

Arrest and Detention

The law requires that persons be apprehended openly with warrants based on sufficient evidence and issued by a duly authorized official, be charged within 24 hours, and be brought before a court. As exceptions, the law permits detention without charges for up to two years (six month periods which can be extended) and allows detention for up to six months without charges for investigation purposes, extendable indefinitely by a special court order.

In normal cases a judge may order a suspect released, remanded to custody to await trial, held in pretrial detention pending investigation, or released on bail. Judges may also extend pretrial detention for one month at a time to allow authorities to conduct investigations. The accused is entitled to legal representation throughout the process and prompt access to family members in nonsecurity cases. There are provisions for state-funded legal counsel for indigents in criminal cases. Suspects detained in security cases generally were afforded access to counsel, but access to family members was delayed. There were reported cases of incommunicado detention by the government within the State Security Prison.

Law No. 17 of 2002 (Protection of Society) provides for official exemption from the prohibition of arbitrary arrest and detention and the Code of Criminal Procedure. Although detainees may have access to counsel, under this law criminal charges are not filed; therefore, there are no charges to refute. Counsel may only petition the prime minister for reconsideration. Decisions taken under this law may not be appealed in the courts. The law empowers the minister of interior to detain a defendant for crimes related to national security, honor, or impudence upon the recommendation of the Director General of Public Security. Under this statute the detention period can range from two weeks to six months and can be extended up to two years at the discretion of MOI officials. The law normally allows detention for up to six months without charges but also allows for indefinite detention upon order of the court. This provision for indefinite detention has not been used. The prime minister adjudicates complaints against these detentions. There was at least one known case of a citizen who had been arrested in 2006 and detained for more than one year under this statute, but authorities released

this individual during the year.

In May 2006 Amnesty International (AI) alleged that 18 persons had been detained in 2005 under the laws for the "protection of society" (Law No. 17 of 2002) and "combating terrorism" (Law No. 3 of 2004), and authorities released these individuals during the year; all expatriates were deported. Another expatriate previously in custody since 2006 under these conditions was found innocent by the court and subsequently deported.

Amnesty

In accordance with custom on the occasion of the Holy Month of Ramadan, in November the emir granted amnesty to 85 prisoners and 56 prisoners on the annual "International Human Rights Day."

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, although in practice it is not, as all judges held their positions at the discretion of the emir. Nevertheless, there were no reports of political or governmental interference in the courts. Approximately 25 percent of the judges were foreign nationals dependent on residence permits granted by the civil authorities. The emir appoints all judges based on the recommendation of the Supreme Judicial Council.

The law provides for a three-tiered court system: the courts of first instance, appeals, and cassation. The courts of first instance include courts of justice (civil, criminal and commercial) and Shari'a (personal status) courts. The courts of appeals (Appeal Court of Justice and Shari'a Court of Appeal) hear appeals of decisions from the courts of first instance. The Court of Cassation with one chamber for the appeals of Shari'a cases and one for appeals from the Court of Justice hears cases from the appeals court that may have been contradictory to established law or where the law may have been mistakenly interpreted. The Court of Cassation is the court of final appeal.

New laws during the year established administrative and constitutional courts. The Constitutional Court was established within the Court of Cassation to rule on disputes related to the constitutionality of laws and rules and jurisdiction of lower courts.

An administrative court of at least one circuit was established within each of the three tiers (first instance, appeal, and cassation). Each circuit consists of three judges and is the sole party concerned with settling administrative disputes within government entities.

There are no provisions in the law for the establishment of security tribunals. The established court system would handle such cases. The constitution provides for the establishment of military tribunals, but their use is restricted except under martial law, and only military crimes committed by the armed forces and the security forces may come before such tribunals.

There are provisions for nonjudicial proceedings for administrative discipline of military and security personnel. No such proceedings were reported during the year.

Trial Procedures

The law provides for the right to a fair trial for all citizens, and the judiciary generally enforced this right. Shari'a, however, does not accord women equal status in judicial proceedings.

Both Muslim and non-Muslim litigants are tried under the unified court system. Shari'a, civil, and criminal law courts are all united under the Supreme Judicial Council, which regulates the judiciary. Trials are by jury and open to the public, but the presiding judge can close the courtroom to the public if the case is deemed sensitive. Beginning in October the president of the Supreme Judicial Council issued a decision to ban journalists and other media from reporting on court sessions. Although not previously enforced, the president cited Article 187 of Law 23 of 2004 as the basis of the ban.

Lawyers prepare litigants and speak for them during the hearing. Non-Arabic speakers are provided with interpreters. Defendants are entitled to legal representation throughout the trial and pretrial process. There are provisions for state-funded legal counsel for indigents in criminal cases. In matters involving religious issues, Shi'a and Sunni judges may apply their interpretations for their respective group. There was an adequate number of both Shi'a and Sunni judges.

Criminal cases normally are tried within five to seven months after suspects were detained. Although infrequently used in practice, suspects are entitled to bail, except in cases of violent crimes. Foreigners charged with minor crimes can be released to their citizen sponsor, although they are prohibited from departing the country until the case is resolved. Defendants have the right to be present and the right of appeal. Their attorneys have access to government-held evidence relevant to their cases, once the case has been filed in the court. Defendants may consult with an attorney in a timely

manner.

Defendants have the right to confront and question witnesses against them and present witnesses and evidence on their behalf. Defendants are presumed innocent. In practice, however, those charged with a crime continue to carry the burden of the charge against them by state security forces before, during, and after trial, even if found innocent. In either case, for noncitizens, deportation normally follows. Citizens are forbidden from continued service in or acquisition of sensitive positions, even if they have been found innocent.

The law pertaining to civil cases restricts the right to appeal, since the appellant must deposit with the court \$5,495 (20,000 riyals) for the appeal if the case has been decided by the court of appeal and \$1,374 (5,000 riyals) for the appeal if the case has been decided by the court of first instance. An additional \$1,374 (5,000 riyals) must be paid to the court in each case to proceed. Sums may be seized, in whole or in part, should the competent court decide to reject the right of appeal. The law extends these rights to all residents.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

Of the 37 individuals convicted in the 1996 planned counter-coup, 19 received sentences of death and 18 were sentenced to life in prison. Of the 37, 29 remained in prison at year's end. Eight of the individuals have been released upon order of the emir, including a member of the ruling family that had been sentenced to death. It is believed the others were released for health reasons.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

The law and judiciary generally permit persons with civil grievances to seek redress in the court system, although the judiciary is not impartial and independent in practice. There are civil and criminal remedies available for those seeking damages for, or cessation of, human rights violations, but no cases were reported during the year. In 2006 a laborer brought a lawsuit against his sponsor for suppression of the right of freedom of movement. The resolution of the case was unknown at year's end.

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The constitution and the Criminal Procedures Code prohibit such actions, and the government generally respected these prohibitions in practice. Traditional attitudes of respect for the sanctity of the home and the privacy of women provided protection against arbitrary intrusion for both citizens and noncitizens. Judicial authorities must grant warrants before police may search a residence or business, except in cases involving national security or emergencies, of which there were none reported during the year. Police and security forces were believed to monitor telephone calls and e-mails.

Citizens must obtain government permission to marry foreigners and may apply for residence permits or citizenship for their spouses. Such permission generally was granted, but there were more restrictions on female than male citizens. Under the law marriage to a female citizen does not entitle the husband to citizenship.

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press in accordance with the law, and the government limited these rights in practice. Journalists and publishers continued to self-censor due to political and economic pressures when reporting on government policies, material deemed hostile to Islam, the ruling family, and relations with neighboring states. There were reports that security authorities threatened both individuals and organizations against publishing certain articles. According to a regional human rights organization, interference of media owners in the content of media material was prevalent.

The 1979 Press and Publications Law provides for criminal penalties and jail sentences for libel and slander, including injury to dignity, as well as for closure and confiscation of assets of the publication. All cases involving the media fall under the jurisdiction of the criminal courts. According to Freedom House's Freedom of the Press report for 2007, one noncitizen journalist was sentenced to one year in prison for slandering a Qatari citizen under this law.

Citizens avoided discussing publicly sensitive political and religious issues. The much larger foreign population did not express itself on sensitive topics. The government did not prosecute anyone for expression of views. During the year the government-supported Qatar Foundation continued to fund the "Doha Debates," a series of public debates among noncitizens on internationally controversial topics broadcast by the BBC.

While the seven daily newspapers are not state-owned, owners are members of the ruling family or have close ties to

government officials. Foreign newspapers and magazines were reviewed and censored for objectionable sexual, religious, and political content.

During the year several Qatari writers whose work appeared in regional and international media outside of Qatar reported that their work was deliberately banned from appearing in the local press. In some cases all of the work from the author was banned; in other cases specific articles deemed to be critical of the government were banned.

The censorship office in the Qatar Radio and Television Corporation and customs officials censored material. There were no specific reports of political censorship of foreign broadcast news media or foreign programs, although foreign movies were censored.

State-owned television and radio reflected government views. However, callers to a popular morning show on the state-owned radio station frequently discussed topics such as government inefficiency and the lack of responsiveness to citizens' needs.

Doha-based Arabic language Al-Jazeera Satellite Channel focused on coverage and commentary on international news topics. Al-Jazeera and the government claimed that the channel was independent and free of government influence, but it was government-subsidized and avoided criticizing government policies. Al-Jazeera covered local news when there was an international component.

In November 2006 the Doha-based Al-Jazeera English channel began broadcasting. Al-Jazeera English covered in-depth some government policies, particularly labor practices. In August the channel aired an investigative documentary entitled, "Blood, Sweat, and Tears," which highlighted forced labor practices in the Gulf, with several references to Qatar. The documentary was also shown on the Al-Jazeera Arabic channel.

Internet Freedom

The government restricted the peaceful expression of views via the Internet and censored the Internet for political, religious, and pornographic content through a proxy server, which monitored and blocked Web sites, e-mail, and chat rooms through the state-owned Internet service provider (ISP). For example, the *Arab Times*, an Arab-American online newspaper, which at times published articles critical of the government, was not available to users in the country. Other sites such as beingboing.net, a technology and fashion site, were also blocked. A user who believed that a site was censored mistakenly could submit the web address to have the site reviewed for suitability. In some cases the ISP responded by unblocking the site after an internal investigation. Statistics on such instances, however, were not available.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

Academic freedom was exercised and cultural activities took place with restrictions in accordance with the general legal framework. Instructors at Qatar University noted that they often exercised self-censorship.

There were no reported government restrictions on cultural events.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

Freedom of Assembly

The law provides for, but regulates, freedom of assembly by requiring a permit for public gatherings. A number of restrictions and conditions must be met in order to acquire a permit, for example, the permission of the director general of public security, whose decision is not subject to appeal. In practice the government generally does not allow political demonstrations. The government permitted one during the year: In March there was a peaceful demonstration arranged by the Central Municipal Council to show support for Iraqi unity.

Freedom of Association

The law provides the right to form private societies and professional associations, but the government severely limited this right in practice. The law forbids formation of and membership in political parties. The law allows noncitizens to participate in private societies only in cases where their participation is deemed necessary to the work of the society. However, the prime minister must approve their participation, and their number cannot exceed 20 percent of the total membership. The law also imposes strict conditions on the establishment, management, and function of societies and associations. They are prohibited from engaging in political matters and must get approval from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, which can deny their establishment if deemed a threat to the public interest. In the case of professional societies, they must pay \$13,736 (50,000 riyals) in licensing fees and \$2,747 (10,000 riyals) in annual fees. There is a requirement for frequent re-registration. Permits are valid for only a three-year period, after which they must renew their license and again pay the

same fees.

A single application form not applicable to all potential organizations restricts registration. Since this law was enacted in 2004, 15 associations have been approved, and an additional 24 were under consideration at year's end. During the year the ministry approved one request for a nongovernmental human rights organization designed to support persons with disabilities. Applications first submitted in 2005 (applications must be resubmitted yearly) to establish a Journalists Association and a Teachers Association were pending at year's end.

A 2006 law regarding the establishment of "private establishments having public interest" may allow for relaxed requirements for the formation of independent local and international NGOs in the country. Although virtually untested, as written the law allows the registration of independent NGOs without the administrative hurdles and monetary requirements of the previously enacted law governing the formation of associations.

Informal organizations, such as community support groups and activity clubs, operate without registration; however, they may not engage in activities that could be deemed "political."

The regulations prohibit international affiliation of associations.

c. Freedom of Religion

The constitution provides for freedom of worship and forbids discrimination based on religion in accordance with the law and the requirements of protecting the public order and morality; however, the government continued to prohibit proselytizing of Muslims by non-Muslims and placed some restrictions on public worship. Among non-Muslims, only Christians have requested and been allowed to rent space for public worship. Adherents of other faiths, however, may privately practice their religion without harassment.

The state religion is Islam. Both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims practiced Islam freely. Shi'a Muslims (approximately 10 percent of the citizen population) organized traditional Shi'a ceremonies and performed rites in their own mosques because they chose not to perform them publicly. Shi'a Muslims were permitted to build and decorate Shi'a mosques without restrictions.

The government and the ruling family are linked inextricably to Islamic institutions and practices. The Ministry of Islamic Affairs administers the construction of mosques, clerical affairs, and Islamic education for adults and new converts. The Ministry of Education administers Islamic education in the public schools. The emir participated in public prayers during both Eid holiday periods and personally financed the Hajj journeys of poor pilgrims.

Between May 7 and 9, the fifth Conference for Religious Dialogue took place in Doha. Representatives from the three largest monotheistic religions—Christianity, Islam, and Judaism—were invited. Invitations were extended to the Roman Catholic Church, Anglican Church, Coptic Church, Middle East Churches Council, Orthodox Church, the Vatican, and Jewish rabbis, among others. Rabbis from the United States and other countries attended and participated.

There was no prohibition of or action to discourage specific religions or religious factions. Hindus, Buddhists, Baha'is, and members of other religious groups do not operate as freely as Christian congregations; however, they did not seek official recognition from the government during the year.

The government gave legal status to Catholic, Anglican, Eastern Orthodox, Coptic, and many Indian Christian churches; other religious congregations may request recognition, but none are known to have done so. The government allowed recognized congregations to open bank accounts and sponsor clergy for visas. Construction continued on six Christian churches on a large tract of property leased from the government. No new requests have been reported.

Religious services were held without prior authorization from the government; however, congregations have been asked not to advertise them in advance or use visible religious symbols such as outdoor crosses.

Converting to another religion from Islam is considered apostasy and is technically a capital offense; however, since the country gained independence in 1971, there has been no recorded execution or other punishment for such an act.

Shi'a Muslims were well represented in the government and business communities. There are no political parties in Qatar.

According to the Criminal Code, individuals caught proselytizing on behalf of an organization, society, or foundation, for any religion other than Islam, may be sentenced to a prison term of up to 10 years. Proselytizing on behalf of an individual for any religion other than Islam can result in a sentence of up to five years. Individuals who possess written or recorded materials or items that support or promote missionary activity can be imprisoned for up to two years.

While disclosure of religious affiliation is required when applying for a passport or other identity documents, affiliation is not

reflected in the issued documents.

Islamic instruction was compulsory in public schools. While there were no restrictions on non-Muslims providing private religious instruction for children, most foreign children attended secular private schools. There were no religious private schools.

The government regulated the publication, importation, and distribution of non-Islamic religious literature. Individuals were allowed to import Bibles and other religious items for personal or congregational use. Government officials only monitored Islamic religious literature and copies of the Koran. Religious materials for use at Christmas and Easter were readily available in local shops. Bibles were not publicly available in local bookstores, either in Arabic or English.

Societal Abuses and Discrimination

There was no indigenous Jewish community; the few Jews in the country were expatriates with no restrictions on their traveling to or working in the country. On occasion in response to political events and developments in the region, some of the country's privately owned Arabic-language newspapers carried cartoons depicting offensive caricatures of Jews and Jewish symbols and editorial comparisons of Israeli leaders and Israel to Hitler and the Nazis. These occurred primarily in the daily newspapers, *Al-Watan*, *Al-Sharq*, *Al-Arab*, and *Al-Raya*, and drew no government response. The government does not officially collect or publish statistical data on the religious affiliation of the population.

For a more detailed discussion, see the [2007 International Religious Freedom Report](#).

d. Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons

The constitution provides for these rights, and the government generally respected them in practice, with notable exceptions. There were no restrictions on internal travel, except around sensitive military and oil and industrial installations. Under a 2003 law for Protection of State Security, the government prevented some citizens from foreign travel. In general, women under the age of 30 required permission from male guardians to travel, whereas women over age 30 did not require permission to travel. Men may prevent females and children under their guardianship from leaving the country by providing their names to immigration officers at ports of departure, but no such cases were reported during the year. The government did not allow noncitizen custodial parents to take their children out of the country without the permission of the citizen parent. Citizens critical of the government faced restrictions on their right to travel abroad, but there were no specific cases reported during the year.

The constitution prohibits internal and external forced exile of citizens, and the government respected this prohibition in practice.

In February 2006 the emir issued orders to begin to reinstate citizenship for as many as 6,000 persons from the Al-Murrah tribe whose citizenship the government revoked between October 2004 and June 2005. Each case was reviewed separately, and by year's end citizenship was restored to all but approximately 150-200 of those who had lost it.

The constitution provides that citizens who have left the country have the right to return. Foreign women who were married to citizens were granted residence permits and could apply for citizenship; however, they were required to relinquish their foreign citizenship.

Freedom of movement for expatriate workers was severely restricted. Citizen employment sponsors frequently confiscated the passports of their expatriate workers. In addition, expatriate workers could not travel outside of the country without their sponsor's permission and an exit visa.

Protection of Refugees

The constitution prohibits the extradition of political refugees; however, Qatar is not a party to the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 protocol, and the government has not established a system for providing protection or status to refugees. Those attempting to enter the country illegally, including persons seeking asylum from nearby countries, were refused entry. Individuals who were able to obtain local sponsorship or employment were allowed to enter and could remain as long as they were sponsored. They were not, however, granted asylum status. Entries were generally based on political or friendship ties.

The government generally provided protection against refoulement, the return of persons to a country where there is reason to believe they feared persecution. In May the government cancelled deportation orders for at least one Qatari-born resident of Somali origins to Somalia in a case that possibly would have constituted attempted refoulement.

There were no reports that the government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to assist refugees and asylum seekers in the country. On April 2, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees visited the country to discuss cooperation. In late October the UNHCR regional representative and director of international relations visited the country to offer training in rescue and relief works for disaster-hit areas.

Stateless Persons

Although the UNHCR has not released exact numbers, there are between approximately 1,200 and 1,500 stateless Bidoons in the country. The government provides a legal means for long-term residents to apply for and acquire citizenship; however, in practice restrictions and uneven application of the law prevent stateless persons from acquiring citizenship.

Citizenship is derived "jus sanguinis" solely from the father. Women are not permitted to transmit citizenship to their children, even if the child is born in wedlock in the country. As with expatriate residents, stateless persons faced discrimination in employment, education, housing, health services, marriage and birth registration, access to courts/judicial proceedings, and owning land and property.

The 2005 nationality law allows noncitizen residents to apply for citizenship after residing in the country 25 consecutive years, but only 50 may be granted per year, and only a small number have been granted under this provision. There were reports of summary deportation orders issued against long-term residents and Bidoons, although all family and economic ties remained in the country.

Section 3 Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

The constitution does not provide citizens the right to change their government peacefully. The constitution provides for hereditary rule by the emir's branch of the Al-Thani family. The constitutional provision for legislative authority vested in an advisory council with 30 elected members and 15 members appointed by the emir has not yet been implemented. The influence of Bedouin tribal traditions was still strong, and the government did not permit political parties or opposition groups to organize.

Elections and Political Participation

The emir exercises most executive powers, including appointment of cabinet members. On April 1, citizens elected the 29 members of the third Central Municipal Council for four-year terms. Informal monitoring by diplomatic missions uncovered no apparent irregularities. Nearly 50 percent of eligible voters participated. The council addresses local issues such as street repair, green space, trash collection, and public works projects. Its role is to advise the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Agriculture. The council does not have the authority to change government policy.

Influence of traditional attitudes and roles continued to limit women's participation in politics; however, some women served in public office as: minister for education; president of the Permanent Election Committee; head of the General Authority for Health, vice president of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs (SCFA) with ministerial rank, head of the General Authority for Museums, and president of Qatar University. Also, one woman was reelected to and served on the Central Municipal Council.

Approximately 75 percent of total residents could not participate in elections or hold public office, as these rights are limited to families that were in the country prior to 1930. The total electorate is believed to be less than 50,000. Limits on political participation also exist for persons whose citizenship was withdrawn but subsequently restored. According to Law 38 of 2005, they are denied the right to candidacy or nomination in any legislative body for a period of 10 years from the date of restoration of their citizenship.

Government Corruption and Transparency

The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, and no specific cases of corruption were reported during the year. Public officials were not subject to financial disclosure laws.

On December 4, emiri decision No. 84 established the National Committee for Accountability and Transparency. The committee is charged with implementing articles of the UN Convention for Combating Corruption, developing a national strategy to support transparency, implementing an awareness campaign, investigating complaints from the public, managing the state's properties, suggesting related legislation, and training staff.

The law does not provide public access to government information, and little was readily available, particularly financial data. The government publishes its laws in the official gazette; however, it did not facilitate access to certain economic statistics, judicial decisions, or draft legislation being analyzed or considered by the government or advisory council. The Ministry of Economy and Commerce and the Central Bank provided published materials on laws and procedures for the

public, but these efforts were not consistent throughout the government. Although there is a mechanism for individuals and private institutions to request this information from the ministries and the planning council, information regarding the budget, government expenditures, and draft laws was generally not available.

Section 4 Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

No international or domestic NGO or international organizations focusing on human rights or humanitarian issues were resident in the country, with the exception of UNESCO. During the year representatives from the Solidarity Center, the National Democratic Institute, the American Bar Association, UNHCR, and the Amman Center for Human Rights visited the country for short periods.

On May 28, the secretary general of AI participated in a "Doha Debate" on torture in the country. During the visit, the secretary general publicly noted that the issue of statelessness related to the Al-Murrah tribe is a key human rights problem. She credited the country with the establishment of the NHRC but noted that it must be strong and independent to be effective.

The law provides for the right to form private independent societies and associations, including NGOs; however, since the law was enacted in 2004, the government approved only one application for establishment of a nongovernmental human rights organization supporting persons with disabilities. By law, domestic associations or NGOs may not engage in political activity or be critical of the government. Unlike in the previous year, there were no known attempts to register a foreign NGO in the country. A foreign NGO attempted to register between 2005 and 2006, but it was hampered by government red tape and lack of sponsor.

The NHRC is an organization funded by the government. An emiri decree established the NHRC in 2002 to investigate and improve local human rights conditions. Its 12 members are all appointed by the government, five from government ministries and seven from civil society. Since May 2006 votes by government members do not count, but they continue to participate in NHRC deliberations. In May 2006 the committee released a report highlighting numerous human rights violations identified during 2005. The report was published in all local newspapers and made available on their Web site. Although the report was intended to be published annually, no further public reports have been issued. During the year the NHRC visited prisons and detention centers at least eight times to investigate conditions and issued quarterly recommendations to the MOI and the ministerial council. These reports were not made available to the public.

Section 5 Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on nationality, race, language, religion, and disability. However, in practice government actions were heavily influenced by local custom and legal, cultural, and institutional discrimination existed based on gender. There were no reports of discrimination based on religious affiliation. Noncitizens were afforded fewer rights under the law. Although there were no reports of discrimination based on sexual orientation, sodomy is a criminal offense.

Women

According to the Qatar Foundation for Women and Children Protection, a quasi-governmental local organization, domestic violence against women was a problem. A total of 107 cases of domestic abuse against women were reported to the foundation during the year, including 82 reports of physical abuse, two of sexual abuse, and four of psychological abuse. According to the organization, the increase was due to increased awareness among the community, the requirement that all health care facilities report suspected abuse cases, and the use of the established hot line system. There were no arrests or convictions for family domestic violence among citizens publicized in the press, although cases involving noncitizens appeared. The law criminalizes domestic violence and rape but does not address spousal rape. There were cases of rape publicized between expatriates, but none were reported involving citizens.

In late September the SCFA established a shelter under the supervision of the Qatar Foundation for Women and Children Protection to accommodate abused women and children. Since its opening, the shelter has accommodated two women and one child. The shelter provided psychological counseling in one case and legal counseling in two other cases that were brought before the court.

Many foreign domestic servants were sexually harassed and mistreated. Most domestic servants did not press charges for fear of losing their jobs.

The legal system allows leniency for a man found guilty of committing a "crime of honor," or a violent assault against a woman for perceived immodesty or deviant behavior. Although not deemed an honor killing by the court, on January 14, the Court of Appeals commuted the three-year imprisonment sentence awarded to a Jordanian teenager to "one suspended year" for killing his sister as the court stated that there was no overwhelming evidence to prove that it was a

case of premeditated murder. The lower court observed that it could not be termed a case of honor killing as the postmortem report proved the victim was a virgin.

Prostitution is illegal and was considered a problem by the government. Government officials reported an increasing number of cases involving prostitution.

Sexual harassment is also illegal and carries penalties of imprisonment and/or fines. There was no new information regarding prosecutions at year's end.

Traditions and the interpretation of Shari'a restricted activities of women. The government adhered to an interpretation of Shari'a that recognizes that Muslims have the automatic right to inherit from their Muslim spouses. Non-Muslim spouses (invariably wives, since Muslim women cannot legally marry non-Muslims) do not inherit unless their spouse formally wills them a portion (up to one-third of the total) of their estates. Similarly a Muslim husband does not automatically inherit the property of a non-Muslim wife. Muslim wives have the right to inherit from their husbands. The proportion that women inherit depends upon their relationship to the deceased; however, in the cases of siblings, sisters inherit only one-half as much as their brothers.

In cases of divorce, young children usually remain with the mother, regardless of her religion, unless she is found to be unfit. According to the 2006 Family Status Law, in the case of divorce, the age of children who remain in the custody of the mother has been raised to 13 years for males and to 15 years for females. In certain conditions the court may extend the age of maternal custody to 15 years for males and to the time of marriage for females. As an exception, the mother retains custody of children with disabilities with no age limit stipulated.

According to a new law on government housing passed during the year, a citizen woman married to a noncitizen man residing in the country the previous last five years may benefit from the government housing system. Widows and divorced women may also benefit from the law if they have children and have not inherited a house from a deceased husband. Unmarried males or females can benefit from this law if he or she supports parents, brothers, and sisters or is above 35 years old. In practice this law appeared to be applied fairly.

Women may attend judicial court proceedings and may represent themselves, but they were generally represented by a male relative. The testimony of two women equals that of one man, but the courts routinely interpreted this requirement on a case-by-case basis. A non-Muslim woman is not required to convert to Islam upon marriage to a Muslim, but many make a personal decision to do so. Children born to a Muslim father are considered to be Muslim.

According to the latest official survey from 2004, women made up 3.6 percent of the overall workforce and 30.6 percent of the citizen workforce, serving as university professors, public school teachers, and police. Women served as professionals in government service, education, health, and private business. Women received equal pay for equal work, but often did not receive equal allowances, which generally covered transportation and housing costs.

Although women above age 30 were legally able to travel abroad alone, tradition and social pressures caused most women to travel with male escorts. According to hotel proprietors, government policy prevented women from booking local hotel rooms.

The SCFA, a government department, seeks to improve the status of women and the family under both civil and Islamic law. The council contributed to a number of national and international conferences, studies, and reports on the status of women in the country. The council played an integral role in the drafting of legislation affecting women and children. On November 25 and 26, the SCFA held a workshop on combating violence against women, a subject once considered taboo in the country. The discussion focused on the first-ever study of "Violence against Women in Qatari Society."

Children

The government is committed to the welfare of citizen children. The government provided for a well-funded, free public education system (elementary through university) and a complete medical protection program. Education was compulsory for citizen children through the age of 15 and was free through primary school (the equivalent of ninth grade) for all citizen children and for noncitizen children whose parents worked in the government sector. There was generally no difference in attendance of girls and boys at the primary, secondary, and post-secondary levels.

Medical coverage for noncitizen children was limited. The lack of primary educational and medical services to noncitizen children caused hardship for a substantial part of the expatriate population living in the country. Health care services were provided equally for citizen girls and boys.

There was no societal pattern of child labor or abuse of children. There were isolated cases of children used by their families or by organized groups for begging, especially during religious occasions. There were also some cases of children who had suffered from various forms of family violence and physical and sexual abuse. The Qatar Foundation for the

Protection of Women and Children reported that 29 cases involving abuse of children were reported to the organization (14 boys and 15 girls) during the year. Among those, there were 15 cases of physical abuse, eight of psychological abuse, and four of sexual abuse.

The Qatar Foundation for the Protection of Women and Children maintained a children's hot line called the "Friendly Line" for use by children and conducted awareness campaigns on the rights of the child. The system allowed both citizen and noncitizen children to call with questions and concerns ranging from school, health, and psychological problems to concerns about sexual harassment. This hot line was operated in conjunction with the family abuse hot line; statistics on use were not available.

Trafficking in Persons

There is no specific antitrafficking law. In addition, provisions of the Sponsorship Law create conditions that could lead to forced labor activities and slave-like conditions. Although the law criminalizes slavery, forced labor, and forced prostitution, prosecutions have not occurred.

On April 25, the UN Special Rapporteur (UNSR) on Trafficking in Persons noted that Qatar is a country of destination and, in some instances, of transit for trafficking of migrant workers, mainly for forced labor, including on camel farms and for sexual exploitation. The UNSR criticized the sponsorship system as an unjust arrangement that increases the vulnerability of foreign migrant workers by rendering them dependent on their sponsors and therefore fosters demand for trafficking. The UNSR also raised concern that the labor law excludes foreign domestic workers from protection and in practice places them in a situation whereby their working conditions are regulated as private matters.

Qatar is a destination for men and women trafficked for the purposes of forced labor and, to a lesser extent, commercial sexual exploitation. Men and women from Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East travel willingly to Qatar as laborers and domestic servants but often subsequently face conditions of forced labor and physical and sexual exploitation. There are reports that Nepalese and Indians recruited for work in the country as domestic servants were then coerced or forced into farm labor in Saudi Arabia.

The country was a destination for some women and girls who traveled to the country voluntarily to work in hotels, cafes, and restaurants but were forced into prostitution. Most often, victims were not prosecuted for prostitution; the women were issued a deportation order and sent to the DDC. Women and girls also traveled to the country to work as domestic servants, where they were vulnerable to domestic servitude and physical and sexual exploitation and unprotected by labor legislation. The Indian Embassy reported that 236 maids had been forced into these conditions.

Legislation guiding the sponsorship of expatriate laborers created conditions constituting forced labor or slavery. Under the law expatriate laborers were not allowed to leave the country without a signed exit permit or change employment without a written release from their sponsor. The dependence of foreign laborers on their employer for residency rights and the inability to change employment or to travel without the sponsor's permission leaves them vulnerable to abuse and arrest. Some sponsors intimidated and coerced foreign employees to work for longer periods, reduced or withheld pay, and commonly withheld passports and failed to obtain or renew residence permits.

Workers without valid residence permits were arrested and detained at the DDC. There were a total of between 1,100 and 1,500 detainees awaiting deportation at the DDC at all times.

Principal traffickers include individual employers, contractors, and employment recruitment agencies. Most victims travel legally into the country by means of recruiting agencies in their home countries, but then subsequently face conditions of forced labor and trafficking after they reach the country. Some workers are recruited for jobs in the country but then abandoned by their recruiters upon arrival in the country or by employers after the work is completed, making them even more vulnerable to trafficking.

Violators of the law banning child camel jockeys may receive six months' imprisonment or a fine of approximately \$825 (3,000 riyals). In cases involving the employment of minors, the punishment is three years imprisonment or a fine of approximately \$2,700 (10,000 riyals). There were no reported cases, and there have been no prosecutions under this law.

Traffickers can be prosecuted under slavery or forced labor articles of the Criminal Law of 2004, which bans forced or coerced labor with penalties of up to seven years and a fine of no more than \$2,750 (10,000 riyals). The criminal law also addresses crimes that violate human liberty and sanctity (kidnapping) with penalties of imprisonment not more than ten years.

The Money Laundering Law specifically defines as a money laundering crime the handling of money related to trafficking of women and children. Although the 2005 Labor Law expands some worker rights, it does not extend to domestic workers.

No antitrafficking or related cases against employers or labor recruitment agencies were prosecuted during the year, and there was no indication that the government assisted with international investigations or extradited citizens who were accused of trafficking in other countries.

While there is no evidence of institutional involvement by government bodies or officials, some may own or operate companies that subject their employees to forced labor conditions.

The country's antitrafficking prevention efforts continued during the year. A government committee conducted visits to camel racing tracks to ensure compliance with the government's ban on the use of child camel jockeys. The police services continued to incorporate antitrafficking training into the basic training curriculum for police officers. A media campaign highlighted sponsors' responsibilities and resources available to victims. During the year a number of seminars and conferences were held highlighting the migrant worker problem in Qatar and the greater GCC.

In 2005 a human rights department was established in the MOI to receive and process victims of human rights abuses and trafficking in persons. The department did not report any cases during the year.

In 2005 the government opened a shelter for trafficking victims to serve the needs of abused domestic workers, other laborers and children. The shelter was under the management of the National Trafficking in Persons Coordinator, and referral by police or other government agencies for access was no longer required. According to government policy, any person facing criminal or immigration violations, i.e. absconding, cannot be considered a victim by the shelter and will not receive assistance. This policy severely limits the effectiveness of the shelter.

Although the government has identified various agencies to implement antitrafficking reforms, it did not systematically monitor its antitrafficking efforts.

Persons with Disabilities

The law requires the allocation of resources for persons with disabilities and prohibits discrimination against such persons. The government acts on complaints from individuals and from the NHRC and enforces compliance. The law requires that 2 percent of all jobs in government agencies and public institutions be set aside for persons with disabilities. Private sector businesses employing a minimum of 25 persons were required to hire persons with disabilities. Employees who violated these employment provisions were subject to fines. There were no reported cases during the year.

Sheikha Hissa bint Khalifa bin Ahmed Al-Thani, the Special Rapporteur of the UN Commission for Social Development on Disability and a Qatari citizen, noted October 20 that government schools in Qatar are providing only 21 percent of the required services for their students with disabilities, while the private and Independent Schools in general provide 68 percent of the required services, according to a recent survey. Sheikha Hissa also noted that there are only three public places in Qatar with the required standards of accessibility for persons with disabilities, and new buildings are not taking this aspect into consideration.

According to the NHRC, some violations with regard to persons with disabilities occurred in the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Agriculture in 2005, in which a number of employees were transferred from their jobs because they were categorized as persons with disabilities. Although authorities concerned were notified, no action was taken. The SCFA was charged with ensuring compliance with the rights and provisions mandated under the law; however, compliance was not effectively enforced.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

The government discriminated based on nationality in the areas of employment, education, housing, and health services. Noncitizens did not receive the same benefits as citizens. They were required to pay for residence permits, health care, electricity, water, and education (services that were provided without charge to citizens). Noncitizens generally could not own property; however, the law provided for property ownership in three designated areas. The largest noncitizen groups were Indian, Nepalese, Sri Lankan, expatriate Arabs, Filipino, Bangladeshi, Iranian, Pakistani, and Indonesian. In the private sector, Iranians occupied some of the highest positions.

Although born, raised and schooled in the country, noncitizen residents and Bidoons are afforded no more rights under the law than temporary migrant laborers. They were discriminated against in medical care, education, employment, and mobility.

Other Societal Abuses and Discrimination

The law prohibits same-sex relations between both males and females. Penalties for adults range from a maximum of seven to 15 years imprisonment. There were at least three cases before the court during the year. The verdict in the 2006 case involving a Qatari male and an Asian expatriate male remained unknown at year's end.

There was discrimination reported against HIV patients if they were citizens or were in the country for at least five years with a legal residence permit. They were usually reported to the Preventive Health Department to maintain statistical records about the extent of contagious diseases in the country and to receive treatment. HIV-positive foreigners were deported to their home country, while HIV-positive citizens were quarantined and received treatment. According to the Qatar National Health Authority on December 1, a total of 228 HIV/AIDS cases have been detected in the country. More than half the number of patients are citizens and in the age group of 18 to 35. There are approximately 10 cases reported per year.

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

The labor law and regulations provide for the right of workers' associations for citizens over 18 years of age in private enterprises with more than 100 citizen workers. In practice the law makes union formation difficult. Noncitizens were not eligible to form worker committees, and foreign workers can only be members of joint labor-management committees. Those working in the government sector are prohibited from joining a union. The law and regulations permit only the single General Union for the Workers of Qatar (composed of various General Committees for the Workers in a trade or industry, which are in turn made up of worker committees at individual firms) and forbid affiliation with groups outside the country. There were no worker committees, joint labor-management committees, general committees, or a national trade union.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

No labor unions existed during the year. Under the labor law, workers are granted the right to bargain collectively and to sign joint agreements, i.e. agreements reached between employer and worker regarding a work-related issue. The right was circumscribed by the government's control over the rules and procedures of the bargaining and agreement processes. Collective bargaining was not freely practiced, and there were no workers under collective bargaining contracts. The law also grants workers the right to strike, but the restrictive conditions imposed by the statute make the likelihood of a legal strike extremely remote. Nevertheless, foreign workers staged at least ten strikes during the year to seek redress and improvement in their work situation from employers. In most cases, strike organizers were summarily deported.

Government employees, domestic servants, and those in the public utility, health, and security services are prohibited from striking. They may legally seek permission to hold a public gathering; however, none are known to have occurred. Private employers set wages unilaterally without government involvement. Local courts handled disputes between workers and employers; however, foreign workers avoided drawing attention to problems with their employers for fear of retaliation and deportation. According to resident embassies of expatriate workers and some individual migrant workers, the labor department was widely perceived to be objective within its narrow mandate when dealing with the nonpayment of wages. The labor department claimed that it resolved 80 percent of worker complaints amicably with a very small percentage referred to the labor courts for judgment.

In 2006 the government established a secretariat for labor relations charged with enforcing laws relating to collective bargaining and overseeing labor relations. During the year the labor inspection section increased its staff to at least 50 and trained inspectors, who were provided with the power of law enforcement.

There were no export processing zones.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits forced or compulsory labor, including by children; however, there were reports that such practices occurred, and the government did not enforce the law. Foreign workers in many cases were employed under circumstances that constituted forced labor. According to government figures, more than 85 percent of the workforce was comprised of foreign workers who, entirely dependent on their employer for residency rights, were vulnerable to abuse. For example, employers must give consent before exit permits are issued to any foreign employee seeking to leave the country. Some employers temporarily withheld this consent to force foreign employees to work for longer periods than they wished. Unskilled workers and domestic servants were particularly vulnerable to nonpayment or late payment of wages. During the year compulsory labor by children occurred.

d. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The law prohibits forced and compulsory labor by children, and the government generally enforced this prohibition with respect to citizen children; however, some child labor occurred. The labor law stipulates the minimum age for employment as 16 years. The labor law provides that minors between the ages of 16 and 18 can be employed with parent or guardian permission, and some children worked in small, family-owned businesses such as small markets or as office clerks. Minors may not work more than six hours a day or more than 36 hours a week. Employers must provide the labor department with the names and occupations of their minor employees and obtain permission from the Ministry of Education to hire a minor.

The labor department may prohibit the employment of minors in jobs that are judged dangerous to the health, safety, or morals of minors.

Violators of the law banning child camel jockeys may receive six months' imprisonment or a fine of approximately \$825 (3,000 riyals). In cases involving the employment of minors, the punishment is three years imprisonment or a fine of approximately \$2,700 (10,000 riyals). There have been no cases investigated or prosecuted under this law.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

Although the labor law provides the emir with authority to set a minimum wage, he did not do so. The average wage of noncitizen workers did not provide a decent standard of living for a worker and family. The law prescribes a 48-hour workweek with a 24-hour rest period, although most government offices followed a 36-hour workweek. Employees who worked more than 48 hours per week or 36 hours per week during the holy month of Ramadan were entitled to overtime pay. Government offices and major private sector companies adhered to this law; however, it was often not observed with respect to unskilled laborers and domestic and personal employees, the majority of who were foreigners. Many such workers frequently worked seven days per week, and more than 12 hours per day with few or no holidays, no overtime pay, and no effective means to redress grievances.

The rights of foreign workers continued to be severely restricted. Some employers mistreated foreign domestic servants, predominantly those from South Asia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Such mistreatment generally involved the nonpayment or late payment of wages and in some cases involved rape and physical abuse. Some foreign embassies provided temporary shelter for 48 hours to their nationals who left their employers as a result of abuse or disputes before transferring the case to local government officials. According to their embassies, the majority of cases were resolved within 48 hours. Those not resolved within 48 hours were transferred to the Criminal Evidence and Investigation Department of the MOI for a maximum of seven days. Cases not resolved within seven days were transferred to the labor court, a special section of the first instance civil court.

During the year the embassies of India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka received a combined total of more than 15,000 complaints from male and female workers alleging mistreatment by their employers. The Nepalese Embassy reported that they received 10 to 11 complaints per day, and the Sri Lankan Embassy received between 50 and 60 per day. Complaints included sexual harassment, delayed and nonpayment of salaries, forced labor, contract switching, holding of passports, poor accommodation, nonrepatriation, physical torture or torment, overwork, imprisonment, and maltreatment. Abused domestic servants usually did not press charges for fear of losing their jobs. According to the Indian Embassy, 208 of their reportedly 313,000 nationals died in the country during the year, of which 17 were deemed suicide. Of the 208 total, 113 died of cardiac arrest, eight of whom were younger than 30 years of age. According to the Nepalese Embassy, 158 of their reported 266,000 nationals died. Heart attacks claimed 107, work-related accidents 22, and suicides eight. Local support groups believed that authorities reported the cause of death as heart attacks to hide workplace deaths.

The government has enacted regulations regarding worker safety and health, but enforcement, which is the responsibility of the Ministry of Energy and Industry, the Ministry of Health, and the Labor Department, while improving, was uneven due to insufficient training and lack of personnel. Diplomatic representatives visited labor camps and found the majority of unskilled foreign laborers living in cramped, dirty, and hazardous conditions, often without running water, electricity, or adequate food. The Labor Inspection Section conducted a limited number of random inspections of labor camps and when found to be below minimum standards, the operators received a warning, after which compliance was mandatory. Statistics on the number of inspections were not available, but foreign labor attaches reported that most labor camps in the country remained far below minimum standards.

In April 2006 two foreign construction workers reportedly died from exposure to toxic gases at a labor camp at Ras Laffan. An estimated 1,000 workers violently protested their deaths, and the organizers were detained and deported. Because the incident was considered a state security matter involving an oil or gas facility, officials from the NHRC were prevented by security authorities from inspecting the camp after the incident to help ensure respect for workers' health and safety. For this reason, compliance with standards was not documented.

The Department of Public Safety oversaw safety training and conditions, and the state-run petroleum company had its own safety standards and procedures. The regulations listed partial and permanent disabilities for which compensation may be awarded, some connected with handling chemicals and petroleum products or construction injuries. The law does not specifically set rates of payment and compensation. The government provided free medical treatment to workers who suffered work-related sickness or injuries.

Foreign workers may enter the country on a visitor's visa, but a sponsor is needed to convert a visitor's visa to a work visa, and the worker must have a sponsor's permission to depart the country. The government punished a small number of individual sponsors and employers who severely violated residence and sponsorship laws by prohibiting them from importing labor until they rectified the situation.

The law does not provide workers the specific right to remove themselves from hazardous work conditions, and workers

often hesitated to do so for fear of dismissal. The law provides any worker with the right to seek legal relief from onerous work conditions; however, pursuing such relief risked deportation, and there were no reports of workers seeking such relief during the year.



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