



In Focus

Labour Reform

Resize Text



Qatar's rapid infrastructure development and fast-growing economy has attracted hundreds of thousands of expatriates seeking to better their lives and the lives of their families.

Qatar currently provides jobs for almost two million people. The government considers the welfare of guest workers as one of the key priorities and is committed to reforming Qatar's labour laws and practices to design a system that is fit for purpose for both employees and employers.

Labour policy is a complex issue and one that cannot be solved overnight. However, over the past several years, Qatar has implemented extensive reforms to strengthen labour laws, and increase protections for migrant workers. Most notably Qatar has:

- Introduced new laws that mean the majority of workers no longer need exit permits to leave the country.
- Announced procedures allowing workers to change employment freely, without requiring a No-Objection Certificate (NOC) from their previous employer.
- Introduced a non-discriminatory minimum wage.
- Announced the establishment of 20 Qatar Visa Centres (QVCs) in India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Philippines and Tunisia, which will expedite the recruitment process and ensure workers do not get exploited in their home countries.
- Established a Workers' Support and Insurance Fund which will ensure and provide care for workers, guarantee their rights and provide a healthy and safe working environment.

Qatar's reforms have been recognised by major human rights groups and UN organisations. This progress makes Qatar the leader in the Gulf on labour reform as unlike others in the region, Qatar's reforms are genuine, long-lasting, and the product of years of careful planning.



Share this



Twitter



Facebook



Email

“The State of Qatar has pursued a consistent policy to protect and promote human rights, on the basis of our Arab and Islamic principles that uphold human values, and are keen to honour our commitment in this respect at the national and international levels to defend individual and collective rights and respect for human rights and dignity. Qatar has made significant achievements in terms of workers’ rights and work conditions in coordination with the International Labour Organization.”

His Highness the Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, September 2019

Reforming Qatar’s Labour Laws

The Government of the State of Qatar has implemented major labour reforms in the past few years, including:

Minimum wage

In March 2021, Qatar introduced a minimum wage of QAR 1,000, which applies to all employees across all sectors in Qatar, including domestic workers. The employer must additionally provide QAR 500 per month for accommodation and QAR 300 per month for food unless provided by their employer.

The minimum wage was decided following extensive consultations with a specialised national committee composed of relevant authorities in Qatar. The Minimum Wage Committee was also established and

composed of relevant authorities in Qatar. The minimum wage committee was also established and tasked with periodically reviewing the impact and application of the minimum wage of workers and domestic workers.

The non-discriminatory minimum wage is the first law of its kind in the region. His Excellency Yousuf Mohamed Al Othman Fakhroo, the Minister of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs announced that a Minimum Wage Committee will be formed and tasked with the continued review and examination of the minimum wage of employees and domestic workers.

“The State of Qatar is committed to creating a modern and dynamic labour market. In line with Qatar Vision 2030, these new laws mark a major milestone in this journey and will benefit workers, employers, and the nation alike.”

His Excellency Yousuf Mohamed Al Othman Fakhroo, August 2020

No-Objection Certificates

Employees will no longer require No-Objection Certificates to terminate their contracts.

Following the Qatar National Vision 2030's aim of attracting workers, protecting their rights and ensuring their safety, the new decision will encourage economic growth and open doors for investors, employers and employees alike. This will drive greater competition in Qatar's labour market by allowing employees to change employers and allowing employers to attract the best talent in the local market.

The new law also indicates the following for employees:

- Employees will have the ability to pursue new opportunities in Qatar and strengthen the economy through local and international business.
- Employees will be able to terminate their contract providing at least one month's written notice if they have worked with the employer for two years or less, or two months' notice if they have worked with the employer for over two years.
- Employees can be placed on probation for a period agreed upon with their employer, as long as the period of probation is no more than six months from the date their work commenced.
- In the case that employees had access to sensitive information, the employer can stipulate that the employee cannot compete with them on any projects or work within a year of ending the contract.

The cancelling of exit permissions

On 16 January 2020, the Interior Minister Decision No. 95 of 2019 was issued, indicating that with immediate effect, exit permits have been removed for all expatriates who are not subject to Qatar's Labour Law.

The new law allows almost all migrant workers in Qatar – including domestic workers – to leave the country without first obtaining permission from their employers, except for military personnel. In order to protect the rights of both employers and domestic workers, domestic workers must notify employers at least 72 hours prior to their departure.

The decision also stipulates that the employer has the right to submit a prior reasoned request to the Ministry of Interior including the names of those whom they deem necessary to obtain prior approval before

leaving the country due to the nature of their work, provided that it does not exceed 5% of employees.

Heat stress protection

On 26 May, a ministerial decree (17) of 2021, extended the legal working hours in outdoor spaces from 1 June to 15 September, with work not being allowed between 10:00 to 15:30.

This legislation extended the summer working regulations by six weeks, providing workers with greater protection from heat stress.

The decree further states that workers must have access to heat stress training, access to personal protection equipment, and annual health checks. Similarly, all work must stop if the wet-bulb globe temperature (WBGT) rises beyond 32.1, taking into consideration more than ambient temperature.

Domestic workers law

In August 2017, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani issued Law No. 15 of 2017, which regulates the relationship between domestic workers and their employers. The law advances the rights of domestic workers in accordance with the provisions of the International Labour Organisation's Convention No. 189 on working conditions for domestic workers.

The Ministerial Decision No. 95 of 2019 further allows domestic workers to leave the country without first obtaining permission from their employers. In order to protect the rights of both employers and domestic workers, domestic workers must notify employers at least 72 hours prior to their departure.

Joint Committees

In April 2019, His Excellency Mr Yousuf Mohamed Al Othman Fakhroo, the Minister of Administrative Development Labour and Social Affairs signed a decree regulating the conditions and procedures for the election of worker representatives in Joint Committees. This decree will allow workers in companies with 30 or more employees to elect their own representatives.

Joint Committees bring together representatives of management and facility workers into regular communication over workplace issues. This includes topics such as the organisation of work, ways to increase production and development, workers' training programmes, risk prevention tools, and ways to improve the level of adherence to occupational safety and health rules.

Workers' Support and Insurance Fund

In October 2018, His Highness the Amir issued Law No. 17 of 2018 to establish the Workers' Support and Insurance Fund. The fund protects workers from the impact of overdue or unpaid wages in instances where the employer has gone out of business or been forced to close due to illegal activity.

Qatar Visa Centres

Qatar has announced the establishment of 20 Qatar Visa Centres (QVC) to create a unified visa system that expedites the recruitment process and protects the rights of workers by eliminating exploitative practices in their home countries.

Qatar Visa Centres will be located in India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Philippines and Tunisia.

Qatar Visa Centres are an initiative led by the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Public Health.

ILO first project office opens in Doha

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) inaugurated its first project office in Qatar on 30 April 2018. The office will support implementation of a comprehensive technical cooperation programme on working conditions and labour rights in Qatar.

This announcement is an acknowledgement of the important steps the Qatari government has taken to develop a modern labour system that is fair to employers and employees alike.

Labour Dispute Resolution Committees

In March 2018, Qatar established Labour Dispute Resolution Committees with the aim of improving access to justice by settling labour disputes within three weeks of a migrant worker filing a complaint.

Regulating the entry, exit, and residence of expatriates

In 2015, the State of Qatar issued Law No. 21 of 2015, which introduces new provisions regulating the entry, exit and residency requirements for Qatar's workers. The law came into effect on 13 December 2016 and introduced new provisions that provide:

- Freedom to change jobs
- New measures to prevent contract substitution
- Greater transparency

- Enhanced representation
- New measures to prevent passport confiscation

Wage Protection System

The Government has also legislated to protect workers from wage exploitation through the introduction of a Wage Protection System (WPS).

The law seeks to end a cash-in-hand culture that puts workers at risk throughout the world. In addition, it also grants new powers to the Qatari authorities to monitor wage payment and ensures that migrant workers are being paid in full and on time, as stipulated in their contracts.

Health, safety & welfare

The government employs multilingual male and female labour inspectors who are fully trained on all aspects of Qatari labour law. These individuals have the ability to file reports instantly from location using GPS-equipped electronic handheld devices.

In April 2021, the Shura Council approved a new law mandating health insurance for all expatriates and visitors. Under the legislation, health insurance is a necessary condition for the granting or renewal of residence permits and employment of expatriates.

The government also has channels available for individuals to report grievances against their employer. A 24/7 hotline has been set-up for workers and 11 electronic kiosks have been set-up in locations across Qatar (operating in 11 languages) for workers to file anonymous complaints.

March 2018

Labour Disputes Settlement
Committee established

The ILO inaugurates its first project
office in Qatar

April 2018

September 2018

HH the Amir issues Law No. 13 of
2018 amending provisions of Law
No.21 of 2015 on the regulation of
entry, exit and residence of
expatriates

October 2018

His Highness the Amir issues Law No. 17 of 2018 to establish the Workers' Support and Insurance Fund

October 2018

Qatar opens its first Qatar Visa Centre (QVC) in Colombo, Sri Lanka

HE the Minister of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs signs a decree regulating the conditions and procedures for the election of worker representatives in Joint Committees

April 2019

October 2019

HE the Minister of Administrative

Development, Labour and Social Affairs announced that the Council of Ministers have adopted new legislations regarding the minimum wage draft law and the facilitation of employment transfers during the contract period, in a manner that preserves the rights of both employers and employees.



January 2020

The Interior Minister Decision No. 95 of 2019 was issued, indicating that with immediate effect, exit permits have been removed for all expatriates who are not subject to Qatar's Labour Law.

August 2020

A non-discriminatory minimum wage

A non-discriminatory minimum wage was announced, alongside the removal of Non-Objection Certificates when transferring employment. ADLSA will be working with employers to update their employment contracts and ensure they are in line with the new legislation within the next six months.

Non-discriminatory minimum wage came into effect.

March 2021

May 2021

A ministerial decree (17) of 2021 has extended the legal working hours in outdoor working spaces from 1 June to 15 September, with work not being allowed between 10:00 to 15:30.