

## Identification of Possible Gaps in the Protection of the Human Rights of Older Persons and How Best to Address Them

### **1. Please state how your government/organization has engaged with international and regional human rights mechanisms (for example: universal periodic review (UPR) treaty bodies, special procedures, regional mechanisms), specifically concerning older persons.**

The National Human Rights Committee in Qatar has actively raised awareness, facilitated education, and conducted training programs centred on the UN's principles concerning older persons since 1991. Additionally, an Agreement of Understanding exists between the NHRC in Qatar and the Qatar Social Work Foundation, specifically linked to *Ehsan*, a nursing home offering specialized services in collaboration with Hamad Medical Services. This agreement fosters information sharing and expertise exchange between NHRC and elderly-related entities, aiming to support the rights of older individuals.

Qatar, in the same way as other nations, collaborates with worldwide and local human rights organizations to maintain and advance the freedoms of its residents, including elder people. The government's obligation to worldwide norms is reflected in its support of different systems like the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), treaty bodies, special procedures, and regional mechanisms.

The UPR is a special system inside the United Nations Human Rights Council that surveys the basic freedoms records of all UN member states. Qatar actively participates in this process by submitting national reports outlining its human rights achievements, challenges, and commitments. With regard to the elderly, Qatar addresses issues such as healthcare, social protection, and inclusion in the national report. Qatar is focused on giving universal medical coverage to its residents, including elder people. This comprises clinical benefits, preventive care, and specific treatments that are fundamental for the prosperity of the elderly. Furthermore, older persons often experience chronic health conditions that require ongoing management. Qatar's healthcare system provides a comprehensive service for managing conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and neurological disorders prevalent among the elderly. Additionally, the state advances approaches and projects that improve the social consideration of more elderly people, empowering them to take part in the community effectively. Moreover, Qatar utilizes policies and projects that support the social inclusion of the elderly.

Qatar is involved with different worldwide human rights treaties that address the privileges of old people explicitly. Treaty bodies, such as the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (CESCR) and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) survey Qatar's consistency with these agreements. The CESCR screens the execution of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) by its state parties. The contract covers several freedoms, such as the right to well-being, schooling, work, government-backed retirement, and a sufficient way of life for people. Besides, the CRPD screens the execution of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. While the focal point of the CRPD is on people with inabilities, it perceives the diversity of freedoms and the need to think about the particular weaknesses and necessities of specific groups,

incorporating elderly individuals with handicaps. The government engages with these bodies by submitting periodic reports and engaging in constructive dialogues on issues related to older persons.

Qatar collaborates with UN Special Procedures, self-governing human rights specialists selected to monitor specific thematic issues or country situations. The government engages with special rapporteurs or independent experts who focus on the rights of older persons. Qatar responds to queries, provides information, and considers recommendations made by these experts to improve the situation of older persons within its borders.

In addition to international mechanisms, Qatar engages with regional organizations that address human rights issues. With regard to elderly people, Qatar partakes in gatherings coordinated by the Arab Human Rights Committee and teams up with local bodies to share encounters and best practices connected with the freedoms and prosperity of old people. A portion of the strategies that are examined incorporate monetary and financial perspectives, including benefit plans and government-backed retirement measures to help the financial prosperity of older individuals and legitimate structures that are set up to safeguard the privileges of elderly people, including shields against senior abuse and segregation.

## **2. Have those engagement resulted in positive impact in strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons? Please elaborate.**

Raising awareness and educating the public about the elderly has yielded positive outcomes in the media sphere. Numerous programs, in collaboration with the NHRC, have spotlighted this issue, garnering constructive feedback and contributing to the improvement of regulations concerning older persons.

The engagement of Qatar in international human rights mechanisms, including the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), treaty bodies, special procedures, and regional mechanisms, has contributed positively to the strengthening of the protection of human rights for older persons. While the UPR may not explicitly focus on older persons, it serves as a comprehensive platform for countries to discuss their overall human rights situation, including issues affecting the elderly. Moreover, through the UPR process, countries receive recommendations from other states, civil society, and international organizations. The UPR process raises awareness about the human rights challenges faced by older persons at the international level, encouraging countries to consider these issues in their national policies. Similarly, recommendations received during the UPR can lead to policy reforms and legislative changes that positively impact the rights of older persons. For instance, recommendations related to healthcare, social protection, and inclusive policies can directly benefit the elderly.

International treaty bodies, such as the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (CESCR) and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), monitor how states comply with specific human rights treaties. While these committees do not exclusively focus on older persons, their work has implications for the elderly population. Firstly, treaty bodies often provide targeted recommendations in their concluding observations, urging states to enhance protections for vulnerable groups, including older persons. Furthermore, the recommendations of treaty bodies can lead to the establishment or improvement of legal

frameworks that specifically address older persons' rights, ensuring their protection and well-being.

Special procedures denote experts who deal with human rights. They are normally appointed by the Human Rights Council to handle certain human rights challenges or thematic zones. Special Rapporteurs and Independent Experts may investigate and report on issues affecting older persons. First, special procedures provide in-depth analysis and specific recommendations on issues facing older persons, leading to increased attention and action by governments to address these concerns. Moreover, special procedures contribute to global advocacy efforts, promoting awareness and understanding of the human rights challenges experienced by older persons.

Regional human rights mechanisms, such as the Arab Human Rights Committee, play a crucial role in safeguarding the rights of older individuals at the regional level. Firstly, regional mechanisms contribute to the enforcement of rights through legal decisions and judgments, ensuring accountability for violations affecting older persons. Furthermore, regional forums facilitate the sharing of best practices among countries, encouraging the adoption of policies that positively impact the rights of older persons.

Nevertheless, there are still gaps that exist in the protection of the rights of older people that have not been adequately addressed by the bodies. In addition, Qatar lacks comprehensive and specific legislation addressing the unique needs and rights of older persons. Similarly, inadequate pension schemes and social security systems leave some older individuals financially vulnerable. Moreover, age discrimination in the workplace can limit opportunities for older individuals to remain active and engaged. Besides, older persons may encounter barriers to active participation in social, cultural, as well as community activities. Similarly, there is limited public awareness regarding the rights and issues faced by older individuals, contributing to societal neglect. Also, challenges related to legal guardianship and decision-making capacity for older individuals may not be adequately addressed. Overall, there is inadequate data collection on the situation of older persons, which may hinder the development of evidence-based policies and programs.

### **3. What other options can be considered to strengthen the protection of older persons? Please elaborate.**

The NHRC proposes a National Convention regarding older persons in order to have an existing agreement about the efforts to protect them.

In addition to the established international mechanisms like the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), treaty bodies, special procedures, and regional mechanisms, several other options and strategies can be adopted to reinforce the fortification of older individuals. These approaches encompass a combination of legislative, policy, as well as societal measures to address the unique challenges faced by older individuals.

Firstly, Qatar can develop specific and comprehensive legislation that explicitly addresses the rights and well-being of older persons. Such regulation can cover regions like medical care, social security, housing, and employment. Essentially, the nation can execute and authorize regulations that deny age-based discrimination in different circles, including employment,

medical care, and access to services; which is significant for safeguarding the freedoms of more aged people.

Furthermore, the public authority of Qatar and civil society associations can start public awareness missions to teach society about the needs, rights, and contributions of elderly people, hence encouraging a culture of regard and incorporation. Also, preparing programs for caregivers, professionals, and the community can improve comprehension of the aging process, guaranteeing better consideration and support for more aged people. Moreover, assurances to the old population can be upgraded further by offering training programs for medical service experts, social workers, and guardians to improve their abilities to tend to the particular requirements of elderly individuals. Another approach is incorporating elderly people with age-related ailments into the program. The government can likewise give training to legal experts, police, and judicial specialists to deal with cases connected with senior maltreatment, segregation, and lawful guardianship effectively.

Civil society groups may protect the rights of aged persons by establishing community-based programs that promote social inclusion, provide social support, and address the isolation that older individuals may experience. This may include implementing services that assist families in caring for their elderly members and recognizing the importance of intergenerational support. Moreover, it is vital to design and implement urban planning strategies that focus on creating accessible and inclusive environments for older individuals, including age-friendly public spaces, transportation, and housing. Similarly, the advanced state of Qatar can promote the use of technology to enhance the independence and well-being of older persons, including telehealth services, smart home solutions, as well as communication tools.

The government of Qatar can invest in research initiatives to collect accurate and up-to-date data on the aging population, helping to identify specific needs and challenges faced by older persons. Similarly, Qatar may conduct regular impact assessments of policies and programs to ensure they effectively address the evolving needs of the older population in a manner that is anchored on evidence and best practices. It is important to promote collaboration across different government ministries and agencies to ensure a holistic approach to addressing the needs of older persons. Similarly, engaging the private sector in initiatives that benefit older persons, such as creating age-friendly workplaces and services, may facilitate better human rights protections for this group.

Qatar should continue to participate in international forums and networks so that it can share best practices and learn from the experiences of other countries in promoting and protecting the rights of older individuals. Moreover, it can engage with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international establishments that specialize in the rights of older persons to leverage their expertise and resources. Finally, it is essential for these efforts to be grounded in a human rights-based approach, hence promoting dignity, autonomy, and full participation for older individuals.

#### **4. If applicable, what is your assessment of the protection of the human rights of older persons according to regional and international instruments?**

International standards are in place to encourage both regional and international entities, including governments, to consider policies and plans that are beneficial to the well-being of elderly individuals.

A portion of the global human rights instruments in Qatar incorporate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which is a fundamental record confirming the innate dignity and equivalent rights, including elderly individuals. Qatar, as a member state of the UN, is supposed to maintain the standards framed in the UDHR. Furthermore, the state is additionally limited by the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which emphasizes the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and emotional wellness. Qatar's obligation to give open and quality medical care to aged people is vital in satisfying this pledge. Thirdly, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) perceives the multifaceted nature of freedoms. Qatar's adherence to CRPD standards decidedly influences elderly persons with handicaps inside its nation.

From a regional point of view, Qatar, being a member of the League of Arab States, adjusts its strategies to the Arab Charter on Human Rights. The contract underscores the standards of dignity, non-discrimination, and the right to health, which are applicable to the protection of more aged people. Additionally, regional joint efforts inside the GCC could add to shared accepted procedures and drives that improve the assurance of the basic liberties of older persons across member states.

Some of the benefits of these protections offered by international and regional bodies include the fact that regional and international instruments emphasize the inherent dignity of older persons, promoting their inclusion and recognizing their value in society. Moreover, human rights instruments underscore the right to health and social services, ensuring that older persons have access to quality healthcare and support tailored to their needs. Furthermore, legal frameworks derived from international instruments protect older persons from discrimination, abuse, and neglect, fostering an environment where their rights are safeguarded.

Nevertheless, despite the presence of international agreements, translating principles into effective national policies can be challenging, leading to gaps in the actual implementation of protections for older persons. Similarly, there is no up-to-date data and information about the actual impacts of the policies, including how effectively they have been implemented. Besides, some international instruments lack robust enforcement mechanisms, relying on member states to voluntarily comply with their commitments, which may result in inconsistent implementation. Secondly, cultural differences and diverse societal attitudes toward aging can influence the effectiveness of rights protection measures. Some cultural norms may not align with international standards. Furthermore, resource limitations may hinder the full realization of older persons' rights, even in industrialized countries like Qatar where some critical healthcare, social services, and legal infrastructure may be under-resourced. Moreover, human rights instruments may not fully address the intersectionality of challenges faced by older persons, particularly those with disabilities or belonging to marginalized groups. Also, rapidly aging populations globally pose new challenges that existing frameworks may not fully anticipate or address, necessitating ongoing adaptation of protective measures.

Therefore, despite bringing countries together to create legislation and policies regarding matters affecting the aging population, there is no guarantee that the UN member states implement their recommendations.