

Qatar

This factsheet provides a review of existing laws and regulations pertaining to the employment of migrant workers in Qatar and has been written by the International Labour Organization [Regional Fair Migration in the Middle East Project](#) with support from DLA Piper. It was developed to increase accessibility to country-specific laws for a wide variety of stakeholders. Building Responsibly does not endorse this factsheet as best practice, and it should not be used as a substitute for legal or labor counsel. Instead, it is intended to be a practical reference point and a tool to support the work of Building Responsibly as it seeks to raise standards and employ best practices on worker welfare issues worldwide. For more information, please see the [Building Responsibly Principles](#).

This summary is based on the Labour Law No. 14 of 2004, as amended (referred to hereafter as the ‘Labour Law’), as well as Law No. 21 of 2015, as amended, hereafter Sponsorship Law, related to the entry, exit, and residence of migrant workers, alongside relevant circulars and decrees. The legislation is likely to undergo modifications for these provisions in the next two years as a result of a [technical cooperation program](#) that is being jointly implemented by the State of Qatar and the International Labour Organization. The Labour Law does not currently apply to certain categories of workers, including, but not limited to, domestic workers, agricultural workers and “casual workers.” This summary does not cover specific provisions related to the employment of minors and only provides limited information on the specific requirements on the employment of Qatari or GCC nationals.

In the construction sector, the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy has developed Workers’ Welfare standards, which goes beyond the requirements of the Labour Law in certain instances and applies to the construction and infrastructure projects of the 2022 Football World Cup.



1. RECRUITMENT AND WORK PERMITS

- Travel expenses
- Accommodation expenses
- Medical and social care
- Leave requirements

1.1 Are workers allowed to pay recruitment fees?

No. Payment of any recruitment fees, expenses, or other costs by workers is prohibited.¹

1.2 How are recruitment agencies regulated?

Only a person/organization with a license issued by the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs can recruit workers. The license must be renewed every two years.² Agencies are regulated by the above-mentioned Ministry, which can conduct unannounced or periodic inspections on recruitment agencies to ensure legal compliance.

1.3 Is there a requirement for written contracts?

Yes. All contracts should be drafted in triplicate and certified by the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs, which uses a model employment e-contract. This model e-contract should contain the following:³

- Name of employer and place of work
- Name, qualifications, nationality, profession, and residence of the worker and proof of identification
- Date of conclusion of contract and its place of execution
- Nature and type of work
- Date of commencement of work
- Period of the contract
- Probation period
- Agreed basic wage (including allowances if any) and method and date of payment

1.4 Is there a requirement for the written contract to be in a language that the worker understands?

Yes. All e-contracts must be at least in Arabic and may be accompanied by a version in another language that the employee understands. In practice, the model e-contract is commonly in dual Arabic/English format. In case of conflict, the Arabic text prevails.⁴

1.5 Is it legal for an employer to keep a worker’s passport?

No, it is illegal, and persons engaging in passport confiscation can be subject to fines of up to QAR 25,000 and/or criminal penalties.⁵ However, workers can request in writing that the employer keep their passport provided that the employer returns it upon the worker’s request.⁶ Employers should design accommodation that includes lockable storage facilities that are accessible to workers at any time and provide a place where they can keep their personal belongings and documents, including passports.⁷

1.6 What are the procedures for obtaining the work permit?

The Ministry of Interior (MOI) handles visas and residence permits in Qatar. Migrant workers require a Work and Residence Permit for which they need a Qatari sponsor, company, or physical person. It is the responsibility of the employer to handle all paperwork required to obtain the Work and Residence Permit on behalf of the migrant worker. The process for obtaining a Work and Residence Permit depends on a number of factors and is subject to frequent changes by the authorities. When a migrant worker first enters Qatar, the employer may arrange

for a temporary business visa which is then converted into a Work and Residency Permit. Applicants may not leave the country during the process of their application.

If an employee is only required to work in Qatar for a short period of time, he/she may get alternative permits, though this depends on the type of work.

1.7 What is Qatarization and what are the requirements for companies?

Qatarization is a strategic initiative by the Government of Qatar to provide employment for its citizens in the private and public sectors. The objective is to provide up to 50 percent or more of Qatari citizens with meaningful permanent employment. However, this binding percentage varies, among other factors, based on the employer's size and sector. It is, generally, only enforced in the government and oil and gas sector, contrary to the private sector. Some sectors—such as banking and insurance—have quotas for the employment of Qatari nationals. It should be noted that there are no sanctions under Qatari Law for failing to adhere to these requirements.

1.8 Are there other employment related restrictions?

There are specific restrictions for women's employment.⁸

- It is prohibited to employ women in dangerous arduous positions, jobs detrimental to their health or morals, or other jobs to be specified by a Decision of the Minister.
- Women workers who have been employed for at least a year are entitled to maternity leave for 50 days, including a minimum of 35 days after delivery.
- Women workers cannot be fired due to marriage or maternity leave.



2. SPONSORSHIP

2.1 How do workers and employers terminate a contract?

Workers can also terminate their contract before its expiry date if they have been misled about working and living conditions. In such cases, workers must register on the website of the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs indicating whether they are applying for a change of employer or final departure. They must submit a certified copy of the employment contract as well as a copy of a certificate which attests to either the amicable termination of the contract or outlines abuse by the employer.

In the context of amicable termination or where an employer terminates an employee's employment contract, the employer undertakes these steps. The Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs makes the final decision as to an employee's change of employer.

In case of unlimited-term contracts, either party can terminate without justification provided they notify the other party with no less than a month if the worker has worked for less than five years and no less than two months if the worker has worked for more than five years, unless both parties agree on longer notice periods.⁹

When an employment contract is terminated or expires, the employer is required to pay an end-of-service benefit mutually agreed upon by the worker and the employer, provided it is not less than the equivalent of three weeks' wage for each of service.

2.2 Protected grounds for dismissal

None specified.

2.3 What is the process for the worker to transfer to another employer?

•Change of employer after expiry of contract:

Workers on fixed-term contracts can change employers without having to obtain the permission of their previous employer, provided that this is done at the end of their contract period and with the approval of the relevant Qatari authorities. Workers with open-ended contracts can change employers without having to obtain the permission of their previous employer after 5 years of completed service provided that the approval of the relevant Qatari authorities is obtained.¹⁰ In such cases, workers complete an "Application Form for Changing Employer" with the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs to transfer the sponsorship and provide the necessary supplementary documents.

•Change of employer prior to expiry of contract:

Workers on fixed-term contracts who wish to end it and change their employer can only do so:

- with the permission of the first employer;
- with the approval of the Ministry of Interior;
- with the approval of the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs;
- and as per the relevant laws.

2.4 Can workers leave the country without permission of the employer?

Workers contracted under the Labour Law have the right to leave the country temporarily or permanently during their contract period.¹¹ A company can still require some workers, not exceeding 5 percent of the total workers, to receive permission from the employer before exiting the country.

However, a company is required to submit the names of these workers for approval from the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs.

Domestic workers still have to obtain an exit permit to leave Qatar.

If such permission is denied, workers can appeal to the Expatriates' Exit Permit Grievances Committee. The composition, mandated procedures, and mode of operation are expected to be regulated through a ministerial decision. A decision is made within three working days and can be appealed by the worker or a recruiter (sponsor).¹² Common reasons for rejection are due to the existence of financial claims against the worker or a travel ban as a result of judicial proceedings.



3. WAGES

3.1 Is there a minimum wage?

Yes. A temporary basic minimum wage of QAR 750 per month was set in November 2017, for immediate effect.¹³ Hence, the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs does not permit employment contracts stipulating basic wages below QAR 750. A review to establish a permanent minimum wage is currently being processed by the State of Qatar in collaboration with the ILO.

3.2 How is payment to be made?

Payment must be made electronically in accordance with the Wage Protection System, introduced in November 2015.¹⁴ The wages of workers employed on an annual or monthly salary are paid at least once a month within one week of the due date. Wages of all other workers are paid at least every two weeks.¹⁵

3.3. What are the penalties for late payment of wages?

Penalties for non-compliance may include:

- imprisonment of up to one month;
- a fine of QAR 2,000-6,000 per worker;¹⁶
- a “blacklisting” of the employer by the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs.

Failure to pay within seven days of the due date may also result in a suspension of any new work permits or a suspension of all transactions with the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs.¹⁷

3.4 Are deductions from pay permitted?

Yes. Employers may deduct wages for the settlement of a loan, for compensation, and as a disciplinary penalty. Regarding settlement of a loan, deductions are permitted provided they do not amount to more than 10 percent of the wage.

Employers cannot charge interest on the loan.

Up to 35 percent of the wage can be deducted for execution of a judgment debt, and the total deductions from a worker’s wage cannot exceed 50 percent of the total wage.¹⁸

The employer can deduct compensation for loss, damage, or destruction to machinery of the establishment caused by the worker, provided that the compensation is “preceded by an enquiry” and does not exceed the equivalent of seven days of wage in one month.

The worker may appeal the employer’s request for compensation or the valuation of the damage within seven days from the day she/he was notified.¹⁹ Deductions must be recorded in the wages register.



4. WORKING CONDITIONS AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

4.1 What are the working hours?

Working hours cannot exceed eight hours per day and 48 hours per week except during Ramadan where the maximum working hours cannot exceed six hours per day and 36 hours per week.

Working hours shall include interval(s) of one to three hours for prayer, rest and meals. An interval must take place following no more than five consecutive hours of work. The intervals are not considered in the calculation of working hours.²⁰

Workers are allowed to a weekly paid rest day, a Friday, which cannot be less than 24 consecutive hours, with the exception for shift workers. If the circumstances of the work necessitate the employment of the worker during the rest day, the latter is compensated by another rest day, and for this the worker shall be paid the wage payable for the ordinary weekly rest day, 150 percent of his basic daily wage.²¹

There are certain limited exceptions to this requirement.²²

It is prohibited to work outdoors from June 15 to August 31 for more than five hours per day.

It is strictly prohibited to work outdoors during the same period between 11:30 a.m. and 3 p.m.

Employers must display a schedule that shows daily working hours in a place that is accessible to all workers and labor inspectors. A maximum penalty of a “one-month closure” can be imposed by a decision of the Minister of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs for failure of employers to comply with the ban. These provisions do not apply to companies engaged in oil and gas projects.²³

4.2 What are the regulations on overtime?

Workers may be required to work additional work hours above the limits outlined in 4.1, provided that the actual work hours do not exceed 10 hours per day, unless the work is necessary for the prevention or as a consequence of gross loss or dangerous accident.

Overtime must be paid in accordance with the overtime provisions of the Labour Law, at a rate of 125 percent of the basic wage. Workers who work between 9 p.m. and 3 a.m. shall be paid 150 percent of the basic wage, with the exception of shift workers.²⁴

4.3 What are the requirements on personal protective equipment (PPE)? Is there a requirement for an OSH policy?

The employer is required to supply workers with protective clothing and tools, including gloves, caps, boots, suits, masks, and other protective instruments. The employer cannot charge workers or deduct the cost of PPE from the workers’ wages.²⁵

4.4 What are the requirements on access to water, food, toilet and washing facilities on site?

Employers must take measures capable of securing hygiene and good ventilation in the workplace as well as suitable lighting and drinking water, hygiene, and drainage, in accordance with the regulations and decisions to be issued by the competent authorities in this respect.²⁶

Employers who employ workers in locations which are “distant from the cities and to which the usual means of transportation are not available” must provide drinking water and suitable food or means of obtaining it.²⁷

4.5 What are the requirements in labor accommodation?

Employers shall provide housing and/or transportation for workers living in certain areas that are deemed far from certain cities and cannot be reached by ordinary means of transportation.²⁸ Specific requirements for bedrooms, kitchens, and bathrooms are established. Employers are responsible for health and safety as well as general maintenance of accommodation and cannot deduct any amounts from workers’ wages for the provision of housing, equipment, or maintenance.²⁹

4.6 What are the regulations regarding occupational safety and health?

Employers must inform workers of health and safety risks at the workplace and take all protective measures, including provision of instructions on preventive measures.³⁰ Workers must comply with these instructions and use the personal protective equipment received from the employer at no cost.³¹



5. ORGANIZING AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

5.1 Are trade unions permitted?

Worker committees and enterprise-level unions are permitted at establishments in which the number of Qatari workers is 100 or more. Enterprise unions in the same industry affiliate into an industry-wide federation, i.e., the General Committee for the Workers of Trade and Industry, which in turn is affiliated with a national workers' federation, i.e., General Union of the Workers of Qatar.³²

The membership is however confined to Qatari nationals.



6. ACCESS TO COMPLAINTS MECHANISMS

6.1 What are the mechanisms for individual complaints?

If a dispute arises, a worker or an employer can submit it to the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs, Labour Relations Department, which takes measures for an amicable dispute settlement within seven days.

If the parties to the dispute accept the outcome of the settlement, the agreed settlement will be evidenced in a report with executory force, signed by the worker and the employer and certified by the Labour Relations Department.³³ If the parties do not accept the outcome of the settlement, the dispute will be referred to a Worker Dispute Settlement Committee established by the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs and chaired, inter alia, by a First Instance Court judge which reaches a decision within three weeks. It is possible for both parties to appeal the decision before the Court within a month of the Committee's decision.³⁴

A worker can decide to appeal against the decision issued by the Workers Dispute Settlement Committee before the Appellate Court. The Labour Law states that workers must bring any claim within one year from the expiry of their contract.³⁵

Human rights violations can be brought before the National Human Rights Committee, and claims may also be filed in the Qatar civil and criminal courts.

6.2 What are the mechanisms for collective complaints?

Collective disputes must first attempt to be settled amicably, particularly by a joint committee in the establishment, if one exists. If amicable settlement is not possible, the parties must communicate in writing, copying the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs, followed by mediation by the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs.

If the dispute is not resolved within 15 days, the Department can, with both parties' approval, submit the dispute to the Conciliation Committee which makes a binding decision. In the absence of such approval, the dispute is referred to the Arbitration Committee under the presidency of a Judge who issues a collective ruling binding for both parties.³⁶



7. SUBCONTRACTING REGULATIONS

7.1 How is subcontracting regulated?

The Labour Law does not explicitly mention or regulate employment in subcontracting arrangements.

For all contracts connected with the World Cup, the Supreme Committee's Worker Welfare standards apply to all contractors and sub-contractors, with potential visits to be carried out by the Supreme Committee, Impactt Ltd (Independent Monitor) and the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs, including potential visits to the premises of sub-contractors. The same applies to the Qatar Foundation and other organizations which have adopted the QF Mandatory Standards for Migrant Worker Welfare for Contractors and Subcontractors (2014).



8. ACCESS TO MEDICAL CARE

8.1 What medical care must the employer provide to workers?

Employers are required to provide a first aid box for every 25 workers. The use of the box is entrusted to a worker trained in first aid. If there are more than 100 workers, the establishment must appoint a full-time nurse. For more than 500 workers, there must be a designated clinic with at least a doctor and a nurse.³⁷

In construction sites where there are more than five workers, there must be at least one fully trained first aid officer per fifty workers.

Employers with contracts connected with the World Cup, must ensure:

- that at least one first aid officer is provided for every 25 workers;
- at accommodation where more than 100 workers reside, contractors are required to provide a resident nurse;
- at accommodation where more than 500 workers reside, contractors are required to provide a designated medical doctor; and
- at accommodation where more than 5000 workers reside, contractors must provide a resident medical doctor.³⁸



9. SOCIAL SECURITY

9.1 Is there mandatory social security for migrant workers?

No. There is a statutory end-of-service gratuity scheme in place for workers who have completed one or more years of employment. It is calculated as three weeks' final basic wage for every year of employment, pro rata.³⁹

If an employer maintains a "retirement system or similar" which secures a benefit that is equal to or greater than the statutory end-of-service gratuity, the worker may choose to participate in that system instead of receiving the statutory end-of-service gratuity. In this case, the employer is not obligated to pay the worker both benefits.

If the net benefit accruing to the worker under the company retirement

system is less than the mandated end-of-service gratuity, the employer pays the worker the end-of-service gratuity and returns any amount that the worker may have contributed to the company retirement system.⁴⁰

10. OTHER

10.1 Disciplinary action

The Ministry may issue models of disciplinary regulations related to a specific sector or industry.⁴¹

1 Labour Law, Article 33 and Ministerial Order No. 8 of 2005, Article 19.

2 Labour Law, Article 29.

3 Labour Law, Article 38.

4 Labour Law, Article 9.

5 Law No 21 of 2015 on the Entry, Exit and Residency of Foreign Nationals, Article 39.

Report by the Government of Qatar to the ILO Governing Body, November 2017.

6 Law No 21 of 2015 on the Entry, Exit and Residency of Foreign Nationals, Article 8.

7 ILO Governing Body: Complaint concerning non observance by Qatar of the Forced Labour Convention, the Labour Inspection Convention, made by delegates to the 103rd Session (2014) of the International Labour Conference under article 26 of the ILO Constitution.

8 Labour Law, Articles 93 to 98.

9 Labour Law, Article 49.

10 Law No 21 of 2015 on the Entry, Exit and Residency of Foreign Nationals, Article 21.

11 Law No 21 of 2015 on the Entry, Exit and Residency of Foreign Nationals, Article 7.

12 Ministry of Interior, Decision No 51 of 2016 on the formation of the Exit Permit Grievances Committee.

13 As announced by the Minister of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs in November 2017.

14 Ministerial Decision No. 4 of 2015 Issuing the Regulations for the Wage Protection System for Workers Subject to the Labour Law.

15 Labour Law, Article 66.

16 Labour Law, Article 145.

17 Ministerial Decision No. 4 of 2015 Issuing the Regulations for the Wage Protection System for Workers Subject to the Labour Law.

18 Labour Law, Article 70.

19 Labour Law, Article 71.

20 Labour Law, Article 73.

21 Labour Law, Article 75.

22 Labour Law, Article 76.

23 Ministerial Decision No. 16 of 2007 determining the working hours in exposed workplaces during the summer.

24 Labour Law, Article 74.

25 Labour Law, Art 100; Decision of the Minister of Civil Service Affairs and Housing No 20 of 2005 on the Precautions and Requirements Necessary to be Provided in the Workplaces and Areas to Protect the Workers, Employees and Visitors Against the Occupational Hazards, article 5.

26 Labour Law, Article 103.

27 Labour Law, Article 106.

28 Labour Law, Article 106. Ministerial Resolution No. 12 of 2005 on the Determination of Areas far from the Cities.

29 Decision of the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs No. 18 of 2014 on the Determination of the Requirements and Specifications of Appropriate Accommodation for Workers.

30 Labour Law, Articles 99 and 100.

31 Labour Law, Article 101.

32 Labour Law, Article 116.

33 Labour Law, Article 115 bis.

34 Labour Law, Article 115 bis and Ministerial Decision no. 6 of 2018 on the establishment of Workers' Dispute Settlement Committees.

35 Labour Law, Article 10.

36 Labour Law, Articles 128 to 134.

37 Labour Law, Article 104.

38 Qatar Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, Workers' Welfare Standards Edition 2.

39 Labour Law, Article 54.

40 Labour Law, Art 56.

41 Labour Law, Article 58.

