

Statement on Qatar

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Mr. Chairman,

In her report to this session of the Council, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief has recalled the important role of the State in the protection of the rights of religious minorities. Not only is this in line with the UDHR and other international commitments, but allowing all persons in a given country, irrespective of their religion or belief, to live freely, contributes to the richness and the advancement of society.

In spite of public statements, Qatar is slowly pursuing a number of actions which will ultimately lead to the eradication of one of its religious minorities from society: the members of the Bahá'í Faith, many of whom were born in Qatar and whose families have been there for generations.

In Qatar, many Bahá'ís find out that they have been blacklisted when they seek to renew their residency permits or try to obtain a certificate of good conduct in order to change jobs. This implies that they have committed some legal offence, yet, no proof is ever presented. In reality their only 'crime' is their belief in the Bahá'í Faith!

The Bahá'ís in Qatar simply wish to contribute to the welfare of the country while practising their basic rights. The Bahá'í International Community has been repeatedly trying to meet with the Qatari authorities, including the Mission in Geneva, in order to discuss these issues and try to resolve whatever misunderstanding may exist. Unfortunately, these requests have remained unanswered.

We call on the international community to remind the Qatari authorities of their obligations to guarantee the rights of all to freely practise the religion of their choice without any fear or punishment.

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