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## Changes in the labour market in Qatar

# Dismantling the kafala system and introducing a minimum wage mark new era for Qatar labour market

Greater freedom to change jobs, combined with a non-discriminatory minimum wage, will benefit employers and workers alike

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DOHA (ILO News) – In a historic move, the State of Qatar has introduced major changes to its labour market, ending the requirement for migrant workers to obtain their employer’s permission to change jobs, while also becoming the first country in the region to adopt a non-discriminatory minimum wage.

Following the adoption on 30 August 2020 of Law No. 18 of 2020, migrant workers can now change jobs before the end of their contract without first having to obtain a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from their employer. This new law, coupled with the removal of exit permit requirements earlier in the year, effectively dismantles the “kafala” sponsorship system and

marks the beginning of a new era for the Qatari labour market.

Additional legislation, Law No. 17 of 2020, adopted today also establishes a minimum wage of 1,000 Qatari riyals (QAR) which will enter into force six months after the law's publication in the Official Gazette. The new minimum wage will apply to all workers, of all nationalities and in all sectors, including domestic workers. In addition to the basic minimum wage, employers must ensure that workers have decent accommodation and food. The legislation also stipulates that employers pay allowances of at least QAR 300 and QAR 500 to cover costs of food and housing respectively, if they do not provide workers with these directly – a move that will help ensure decent living standards for workers.

The adoption of these laws supports the transition towards a more skilled and productive workforce, which is a key goal in [Qatar's National Vision 2030](#) >. It will also help promote economic recovery from the fallout of the [COVID-19 pandemic](#) >, as well as the growth of the economy over the longer term.

**“** By introducing these significant changes, Qatar has delivered on a commitment. One that will give workers more freedom and protection, and employers more choice. We are witnessing what can be achieved when governments, workers and employers work together with the ILO to promote decent work for all”

*Guy Ryder, ILO Director-General*

In addition to removing the need to obtain an NOC, the adoption of Law No. 19 of 2020 provides greater clarity regarding termination of employment. To terminate an employment contract and change jobs, workers must provide 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.

Minister of Administrative Development, Labour & Social Affairs Yousuf Mohamed Al Othman Fakhroo said, “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.”

Increased labour mobility is expected to provide numerous benefits to Qatar as it transitions towards a knowledge-based economy. Employers will be able to hire experienced staff locally instead of from overseas, thus greatly reducing recruitment costs. Enhanced mobility will also generate more job opportunities and increase job satisfaction for workers.

The introduction of a non-discriminatory minimum wage should directly affect around 400,000 workers in the private sector, and, through higher remittances, will improve the lives of millions of family members in the workers' countries of origin. To ensure compliance with the minimum wage, the government is enhancing detection of violations, enacting swifter penalties and

further strengthening the capacity of inspectors.

Sharan Burrow, General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) said, “This is very good news for migrant workers in Qatar. The leadership shown by Qatar in dismantling the kafala system and introducing a minimum wage is long-awaited news for all workers. The ITUC stands ready to support the Government of Qatar in the implementation of this historic move, to ensure all workers are aware of the new rules and benefit from them. Other countries in the region should follow Qatar’s example.”

Roberto Suárez Santos Secretary-General of the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) said, “These reforms will make a major contribution to the efficiency and productivity of the Qatar labour market. IOE stands ready to support the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Government in supporting employers during this transition. Our congratulations to Qatar and its Chamber of Commerce!”

The ILO has worked closely with Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour & Social Affairs and with employers’ and workers’ organizations to support the adoption and enhancement of laws, policies and procedures relating to labour market mobility and the new minimum wage in Qatar. Further support will be provided for the implementation and enforcement of the new laws.

**Tags:** labour market, minimum wage, discrimination

**Regions and countries covered:** Global, Qatar

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