

## Qatar News Update

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I thought you might be interested in the latest developments regarding the State of Qatar.

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### Qatar Sees Economic Growth & Security

- According to the IMF, Qatar is one of the world's fastest-growing economies, with an annual growth rate >12%.

- Qatar ranked 6<sup>th</sup> out of 63 countries in economic performance last month, showing economic resilience in light of business shutdowns and restrictions due to the global pandemic.
- The International Institute for Management Development's World Competitiveness Yearbook ranked Qatar as the 14<sup>th</sup> best country for competitiveness, outscoring many European countries, the UK, and China.
- Qatar is the safest country in the world with the lowest crime rate (out of 133 countries), according to the Numbeo crime index's 2020 mid-year report, ranking as the number one safest country in the world since 2017, and the number one safest country in the Middle East since 2015.
- Qatar has the highest food security ranking in the Middle East and is ranked 13<sup>th</sup> globally according to the Global Food Security Index.
- Fitch expects Qatar's economy to bounce back in 2021 with an expected growth of 3.4% due to increased business activity as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, the upcoming 2022 FIFA World Cup potential to prompt businesses to expand operations for tourism-driven demand, and with demand increasing for natural gas production as world economies start to reopen after pandemic restrictions are lifted.
- Although the four-country blockade had negative impacts for Qatar, it's also forced accelerated growth in some sectors, causing the country to be much more independent, opening dozens of factories, introducing new laws to encourage FDI, diversifying the economy, expanding the agricultural sector, and brought new focus to renewable energy, technology, tourism, and sporting events.

<https://m.gulf-times.com/story/668059/Qatar-continues-lead-as-world-s-safest-country-Numbeo-Index>

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<https://m.gulf-times.com/story/668525/Fitch-Solutions-more-optimistic-about-Qatar-growth-in-2021>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/newsfeed/2020/06/qatar-food-security-boost-post-blockade-200609125035243.html>

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20200714-qatar-ranked-safest-country-in-the-world-for-sixth-time/>

## Qatar Strengthens Ally Relationships Around the World

- “Since the beginning of the Global War on Terrorism, Qatar has been a steadfast ally, allowing the basing of U.S. forces on their sovereign territory, overflight, and contributing assets and resources in many other ways to our shared goals,” said Chuck Kowalski, a member of the AFCENT coalition interoperability team.
- The U.S. has been pressing Saudi Arabia and the UAE to end their three-year blockade of Qatar, because it forces Qatari aircrafts to use Iranian airspace as they fly into-and-out of the region. With Qatar forced to fly over Iranian airspace, it has to pay “overfly fees” to Iran, plus U.S. soldiers flying to-and-from U.S. bases in Qatar are flying over Iran, a huge source of distress for U.S. leaders.
- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled in Qatar's favor and rejected the appeal, brought by Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the UAE, stating that the International Civil Aviation Authority (ICAO) (U.N.'s international aviation agency) is competent to hear the case on whether the four-country air blockade against Qatar violates the 1944 Convention on Civil Aviation.
- With jurisdiction clarified, the ICAO will hear the case and is expected to make a decision on the air blockade sometime next year.
- U.S. Special Envoy for Iran Brian Hook, stated, “The dispute has continued for too long and it ultimately harms our shared regional interests in stability, prosperity and security... Bringing an end to this dispute really will advance the collective interests of all the parties to this conflict.”
- Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani spoke with Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, U.S. General Mark Milley, where the two discussed strategic cooperation in the areas of defense, the military, and enhancing the security and stability in the region.
- U.S. Secretary of State Pompeo and Qatari Deputy PM and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani recently discussed regional issues, Gulf unity, and Iran's destabilizing effect on the region. U.S. Secretary of State Pompeo thanked the State of Qatar for its recent facilitation of intra-Afghanistan talks.

- The Qatar Emiri Air Force has brokered a deal with the U.S. government to procure a fleet of F-15QA fighter jets, enabling Qatar to protect allied forces (including the U.S.) and allowing the U.S., Qatar, and their coalition partners to conduct missions and ensure security throughout the region.
- Mexico and Qatar recently celebrated 45 years of diplomatic relations. Through a teleconference, the two discussed bilateral relations in education, FDI, science, trade, community development, COVID-19 response, culture, the economy, and the environment, even signing MoUs on direct air services agreements, cultural and artistic agreements, and energy sector agreements.
- In 2019, trade between Qatar and Mexico reached \$111M, 60% growth from 2018.

<https://www.dvidshub.net/news/372798/qatar-emiri-air-force-partners-with-us-gain-newest-f-15-their-fleet>

<https://menafn.com/1100397696/45-years-of-Qatar-Mexico-diplomatic-ties-commemorated-in-virtual-meet>

<https://menafn.com/1100395874/Joint-event-marks-45th-anniversary-of-Qatar-Mexico-diplomatic-relations>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/06/pressing-saudi-uae-airspace-ban-qatar-report-200603203216753.html>

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/07/1068341>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/07/top-court-backs-qatar-air-blockade-row-neighbours-200714140347856.html>

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-gulf-qatar-usa/gulf-dispute-has-gone-on-too-long-us-envoy-says-on-visit-idUSKCN24R0HN>

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20200726-qatar-emir-meets-us-military-chief-in-doha/>

<https://www.state.gov/secretary-pompeo-calls-with-qatari-deputy-prime-minister-and-minister-of-foreign-affairs-mohammed-bin-abdulrahman-al-thani/>

## Humanitarian Aid for Countries in Need

- Qatar has offered an additional \$100M in humanitarian aid to Syria, totaling \$2B in aid for the war-torn country.
- From July-December Qatar Airways Cargo is donating 1M kilos of medical equipment, humanitarian relief, and essential products to charities to supply areas of need.
- Qatar Charity (QC) and the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) completed phase two of the “Printing and Distributing School Textbooks” project in northern Syria, distributing nearly 4M textbooks to 472,925 students last school year, and phase one providing 5.1M textbooks to 600,000 students in northwestern Syria during the 2017-2018 school year. The books covered Arabic, English, Algebra, Geometry, Science, Physics, and Chemistry for both male and female students from grades 1-12.
- The Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) has provided urgent medical equipment and supplies to more than 22 countries to help with the urgent need due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/25/06/2020/Qatar-sends-urgent-medical-aid-to-Belarus>

<https://news.trust.org/item/20200630122739-j0rsk/>

<https://qatarfund.org.qa/en/qatar-charity-qffd-prints-9mn-textbooks-for-children-in-northern-syria/>

<https://www.aviationpros.com/airlines/press-release/21145827/qatar-airways-qatar-airways-cargo-ships-1-million-kilos-for-charities>

## Qatar Shows Strength in Light of Coronavirus

- Although the three-year illegal blockade from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt has been financially, economically, and strategically challenging for Qatar, it prepared the country for the economic hardships of COVID-19, as it went from importing 90% of its goods to becoming increasingly more self-sufficient across the food, agricultural, and industrial sectors by expanding and diversifying local production and supply chains.
- With a diversified economy, strengthened food security, and a decreased reliance on imports, Qatar will be one of the few countries to have a fiscal surplus in 2020.
- In June, the country began a four-phase reopening, with phase 1 allowing some stores to reopen and allowing people to exercise outside without face masks.
- As of July 1<sup>st</sup>, phase 2 allowed the reopening of restaurants, mosques, museums, libraries, beaches and parks with limited hours and occupancy. The public and private sector could bring back up to 50% of employees, with strict safety protocols. However, masks were still required by law in public areas, and social gatherings were still limited to <5 people.

- In phase 3, which started August 1<sup>st</sup>, flights from low-risk countries resumed, and there was a full reopening of shopping centers; however, gyms, pools, and salons are only open with limited capacity.
- In phase 4, beginning September 1<sup>st</sup>, wedding parties and business gatherings will be permitted. At this time, theaters, cinemas, gyms, and salons can fully reopen and resume business. All employees may return to their workplaces but must follow strict health precautions.
- Qatar Airways is requiring economy passengers and crew to wear face masks and face shields onboard. The airline is providing passengers with a complimentary kit of disposable PPE, including: a shield, a mask, gloves, and hand sanitizer. Although business-class and first-class passengers are all provided with PPE kits, they are not required to wear the face masks and shields, as they have more space and privacy in their seating.
- Although Qatar is now allowing citizens and residents to travel in-and-out of the country to low-risk countries, travelers must be tested for COVID-19 upon landing and must sign a pledge to self-quarantine at home for one week, followed by a second COVID-19 test, which, if positive, would require isolation. The low-risk country report will be updated bi-weekly.
- For air travelers traveling from countries not on the list, they must have a “virus-free certificate” from <48 hours before their flight and are required to self-quarantine for a week upon arrival.
- If travelers are coming from an area where they cannot obtain a test from an accredited facility, they’re required to quarantine at a hotel (at their own expense) for a week and must pass a COVID-19 test to leave quarantine. If positive, they will be put into isolation, if negative, they must self-quarantine at home for another week.
- Qatar’s Ministry of Education and Higher Education stated that all public and private schools will begin the 2020-2021 academic year in three stages starting September 1<sup>st</sup> with specific guidelines for how the schools should operate with increased precautions and extra guidelines on cleanliness.
- Stage 1: September 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> schools will operate with the attendance <1/3 of the students for each of the three days, alternating which students are in class on which days.
- Stage 2: September 6<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> schools will alternate students’ attendance in two groups, with half of the students attending classes the first week and doing remote education the following week, while the other half does the opposite schedule.
- Stage 3: From September 20<sup>th</sup> on, all students in public, private, and kindergarten schools will attend in-person classes in schools, taking precautionary measures in accordance with the Ministry of Public Health.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/06/beatng-blockade-qatar-prevailed-siege-200603132131301.html>

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<https://gulfnews.com/world/gulf/qatar/qatar-to-resume-school-classes-in-three-phases-1.72776602>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/07/tests-home-quarantine-qatar-reopens-borders-august-1-200722043415188.html>

## **Qatar Enters the World of Global Sporting Events**

- Qatar has developed state-of-the-art sporting venues and transportation networks as part of its National Vision 2030 and to prepare for the FIFA 2022 World Cup.
- Qatar has submitted its interest in bidding to host the 2032 Olympic Games.
- Qatar’s FIFA World Cup fields are geographically close, allowing fans to attend more than one game a day (there will be four games a day in total). The geographic closeness of the games will remove the need to travel between airports and allow viewers to stay at just one hotel during their stay, as they will not have to travel between games.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/07/qatar-announces-plan-bid-2032-olympic-games-200727084327428.html>

[https://en.as.com/en/2020/07/19/football/1595154471\\_648662.html](https://en.as.com/en/2020/07/19/football/1595154471_648662.html)

<https://www.espn.com/soccer/fifa-world-cup/story/4137041/world-cup-2022-dates-and-times-revealed-as-fifa-announce-four-games-a-day-in-qatar>

All the best,

**Syl Lukis**

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