

**From:** Reuter, Gayle **On Behalf Of** Moran, James  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 12, 2018 4:08 PM  
**To:** Gayle Reuter ([greuter@mwe.com](mailto:greuter@mwe.com)) <[greuter@mwe.com](mailto:greuter@mwe.com)>  
**Subject:** Progress on International Labor Rights

In light of the Congressman's admirable concern over the labor rights of migrant workers internationally, please share the accompanying memo and briefing document regarding progress the State of Qatar recently achieved. Hopefully this might influence other countries in the region to improve their laws with respect to migrant workers as well.

Context

Much of the building and infrastructure construction that has taken place over the last several years in Gulf Coast cities of the Middle East such as Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Riyadh and Doha has employed migrant workers often from depressed Asian economies.

Issues

The US has raised human rights issues with regard to these workers, many of whom have not been allowed to return to their native country without the permission of their employer. There has also been concern that such migrant workers have been disconnected from the citizenry with no hope of ever achieving any permanent residency status.

Response

This month, the State of Qatar responded to such international concerns by allowing migrant workers to leave when they want without permission or permits. It would also make permanent residency available to non-Qatari born residents to include free health care and free education and employment opportunities.

Attached is a briefing memo and document describing legal changes to Qatar's treatment of such migrant workers.

It is hoped that other nations in the region might consider following Qatar's lead with regard to labor rights and their treatment of non-citizens.

Jim

**James P. Moran**

Senior Legislative Advisor  
US Member of Congress  
1991-2015

**McDermott Will & Emery LLP** | The McDermott Building | 500 North Capitol Street, NW | Washington, DC 20001-1531  
Tel +1 202 756 8746 | Fax +1 202 756 8087

[Website](#) | [vCard](#) | [Email](#) | [Twitter](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Blog](#)

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**Briefing Memo**

**Qatar Law No. 13 of 2018**

- On September 4, 2018, the State of Qatar adopted new legislation on migrant labor laws. Through this new law, Qatar seeks to recognize the commitment and hard work of expatriate workers who have for many years supported the nation by contributing to its society and economy.
- This new legislation is a part of the government of Qatar's larger effort to achieve the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030 and provide permanent residency for long-serving residents who meet specific criteria. This legislation is also part of an overall strategy in Qatar to invest in human capital and create a sustainable, knowledge-based economy.
- This new legislation, formally titled Law No. 13 of 2018, amends previous laws that regulates the entry and exit of expatriates. Under the previous framework, every migrant worker in Qatar was required to obtain an exit permit and permission from their employer in order to leave the country. Law No. 13 deems that migrant workers covered by Qatar's Labor Code are free to leave Qatar without such permits and permission from their employer. Employees will no longer be required to notify their employer of their desire to leave Qatar.  
While the legislation only applies to those covered by Qatar's Labor Code, the Government of Qatar anticipates further regulations will soon be announced for those not covered by the Labor Code, such as domestic workers.
- Additionally, article No. 1 of the law outlines the process by which expatriates may apply for permanent residency. Permanent residents will be rewarded with several benefits and privileges, including access to free healthcare, free education, and new investment opportunities. Qatar is the first country in the region to offer permanent residency status to expatriates.
- In order to apply for a permanent residency permit, non-Qatari born residents must have lived at least 20 consecutive years in Qatar at the time of application. Applicants must:
  - Have enough income to cover expenditures for themselves and their families.
  - Be of good behaviour and reputation (clean record).
  - Have a basic knowledge of the Arabic language.
- Exempt from these regulations are:
  - Children of Qatari women married to non-Qataris.
  - Non-Qatari husbands of Qatari women.
  - Expatriate wives of Qatari citizen.
  - Children of naturalized Qataris.
  - Individuals who have served the State of Qatar exceptionally in various fields.
  - Individuals with special capabilities needed by the state.
- Through the introduction of this legislation, Qatar has followed through on its commitments to improve the rights of expatriate workers within its borders. This new law demonstrates the progress that Qatar has made on labor reforms and its position as the region's leader on expatriate workers' rights.

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## **Qatar Law No. 13 of 2018**

### Overview

- On September 4, 2018 the State of Qatar adopted new legislation on migrant labour, which seeks to recognize the commitment and hard work of expatriate workers who have contributed to Qatar's society and economy.
  - The legislation is a milestone for Qatar and the region, and is part of Qatar's work to achieve the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030.
  - Qatar wishes to invest in human capital and create a sustainable, knowledge-based economy, and is working to do so through reforms such as these.
- The new legislation has two primary components as it relates to migrant workers: **exit permit requirements and permanent residency status.**

### Part I: Exit Permits

- Under the previous legal framework, migrant workers in Qatar were required to obtain an exit permit and permission from their employer in order to leave the country.
- Now, migrant workers covered by Qatar's Labour Code are free to leave Qatar without having to obtain such a permit and permission from their employer.
- In order to protect their financial assets, Qatari companies can submit a request to the government naming specific workers for whom a "no objection certificate" would still be required to leave the country. To do so, employers must justify this request based on the nature of the employee's work (maximum of 5% of their workforce).
- **This new law demonstrates the progress Qatar has made on labor reforms and its position as the region's leader on expat workers' rights.**

### Part II: Permanent Residency

- Qatar is the first country in the region to offer permanent residency status, underscoring its position as the most open country in the region.
- Permanent residents will be rewarded with several benefits and privileges, including access to free healthcare, free education, and new investment opportunities.
- In order to do apply for a permanent residency permit, non-Qatari born residents must have lived a minimum of 20 consecutive years in Qatar on a residency permit at the time of application.
  - Applicants must also have enough income to cover expenditures for themselves and their families, should be of good behaviour and reputation, and must not have previously been convicted of a dishonourable offence.
  - Certain individuals may be exempt from these requirements, including individuals who have served the State of Qatar exceptionally in various fields and individuals with special capabilities needed by the state.
- The new legislation demonstrates that Qatar has followed through on its commitments to improve the rights of its expat workers.

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