

## COVID-19 Developments in Qatar

---

May 20, 2020

The Government of Qatar, acting through various ministries and agencies, continues to monitor the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and has implemented a coordinated set of measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The Qatar Supreme Committee for Crisis Management, in its coordinating role, has initiated legislative and regulatory actions to safeguard Qatari citizens, residents and visitors from harm. As of May 20, 2020, the following measures are in effect:

### Travel to Qatar

Only Qatari nationals, their children and spouses, and holders of permanent Qatari residence permits may travel to Qatar, provided that they self-quarantine for a period of 14 days once they arrive in the country. These individuals must provide at least 72 hours' notice to the Qatari Embassies in the countries of departure ahead of their travel. Individuals are still permitted to transit in Qatar if they are traveling to a country other than Qatar. Cargo also remains unaffected.

### Closures

The Qatar Supreme Committee for Crisis Management has announced that all forms of social gathering are banned, including but not limited to those occurring at the Corniche, public parks and beaches. It has also enacted the following measures relating to business closures:

- Certain parts of the Industrial Area are closed;
- Most shops and businesses are shut down, including: cafes; restaurants; schools and other educational and support centers; any location providing art, theatrical or other entertainment; wedding and event services; shoe and watch repair; retail stores; bank branches in malls and shopping centers; salons (including home service); and health clubs.
- The following services are exempt from this limitation: food and supply outlets (including all forms of grocery stores and vegetable sale outlets); restaurants (delivery only); bakeries; pharmacies; offices of telecommunications companies (located in hypermarkets); home maintenance companies (electricity, plumbing, and electronics); petrol stations; factories; clinics (committed to the decision of the Ministry of Public Health); contracting companies operating in the State's projects; companies operating in the hospitality sector; and logistic services companies, freight companies, companies operating in ports and airports, customs services, and any other activities as determined by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

### Enforcement

The Qatari police and other services with appropriate jurisdiction are enforcing applicable laws and regulations through:

- Deploying patrol squads with authority to detain violators;
- Establishing check points across the country; and
- Dedicating a hotline to receive reports and complaints related to any violations.

## Continued

---

Additionally, the Qatar Ministry of Interior has launched a smartphone application, "Ehteraz," which Qatar citizens and residents are required to download on their phones by May 22. Ehteraz will assist in identifying disease transmission chains, alerting individuals and stakeholders to expedite the provision of medical support, and prioritizing testing. Non-compliance can result in criminal and/or civil penalties, including a fine of up to USD 55,000.

## Reduction in Workforce

The Qatar Council of Ministers has decided that no more than 20% of both the public and private sector workforce may work from the workplace. The remaining 80% of the workforce is to work from home/remotely. The following measures have also been implemented:

- The employees who qualify as part of the 20% permitted to work from the workplace may only physically go in for a total of six working hours between 7 a.m. and 1 p.m.
- All meetings held must be done through "modern technical means." If absolutely necessary, a physical meeting may be held but with no more than five people, taking into account the preventive measures determined by the Ministry of Public Health.
- The number of workers who are transported by buses must be reduced to half the capacity on each bus and buses should abide by the Ministry of Public Health precautionary measures.
- Temporary stopping of home services systems provided by cleaning and hospitality companies.
- The following sectors are exempt from the decision: food; pharmacy; delivery; military; security; health and oil and gas sectors; Ministry of Foreign Affairs and diplomatic missions; and government agencies' employees whose work requires their presence, according to what is decided by the head of the competent authority, in addition to workers in major State projects.
- The Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs launched an awareness campaign on April 5, 2020, to educate employers as well as expatriate workers on various procedures in different languages.

## Banks

The Qatar Central Bank is also taking action to relieve the pressure on those industry sectors hit hardest by COVID-19.

- Banks are to permit the postponement of payment of outstanding loan installments and interest for certain industry sectors for a period of six months starting on March 16, 2020.
- By way of a circular, the Qatar Central Bank has stipulated the allocation of a repurchase window with a 0% rate to be used by banks to postpone loan installments or grant new loans, as well as to cancel fees on points of sale and withdrawal fees via ATMs. This does not include personal loans granted with a salary guarantee.
- The Qatar Central Bank has facilitated further transition to electronic banking by requiring banks and money exchange points to offer electronic money transfers abroad and the provision of electronic services to workers.
- Banks are to permit domestic workers to open bank accounts with no minimum amount requirement.

Continued

---

## Assistance to the Private Sector

As part of a 75 billion Qatari riyal stimulus program aimed at providing financial and economic incentives to businesses, the Government of Qatar is directing three billion Qatari Riyals to local banks to guarantee (for a period of up to three years) loans taken by private companies to meet their short-term payment obligations for the next three months, including salaries and rent. The program will be administered by the Qatar Development Bank.

Any organization that is 100% privately owned and incorporated in Qatar with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry may apply, except if such company operates in the real estate or construction/contracting sectors. Furthermore, a personal guarantee is required by all shareholders of the entity holding 10% or more of the shares.

## Amendments to Infectious Disease Law

On March 26, 2020, the Amir HH Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani issued Law No. 9 of 2020 ("new law") amending certain provisions of Law No. 17 of 1990 on Protection from Infectious Diseases ("1990 law"). The 1990 law will still be in effect, subject to those new law amendments.

- The 1990 law defines an "infectious disease" as "a disease transmissible to one individual through contact with another human, animal or insect vector, or through the ingestion of infected or contaminated food, liquids or contact with other contaminated matter." Therefore, an "infectious disease" under the new law is not limited to COVID-19.
- Under Article 3 of the 1990 law, if a person is diagnosed with or suspected of having an infectious disease, the nearest medical center or hospital must be notified immediately and that medical center or the hospital must promptly inform the Department of Preventive Health at the Ministry of Health. No further details are provided under the 1990 law or new law regarding the content of what must be reported. Neither law specifies how this information should be reported to the Qatari authorities.
- The following individuals/entities must report cases of infectious disease: (i) a doctor who examines a person diagnosed with or suspected of having the infectious disease; (ii) the (suspected) infected person or their guardian; (iii) the president of a university, institute or school, or the president's representative (if the (suspected) infected person is a student, employee or faculty member); and (iv) the (suspected) infected person's manager and/or employer if signs of the infection arise at the workplace.

Miller Canfield is prepared to assist you with any concerns you may have regarding the effects of COVID-19 on the Qatar legal landscape. Please contact **Pawel Chudzicki** with further questions.

*This information is based on the facts and guidance available at the time of publication, and may be subject to change.*