

Government Communications Office statement in response to HRW report regarding “The Shura Council Elections”

9 September 2021

The following statement is attributable to a spokesperson from the Government Communications Office of the State of Qatar:

The Shura Council elections are a major step forward in expanding citizen participation in Qatar’s decision-making process. In line with Qatar’s National Vision 2030, the elections aim to strengthen the role of the legislative branch of government and enhance the involvement of citizens in the political process.

Public debates and discussions around the elections have been actively encouraged by the government and a competitive campaign is expected among the eligible candidates.

During the voters’ registration process, a small number of individuals were summoned by the authorities for violating Qatari Law for incitement of hate speech, abusive online behaviour towards voters, and incitement of violence towards law enforcement officers and other members of the general public.

Mechanisms that were put in place to ensure a free and fair election process were not adhered to by some of the individuals. For example, a Voters Committee established to manage complaints that arise during the election process was not used. All complaints are reviewed by the Voters Committee and decisions are made in accordance with the Constitution. If a complaint is rejected by the Voters Committee, it can be referred to The Competent Court of Appeal to resolve the case in a timely manner.

To date, most of the cases have been resolved and no further action has been taken. All individuals were treated fairly and provided protections under procedural due process during the investigations under the laws of Qatar.

The laws governing Shura Council elections are governed by the Permanent Constitution of the State of Qatar, which was promulgated in 2004 and was voted on by an overwhelming majority of the Qatari public in 2003. Any amendments to the laws governing the elections process can be reviewed by the incoming elected Shura Council members.