

Universal Periodical Review

Forth Cycle

47th Working Group

QATAR



Right to Life

Ratification of the Convention on the Prevention and the Punishment of the Crime of Genocide Decriminalization of suicide

8th of April 2024

“From the politics of taking life to the politics of affirming it”

**We understand the right to life as being – for everyone – the full enjoyment of life,
as being the right not to be killed,
as being everyone’s responsibility not to kill or let others die.**

The Center for Global Nonkilling works for the fulfillment of life, individually and universally. It has a unique mission, that is both inspirational for individuals and transformative for societies:

*“To promote change toward the measurable goal of a killing-free world
by means open to infinite human creativity in reverence for life”.*

The Center was founded by various persons, notably by Glenn Paige (1929-2017), Professor of Political Science and author of the book “Nonkilling Political Science”, widely translated¹. We are a worldwide congregation of persons, including scholars and practitioners coming from all walks of life. We use our freedoms, responsibilities and knowledge, our conscience to create societies and institutions that do not kill, enabling all individuals, all institutions and societies to live fulfilled nonkilling lives. Valuing and protecting life is the most enhancing and empowering mission of each and all, of everyone and of all human social groups and institutions². As humans, we are all and shall all be nonkilling centres. As citizens of the future, we are all global. We hereby partake with, sustain our institutions towards the services to life, happiness and well-being, in present time as for the future.

We are all global on our single planet.
May we all be and become nonkilling!

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The Center for Global Nonkilling uses the Universal Periodic Review and its cycles to highlight and follow the implementation of all aspects of life and of the right to life.

Presently, we make three types of UPR submissions:

- A systematic call for *the urgent and universal ratification of the Genocide Convention*.
- A systematic call for *the urgent and universal decriminalization of suicide*.
- On demand, we do a comprehensive *country portrait*³ staging all the domains of life where the People and the concerned States can and shall progress towards fulfilling life and the right to life, valuing and protecting life, avoiding all preventable accidents and injuries⁴.

From conception till death, these living domains of life include the right to be given and to share an enjoyable life, reproductive rights, prenatal and genetic engineering, abortion, infant and maternal mortality and morbidity, birth registration as needed to be legally recognized as a living person fully entitled with rights and duties; deaths caused by road traffic, suicides, homicides and conflicts, deaths occurring at work, in custody, through leisure accidents or because of fires, falls, drownings and poisoning, or by any other preventable cause⁵. We also support leading efforts towards a healthy and happy longevity and in some circumstances, we may survey the right to die⁶.

Due to constrained capacities so far, we do not or rarely address other issues and rights, though they are fully needed to sustain life such as the rights to health, to a safe environment and to fulfilled standards of living. Yet we stand in our dignity and recall that all rights are equal, interlinked, indivisible and mutually reinforcing and that all rights are needed to lead all lives into well-being and happiness, in a peaceful, sustained and sustainable manner.

*To any of these submissions, we may add reflections and demands regarding the Life and Peace Constitutions.
Improvements of our common legal infrastructures favor the status of life and
forward the establishment of comprehensive and encompassing peace policies.*

“Happy people breed a happy world”

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Thank you for your kind support at www.nonkilling.org

Universal Periodic Review of Qatar

We wish a happy UPR to the people and the country of Qatar.

Summary

This is our second submission for Qatar⁷. It deals with:

1. The ratification of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.
2. The decriminalization of suicides.

We recall our other requests made to Qatar during the 3rd cycle still needing to be met:

3. Abolition of the death penalty and ratification of OP-II of CCPR aimed at the abolition of the death penalty.
4. Ratification of the Convention on Enforced Disappearances.

We appeal to the People and the Authorities of Qatar to sustain the roads of change, to rejoice in humanity and its sustainable development, in its participative dignity.

Preventing genocide

Ratification of the Convention on the Prevention and the Punishment of the Crime of Genocide is a commitment to the universality of the human species, to the right to life, to the right of everyone to belong to social groups and to have social relations, as needed to develop our common humanity through happy and thriving collective societies and individual identities.

We congratulate Qatar for supporting all 3 recommendations in previous UPR cycles towards the ratification of the genocide convention⁸ and for supporting the two last resolutions on Genocide Prevention adopted by the Human Rights Council⁹. As Qatar has neither ratified the Rome Statute of the Criminal Court, nor integrated genocide in its penal code¹⁰ as required by the Convention, action needs to be taken to integrate genocide in Qatar's National Legislation. We note however with delight that Qatar has a focal point for the responsibility to protect¹¹.

Awaited for, for soon ten years since first supporting such recommendations, we would like to know and kindly ask if these legal changes and the ratification process are well under way?

Ratification is one of the means needed to prevent and end genocide, allowing humanity to enter an "age of dignity" and to pursue its existence taking itself and all its members, its survival and the well-being of everyone in due account.

Suicide decriminalization

Life is a gift and a responsibility, individually as in common.

Bringing life to happiness and worth, for all, protecting life as required by international law, thus largely preventing and eradicating suicide are chosen and noble goals.

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This decriminalization demand is based on the existence of a penalty in the Qatari Penal code¹². Needs and effects of decriminalization are inferred from the World Health Organization's work on suicide prevention¹³. WHO's latest publication in 2023 specifically addresses the topic: "WHO policy brief on the health aspects of decriminalization of suicide and suicide attempts"¹⁴.

Decriminalization is one of the means needed to attain better suicide prevention, greater respect for the right to life by States.

The Human Rights Council adopted by consensus a resolution calling for non-coercive measures to address mental health issues¹⁵.

Decriminalization serves as an efficient tool to progress and achieve Sustainable Development Goal 3.4.2: "To reduce of a third, by 2030 the number of deaths attributed to suicide"¹⁶.

Preventing suicides is also mentioned in the Human Rights Committee general comment N° 36¹⁷.

Decriminalization of self-inflicted suicide highly helps prevention.

Instead of stigma, it raises awareness and care for life. Instead of secrecy and isolation, it opens safe spaces for health and care for the concerned persons and their relatives, spaces in which to seek for help without fear. It opens avenues for better training and dedication of medical and social teams and personal. Instead of threat and force imposed on already vulnerable and fragile persons, decriminalization adds good will and benevolence to their situation. It transfers otherwise used resources (repression) for information and prevention campaigns, such as hotlines and care centers.

Persons concerned by suicides and attempts will know they can genuinely have access to counsel, help and healing.

Medical personal and other health and social workers will deliver their services honestly, without threat or fear of coercion for the concerned person.

People attempting suicide or having ideation of suicide often express through it a call for help.

This call must be heard and answered. These persons need steady, strong, open and solid support for their existence rather than shame and blame or unpredictable punishment or deprivations. They need to be able to do their resilience and their social integration or reintegration without added burdens.

Decriminalization helps policy makers and the political valuation of life. Though more reporting may occur soon thereafter, decriminalization is proven to be a suicide rate reducing measure¹⁸. It garners accurate reporting and statistics, thus giving adequate tools to the authorities to draw life-saving policies¹⁹. Decriminalization also creates strong motives and incentives for all other life protecting policies, creating a culture of respect for life and of civic cooperation, enabling society to thrive in happiness, more happiness for all its people.

Suicide prevention in Qatar

Data related to suicides in Qatar is available, though neither very recent nor coherent, figures often differ²⁰. Using to the World Health Organization database, the rate of suicides for 100,000 persons is rather low compared to the world's rate: 4.1/100,000 – world rate: = 9.8/100,000. However, in absolute figures, it is still ~ 170 persons who perished at their own hands in 2019 in the country²¹. And if rates have been halved since year 2000, the rate is sadly and to our knowledge stable since 2015. Much more can and shall be done to save lives. As well, more needs to be done to fulfill SDG target 3.4.2 of diminishing suicides by a third. Such accomplishment would see the rate (as provided by WHO and the World Bank) come down

from 4.6 to 2.9/100,000 or to around 120 suicides yearly. Whatsoever, none of these figures take in account the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on suicides²².

Preventive measures.

There is a national official mental health helpline²³. Psychiatric services also provide mental services²⁴. Regarding the official helpline, medical secrecy overruns the illegality of suicide. We still ask this can be coordinated in all situations: decriminalization will lift all ambiguities and stigma.

Decriminalization

Article 304 of the Qatari penal code allows courts to punish persons attempting suicide to up to six months of imprisonment, to pay a fine or both²⁵. The disposition was adopted in 2004. Mostly likely it was present in previous versions of the code. United for Global Mental Health reports that no sentences have been handed down for the period 2016-2022²⁶. We hope this trend to last until decriminalization is accomplished.

During the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Qatar pledge to support the family in tis contribution to achieve SDG 3, which includes reduction of suicides. Family sound and caring environment is essential to suicide prevention and attempts recovery²⁷.

Suicide decriminalization in other countries

India decriminalized in 2017²⁸, Nepal in 2018²⁹, Guyana³⁰ and Pakistan in 2022³¹, Malaysia in 2023³². Ireland started its prevention strategy by decriminalizing in 1993.

They are to our knowledge around 30 countries in the world still in need to do so. Qatar is listed on the two lists we have regarding the countries still in need of doing this decriminalization³³.

We strongly recommend to the authorities of Qatar:

- 1) **To revise the Penal Code to integrate the crime of genocide.**
- 2) **To ratify the Genocide convention.**
- 3) **To revise the Penal Code to decriminalize suicide.**
- 4) **To adopt all other accurate measures to prevent suicides and to protect life.**
- 5) **To clarify and unify suicide data collection.**

**We greatly thank the authorities of Qatar
for further successes in the implementation of these endeavors.**

*Calling on each and every one to create a nonkilling world.
A world where life can be lived happily,
A life which can be universally and infinitely sustained on Earth,
We welcome the delegations of Qatar to Geneva,
A City of Peace.*

*We wish to all the people of Qatar,
And to their Authorities
A successful Universal Periodic Review,
A rewarding, constructive and fulfilling life.*

¹ <http://nonkilling.org/center/publications-media/books-translations>

² <http://nonkilling.org/center/how-to-help>

³ All our UPR submissions are or will be available here: <https://nonkilling.org/center/nonkilling-monitoring-programs/nonkilling-activity-at-the-un>

⁴ Shall you wish to see done such a scan of your own country's status of life and the right to life or done for any other country, please contact our office, the author of this submission, or our UN team.

⁵ For most of causes of death, statistics and efficient preventive methods exist.

The Universal Periodic Review cycles and the Sustainable Development Goal's (SDG) Voluntary National Reports (VNR) largely allow for a regular follow up of progresses made.

⁶ Here is an WHO updated statistic overview of causes of death due to injury and violence (2019-2022):

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240047136>

⁷ Our previous submission is here: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/uprqa-stakeholders-info-s33>

⁸ 3rd cycle: Ukraine. 2nd cycle, Armenia and France.

⁹ A/HRC/49/9 and A/HRC/55/L.16

¹⁰ <https://www.almeezan.qa/LawPage.aspx?id=26&language=en>

¹¹ <https://www.globalr2p.org/resources/members-of-the-global-network-of-r2p-focal-points/>

¹² The code as we know it, as retrieved on April 5th 2024, in English on the website of the Qatari Ministry of Justice.

<https://www.almeezan.qa/LawPage.aspx?id=26&language=en>.

¹³ WHO country guide: “LIVE LIFE: An implementation guide for suicide prevention in countries”, 2021. Quoted “Who. Live

life”, <https://www.who.int/publications-detail-redirect/9789240026629>. Various mentions of decriminalization with examples of successes and effects are found therein.

See also WHO: “National suicide prevention strategies. Progress, examples and indicators”, 2018.

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/national-suicide-prevention-strategies-progress-examples-and-indicators>

A WHO general overview on suicide (WHO news-room on suicide): <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/suicide>

All WHO publications on suicides: <https://www.who.int/publications/?healthtopics=1822c912-624e-414c-aa36-7fac6c6958e9,d96f810d-4734-477f-829e-3b8a4cfd2909,94489630-4c06-4ff1-91cf-3d15b824556d>

Suicide prevention day, 10th of September yearly: <https://www.who.int/campaigns/world-suicide-prevention-day/2022>

¹⁴ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240078796>

¹⁵ Qatar is presently a member of the Council and was at the time of adoption of this resolution: session 52,

https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/52/L.15, operative paragraph 5.

¹⁶ Text of the Goal is here summarized for direct understanding, the complete version reads:

Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

Target 3.4: By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being. *Emphasize added.*

Indicator 3.4.2: Number of Deaths Attributed to Suicide.

<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal3>

¹⁷ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/general-comment-no-36-article-6-right-life>

¹⁸ United for Mental Health: “Decriminalising Suicide: Saving Lives, Reducing Stigma”, 2021, p.5.

<https://unitedgmh.org/knowledge-hub/its-time-to-decriminalise-suicide-reducing-stigma-and-saving-lives/>.

Wu KC-C, Cai Z, Chang Q, *et al.* “Criminalisation of suicide and suicide rates: an ecological study of 171 countries in the world”, 2022. *BMJ Open* 2022;12:e049425. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2021-049425

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8860012>

¹⁹ WHO, “Suicide prevention: a global imperative”, 2014, p. 51. It clearly shows that rates will only be accurate if suicides are decriminalized, even if they may rise in the beginning because decriminalization increases reporting.

²⁰ Every life counts.

Data may differ (even within UN or related bodies) and they are limitations to suicide reporting as stigma, social and legal regulations and delays may impede the quality of reporting. We do our best to find various sources of data and to cross them accurately, but do not always have the time and means needed to contact delegations or local authorities to collect firsthand information. Foremost, what is important is the preservation of life, as sound and updated the reporting may however be.

2019: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240026643>, p. 24.

2019: <https://apps.who.int/gho/data/view.main.MHSUICIDE15TO19v>

Others: <https://www.worldlifeexpectancy.com/cause-of-death/suicide/by-country/>

<https://donnees.banquemondiale.org/indicateur/SH.STA.SUIC.MA.P5?locations=QA>

Every life counts.

²¹ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240026643>, p. 24.

²² There is a collective study on the use of the State helpline during Covid: “Management of suicide and self-harm risk by the National Mental Health Helpline in the State of Qatar”, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10228208/>

²³ <https://sportandhealth.moph.gov.qa/EN/faninfo/Pages/Support.aspx#:~:text=National%20Mental%20Health%20Helpline%E2%80%8B%E2%80%8B&text=Call%2016000%2C%20select%20Arabic%20or,for%20the%20mental%20health%20helpline.>

²⁴ <https://www.marhaba.qa/mental-health-services-in-qatar/>

²⁵ Penal code of Qatar: “Article 304. Anyone who tries to commit suicide but using, executing any actions that usually lead to death is convicted to no more than six months in prison and to a fine of no more than three thousand riyals, or to one of these two penalties.”. <https://www.almeezan.qa/LawPage.aspx?id=26&language=en>.

See also: United for mental health: “Decriminalising Suicide: Saving Lives, Reducing Stigma”, 2021, p. 28-29.

<https://unitedgmh.org/knowledge-hub/its-time-to-decriminalise-suicide-reducing-stigma-and-saving-lives/>

²⁶ United for Mental Health: “Decriminalising Suicide: Saving Lives, Reducing Stigma”, 2021, p.55

<https://unitedgmh.org/knowledge-hub/its-time-to-decriminalise-suicide-reducing-stigma-and-saving-lives/>

²⁷ Pledge n° 6. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/human-rights-75/pledge/human-rights-75-pledges>

²⁸ “Who. Live life”, p. 22.

²⁹ “Who. Live life”, p. 14.

³⁰ Which had one the world’s highest rate. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2023/9/10/from-ghana-to-guyana-hope-mounts-in-fight-against-suicide-criminalisation>

³¹ Same article and numerous other press accounts.

³² <https://time.com/6290858/malaysia-suicide-decriminalization-mental-health/>

³³ United for Mental Health: “Decriminalising Suicide: Saving Lives, Reducing Stigma”, 2021, p.3. lists all countries where this decriminalization is still, to our knowledge, required, to the exception of Pakistan that did so on the 23rd of December 2022.

<https://unitedgmh.org/knowledge-hub/its-time-to-decriminalise-suicide-reducing-stigma-and-saving-lives/>

See also the “WHO policy brief on the health aspects of decriminalization of suicide and suicide attempts”, page 2, footnote 1.

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240078796>.

Though not official, Wikipedia holds a list of suicide legislation: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suicide_legislation