

Qatar Crisis – Report (January 2018)

1. Qatar Crisis - what is it all about?

The Qatar diplomatic crisis began in June 2017 when a number of middle eastern countries, including Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, severed their diplomatic ties with the State of Qatar in a statement against Qatar’s “support for terrorist organisations” and “interference in the domestic politics of neighbouring states”.

While certain countries demoted their relationship with Qatar, others took a stronger approach and imposed restrictions on the movement of individuals.

The crisis has resulted in increased restrictions on people’s mobility within the Gulf, primarily to and from Qatar, due to the closure of land and marine borders and airspaces as well as the embassies withdrawing their staff.

2. Where are we now?

Over six months have passed since the start of the Qatar crisis and it appears the situation is far from being resolved:



Land and marine borders with Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates remain closed



Airspaces of Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates remain closed for aircrafts originating from Qatar, although nine emergency corridors exist



Key embassies in the region remain closed, including the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Doha



Travel restrictions continue to impact citizens and residents of the countries involved in the crisis and beyond



Relationship between Kuwait, Oman and Qatar remains unchanged

3. Recent immigration updates

July 2017:

Qatar initiated the expansion of its visa on arrival program by facilitating entry to over 70 nationalities.

August 2017:

Qatar restored diplomatic ties with Iran.

August 2017:

Further expansion of Qatar’s visa on arrival program to over 80 nationalities in total.

November 2017:

Bahrain imposed entry visas for Qatari citizens.

4. What are the existing mobility restrictions?



Travelling to Bahrain:

- Qatari citizens are subject to a pre-arranged entry visas to Bahrain that must be applied for through the online portal. A supporting letter specifying the reasons for the visit and contact details of the applicant and the host in Bahrain must be provided for the adjudication process. In practice, visas are issued only in exceptional circumstances, e.g., due to family ties.
- Foreign nationals holding a residence permit for Qatar are required to obtain a pre-arranged entry visa even if they qualify for a visa on arrival based on their nationality. The visa must be applied for through the online portal. A supporting letter specifying the reasons for the visit and contact details of the applicant and the host in Bahrain must be provided along with a copy of a valid residency permit for Qatar.
- Foreign nationals who are not residents in Qatar and are eligible for a visa on arrival based on their nationality are not affected.
- Foreign nationals entering Bahrain with immigration stamps from Qatar may be delayed and the individuals may be subject to questioning.



Travelling to Qatar:

- Citizens of Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are not subject to an entry ban imposed by the State of Qatar, however they are restricted on travel to Qatar by their own governments.
- Foreign nationals holding a residence permit issued in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia or the United Arab Emirates are eligible for visitor visas for GCC residents in Qatar. They can also travel without restrictions based on other visa categories.
- Egyptian nationals are in practice not eligible for any categories of visas for Qatar.



Travelling to Saudi Arabia:

- Qatari citizens are banned from entering Saudi Arabia.
- Foreign nationals holding a residence permit for Qatar can travel without restrictions based on the respective categories of Saudi visas. Due to the closure of the Saudi Arabian embassy in Doha, foreign nationals must apply for visas from their home countries (Saudi Arabian diplomatic missions in third countries do not accept visa applications to non-residents or citizens of those countries).
- Foreign nationals holding immigration stamps from Qatar can travel to Saudi Arabia without restrictions.



Travelling to the United Arab Emirates:

- Qatari citizens are banned from entering the United Arab Emirates.
- Foreign nationals holding a residence permit for Qatar are not eligible for visitor visas for GCC residents in the United Arab Emirates but can travel without restrictions based on other visa categories.
- Foreign nationals holding immigration stamps from Qatar can travel to Saudi Arabia without restrictions.

5. Are there any exceptions?

The governments of Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have issued directives to take into consideration the humanitarian situation of families with Qatari ties and may facilitate travel to the respective countries at their own discretion.

The following telephone numbers have been announced for affected individuals, who may contact the authorities to discuss their case:

- **(+973) 173-99-821 – Bahrain**
- **(+966) 112-409-111 – Saudi Arabia**
- **(+971) 800-26-26 – UAE**

6. What is the impact on the businesses operating in the region?

- Employment of Qatari citizens in Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates continues to be highly restricted.
- Qatari businessmen and investors, including property owners, are restricted from operating in the blocking countries.
- Business travels must be planned ahead of time taking into account the potential need of pre-arranged visas, including the home country application process for countries with embassies being closed.
- Travel time between Qatar and the blocking countries has increased as a result of lack of direct flights; visitors are required to travel through a third-country e.g., Oman or Kuwait.
- Financial transactions between the United Arab Emirates and Qatar have been undergoing additional security checks by banks, although with no delays to the service.
- Closed borders have caused difficulty in the import and export of goods and produce to and from Qatar, including food, construction supplies and courier parcels.

7. What can you do now?

- Identify nationalities among your employee population that may be subject to potential entry or residency restrictions in Qatar. This should include the nationals of countries which have severed diplomatic relations with Qatar, mainly Egyptians and their dependants.
- Prepare a strategy for re-deployment, should there be any additional restrictions or sanctions imposed by the countries involved.
- Consider amending your corporate documents, including business licenses, in order to avoid potential problems with the availability of authorised signatories.
- Constantly monitor the situation with the support of Fragomen.

8. References to news flashes, Fragomen blog, etc.

- Read our previous report issued in August 2017 for more information on the Qatar crisis.
- Visit the [Fragomen website](#) for more information on the immigration developments in Qatar and in the region.

The screenshot displays the Fragomen Knowledge Center interface. On the left, a dark navigation menu features the Fragomen logo and 'WORLDWIDE IMMIGRATION SOLUTIONS' tagline. Below the 'Knowledge Center' heading, a brief description states: 'Fragomen is both local and global. We invest time and resources being a part of our communities and gaining contextual cultural knowledge.' A call to action reads: 'Check here for our latest local activities, insights, emerging trends, and information as it relates to immigration in your community and around the world.' A grid of icons links to various content types: Immigration Alerts, Blog, Social, Publications, Country Summaries, Immigration Links, Video, Events, Why Fragomen?, and Fragomen. At the bottom of the menu, it lists 'Attorney Advertising | Legal Notices | Privacy Policies | Our Organization'.

The main content area shows a blog post dated 2017-06-14 titled 'Diplomatic Crisis: What are Your Options for UAE/Qatar Movement?' by Oriagh Mailey. The post text begins: 'The diplomatic crisis with Qatar has become a talking point for many in recent days as the number of participating countries has risen to thirteen. While some countries have downgraded their relationship with Qatar, others have taken a more serious approach and have imposed an entry ban against Qatari citizens. Both businesses and individuals alike have been expressing their concerns over how to best accommodate those affected as the consequences are felt globally.'

The text continues: 'Qatar's land, sea and air borders remain shut to travel to and from countries participating in the travel ban, and the embassies of countries involved have been gradually removing their staff from Qatar. This has resulted in limited mobility within the Gulf, especially when travelling to and from Qatar. Although there is no flexibility available for Qatari nationals (with the exception of those with mixed families), who are currently prohibited from travelling to the'