

**NHRC Statement No. (07/2018)****On****The announcement by Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Hajj and Umrah**

The National Human Rights Committee of the State of Qatar reviewed the media reports on the announcement by Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Hajj and Umrah welcoming Qataris and residents of Qatar to perform Umrah rituals.

The National Human Rights Committee considers that this announcement does not break any new ground and that the Saudi authorities are still practicing evasion to mislead the Gulf and international public opinion regarding the right of Qataris and residents in Qatar to perform religious rites, by issuing statements that attempt to improve its image and help appear as collaborators despite the fact that these announcements don't have any perceptible effect on the ground.

This clearly affirmed the continuation of the politicization of religious rites in violation of Article (18) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article (18) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article (30) of the Arab Charter on Human Rights, and article (6) of the human Rights Declaration for the Member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). This recent announcement by the Saudi authorities is considered as a new maneuver after growing the voices of those condemning the committed violations.

The National Human Rights Committee recalls the complaints submitted by some of those who tried to visit Mecca to perform Umrah rituals during the year, where they were questioned, treated in humiliating ways, and returned to wherever they came from, and renews its previous demands to enable citizens and residents in the State of Qatar to perform their religious rites, especially that there is only two months left till the season of Hajj, including the following:

- The need for coordination between the Saudi authorities and the Ministry of endowment and Islamic Affairs of Qatar to reach to clear and specific mechanisms to facilitate Hajj and Umrah procedures for Qataris and residents in Qatar.
- Opening the electronic registration portal for pilgrims from the State of Qatar, and granting them visas through the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in Doha.
- Opening the land border crossing between the two countries, taking into account humanitarian cases, and low-income individuals.
- Opening direct flights back and forth between the State of Qatar to Saudi Arabia for those wishing to perform Hajj and Umrah rituals.
- Allowing the flow of remittances between campaigns, Hajj and Umrah service providers in Qatar, Hajj and Umrah agents in Saudi Arabia, and permitting the Qatari currency to float freely in Saudi Arabia.

The National Human Rights Committee welcomes the international positions and the urgent appeal issued by the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief, and Amnesty International's statement issued on 5 June 2018 on the prevention of pilgrims from the State of Qatar from performing religious rituals, and considers these positions as an important step in bringing the file to the international human rights mechanisms of the United Nations.

The NHRC also calls on international organizations to intensify efforts to lift the injustice of pilgrims and to prevent the politicization of religious rites and their use as a political leveraging tool.

In light of the silence of the regional mechanisms of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the League of Arab States, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Muslim World League, the National Human Rights Committee shall continue its international efforts to condemn, and hold accountable the Saudi authorities for these violations and shall spare no effort to resort to all legal procedures for their prosecution for the psychological damage caused to individuals and material losses incurred by campaigns.

**21 Ramadan 1439**  
**06 June 2018**  
**Doha, Qatar**

