

## NDI and Qatar

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### NDI HISTORY

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), a nonprofit organization established in 1983, conducts nonpartisan international programs to help promote, maintain, and strengthen democratic institutions. NDI programs are supported by the National Endowment for Democracy, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and private donations.

### PROGRAM HISTORY

In November 2006, staff of the National Democratic Institute visited Qatar to initiate discussions with members of the Qatari government and civil society to explore opportunities to further Qatar's democratic institutions. During these meetings, Qataris expressed their eagerness to be prepared for the upcoming municipal elections and future Shura Council elections. As a result of these discussions, NDI, in consultation with the Permanent Elections Committee (PEC), conducted a series of trainings in advance of the April 1, 2007 Central Municipal Council (CMC) elections. These sessions provided twenty-seven prospective municipal council candidates from across the political spectrum with exposure to the skills necessary to wage effective and credible campaigns. Two weeks prior to the CMC elections, NDI staff returned to Qatar for follow-up consultations with candidates to provide feedback on campaign strategies, materials, and voter outreach efforts. As a result of the training sessions, candidates developed new and innovative approaches for their campaigns, which included forming a coalition to share campaign resources and voter outreach strategies. Four of the candidates who participated in the training sessions were elected to seats on the CMC.

Shortly after the municipal council elections, NDI facilitated a roundtable discussion with Qatari journalists aimed at enhancing their abilities to cover electoral and political processes in the country. The roundtable, conducted in partnership with the PEC and the Dar Al Sharq Centre for Information, Training and Studies (Darinfo), sought to identify lessons learned from coverage of the CMC elections and to develop strategies to cover future parliamentary elections. Journalists expressed an interest in having a more direct relationship and line of communication with election officials in order to receive accurate information regarding electoral procedures.

### CIVIC EDUCATION PROGRAM

Building on previous partnerships during the journalist roundtable and CMC candidate workshops, the PEC approached NDI about designing a joint civic education training program. Launched in October 2007, this 13-month, multi-faceted collaborative program is designed to enhance citizen awareness of the Qatari electoral process, promote understanding of the roles and responsibilities of an elected Shura Council, and encourage voter participation on election day. The multi-stage program will develop materials and strategies for the country-wide program, as well as provide advanced training for a core cadre of PEC staff and volunteers to serve as facilitators for this and future programs designed in collaboration with the PEC.



For more information about NDI's programs in Qatar, please contact:

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## **Introduction to the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs**

Founded in 1983, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that works to strengthen and expand democracy worldwide. Recognizing that democracy depends on active citizens, legislatures that represent citizens and oversee the executive, independent judiciaries that safeguard the rule of law, political parties that are open and accountable, and competitive elections that allow voters to choose freely, NDI works to bolster institutions and processes that allow democracy to flourish. Headquartered in Washington, DC and with 61 country offices on five continents, NDI has conducted democratic development programs in more than 100 countries around the world. By promoting and exchanging best practices and lessons learned among organizations, NDI seeks to create global networks of activists committed to building political and civic organizations, safeguarding elections, and promoting citizen participation, openness, and accountability in government. The Institute receives funding to carry out its mission from a variety of sources, including the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), international organizations, international financial institutes, and other donor agencies and private foundations.

## **NDI's Geographic Presence throughout the Middle East and North Africa Region (MENA)**

Recognizing that the MENA region includes countries with great disparities in wealth, education, and colonial experiences, NDI shapes its programs to meet the needs of local democrats and governing conditions. NDI organizes its operation in the MENA region into four geographic regions: the Maghreb (covering North Africa), the Levant (responsible for Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and the West Bank/Gaza), the Gulf (working with the six Gulf Cooperation Countries as well as Yemen), and Iraq, with a dedicated presence supporting the growth of democratic institutions in post-war Iraq. Through its close ties to local democrats and like-minded local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), as well as the Institute's global network of experts, NDI can rapidly respond to changing situations and launch new project initiatives in countries where no other organizations dedicated to democratic development have a presence. Currently, NDI operates 15 field offices in 11 MENA countries.