



DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION POLICY
Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR)
(Final as of May 2024, Reviewed October 2025)

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1. Policy statement

The Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR) acknowledges the diverse backgrounds, personal identities, and unique experiences of its employees, collaborators, beneficiaries and partners. We are dedicated to honouring and embracing these diversities within our work environment. Our policy is designed to foster values of diversity and inclusion among all members of the GCHR team, including staff, beneficiaries, members, and collaborators, to cultivate an atmosphere that celebrates differences.

Through this policy, we pledge to uphold principles of equity and to combat any form of discrimination, ensuring the protection of every individual's dignity regardless of gender identity, race, ethnicity, age, religion, sexual orientation, physical ability, mental health, or nationality.

GCHR maintains a strict zero-tolerance stance against all types of discrimination and workplace misconduct. To support our commitment to fostering an equitable and inclusive organisation, we have established comprehensive guidelines and procedures outlined in our Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

2. Mission, vision and values

Our vision is: To have vibrant civic spaces in the Middle East region where human rights are fully respected and human rights defenders, including journalists and Internet activists, can work free from oppression and fear.

Our mission is: GCHR is an independent, non-profit and non-governmental organisation that provides support and protection to human rights defenders in the MENA countries in order to promote human rights, including but not limited to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.

Our values:

We believe in:

Justice: We call for fairness in a just society where human rights are respected and impunity for human rights violations is overcome by holding all perpetrators accountable.

Equality: We respect everyone's right to be treated equally in terms of rights, status and opportunities, regardless of any differences. We are guided by the principles of non-discrimination and gender equality.

Freedom: We believe that everyone should be free from any form of oppression and that voices of people who engage in peaceful protest must not be silenced.

Safety: We aim to establish safe spaces and maintain a secure environment for human rights defenders to ensure well-being, as well as physical and digital security.

Solidarity: We support a culture of trust and exchange among human rights defenders to build a stronger and more collaborative network throughout our region.

We work with:

Integrity: We are adamant about being credible and trustworthy. We are bound by impact-oriented processes and the highest ethical standards.

Independence: We do not take funds from governments in the countries in which we work, or any party that may compromise our values.

Cooperation: We cooperate with all local, regional and international partners through networking and complementary efforts to promote and protect human rights for all.

Learning: We include evaluation in all our activities, and survey the human rights defenders in our community to best assess their needs.

3. Purpose

This policy's purpose is to:

- a. Provide equality, fairness and respect for all employees, freelancers, consultants, suppliers, stakeholders and beneficiaries we work with.
- b. Ensure a safe work environment free from any form of discrimination based on (includes but not limited to):
 - age
 - physical ability
 - mental health
 - gender marriage and civil partnership
 - parental status (including pregnancy and maternity)
 - race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin)
 - religion or belief
 - sex
 - gender or sexual identity
 - sexual orientation
- c. Oppose and avoid all forms of discrimination. This includes but is not limited to:
 - fees
 - terms and conditions of engagement
 - dealing with grievances
 - dismissal
 - leave for parents
 - requests for flexible working
 - selection training or other developmental opportunities

4. Scope

This policy extends to all members of the GCHR team, including full-time employees, freelancers, part-time consultants, trainers, beneficiaries, volunteers and interns, short-term contributors, partner organisations, and other collaborators.

All team members and collaborators will receive notification of the implementation of this policy and are expected to adhere to its guidelines.

This policy addresses various forms of workplace misconduct that contravene the values of Diversity and Inclusion. For further information on workplace abuse, please consult Section 6.

5. Key Definitions

Diversity refers to the visible and invisible differences between individuals. These differences can be related to gender identity, age, race, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, mental health, physical disability, civil status, personal legal and housing status, marital status, cultural views, level of education, spoken language and life experiences.

Gender refers to the behavioural, cultural and psychological characteristics that are socially constructed, and often associated with a person's sex at birth. Gender is a spectrum, is different from sex and involves a variety of gender identities that include - but is not limited to - women, men and non-binary.

Discrimination is any direct or indirect unequal treatment of a person based on their personal identity (age, sex, gender, religion, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, education, social class, marital status, etc.)

Harassment or bullying is any form of unwanted conduct related to any of the above listed discriminatory grounds that has the effect of causing undue stress on individuals and/or demotivating them.

Sexual harassment is any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

Equity is about recognising that not all people start from the same place, and it is different from equality. Whereas equality is about treating people in an equal manner, equity is about providing each individual with the individually needed tools to access the same opportunities; it is about recognising that we do not all start from the same place and must acknowledge and make adjustments to imbalances.

Social equity refers to the concept of fairness and justice in terms of access to wealth, opportunities, and resources. It's about creating a level playing field where everyone has an equal chance to succeed, regardless of their background or circumstances.

Equality is about ensuring that every individual is being treated equally, especially in status, rights, or opportunities.

Intersectionality is the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, sex and gender, and other dimensions of identity as they apply to a given individual or group, creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. Intersectionality recognizes the multiple ways in which people are often disadvantaged by multiple sources of oppression.

6. Safe Working environments

This policy aims to eliminate all types of abuse, discrimination and oppression that exists in the workplace to maintain a safe and inclusive professional environment. Working environment is defined as the GCHR's offices, events (virtual or in-person) and any interaction on a digital platform.

Please refer also to **GCHR's Protection Against Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, Harassment and Discrimination Policy** [here](#).

Below is a list of types of behaviours that violate Diversity and Inclusion values:

6.1 Discrimination

Discrimination is the unjust or prejudicial treatment of individuals or groups of people.

Racial discrimination is the unjust or prejudicial treatment of people based on their race, skin colour, ancestry, origin country, or citizenship. Even attributes of a certain ethnicity - such as hair texture, skin colour, accent, food, customs, beliefs, holidays or celebrations, fashion style - may be the cause of racial discrimination.

Gender discrimination is a discriminatory behaviour towards a person based on their gender expression. It can happen to cisgendered women or men (people whose gender identity matches that they were assigned at birth), trans women or men, and non-binary.

Religious discrimination is a discriminatory behaviour towards a person based on their religious beliefs, and it is often intersectional with racial discrimination.

Ability-based discrimination is a type of workplace discrimination directed towards individuals who either live with a physical or mental disability, are acquainted with a person with a disability or use disability services.

Sexual orientation-based discrimination is a discriminatory behaviour towards a person or a group of people based on sexual orientation. Sexual orientation-based discrimination can happen to all people of all sexual orientations.

Age-based discrimination is a discriminatory behaviour towards a person based on their age.

6.2 Harassment (sexual, physical, personal, psychological)

Sexual harassment is an unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature that violates a person's dignity and makes them feel degraded, humiliated, intimidated or threatened.

It is important to emphasise that, no matter the intention, the person on the receiving end of the behaviour decides if it is unwanted. This is regardless of the intention of the person accused of harassment.

Sexual harassment can be ongoing or a one-time occurrence.

Sexual harassment can be:

- **Physical** – someone uses physical pressure or force to have sexual contact with another person against their will;
- **Verbal** - someone gives another person unwanted sexual attention through verbal or written comments or conversation;
- **Non-verbal** – someone gives another person unwanted sexual attention through noises or actions at a distance.

Physical harassment is workplace violence that includes physical attacks and/or threats. This type of harassment can be classified as assault in certain cases.

Personal harassment is a type of workplace harassment that is not based on a person's protected characteristics (race, gender, sexual orientation, religion). It often targets a person's work, personality, body size or appearance. It is a form of bullying.

Psychological harassment is a type of harassment that targets a person's well-being. Psychological harassment often aims to put people down and belittle them on a personal or professional level, and has a serious negative impact on a person's well-being and mental health.

6.3 Bullying or power harassment (online and offline)

Bullying or power harassment is a type of workplace harassment that includes attempts to prove or increase disparity between the harasser and the victim. Power harassment happens when a person bullies another person who has a lower hierarchical work position. Bullying or power harassment is often psychological.

7. Management and delivery of this policy

Ensuring compliance with the Diversity and Inclusion Policy is the shared responsibility of every individual within the GCHR team.

The leadership at GCHR is dedicated to integrating diversity and inclusion into our daily operations.

This policy will be disseminated to all staff members, freelancers, partners, collaborators, and beneficiaries through various communication channels, including but not limited to sharing it during workshops and events.

GCHR's team members will receive comprehensive training to ensure they grasp their obligation to refrain from discrimination and to treat all individuals with dignity and respect. They will also be provided with support to address and overcome unconscious biases, stereotypes, and personal prejudices that may hinder the creation of an inclusive professional environment.

The Diversity and Inclusion Policy will be reviewed annually by senior management staff to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness, with updates made as necessary. It will then be shared with all staff and Board members and approved by the GCHR team.

8. Reporting mechanisms

All GCHR team members, as well as long-term full time and part-time consultants, partners, beneficiaries and activities' participants are encouraged to report if they have been abused at work or during any of GCHR activities, both offline and online, or witnessed someone else facing workplace abuse. All reports will be taken seriously and will be dealt with sensitively, consistently, and fairly, respecting the rights of all parties involved. In some circumstances, it may be necessary to bring in external assistance or expertise to ensure a fair, impartial and objective investigation.

Please refer also to **GCHR's Protection Against Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, Harassment and Discrimination Policy** [here](#).

8.1 Who can make a complaint

All GCHR team members, long-term consultants, freelancers, partners, beneficiaries and activities' participants have a right to complain if they or someone else is facing workplace abuse or discrimination. Workplace abuse or discrimination can be reported by:

1. The person who has been abused or discriminated against
2. A witness to the abuse or discrimination

If someone reports to you an incident of workplace abuse, you should encourage him/her to report this to the Executive Director, the Deputy Director, or the Finance Manager, as GCHR does not currently have a human resources manager.

8.2 Who handles workplace abuse complaints

GCHR will designate a staff person for dealing with workplace abuse and discrimination cases with the support of GCHR's Executive Director, the Deputy Director or the Finance Manager.

Any GCHR team member, long-time consultant, beneficiary, partner or participant can make a complaint to the designated staff person, the Executive Director, the Deputy Director, or the Finance Manager. They can also make a complaint to any person with responsibility in GCHR, including an immediate manager.

Each of these individuals should refer the complaint to the designated person, or the Finance Manager, who will put the complaint on the record.

8.3 Reporting procedures

General note on investigations:

Those responsible for investigating complaints should consider all available evidence, including any surrounding evidence, and make their finding on the balance of probabilities.

It is important to note that even if there is not enough evidence for a complaint to be substantiated, it does not mean that the discrimination did not occur or that the complainant is a liar.

Sequence of events

Step 1 – Complaint on workplace abuse or discrimination made

- A verbal or written complaint is made about abuse experienced at GCHR or any related event.
- The complaint is made to a person with responsibility in GCHR (defined above).
- Whoever receives the complaint informs the designated person for workplace abuse and discrimination cases at GCHR.

Step 2 – Complaint received

- The designated staff person contacts or requests a meeting with the person making the complaint.
- If the complaint was verbal, the designated staff person will make a written note of the complaint and share a copy with the person making the complaint to:
 - Inform them of their rights, the process going forward and answer any questions;
 - Explain about confidentiality and what it means for them and the person they are accusing;
 - Explain what the potential professional and legal consequences will be for the person they are accusing if a case is found;
 - Explain what support is available to them and ascertain what support they might want or need;
 - Put the above in writing.
- The designated staff person contacts or calls a meeting with the person accused of workplace abuse or discrimination and:
 - Informs them about the case against them;
 - Informs them of their rights (including their right to respond) and the process going forward and answers any questions;
 - Explains about confidentiality and what it means for them and the person who is accusing them;
 - Explains what the potential professional and legal consequences will be for them if a case is found;
 - Puts the above in writing.
- An incident file is opened.
- A small number of senior management are informed about the case: the Executive Director, the Deputy Director and the Finance Manager.

Step 3 – Investigation

- Interviews are conducted with:

- The person being abused or discriminated against;
- The person being accused of workplace abuse or discrimination;
- Any witnesses or third parties.

- The Finance Manager will represent GCHR alongside a designated board member in any meeting or interview. If any of these parties are implicated either as a complainant or accused, GCHR's Executive Director may represent GCHR. Where appropriate, an external, non-partisan HR expert will also be engaged to advise on proceedings.

- Written statements are taken from:

- The person facing abuse or discrimination;
- The person being accused of abuse or discrimination;
- Any witnesses or third parties;
- The facts of the case are compiled, including diaries and evidence collated by the person facing abuse or discrimination and any counter evidence from the person being accused.

- A confidential record is kept of all information relating to the case, including all discussions and communication with all parties.

- Confidentiality of all parties is safeguarded.

Step 4 – Decision and Outcome

- GCHR (represented by the Finance Manager or Executive Director) decides whether or not workplace abuse has happened, based on the facts and evidence compiled.

- GCHR decides on what response measures are to be taken if any.

- If no case is found, all documents relating to the case will be destroyed after an appropriate time (normally a few weeks).

- GCHR will produce a report detailing the investigations, findings, outcomes, and disciplinary measures taken if a case is found. GCHR points out that disciplinary measures are recorded in the personnel file.

- GCHR will detail an appropriate plan for follow-up and support as necessary.

- Feedback is given to the parties involved in the case while ensuring that confidentiality is safeguarded.

- Outcomes will depend on factors such as:

- the severity or frequency of the abuse or discriminatory behaviour;
- the wishes of the person who was abused or on the receiving end of discriminatory behaviour
- whether the accused could have been expected to know that such behaviour was a breach of the policy;
- the level of contrition;
- whether there have been any prior incidents or warnings.

Step 5 – Follow-up & support

- The Finance Manager will systematically follow up with both parties to ensure that the abuse has stopped.
- The Finance Manager will also conduct follow-up meetings with relevant staff.

9. Contacts

If you have any question regarding this policy or need any guidance, kindly contact one of the following GCHR team members listed below:

Please list relevant contacts

Designated staff person (TBC)

Sabah Faour, Financial Manager, sabah@gc4hr.org

Khalid Ibrahim, Executive Director, khalid@gc4hr.org

10. Related Policies

GCHR's Protection Against Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, Harassment and Discrimination Policy [here](#).

11. Resources

- [Disability Language Style Guide](#), National Center on Disability and Journalism
- [GLAAD Media Reference Guide](#), GLAAD
- [The Language of Gender](#), Gender Spectrum
- [ACS Inclusivity Style Guide](#), ACS
- [Global Press Style Guide](#), Global Press Journal
- [11 Types of Workplace Harassment \(and How To Stop Them\)](#), i-Sight
- [Inclusive Language: Words to Use and Avoid When Writing About Disability](#), UK Government, Disability Unit