

# Qatar Model Regulation in the Middle East

## Q: What is the purpose/objective of the Communications Regulatory Authority?

**A:** The Communications Regulatory Authority works to ensure that the voices of telecoms consumers in Qatar are heard and ensures that customers are fully aware of their rights, as well as service provider obligations to them. CRA will serve as the primary consumer-facing arm of Communications Regulatory Authority, and is committed to making the telecoms consumer protection process in Qatar efficient and transparent.

The Consumer Affairs Department has established a dedicated telecoms consumer protection hotline, and will conduct regular consumer rights awareness campaigns and outreach events, publish regular reports on quality of service for telecoms in Qatar, and will also regularly issue consumer tips and alerts.

## Q: What has the CRA already done to protect consumers?

**A:** Consumer affairs have been at the core of CRA's efforts to liberalize Qatar's telecoms market since its creation. Qatar was the first country in the entire GCC to include consumer protection provisions in its telecommunications laws and regulations, an example which was later followed by other countries in the region.

Communications Regulatory Authority has already resolved 99% of the formal complaints it has received to date, it has created and publicized clear procedures for telecoms consumers to file and follow a complaint to resolution with CRA, mandated that service providers in Qatar create their own consumer management functions, and published a number of consumer tips on topics including international roaming, bundling, spam and scams .

Additionally, CRA has carried out a range of initiatives aimed at keeping consumers safe online, including public awareness campaigns and programs in schools, and has also worked to ensure communications services are accessible to those with disabilities.

## Q: What sort of initiatives and activities will the Consumer Affairs Department undertake?

**A:** The first major initiative is the establishment of a dedicated hotline through the Government call center - 103 - for telecoms consumers to call if they are unable to resolve their issues with their service providers. This hotline is accessible in both Arabic and English and will help streamline the complaint process, providing the consumer with a clear ticketing and tracking system to follow-up their issue through to resolution.

The Consumer Affairs Department will also engage more directly with the public through a series of awareness campaigns, outreach activities and events. CRA will be regularly sharing quality of service reports online, as well as publishing regular consumer alerts and consumer tips. CRA will also work to develop appropriate telecoms policies to protect consumer rights where needed, and will conduct regular market research with consumers to determine gaps and satisfaction levels.

## Q: How does the new consumer affairs call centre function, and how is it different to the previous complaint process?

**A:** The new consumer call center features a dedicated hotline number - 103 - that can be called from any phone in Qatar. As before, telecoms consumers should call the hotline for help only after trying to resolve any issue with their service provider. Upon calling the number, consumers will have the choice of lodging their complaint in Arabic or English. The complaint will be immediately filed and the consumer will receive a dedicated tracking number to follow-up on the complaint through the resolution process. Within one working day, the consumer will receive a follow-up call from a consumer protection agent to obtain all the necessary information to investigate and resolve the complaint. Depending on the complaint, a final resolution may take up to 10 days to resolve, however most complaints are investigated and resolved within 7 working days. ▶

- ▶ The major difference between the previous process and the planned one is the enhanced efficiency in the process and the consumer friendly number, 103. Consumers can track their complaints there is greater transparency throughout the process. CRA has also hired additional agents to reduce the response time for complaints received.

**Q: Why must consumers try to resolve complaints with their service provider first?**

**A:** It is the obligation of licensed service providers in Qatar to provide quality customer service and resolve customer complaints in a reasonable and mutually acceptable timeframe (30 days). CRA only intervenes when the service providers fail to meet their obligations, a complaint is urgent or the consumer is a special needs customer.

The service providers generally have the information and means to resolve customer complaints, whereas CRA will need to launch an investigation to understand the complaint and work to resolve it. Direct resolution with the service provider therefore generally produces a more timely and efficient result. However, when a satisfactory resolution is not achieved, consumers have the power to lodge a formal complaint with CRA for investigation and final resolution.

**Q: What sort of complaints does the CRA usually receive?**

**A:** CRA receives a wide range of consumer complaints, and to-date has resolved 99% of them. Some common complaints are about disconnections, delay in service provisions, refunds, incorrect billing, slow internet, weak broadband services, services not activated or mistakenly disconnected, high roaming charges, slow provisioning of services, double debiting, replenishment failures or failure to activate SIM cards.

**Q: Has competition really done anything to benefit telecoms consumers in Qatar?**

**A:** The introduction of competition into Qatar's telecoms market has brought significant benefits to the consumers including reduced prices, more innovative offerings, improved customer service and improved quality of service. While Qatar and all countries in the region still lag behind most OECD countries in terms of price and quality of service, progress is being made. Also, compared to its regional peers, Qatar has very competitive prices in both mobile and fixed voice services.

**Q: When will the quality of service in Qatar improve?**

**A:** The quality of telecommunications service, especially in mobile service, has improved substantially since the introduction of competition. CRA recognizes that there is still much progress to be made, especially in fixed services. CRA regularly monitors the Quality of Service (QoS) from licensed service providers across numerous parameters and these reports will be published on CRA's website.

CRA, in collaboration with the service providers, is also working to greatly enhance the country's telecommunications infrastructure. The Qatar National Broadband Network, which aims to connect 95% of Qatar to a fiber network by 2015, is currently underway, and an ambitious satellite program is being implemented to increase connectivity.

**For further information:**

<http://cra.gov.qa/en>

