

# Ooredoo Q.S.C.

Operating company evaluated:

- Ooredoo Qatar

Services evaluated:

- Ooredoo Qatar [Prepaid mobile]
- Ooredoo Qatar [Postpaid mobile]
- Ooredoo Qatar [Fixed-line broadband]

Rank

12

Score

5%

Difference

▼ 0.26

Rank among 12 telecommunications companies

0% —●—●—●—●—●—●—●—●— 100%

## Key findings

- Ooredoo was the lowest scoring telecommunications company in the Index, disclosing almost nothing about its policies and practices affecting freedom of expression and privacy.
- Ooredoo revealed nothing about how it responds to government and other types of third-party requests to block or filter content, or government demands to shut down its networks.
- Ooredoo did not publish a privacy policy, making it impossible for users to understand what the company does with their information, including what it collects, shares, and why.

## Key recommendations

- **Publish privacy policy:** Ooredoo should publish a privacy policy that is easy for its users to find and understand.
- **Clarify content and access restrictions:** Ooredoo should be more transparent about how it handles government and private requests to block content or restrict user accounts, and government requests to shut down networks.
- **Improve redress:** Ooredoo should clarify if its process for receiving complaints includes those related to freedom of expression and privacy, and provide clear remedies for these types of complaints.

## Analysis

Ooredoo received the lowest score of all telecommunications companies, disclosing less about policies and practices affecting users' freedom of expression and privacy than any of its peers, including Etisalat, the UAE-based telecommunications company.<sup>1</sup> Ooredoo, which is majority owned by the government of Qatar, was one of three companies in the Index to make no improvements to its disclosure over the past year.<sup>2</sup> While the political and regulatory environment in Qatar discourages companies from making public commitments to human rights, Ooredoo could still be more transparent about basic policies affecting freedom of expression and privacy in a number of areas.<sup>3</sup>

**Ooredoo Q.S.C.** provides telecommunications services such as mobile, broadband, and fiber in Qatar and 11 other countries in the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia.<sup>4</sup>

**Market cap:** USD 5.2 billion<sup>5</sup>

**DSM:** ORDS

**Domicile:** Qatar

**Website:** <https://www.ooredoo.qa>

## Governance 0%

Ooredoo received no credit on any indicator in this category, and disclosed nothing about its governance and oversight over human rights issues at the company. It did not make a public commitment to respect freedom of expression and privacy in line with international human rights principles [G1], nor did it disclose having senior-level oversight over these issues within the company [G2]. Although it disclosed a whistleblower policy, it did not specify if it pertains to freedom of expression or privacy

issues [G3]. It offered no evidence that it has human rights due diligence processes in place [G4], or if it engages with stakeholders on freedom of expression or privacy issues [G5]. Ooredoo Qatar did not offer a grievance mechanism for users to submit freedom of expression and privacy-related complaints, and there was no additional information about how it receives and responds to such grievances [G6].

## Freedom of Expression 13%

Ooredoo disclosed minimal information about its policies affecting freedom of expression and tied with Axiata for the second-lowest score among telecommunications companies, ahead of MTN and Bharti Airtel. Ooredoo Qatar offered terms of service that were easy to find and understand [F1], and those terms gave some information about its rules and how they are enforced [F3].<sup>6</sup> It also disclosed some information about why it may need to shut down or restrict access to its networks [F10], though it did not disclose any other information about how it handles government demands to shut down its networks.

Ooredoo otherwise earned no credit on any of the other indicators in this category. Ooredoo Qatar failed to disclose any information about its network management policies [F9]. The company also provided no information about its process for

responding to government or private requests to block content or restrict users' accounts [F5], nor did it supply any data about the number of government or private requests to restrict content or accounts that it received or with which it complied [F6, F7]. There is no apparent legal barrier to supplying this information. The lack of disclosure is likely a result of Ooredoo being majority state-owned as well as due to a general lack of transparency in the Qatari legal environment. Telecommunications companies in Qatar are legally required to comply with all judicial orders to block content, though there is no law prohibiting Ooredoo from disclosing its processes for handling these requests or its compliance rates with either government or private content-blocking requests.<sup>7</sup>

## Privacy 0%

Ooredoo received the lowest privacy score of all companies evaluated. Ooredoo Qatar did not publish a privacy policy for any of its services, making it impossible for users to understand what the company does with their information, including what it collects, shares, and why [P1-P8]. Ooredoo Qatar was also the only company to disclose nothing about its policies for keeping users' information secure [P13-P18]. It did not disclose whether it has systems in place to monitor or limit employee access to user information [P13], nor did it provide any information about its processes for addressing security vulnerabilities or for handling data breaches [P14, P15].

Ooredoo provided no information about how it handles government or private requests for user information, making it

one of four companies, alongside MTN, Etisalat, and Axiata, that received no credit on these indicators [P10, P11, P12]. It provided no information about its process for responding to these types of requests [P10], or whether it notifies users when their information is requested [P12]. Ooredoo also failed to publish any data on the number of requests it received for user information [P11]. The lack of disclosure is likely a result of Ooredoo being majority state-owned as well as from a general lack of transparency in the Qatari legal environment. Still, there is no law specifically prohibiting Ooredoo from disclosing its policies for responding to user information requests that come through private processes.

## Footnotes

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[1] The research period for the 2019 Index ran from January 13, 2018 to February 8, 2019. Policies that came into effect after February 8, 2019 were not evaluated in this Index.

[2] For Ooredoo's performance in the 2018 Index: <https://rankingdigitalrights.org/index2018/companies/ooredoo/>.

[3] "Qatar 2017/2018," Amnesty International Report, 2018, [www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/qatar/report-qatar](http://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/qatar/report-qatar).

[4] "Our Markets," Ooredoo Corporate, Accessed January 15, 2019, [ooredoo.com/en/who\\_we\\_are/our\\_markets](http://ooredoo.com/en/who_we_are/our_markets)

[5] Bloomberg Markets, Accessed April 18, 2019, [www.bloomberg.com/quote/ORDS:UH](http://www.bloomberg.com/quote/ORDS:UH)

[6] For most indicators in the Freedom of Expression and Privacy categories, RDR evaluates the operating company of the home market, in this case Ooredoo Qatar.

[7] Peter Kovessy, "Qatar's Emir Signs New Cybercrime Legislation into Law," Doha News, September 16, 2014, [dohanews.co/qatars-emir-signs-law-new-cybercrime-legislation/](http://dohanews.co/qatars-emir-signs-law-new-cybercrime-legislation/)