

# Emir of Qatar

The **Emir of the State of Qatar** (Arabic: **أمير دولة قطر**) is the monarch and head of state of Qatar. The emir is also the commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces and guarantor of the constitution. The emir holds the most powerful position in the country, controlling all branches of state power, and has a prominent role in foreign relations.

The emirs are members of the House of Thani (*Al Thani*), whose origins are in the Banu Tamim, one of the largest tribes in the Arabian Peninsula. The current ruler is Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, who succeeded on 25 June 2013.<sup>[1]</sup>

## Historical background

All the emirs of Qatar have been members of the Al Thani family.<sup>[2][3]</sup> Sheikh Mohammed bin Thani is recognised as the first ruler, having begun his reign in 1851 when he united the country's tribes under his leadership.<sup>[4]</sup>

Qatar became part of the Ottoman Empire in 1871, although Sheikh Mohammed retained control of its internal affairs.<sup>[4][5]</sup> Following his army's victory at the Battle of Al Wajbah in March 1893, the second ruler Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed Al Thani has been recognised as Founder of the State of Qatar, although it remained part of the Ottoman Empire until July 1913.<sup>[6]</sup>

The Ottomans maintained a military presence in Qatar until August 1915 and Sheikh Abdullah bin Jassim Al Thani signed the Anglo-Qatari Treaty on 3 November 1916. Sheikh Abdullah was the Qatari ruler from 1913 to 1949, and is one of the few monarchs, alongside the likes of Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands, whose tenure extended through both world wars (1914–1945). Qatar's first oil well was drilled in October 1938, and oil was found at Dukhan (Dukhan Field) in January 1940.<sup>[7]</sup>

Qatar became an independent state on 3 September 1971 and, since then, the ruler has been styled emir (or "amir").<sup>[8]</sup>

### Emir of the State of Qatar

أمير دولة قطر

*Amir Dawlat Qatar*

Incumbent



**Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani**

since 25 June 2013

#### Details

|                         |                                    |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Style</b>            | <u>His Highness</u>                |
| <b>Heir presumptive</b> | <u>Abdullah bin Hamad Al Thani</u> |
| <b>First monarch</b>    | <u>Mohammed bin Thani</u>          |
| <b>Formation</b>        | 1851                               |
| <b>Residence</b>        | <u>Amiri Diwan</u>                 |

# Constitutional role and authority

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Qatar is officially a constitutional monarchy,<sup>[9][10]</sup> but the wide powers retained by the emir and his family have it bordering an absolute monarchy<sup>[11][12]</sup> and autocracy.<sup>[13][14]</sup> The emir holds the primary role in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, and also maintains ultimate control over the military.

## Executive authority

The emir and his family hold uncontested control over the executive branch. While the Shura Council holds some "limited ability to offset executive power in certain areas",<sup>[15]</sup> all its members are themselves appointed by the emir.<sup>[16]</sup> The emir has the exclusive power to appoint and replace the prime minister and cabinet ministers, who together constitute the Council of Ministers, which is the main executive authority in the country.<sup>[17][15]</sup>

## Legislative authority

In 2003, Qatar adopted a constitution that provided for the direct election of 30 of the 45 members of a legislature.<sup>[18][19][20]</sup> However, the legislature has limited powers to reject legislation by the emir and dismiss ministers, and he maintains the last say on these decisions.<sup>[21][22][23]</sup> After nearly 20 years of postponements, the Council held its first partial election in October 2021.<sup>[24][25][26]</sup> In May 2024, however, the country's "short-lived experiment" in electing members of the Shura Council ended with a constitutional referendum abolishing future elections. Qatar's state news agency stated that the referendum will "strengthen the social fabric in the most beautiful image and form, which honestly represents an important stage in the country's victorious march and its national unity". The Associated Press noted that the 2021 election came "about a year ahead of Qatar hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup, an event that drew intense scrutiny from the West of the country's treatment of foreign laborers and its system of governance", and called the 2024 referendum "another rollback in the hereditarily ruled Gulf Arab states of halting steps to embrace representational rule".<sup>[16]</sup>

## Judicial authority

While the constitution makes some guarantees on judicial independence, and judges are nominated for appointment by a "Supreme Council of the Judiciary" composed of senior judges, the emir appoints all judges, and "ultimately controls the judiciary".<sup>[15]</sup>

## Military and security authority

The emir is the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. This title enshrines his role as the ultimate authority over all military branches: the Qatari Emiri Land Force, Qatari Emiri Navy, Qatar Emiri Air Force and Qatar Amiri Guard. He also appoints military personnel and terminates their service. This power is absolute and places the entire military apparatus under his direct control. Setting defense policy "is the sole responsibility of the emir and his closest advisors", and the Shura Council has never debated security issues.<sup>[27][28]</sup>

# Succession

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Originally, those eligible for succession were simply those "within the Al Thani family", but within months of the 1995 coup that brought him to power, Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani declared changing the line of succession to only include his own male descendants.<sup>[29]</sup> The permanent constitution of the state of Qatar, published in 2005, dictates that the emir must appoint a crown prince to be his successor from amongst his male children, in consultation with members of the Al Thani Ruling Family. To be eligible for appointment as crown prince, a candidate must be Muslim and born of a Qatari mother. In the event that the ruling Emir has no eligible male children, the emir must select the crown prince from amongst the eligible members of the broader Al Thani family.<sup>[30]</sup>

The former emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, appointed his fourth son, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, as heir apparent on 5 August 2003, after his older son Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad Al Thani (who held the position between 1996 and 2003) renounced his rights to the throne in favour of Sheikh Tamim.<sup>[31]</sup>

The three previous transitions of power between emirs happened as a result of coups or forced abdications.<sup>[32]</sup> Hamad bin Khalifa replaced his father, Emir Khalifa bin Hamad, in a bloodless palace coup in June 1995 while Khalifa was on a visit to Geneva, Switzerland.<sup>[33][34][35][36]</sup> Khalifa had himself replaced his own uncle, Emir Ahmad bin Ali, under similar circumstances while Ahmad was on a visit to Iran in February 1972.<sup>[37]</sup> Emir Ali bin Abdullah Al Thani was forced to abdicate in favour of his son, Ahmad bin Ali, in October 1960.<sup>[32][38]</sup>

# List of rulers

| Name                                                                                                                  | Lifespan                                                  | Reign start                           | Reign end                                                                                                                           | Notes                                                                           | Family          | Image                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Sheikh <b>Mohammed bin Thani</b><br/> <i>Hakim of Qatar Peninsula</i><br/> محمد بن ثاني</p>                        | <p>1788 – December 1878<br/> (aged 90)</p>                | <p>1851<sup>[4]</sup></p>             | <p>18 December 1878</p>                                                                                                             | <p>Son of Thani bin Mohammed.</p>                                               | <p>Al Thani</p> |                                                                                       |
| <p>Sheikh <b>Jassim bin Mohammed Al Thani</b><br/> <i>The Founder</i><sup>[6][39]</sup><br/> جاسم بن محمد آل ثاني</p> | <p>1825 – 17 July 1913<br/> (aged 87–88)</p>              | <p>18 December 1878<sup>[6]</sup></p> | <p>17 July 1913<sup>[6]</sup></p>                                                                                                   | <p>Son of Mohammed bin Thani.</p>                                               | <p>Al Thani</p> |    |
| <p>Sheikh <b>Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Thani</b><br/> أحمد بن محمد بن ثاني</p>                                            | <p>1853 – December 1905<br/> (aged 52)</p>                | <p>1898</p>                           | <p>1905<br/> <i>(assassinated)</i><br/> <i>(after his brother abdicated in favor of him until he was killed)</i><sup>[40]</sup></p> | <p>Son of Mohammed bin Thani.</p>                                               | <p>Al Thani</p> |                                                                                       |
| <p>Sheikh <b>Mohammed bin Jassim Al Thani</b><br/> محمد بن جاسم آل ثاني</p>                                           | <p>17 January 1881 – 8 April 1971<br/> (aged 90)</p>      | <p>1913</p>                           | <p>1914<br/> <i>(abdicated)</i><br/> <i>(reigned for 10 months)</i></p>                                                             | <p>Son of Jassim bin Mohammed Al Thani.</p>                                     | <p>Al Thani</p> |                                                                                       |
| <p>Sheikh <b>Abdullah bin Jassim Al Thani</b><br/> عبد الله بن جاسم آل ثاني</p>                                       | <p>11 February 1880 – 25 April 1957<br/> (aged 77)</p>    | <p>17 July 1914</p>                   | <p>20 August 1949<br/> <i>(abdicated)</i></p>                                                                                       | <p>Son of Jassim bin Mohammed Al Thani.</p>                                     | <p>Al Thani</p> |  |
| <p>Sheikh <b>Ali bin Abdullah Al Thani</b><br/> علي بن عبد الله آل ثاني</p>                                           | <p>5 June 1895 – 31 August 1974<br/> (aged 79)</p>        | <p>20 August 1949</p>                 | <p>24 October 1960<br/> <i>(abdicated)</i></p>                                                                                      | <p>Son of Abdullah bin Jassim Al Thani and Mariam bint Abdullah Al Attiyah.</p> | <p>Al Thani</p> |                                                                                       |
| <p>Sheikh <b>Ahmad bin Ali Al Thani</b><br/> أحمد بن علي آل ثاني</p>                                                  | <p>1922 – 25 November 1977<br/> (aged 54–55)</p>          | <p>24 October 1960</p>                | <p>22 February 1972<br/> <i>(deposed)</i><sup>[41]</sup></p>                                                                        | <p>Son of Ali bin Abdullah Al Thani.</p>                                        | <p>Al Thani</p> |                                                                                       |
| <p>Sheikh <b>Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani</b></p>                                                                       | <p>17 September 1932 – 23 October 2016<br/> (aged 84)</p> | <p>22 February 1972</p>               | <p>27 June 1995<br/> <i>(deposed)</i><sup>[34]</sup></p>                                                                            | <p>Nephew of Ali bin Abdullah Al Thani.</p>                                     | <p>Al Thani</p> |                                                                                       |

|                                                                                                               |                                         |                             |                                         |                                                                    |          |                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| خليفة بن حمد آل ثاني                                                                                          |                                         |                             |                                         |                                                                    |          |                                                                                     |
| Sheikh<br><b>Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani</b><br><i>The Father Emir</i> <sup>[42]</sup><br>حمد بن خليفة آل ثاني | 1 January 1952 – 12 July 2026 (aged 74) | 27 June 1995                | 25 June 2013 (abdicated) <sup>[1]</sup> | Son of Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani and Aisha bint Hamad Al Attiyah. | Al Thani |  |
| Sheikh<br><b>Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani</b><br>تميم بن حمد آل ثاني                                              | 3 June 1980                             | 25 June 2013 <sup>[1]</sup> | Incumbent                               | Son of Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani and Moza bint Nasser.            | Al Thani |  |

## See also

- Deputy Emir of Qatar
- House of Al Thani
- Politics of Qatar
- Prime Minister of Qatar

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