



Production of Qatar Foundation

PRESS RELEASE

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Doha Debates Aims to Inspire New Generation of Global Change-makers

Qatar Foundation initiative relaunched at inaugural live event attended by Her Excellency Sheikha Hind bint Hamad Al Thani

DOHA, Qatar, December 13, 2018 — The innovative new concept for Doha Debates, a series that brings powerful new voices and viewpoints to global topics and themes, was today launched at an inaugural event attended by Her Excellency Sheikha Hind bint Hamad Al Thani, Vice Chairperson and CEO of Qatar Foundation (QF), at Qatar National Library.

The QF initiative - produced under the patronage of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation – is returning with a fresh goal six years after the original debates last aired, to seek exciting new solutions to global challenges through honest, lively debates.

The relaunch of Doha Debates, at an event also attended by members of QF’s leadership, students, and educators from across the country, paves the way for its Season 1 to tackle some of the world’s most pressing challenges: the global refugee crisis, water shortage, loss of faith in institutions, gender inequality, capitalism, global citizenship and artificial intelligence. Passionate differences of opinion are encouraged in Doha Debates, where a clash of ideas can lead to common ground on today’s critical questions — live onstage, and in videos, podcasts and social media conversations.

Speaking at the relaunch of Doha Debates, Her Excellency Sheikha Hind bint Hamad Al Thani said, “In a time when soundbites and fake news risk drowning out analysis and discourse, and crucial issues are often viewed through a narrow lens, the importance of enabling and promoting 360-degree thinking is clear. Doha Debates allows such thinking to thrive.

Its new concept continues the proud Doha Debates tradition, stretching back to its inception 14 years ago, when it was the only platform of its kind for Arab youth to speak out about the world’s most pressing matters and share their perspectives. But it also represents the evolution of this platform – and what we stand for as a culture, as a nation, and as Qatar Foundation.

“The majlis format of Doha Debates promotes conversation, rather than competition. It is an equitable setting, not an adversarial one, where every voice is heard, and where issues are addressed and problems solved together. It is a platform rooted in our traditions, and wholly relevant to today. And it is a reflection of values that are at the core of QF, and are woven into

the fabric of Education City: a place where respectful dialogue, open-mindedness, and freedom of expression are encouraged.”

Amjad Atallah, managing director of the new Doha Debates, said: “Doha Debates was never just a talk show. It’s a showcase for all the passions and dramatic confrontations of the Middle East and the world. Instead of just debating problems, Doha Debates will engage millions of young people to find individual solutions, not in a gladiator-style winner-takes-all shouting match to score political points, but in invigorating and creative formats across a multitude of platforms.”

“Our primary goal is what inspires me most: We have to find solutions, personal and global, to the failed economics and politics facing every one of us, in every part of the globe. And that search for solutions has to include global voices, representing everyone impacted by these challenges. In person and digitally, our debates are a positive step toward real solutions across the region and the world.”

Atallah added: “We are introducing a local problem-solving mechanism, the majlis, to a global platform. Meaning ‘assembly’ or ‘parliament’ in Arabic, the majlis is a welcoming space for critical conversations. We’re also working with curriculum specialists to support students in high schools and universities. Our goal is to inspire meaningful and in-depth learning by creating content for students and teachers. Doha Debates hopes to build on the landscape of education that Qatar Foundation has created at Education City.”

Aligning with the objectives of QF’s educational mission, Season 1 of Doha Debates will include digital conversations and live debates held at Northwestern University in Qatar, a QF partner university, at Education City in Doha, Qatar, and international cities to be announced in 2019. The live events are moderated by Ghida Fakhry — an award-winning multilingual journalist and TV host — in front of university students and livestreamed across digital channels. Digital content is produced by the Doha Debates team, creators and executives who have built successful digital operations at AJ+, Fusion, Univision and the New York Times.

Partnerships with TED and Shared_Studios

Doha Debates also today announced its partnerships with TED and Shared_Studios. TED is a global nonprofit community of innovators who believe passionately in the power of ideas to change attitudes and lives. Through our partnership with TED, Doha Debates will reach new audiences on digital channels, with our first co-partnered events on January 16, 2019, in New York City during the TED Salon ‘Up for Debate’, which will explore human engagement and communication.

Shared_Studios is known for its iconic walk-in portals of communication — a network of gold-colored shipping containers outfitted with video-conference equipment for people to step inside and speak across the world. There are more than 40 portal locations worldwide, from refugee camps to universities. The portals are designed to connect people who might not otherwise meet, through thoughtful programming and immersive technology.

Doha Debates will host its own portal throughout 2019, reflecting the various debate topics as the series travels the world and connects audiences digitally.

Stunning new show set

The set for Doha Debates is truly unique, inspired by the beauty of contemporary Doha architecture and the rich majlis culture. The set reflects the spectacular design of Education City, QF's flagship development, by incorporating characteristics of Doha's architecture. The set is a traveling representation of Doha in the world, and an expression of the philosophy of Doha Debates: promoting a positive orientation toward generating solutions and fostering a spirit of inclusiveness.

The set was designed by a prominent Dutch team working with Storytegitic, a Doha Debates production partner, which oversees all elements of the live events.

Speaking at the launch event, Ghida Fakhry, moderator of Doha Debates, highlighted the value of listening critically and challenging assumptions. "Doha Debates will galvanize people with diverse perspectives to take action for real solutions," Fakhry said. "We must change the way we address the world's most pressing challenges. And the timing couldn't be more important with the current state of discourse and the widening polarization all around us.

"Polarization leads to paralysis — and conflict. Doha Debates will give us an opportunity to engage each other on some of the most vital and urgent issues we face. Our deep respect for difference, including difference of opinion, will guide our debates. Our aim is to inspire action. We can no longer afford to sit on the sidelines. We must engage, we must listen, we must act.

Fakhry added: "Our debates will explore the deep divisions that keep us apart and often hold us back, but we will always try to come up with tangible solutions that move us forward. It's a place where we discuss who we are and find a constructive way to overcome our differences. As a journalist who's covered conflict for more than two decades, I'm excited to be part of the new Doha Debates, where we build on a strong legacy with a renewed sense of purpose and urgency. We will announce the lineup of the extraordinary speakers who'll be joining us in our first live debates in the coming weeks on our website and across other channels."

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Qatar Foundation — Unlocking Human Potential

Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF) is a non-profit organization that supports Qatar on its journey to becoming a diversified and sustainable economy. QF strives to serve the people of Qatar and beyond by providing specialized programs across its innovation-focused ecosystem of education, science and research, and community development.

QF was founded in 1995 by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Father Amir, and Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, who shared the vision to provide Qatar with quality education. Today, QF's world-class education system offers lifelong learning opportunities to community members as young as six months through to doctoral level, enabling graduates to thrive in a global environment and contribute to the nation's development.

QF is also creating a multidisciplinary innovation hub in Qatar, where homegrown researchers are working to address local and global challenges. By promoting a culture of lifelong learning and fostering social engagement through programs that embody Qatari culture, QF is committed to empowering the local community and contributing to a better world for all.

For a complete list of QF's initiatives and projects, visit www.qf.org.qa