



ICJ on Qatar Blockade

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Why in News

Recently, the **International Court of Justice** (ICJ) refused an appeal by **Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates** (UAE) which challenged the authority of the **International Civil Aviation Organisation** (ICAO) to adjudicate on the legality of the **Qatar blockade**.

- ICJ is the top **United Nations** (UN) court and ICAO is the international aviation agency of the UN.
- UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Qatar are located in the **Persian Gulf Region** and are the members of the **Gulf Cooperation Council** (GCC).



Key Points

- **Qatar Blockade:**

- In **June 2017**, Qatar's neighbouring Arab nations of Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and Egypt **shut off shipping routes and air space with Qatar** for its **alleged support for terrorism** and its **ties with Iran**.

It severed their diplomatic and economic ties with Qatar.

- However, **Qatar denied supporting Islamic extremism** and has openly **condemned its isolation** as a clear attack on its sovereignty.
- All four neighbours issued a **13-point list of demands for Doha** (capital of Qatar) to comply with in order to restore erstwhile relations.

Some of the demands included Qatar closing down news outlets such as **Al-Jazeera**, end ties with radical Islamist groups like the **Muslim Brotherhood**, scale down ties with Shia-majority Iran and remove Turkish troops stationed in the country.

- Since 2017, the **blockade of Qatar has included:**
 - Closing of its only land border with Saudi Arabia.
 - Stopping Qatari ships from entering ports anywhere in the Saudi coalition.
 - Blocking Qatari planes from flying in their airspace.
 - Expelling Qatari citizens from these countries as part of the measures.

- **Dispute at the ICJ:**

- Qatar approached the ICAO, alleging that its rights of free passage under the **1944 Convention on Civil Aviation** were violated by the blockade.
- Saudi Arabia and its allies argued that the **ICJ should have the authority** to settle the dispute instead of the ICAO because the **dispute goes beyond the aviation matters**.
- In 2018, the **ICAO ruled against the Saudi coalition**, holding that it did have jurisdiction to hear the case and its ruling was **recently backed by the ICJ** too.
- The blockade **still remains in force** and the ICAO is expected to **deliver its verdict in 2021**. The ruling will be in Qatar's favour and will be a major win for the country and its **national carrier, Qatar Airways**.

International Civil Aviation Organisation

- It was established by the **Convention on International Civil Aviation** which was signed on **7th December 1944 in Chicago**.
- It laid the foundation for the standards and procedures for peaceful global air navigation and established the core principles permitting international transport by air.
- **Objective:** To foster the planning and development of international air transport so as to ensure the safe and orderly growth of international civil aviation throughout the world.

- **India is among its 193 members.**
- **Headquarters:** Montreal, Canada.

Source: IE