

Qatar Reads Brings Arabic Storytelling to Buenos Aires, Launching Cultural Exchange Under Qatar–Argentina 2025 Year of Culture

Minister of Culture of Buenos Aires and the Embassy of Qatar in Argentina Officially Open Qatar Reads Exhibition and Launch First International Session of Qatar Reads in Buenos Aires

7 August 2025 – Doha, Qatar – Her Excellency Gabriela Ricardes, Minister of Culture of Buenos Aires, and Mr. Ali Al-Binali, Counsellor at the Ministry of the State of Qatar in Argentina, officially inaugurated the *Kalila wa Dimna* exhibition as part of Qatar Reads’ participation in the Qatar–Argentina 2025 Year of Culture.

Organised by Qatar Reads, a national initiative under Qatar National Library, the exhibition and accompanying cultural session marked a major highlight in this year’s cross-cultural programming. The event brought together children, families, educators, and dignitaries to celebrate the power of storytelling and its role in establishing dialogue between cultures.

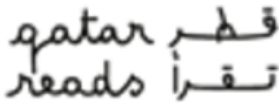
Qatar Reads aims to cultivate a love of reading in Qatar through Nationwide programs and campaigns. It has extended its reach through partnerships with the Years of Culture initiative by promoting reciprocal literary exchange: while Arabic stories are shared abroad, Argentinian tales will be introduced to readers in Qatar later this year.

This year’s collaboration with the Ministry of Culture of Buenos Aires brings the classical Arabic fables of *Kalila wa Dimna* to libraries across Argentina in Spanish. Themselves an embodiment of cross-cultural power, the fables, originating in ancient India, translated into Arabic in the 8th century, and passed on through Islamic and European literary traditions, are known for imparting moral lessons through talking animals and cunning plots.

The exhibition, on view from 6 August to 31 October, features 12 newly commissioned miniature-style paintings by Qatari artist Wadha Al Athba. Created with traditional materials such as indigo, saffron, and gold leaf, the artworks blend the aesthetics of classical Islamic art with contemporary visual storytelling. These twelve artworks were also featured in the Spanish edition of *Kalila wa Dimna*, published by HBKU Press. As part of the ongoing collaboration, Qatar Reads will be distributing 1,000 reading packages children across Argentina.

The opening event at Biblioteca Ricardo Güiraldes included an immersive storytelling and arts workshop with 30 public school students from across Buenos Aires. Children enjoyed readings from the Spanish-language version of *Kalila wa Dimna*, participated in hands-on creative activities, and received custom-designed reading kits to continue their literary journey at home.

Qatar’s Ambassador to Chile and Argentina His Excellency Batal Mojab Al-Dosari commented earlier: “This initiative reminds us that diplomacy can be expressed in many languages, but it is most enduring when written through stories that will resonate for generations and by sharing Qatari literature with Argentinian children, we plant the seeds of empathy and mutual understanding.” Qatar Reads has also made copies of the book available at the National Library of Argentina (Biblioteca Nacional), giving more children and families in Buenos Aires access to this timeless fable.



Minister Ricardes echoed this sentiment, noting literature’s power to bridge cultures: “Hosting Qatar Reads in Buenos Aires reaffirms our belief that stories communicate universal values of kindness, courage, and wisdom. These values transcend borders, helping our children build a common cultural language through books.”

Fatema Majed Al Malki, Qatar Reads Manager, commented, “At Qatar Reads, we believe every story shared brings us one step closer to understanding. Today’s session in Buenos Aires gives children the opportunity to see themselves in new narratives and to discover the beauty of cultural exchange. A child who reads across cultures grows into an adult who leads with empathy, nurtured by the seeds of curiosity and connection planted through these exchanges.”

The illustrated edition of *Kalila wa Dimna* will be distributed widely to schools and libraries throughout Argentina. This initiative reflects a shared commitment by Qatar and Argentina to building intercultural understanding through literature and the arts. By using storytelling as a form of cultural diplomacy, the programme shows how narrative can transcend borders and help shape a more connected and empathetic global future.

-ENDS-

About Years of Culture

The Years of Culture initiative, chaired by Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, spearheads long-lasting cultural partnerships between Qatar and other nations. It exists to promote respect and understanding among diverse cultures and serves as a catalyst for bringing people together, nurturing connections, encouraging dialogue, and deepening understanding. At its heart, Years of Culture celebrates the power of cultural exchange, which enriches Qatar’s ties with partner countries beyond the dedicated year.

Each year is organised with support from Qatar and partner countries’ cultural institutions, ministries, foundations, and private and public sector partners, with assistance from Embassies in Qatar and abroad. Programmes are tailored to explore the unique nature of each partner country with a focus on cultural heritage, creative industries, social and economic development, and innovation.

Previous Years of Culture have included: Qatar-Japan 2012, Qatar-UK 2013, Qatar-Brazil 2014, Qatar-Türkiye 2015, Qatar-China 2016, Qatar-Germany 2017, Qatar-Russia 2018, Qatar-India 2019, Qatar-France 2020, Qatar-USA 2021, Qatar-MENASA 2022, Qatar-Indonesia 2023, and Qatar-Morocco 2024.

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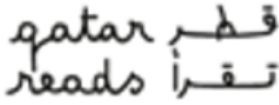
Years of Culture

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About Qatar National Library

Qatar National Library acts as a steward of Qatar's national heritage by collecting, preserving, and making available the country's recorded history. The Library provides equal access to all types of information and services and aims to enable the people of Qatar to positively influence society by creating an exceptional learning and discovery environment.

His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the Amir of Qatar, officially inaugurated Qatar National Library on 16 April 2018. The Library was granted the status of national library under the Amiri Decree No.11 of 20 March 2018.

About Qatar Reads

Qatar Reads is an initiative under Qatar National Library aimed at fostering a love for reading within Qatar's community. The program leverages reading as a tool to disseminate knowledge, instill values, encourage analytical thinking, and promote social progress.

Website: www.qnl.qa

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