

# Bosnia and Herzegovina



## header1 Overview

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is a highly decentralized parliamentary republic whose complex constitutional regime is embedded in the Dayton Peace Agreement, which ended the 1992–95 Bosnian War. Political affairs are characterized by severe partisan gridlock among nationalist leaders from the country’s Bosniak, Serb, and Croat communities. Political participation by citizens from other communities is extremely limited. Corruption remains a serious problem in the government and elsewhere in society.

## header2 Key Developments in 2024

- Local elections were held in October. In the Federation entity, the “Troika” coalition held most of the mayoral seats it controlled beforehand, while the secessionist Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) won most mayoralities in the Republika

Srpska (RS) entity. The Croat nationalist HDZ BiH performed well in municipalities with a Croat majority, but lost three mayoralties compared to the previous local polls in 2020. An observer mission from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) said the election was competitive and well-run, but noted instances of pressure on voters, misuse of public resources, few parties that campaigned across ethnic lines, and low representation of women.

- In December, BiH Security Minister Nenad Nešić was arrested by RS entity police on a litany of corruption charges. He is the most senior RS-based politician to be arrested in recent years.
- In September, Bosnian media reported that High Representative Christian Schmidt had retained the services of a British law firm in an effort to see the Office of the High Representative (OHR) testify in an appeal of the so-called Kovačević case at the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). (In its 2023 ruling on the case, the ECHR had struck down segments of BiH’s constitution on the grounds that its ethnoterritorial provisions were discriminatory. If the ruling was upheld, it would likely require the country’s constitution, which has generated several landmark legal cases regarding unfair political representation, to be rewritten.) The revelation prompted criticism of Schmidt—who has argued that the implementation of the Kovačević decision would be divisive—for acting without the authorization of the Peace Implementation Council (PIC), the OHR’s steering board. BiH’s Council of Ministers had appealed the Kovačević decision at the ECHR.

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*For additional background information, see last year’s [full report](#).*

## PR Political Rights

### A Electoral Process

A1 1.00-4.00 pts 0-4 pts

Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections?	2.002 4.004
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A2 1.00-4.00 pts 0-4 pts

Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?	2.002 4.004
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A3 1.00-4.00 pts 0-4 pts

Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies?	1.001 4.004
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### B Political Pluralism and Participation

B1 1.00-4.00 pts 0-4 pts

Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings?	3.003 4.004
B2 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts	

Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections?	2.002 4.004
B3 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts	

Are the people’s political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapolitical means?	1.001 4.004
B4 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts	

Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities?	2.002 4.004
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## **C Functioning of Government**

C1 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government?	2.002 4.004
C2 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts	

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?	1.001 4.004
C3 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts	

Does the government operate with openness and transparency?	1.001 4.004
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## **CL Civil Liberties**

### **D Freedom of Expression and Belief**

D1 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media?	2.002 4.004
D2 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts	

Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?	3.003 4.004
D3 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts	

Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? | 2.002  
4.004

D4 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? | 3.003  
4.004

## **E Associational and Organizational Rights**

E1 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly? | 3.003 4.004

E2 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights– and governance-related work? | 3.003  
4.004

*Score Change: The score improved from 2 to 3 because NGOs are active and have become an increasingly institutionalized part of civil society.*

E3 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? | 2.002 4.004

## **F Rule of Law**

F1 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary? | 1.001 4.004

F2 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? | 2.002 4.004

F3 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? | 2.002  
4.004

F4 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? | 2.002  
4.004

## **G Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights**

G1 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education?	3.003 4.004
G2 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts	
Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors?	2.002 4.004
G3 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts	
Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance?	3.003 4.004
G4 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts	
Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation?	2.002 4.004