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Freedom House (Author)

Freedom in the World 2024 - Israel

FREE

74

/ 100

Political Rights 34 / 40

Civil Liberties 40 / 60

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS

77 / 100 Free

Global freedom statuses are calculated on a weighted scale. [See the methodology.](#)

Note

The numerical scores and status listed above do not reflect conditions in the Gaza Strip or the West Bank, which are examined in separate reports. Although the international community generally considers East Jerusalem to be part of the occupied West Bank, it may be mentioned in this report when specific conditions there directly affect or overlap with conditions in Israel proper. *Freedom in the World* reports assess the level of political rights and civil liberties in a given geographical area, regardless of whether they are affected by the state, nonstate actors, or foreign powers. Disputed or occupied territories are sometimes assessed separately if they meet certain criteria, including boundaries that are sufficiently stable to allow year-on-year comparisons. For more information, see the report [methodology](#) and [FAQ](#).

Overview

Israel is a parliamentary democracy with a multiparty system and independent institutions that guarantee political rights and civil liberties for most of the population. Although the judiciary is comparatively active in protecting minority rights, the political leadership and many in society have discriminated against Arab and other ethnic or religious minority

populations, resulting in systemic disparities in areas including infrastructure, criminal justice, education, and economic opportunity.

Key Developments in 2023

- In January, the government proposed a set of legal amendments that would reduce the judiciary's ability to block government actions and legislation, triggering massive protests and criticism from opponents who argued that the changes threatened the checks and balances of Israeli democracy. In July, the Knesset (parliament) passed one of the proposed bills; it was under review by the Supreme Court at year's end, with a decision expected in early 2024.
- On October 7, the Palestinian militant group Hamas launched a massive terrorist incursion from its base in the Gaza Strip, killing approximately 1,200 Israeli civilians and soldiers. More than 200 hostages, including Israeli and foreign citizens, were also abducted and taken back to Gaza. Following the attack, the Knesset approved an expanded wartime cabinet to oversee Israel's military response.
- The number of Palestinians held in Israeli prisons—including those held without charge in administrative detention—sharply increased after Hamas's attack and during the ensuing Israeli military operations in Gaza and the West Bank.
- The criminal trial of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who faced multiple corruption charges, continued throughout the year.

Political Rights

A Electoral Process

A1 0-4 pts

Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 4 / 4

A largely ceremonial president is elected by the Knesset for a single seven-year term. In 2021, Isaac Herzog, formerly the head of the Labor Party, was elected to replace outgoing president Reuven Rivlin.

The government must have the support of a majority in the Knesset. In 2014, in a bid to create more stable governing coalitions, the electoral threshold for parties to win representation was raised from 2 percent to 3.25 percent, and the no-confidence procedure was revised so that opponents hoping to oust a sitting government must simultaneously vote to select a new government. Despite this change, there are still many small parties in the political system, making it difficult to form majorities.

Following the Knesset elections held in November 2022, Netanyahu and his Likud party formed a coalition government that was widely described as the most right-wing in Israeli history. It replaced a fragile coalition of parties from across the political spectrum.

In October 2023, following Hamas's terrorist attack on Israel, the Knesset approved a broader wartime cabinet that included former defense minister Benny Gantz and members of his centrist National Unity party.

A2 0-4 pts

**Were the current national legislative representatives elected 4 /
through free and fair elections? 4**

Members of the 120-seat Knesset are elected to serve four-year terms through closed-list proportional representation using a single nationwide district, and elections are typically free and fair.

In the November 2022 elections, the right-wing nationalist bloc headed by Netanyahu was able to secure a majority of 64 seats: Likud took 32 seats, while the far-right Religious Zionist list took 14 seats, and ultra-Orthodox parties Shas and United Torah Judaism took 11 and 7 seats, respectively. The centrist parties Yesh Atid and National Unity took 24 and 12 seats, respectively; the right-wing nationalist Israel Is Our Home party won 6; the Islamist party Ra'am and the Arab-led Joint List won 5 seats each; and the center-left Labor Party won 4.

A3 0-4 pts

**Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they 4 /
implemented impartially by the relevant election management 4
bodies?**

The Central Elections Committee (CEC) is responsible for ensuring the fairness of elections. It is composed of delegations representing the various political groups in the Knesset, supported by a professional staff, and chaired by a Supreme Court judge. Elections are generally conducted in a peaceful and orderly manner, and all parties usually accept the results. The conduct of the 2022 elections was generally perceived as fair and successful.

B Political Pluralism and Participation

B1 0-4 pts

**Do the people have the right to organize in different political
parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, 3 /
and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of 4
these competing parties or groupings?**

Israel hosts a diverse and competitive multiparty system. However, parties or candidates that deny Israel's Jewish character, oppose democracy, incite racism, or support terrorism are prohibited. This rule

has occasionally been invoked against both far-right Jewish and Arab candidates and parties, with final decisions adjudicated by the Supreme Court. In July 2023, lawmakers put forward a bill that would prohibit the Supreme Court from overruling CEC decisions to ban political parties or candidates from the ballot, but the measure had not made progress as of December.

B2 0-4 pts

Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 4 / 4

Israel has undergone multiple, peaceful rotations of power among rival political groups during its history, and the 2022 elections resulted in the replacement of the incumbent prime minister and government. Opposition parties have typically controlled many local governments, and Arab-majority towns are mostly run by independents or mayors from Arab-led political parties.

B3 0-4 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? 4 / 4

Israeli voters are generally free from coercion or undue influence by interest groups outside the political sphere. Political parties rely mostly on public subsidies for their financing.

B4 0-4 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 / 4

Political rights are unevenly protected. Political power in the country is held disproportionately by Jewish men; while Ashkenazim (Jews of European descent) have historically enjoyed particular advantages, Mizrahim (Jews of Middle Eastern descent) have gained representation and influence in recent decades.

Women generally enjoy full political rights in law and in practice, though they remain underrepresented in leadership positions and can encounter additional obstacles in parties and communities—both Jewish and Arab—that are associated with religious or cultural conservatism. Parties such as Shas and United Torah Judaism continued to exclude women from their candidate lists in 2022. After those elections, women made up approximately 25 percent of the Knesset.

Arab citizens of Israel, who often identify as Palestinian, face political discrimination. In 2018, the Knesset adopted a new “basic law” known as the nation-state law, which introduced the principle that the right to exercise self-determination in the State of Israel belongs uniquely to the

Jewish people, among other discriminatory provisions. The basic laws of Israel are considered equivalent to a constitution.

Until 2021, no independent Arab party had ever been formally included in a governing coalition, and Arabs generally do not serve in senior positions in government. Arab representation in the Knesset was at an all-time low in 2023, with only 10 non-Jewish members in the 120-seat body. Members of other ethnic and religious minority populations, as well as LGBT+ Israelis, enjoy some representation in the Knesset and the political system more broadly. The current speaker of the Knesset and some other members are openly gay.

The roughly 700,000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are Israeli citizens and can participate in Israeli elections. Arab residents of East Jerusalem have the option of obtaining Israeli citizenship, though most decline for political reasons; those who have applied face significant delays and are rejected in most cases. While these noncitizens are entitled to vote in municipal as well as Palestinian Authority (PA) elections, they have traditionally boycotted Israeli municipal balloting, and Israel has restricted PA election activity in the city. A Palestinian Jerusalem resident who is not a citizen cannot become mayor under current Israeli law. Citizenship and residency status are overwhelmingly denied to Palestinian residents of the West Bank or Gaza Strip who are married to Israeli citizens.

Courts can revoke the citizenship of any Israeli convicted of spying, treason, or aiding the enemy. Separately, the Interior Ministry has been accused in recent years of revoking the citizenship of dozens and possibly thousands of Bedouins on the basis of decades-old registration errors.

Jewish immigrants and their immediate families are granted Israeli citizenship and residence rights. It is extremely difficult in practice for non-Jewish immigrants to obtain citizenship and access to political rights.

C Functioning of Government

C1 0-4 pts

Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 4 / 4

The government and parliament are free to set and implement policies and laws without undue interference from unelected entities.

In March 2023, the Knesset passed legislation that effectively made it more difficult to deem the prime minister unfit to govern. The law states that a three-quarters majority in either the Knesset or the cabinet would be necessary to remove the prime minister as unfit, and that the mechanism could only be invoked for psychological or health reasons. Under the previous rules, the attorney general was considered to have

the authority to deem a prime minister unfit for office. The change was seen as part of Netanyahu's wider efforts to weaken independent checks on his authority as he faced an ongoing trial on corruption charges.

C2 0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Corruption scandals are common at all levels of government, and high-level corruption investigations are relatively frequent, with senior officials implicated in several scandals and criminal cases in recent years. In 2019, Netanyahu was indicted on charges of fraud, bribery, and breach of trust for allegedly accepting expensive gifts, his apparent attempt to collude with the owner of the newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth* to secure positive coverage, and the granting of regulatory favors to telecommunications operator and media conglomerate Bezeq in return for positive coverage. Netanyahu denied the charges against him and accused law enforcement bodies of perpetrating "an attempted coup," a sentiment that has been amplified by right-wing media outlets.

Netanyahu has unsuccessfully pursued legislative approval of an immunity bill that would partly shield him from prosecution while in office. His trial has been ongoing since 2021, and his supporters, including his son Yair Netanyahu, have been accused of attempting to intimidate prosecution witnesses.

Some commentators speculated in 2023 that parts of the government's proposed judicial overhaul were intended to protect or extricate the prime minister from his corruption charges. In July 2023, the Knesset adopted one of the judicial reform bills, removing the courts' ability to review government decisions on the basis of "reasonableness." The measure raised concerns that it could clear the way for greater political influence over the attorney general's office and members of the professional civil service responsible for corruption prosecutions. A Supreme Court decision on whether to strike down the new law was pending at year's end.

C3 0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 3 / 4

Israel's laws, political practices, civil society groups, and independent media generally ensure a substantial level of governmental transparency, though recent corruption cases have illustrated persistent shortcomings. The Freedom of Information Law grants every citizen and resident of Israel the right to receive information from a public authority. However, the law includes blanket exemptions that allow officials to withhold information on the armed forces, intelligence services, the Atomic Energy Agency, and the prison system, potentially enabling the concealment of abuses. Authorities often fail to respond to freedom of information

requests in a timely manner, leading applicants to turn to the courts for enforcement.

After the Hamas terrorist attack of October 2023, the government adopted special regulations to further limit freedom of information regarding ongoing military operations. While some observers criticized the measures, others argued that they did not go far enough. One ruling by the Justice Ministry, which would have allowed public authorities to delay responses to freedom of information requests by at least seven months, was revoked in November amid a public backlash, though delays related to the war continued in practice.

Civil Liberties

D Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media? 3 / 4

The Israeli media sector is vibrant and free to criticize government policy. While the scope of permissible reporting is generally broad, news articles on security matters are subject to a military censor. The fighting with Hamas that followed the October 2023 terrorist attack apparently led to a surge in the number of censored news items, with more than 6,500 items completely or partially redacted by year's end, compared with about 1,100 in all of 2022. The censor's office also reportedly issued a notice calling for prepublication review of content on eight topics, such as hostages, military weapons systems and operational details, and the movements of senior officials. The Government Press Office has occasionally withheld press cards from foreign journalists to restrict them from entering Israel, citing security considerations. While Israeli authorities permitted some international journalists to enter Gaza from Israel in the company of military forces after October 2023, others were denied entry.

In October 2023, the government issued emergency regulations that allow authorities to ban foreign broadcasters, and at least one Lebanese outlet was banned under the new rules by year's end. Separately, at least three journalists were killed in Hamas's terrorist attack on October 7, while other journalists faced harassment for their reporting on the war.

Despite the existence of robust legal protections for journalists, Prime Minister Netanyahu and his allies have harmed public trust in the media over time by portraying critical correspondents as traitors seeking to unseat him. As a result, journalists have described self-censorship on stories that might be perceived as sympathetic to Palestinians or "leftist" in orientation. Netanyahu's efforts to undermine the independence of Israel's public broadcaster and financially weaken certain commercial

television channels have had a chilling effect on those outlets' willingness to investigate possible misconduct or corruption by influential politicians.

Most Israeli media outlets are not financially independent, and their coverage is sometimes biased toward the political and commercial interests of their owners. Communications Minister Shlomo Karhi has promoted policies and regulations that would effectively empower the government to support the right-wing television outlet Channel 14 while putting the public broadcaster and other private outlets at a disadvantage.

D2 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 3 / 4

While Israel defines itself as a Jewish state, freedom of religion is largely respected. Christian, Muslim, Druze, and Baha'i communities have jurisdiction over their own members in matters of marriage, divorce, and burial. The Orthodox establishment governs personal status matters among Jews, drawing objections from many non-Orthodox Israelis. Orthodox parties have enough political power to shape government decisions relating to religion and the state; for example, public transportation is largely unavailable on the Sabbath or religious holidays. In March 2023, the Knesset passed a law allowing hospitals to ban hametz, or leavened food products, during Passover.

Although the law protects the religious sites of non-Jewish groups, they face discrimination in the allocation of state resources as well as persistent cases of vandalism or harassment, which usually go unsolved. In 2023, media reports noted that Israel's Christian population had experienced increasing vandalism and harassment by Jewish extremists since the current right-wing government took power.

Citing security concerns, Israeli authorities have long set and adjusted limits on Muslim access to the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif in East Jerusalem, which affects worshippers across the broader area. In recent years, Israeli authorities have eased security-related restrictions on Jewish prayer at the site without openly announcing a change in policy, and the number of Jewish worshippers ascending to the upper part of the compound has increased. Related tensions contributed to violence between security forces and Muslim worshippers in April 2023. At the Western Wall of the compound, long a site of Jewish prayer, rival advocacy groups have been engaged in an ongoing dispute over access for women and non-Orthodox Jewish worshippers.

D3 0-4 pts

Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

Primary and secondary education is universal, though divided into multiple public school systems (state, state-religious, independent religious, Arabic-Christian, Arabic-Druze, and Arabic-Muslim) as well as private schools. School quality and resources are generally lower in mostly non-Jewish communities. A 2018 law bans groups that are in favor of legal action abroad against Israeli soldiers, or that otherwise undermine state educational goals by criticizing the military, from entering Israeli schools or interacting with students. Attempts to influence or restrict academic freedom at universities are generally blocked.

In November 2023, an Israeli history teacher was arrested and detained for four days after sharing a Facebook post that expressed opposition to Israeli military actions in Gaza. He was released but lost his job and still faced charges.

D4 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

While private discussion in Israel is generally open and free, there are some restrictions on political expression. For example, the 2011 Boycott Law exposes Israeli individuals and groups to civil lawsuits if they advocate an economic, cultural, or academic boycott of the state of Israel or West Bank settlements. Israel's defamation law allows for both slander and libel, including on social media, to be categorized as civil wrongdoing or criminal misdemeanors.

According to the newspaper *Haaretz*, police have targeted current and former government officials, businesspeople, and others with the Pegasus spyware product, which was developed by an Israeli company.

Since October 2023, hundreds of people have been arrested for social media posts or other expression about the war, often without due process or sufficient evidence. For example, two activists from a Jewish-Arab peace group were detained after putting up posters that read, "Jews and Arabs, we will get through this together." A hospital director was suspended from his position for using a social media profile image of a dove carrying an olive branch over a green flag with the Muslim declaration of faith.

In November, the Knesset approved an amendment to the Counterterrorism Law that criminalizes the "consumption of terrorist materials" and carries a maximum prison sentence of one year. Rights groups argued that the vaguely worded law amounted to the policing of thought and would expand authorities' surveillance powers while hindering free expression.

E Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4

Protests and demonstrations are widely permitted and typically peaceful. However, some protest activities—such as desecration of the flag of Israel—can draw criminal penalties, and police have sometimes attempted to restrict peaceful demonstrations, particularly those organized by ethnic minority groups such as Arabs and Ethiopian Jews.

During 2023, mass demonstrations against the government's judicial reform bills took place on a weekly basis and sometimes more frequently. Assemblies in support of the measures also occurred, but were less common. While the demonstrations were largely peaceful and typically did not encounter undue obstacles, police sometimes acted with excessive force and made unnecessary arrests. In March, for example, police used stun grenades and water cannons to disperse demonstrators who had blocked a highway in Tel Aviv.

After the Hamas attack and the outbreak of war in Gaza, the authorities disallowed some demonstrations, with and without court sanction, most often restricting those that were organized by Arab citizens calling for a cease-fire or otherwise protesting the war. In November, the Supreme Court rejected a request to hold an antiwar protest in northern Arab Israeli towns, arguing that police were overburdened due to the war. Also that month, four former Arab Israeli lawmakers who had planned an antiwar protest were detained and questioned on suspicion of "incitement and harm to public order." In December, two activists were arrested in Haifa after participating in a peaceful demonstration against the war.

E2 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

The environment for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) has deteriorated in recent years. A law enacted in 2012 requires NGOs to submit financial reports four times a year on support received from foreign government sources. Under a 2016 law, NGOs that receive more than half of their funding from foreign governments must disclose this fact publicly and in any written or oral communications with elected officials. The measure mainly affects groups associated with the political left that oppose Israel's policies toward Palestinians; foreign funding for right-leaning groups that support Jewish settlements in the West Bank, for example, more often comes from private sources. A 2017 law bars access to the country for any foreign individuals or groups that publicly support a boycott of Israel or its West Bank settlements.

E3 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 4 / 4

Workers may join unions and have the right to strike and bargain collectively, although employers often attempt to prevent such moves. Most of the workforce either belongs to Histadrut, the national labor federation, or is covered by its social programs and bargaining agreements. Histadrut also competes with other independent union organizations. While some members of the current government have advocated imposing new limits on unions, the National Labor Court generally protects their rights.

F Rule of Law

F1 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary? 3 / 4

The judiciary is independent and regularly rules against the government. The Supreme Court has historically played a crucial role in protecting minority groups and overturning decisions by the government and the parliament when they threaten human rights. The court hears direct petitions from citizens and other individuals in Israel as well as Palestinian residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the state generally adheres to court rulings.

In early 2023, Netanyahu's government presented a package of judicial reform bills that would limit the judiciary's ability to review government decisions and legislation, curb the independence of ministerial legal counsel, change how judges are selected and appointed, and allow the Knesset to override Supreme Court rulings. In July, the Knesset passed one of the proposed bills, barring judicial review of government decisions on the basis of "reasonableness." The law was challenged before the Supreme Court, and a judgment on whether to strike it down was expected in early 2024.

Also during the year, while the bill to overhaul the judicial appointment system stalled in the Knesset, Justice Minister Yariv Levin refused to convene the existing Judicial Appointments Committee and advance the nomination of new judges, creating dozens of vacancies by year's end as incumbent judges—including the chief justice—retired. The committee was convened once in November, meeting for the first time since April 2022, but made no nominations.

Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 due to rising political pressure on judicial autonomy, including the justice minister's lengthy refusal to initiate nomination procedures to fill judicial vacancies and the passage of legislation to limit judicial review of government decisions.

F2 0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 2 / 4

Although due process is largely guaranteed in ordinary cases, those suspected of security-related offenses are subject to special legal provisions. Individuals can be held in administrative detention without trial for renewable six-month terms. The number of people in administrative detention—nearly all of whom are Palestinians from the occupied territories—has risen sharply from fewer than 500 in 2021. As of late September 2023, of the approximately 1,300 people held in administrative detention, about half had been held for longer than six months, 29 had been held for up to two years, and 3 had been held for more than two years. The total nearly doubled after the October terrorist attack, and by year's end more than 8,000 Palestinians from the occupied territories were being held in Israeli facilities on security grounds, including more than 2,800 in administrative detention—exceeding all previous tallies dating back to 2001. The Supreme Court almost never grants attorneys' requests to void administrative detention orders.

Under criminal law, individuals suspected of security offenses can be held for up to 96 hours without judicial review under certain circumstances and be denied access to an attorney for up to 21 days. Human rights activists have noted that detainees are often unable to read Hebrew-language statements or other legal documents, including confessions.

Scores of Palestinian children (aged 12–17) from the occupied territories are held in Israeli military detention. Although Israeli law prohibits the detention of children younger than 12, some are occasionally held. Child detainees typically serve sentences—handed down by a special military court for minors created in 2009—for throwing stones or other projectiles at Israeli troops in the West Bank; acquittals on such charges are very rare, and the military courts have been criticized for a lack of due process protections. East Jerusalem Palestinian minors are tried in Israeli civilian juvenile courts.

Due process in Israel was affected by the blockage in judicial appointments during 2023, which added to an already enormous burden of open cases pending before the courts. There were fewer than 800 judges nationwide, and each was tasked with roughly 1,000 new cases per year. The growing backlog has contributed to delays for individual criminal defendants and civil litigants.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to a sharp increase in the number of Palestinians held in administrative detention in Israel over the past two years, particularly since October 2023, as well as a swelling backlog of unresolved court cases linked to delays in the appointment of new judges.

F3 0-4 pts

Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 1 / 4

Hamas's terrorist attack on October 7, 2023, consisted of a large-scale raid into Israeli territory from the Gaza Strip. The attackers killed some 1,200 civilians and soldiers and abducted more than 200 others, bringing them back to Gaza as hostages. There were also allegations of sexual assault and torture. It took Israeli security forces a number of days to regain control of the devastated towns and villages near the border with the Gaza Strip. As of December 2023, dozens of hostages were still believed to be held in Gaza by Hamas.

Hamas and other militant groups in the Gaza Strip sharply escalated their rocket and artillery fire against Israeli border communities beginning in October, while militant groups including Hezbollah launched similar attacks from Lebanon and Syria.

Israeli security forces and civilians also faced the ongoing threat of small-scale terrorist attacks, most often involving stabbings or vehicular assaults. Human rights groups have accused police of using deadly force against stone throwers or perpetrators of stabbings and vehicular attacks when they did not pose or no longer posed a lethal threat. In November 2023, three civilians were killed in a shooting at a Jerusalem bus stop. A fourth civilian, who was mistaken for one of the attackers, was killed by security forces.

The Supreme Court banned torture in a 1999 ruling but said physical coercion might be permissible during interrogations in cases involving an imminent threat. Human rights organizations accuse the authorities of continuing to use some forms of physical abuse and other measures such as isolation, sleep deprivation, psychological threats and pressure, painful binding, and humiliation. Following the October 2023 terrorist attack, alleged cases of torture and degrading treatment in Israeli prisons were reported. Under emergency regulations approved by the Knesset for a three-month period in October, prisoners were also reportedly subjected to overcrowding, confinement to cells, and reduced access to visits, food, and electricity.

In another response to the October attack, the minister of national security oversaw the creation of civilian paramilitary forces in Israel and the occupied West Bank, raising concerns that the program could fuel violence against Palestinian civilians in particular.

Separately, the number of murders within Arab-majority communities rose to 244 in 2023, more than double the figure from the previous year. Arab or Palestinian citizens of Israel account for a majority of murder victims each year despite representing about a fifth of the population. Police are far less likely to solve murders with Arab victims than those with Jewish victims. The previous government's efforts to address crime in Arab communities were discontinued under the current government.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to Hamas's October invasion of Israeli territory, which entailed the murder or abduction of some 1,400 people, as well as subsequent rocket attacks and a rise in criminal violence earlier in the year.

F4 0-4 pts

Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of 2 / various segments of the population? 4

Jewish citizens of Israel enjoy practical advantages relative to the Arab and Palestinian population on matters including legal treatment and socioeconomic conditions.

Arab or Palestinian citizens of Israel face de facto discrimination in education, social services, personal security, and access to housing and related permits. The 2018 nation-state law declared that the state “views the development of Jewish settlement as a national value, and shall act to encourage and promote its establishment and strengthening.” The Jewish National Fund (JNF-KKL), which owns about 13 percent of the land in Israel, has effectively maintained a Jewish-only land-leasing policy. Meanwhile, the Israel Land Authority directly controls about 93 percent of the country's land, and can only transfer its properties to affiliated entities like the JNF-KKL. Another law allows smaller communities to reject housing applications based on vague criteria, and this power has been used to discriminate against Palestinian Israelis and other marginalized groups in practice.

About a third of Israel's Bedouin citizens live in communities or villages that are not recognized by the state. Those in unrecognized villages cannot claim social services, are in some cases off the electricity and water grids, and have no official land rights. The government routinely demolishes Bedouin homes and other structures built without a license.

Israelis of Ethiopian origin suffer from discrimination—including in the criminal justice system—and lag behind the general population economically despite government integration efforts.

Women are treated equally in criminal and civil courts and have achieved substantial parity within Israeli society, though economic and other forms of discrimination persist, particularly among Arab and religious Jewish communities. Arab women are far less likely to be employed than either Arab men or Jewish women. Religious courts that rule on family law cases systematically discriminate against women. Femicide and other violence against women remains a persistent problem in both Arab and Jewish communities.

Discrimination based on sexual orientation is illegal, though LGBT+ people continue to face bias in some communities. Gay and transgender Israelis

are permitted to serve openly in the military.

Individuals who enter the country irregularly, including asylum seekers, can be detained for up to a year without charges. Asylum applications, when fully processed, are rejected in over 99 percent of cases. There have been few new irregular entries since a barrier along the border with Egypt was completed in 2012, though about 25,000 asylum seekers remained in the country as of 2023, and the authorities have pressured those who entered irregularly—mostly from Eritrea and Sudan—to agree to be deported to a third country.

G Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

G1 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 3 / 4

Security measures can sometimes present obstacles to freedom of movement. Following the October 2023 terrorist attack, access to areas near the borders with Gaza and Lebanon was restricted by the military, and about 200,000 Israelis were evacuated and displaced from the two zones.

Foreign workers are subjected to certain limits on their place of employment. A 2022 government regulation prohibits asylum seekers from working in sectors other than construction, agriculture, institution-based caregiving, hotels, and restaurants. Migrant workers in the caregiving sector are only allowed to work within an assigned geographical area, and can only switch employers three times during their stay in Israel, which is generally capped at five years.

G2 0-4 pts

Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 3 / 4

Property rights within Israel are effectively protected, and business activity is generally free of undue interference. Businesses face a low risk of expropriation or criminal activity, and corruption is not a major obstacle for private investors. However, migrant workers and asylum seekers are barred from owning businesses, forcing them to enlist Israeli partners. The authorities' general commitment to property rights has also been called into question due to their policies on issues such as unrecognized Bedouin villages and Jewish settlement in the occupied territories.

G3 0-4 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 / 4

Personal social freedoms are generally guaranteed. However, since religious courts oversee personal status issues, women face some disadvantages in divorce and other matters. Many ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities attempt to enforce unofficial rules on gender separation and personal attire in the public sphere. Marriages between Jews and non-Jews are not recognized by the state unless conducted abroad, nor are marriages involving a Muslim woman and a non-Muslim man. Israel recognizes same-sex marriages conducted abroad. Nonbiological parents in same-sex partnerships are eligible for guardianship rights. A 2018 law extended surrogacy rights to women without a male partner but not to men without a female partner, effectively excluding gay men. A 2022 rule change simplified access to abortion and allowed abortion pills to be provided through the public health care system. In November 2023, the Knesset extended war-related survivor benefits to the same-sex partners of soldiers.

G4 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from 2 / economic exploitation? 4

Israel remains a destination for human-trafficking victims, and African students, migrant workers, and asylum seekers are especially vulnerable to forced labor and other forms of exploitation.

Many Palestinian laborers from the occupied territories have been forced to pay illegal broker fees to obtain Israeli work permits, which can leave them in debt and less likely to quit when faced with abusive employment conditions. Thousands of laborers from Gaza who were working in Israel on the day of the October 2023 terrorist attack were detained by authorities and held for nearly a month. Released workers reported experiencing physical and psychological mistreatment in custody, and at least two workers died while held in Israeli detention centers.

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