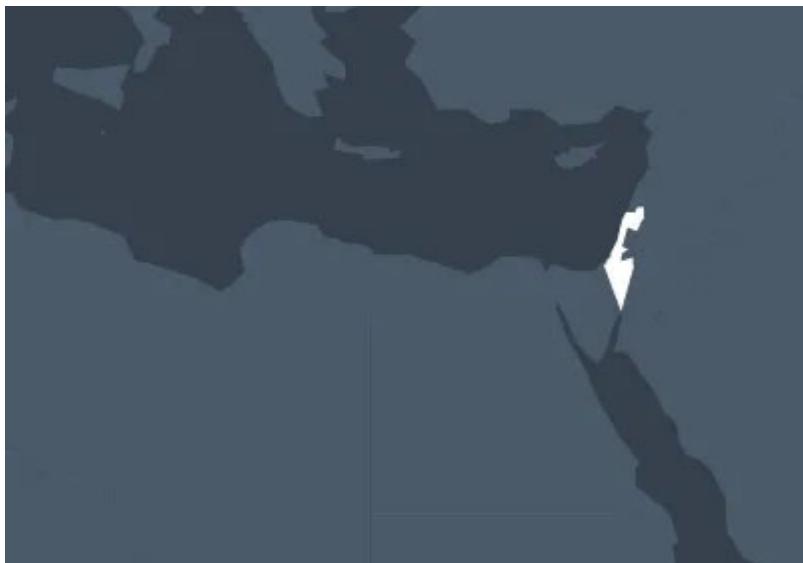


Freedom in the World 2025



A Note About Related Territories

Territories are sometimes assessed separately from related countries if they meet certain criteria, including significantly different conditions for political rights and civil liberties, and boundaries that are sufficiently stable to allow annual comparisons.

Related Territories: 2025 Global Freedom Score Overview



West Bank
22 / 100
Not Free



Gaza Strip

2 / 100

Not Free

Click on a scorecard to visit each countries Freedom in the World Report.

header1 Note

The numerical scores and status listed for Israel do not reflect the actions of the Israeli military or Jewish Israeli settlers in the Gaza Strip or the West Bank, as conditions there are examined in separate reports. Any actions that affect conditions for people within Israel, such as cross-border shelling from Gaza or Lebanon, are captured in this report. Although the international community generally considers East Jerusalem to be part of the occupied West Bank, it may be mentioned in this report to provide context for 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. Related, disputed, or occupied territories are sometimes assessed separately from the relevant countries if they meet certain criteria, including distinct conditions for political rights and civil liberties and boundaries that are sufficiently stable to allow year-on-year comparisons. For more information, see the report [methodology](#) and [FAQ](#).

header2 Overview

Israel is a parliamentary democracy with a multiparty system and independent institutions that generally guarantee political rights and civil liberties for the population within its borders. However, the judiciary's independence has come under growing political pressure in recent years, and long-term discrimination against Arab and other ethnic and religious minority populations has resulted in systemic disparities in areas including criminal justice, local government budgets, education, and economic opportunity.

header3 Key Developments in 2024

- In early January, the Supreme Court struck down a law passed by the Knesset (parliament) in July 2023 that would have reduced the judiciary's ability to review and block government actions. The law was part of a broader legislative effort by the government to exert control over the courts.
- In June, following the government's failure to pass legislation exempting many ultra-Orthodox Jewish men from compulsory military service, the Supreme Court ruled that the military must begin conscripting such men in keeping with existing laws. Draft notices were issued during the subsequent months despite protests from the ultra-Orthodox community.
- Protests calling for the release of hostages held in the Gaza Strip by the Palestinian militant group Hamas since its October 2023 terrorist attack on Israel intensified during the year, putting pressure on the government to reach a cease-fire and exchange agreement with Hamas. However, no deal had been agreed by year's end, and the Israeli military's campaign continued, as did its mass detention of Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank. Although Israel reached a separate cease-fire agreement with the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah in late November, roughly 60,000 Israelis remained displaced from their homes near the Lebanese border.
- The trial of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on charges of fraud, bribery, and breach of trust continued in an Israeli court throughout the year. Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant, whom he had recently dismissed as defense minister, were also named in arrest

warrants issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in November for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity as part of the conflict in Gaza, though the Israeli authorities rejected the validity of the decision. The arrest of Hamas military chief Mohammed Deif, who was reportedly killed in an air strike in July, was sought as part of the same ICC investigation. The ICC prosecutor had initially requested arrest warrants for two additional Hamas leaders, Yahya Sinwar and Ismail Haniyeh, but both were confirmed to have been killed prior to the court's November decision.

PR Political Rights

A Electoral Process

A1 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

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

4.004
4.004

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.

In Israel's parliamentary system, the prime minister and cabinet must have the support of a majority in the Knesset. To oust a sitting government through a no-confidence motion, lawmakers must simultaneously vote to select a new government.

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 outgoing Prime Minister Yair Lapid's fragile coalition of parties from across the political spectrum.

After Hamas's terrorist attack on Israel in October 2023, the Knesset approved a broader wartime cabinet that included the centrist National Unity party, which held 12 seats in the legislature. The party split in March 2024, with the four-seat New Hope faction leaving the government. The remainder of National Unity also left the government in June, but New Hope returned in September, giving the governing coalition a total of 68 seats.

A2 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

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

4.004
4.004

Members of the 120-seat unicameral Knesset are elected to serve four-year terms through proportional representation using a single nationwide district, and elections are widely considered to be free and fair. Since 2015, the electoral threshold for parties to win representation has been 3.25 percent.

In the November 2022 elections, the right-wing nationalist and religious bloc headed by Netanyahu was able to secure a majority coalition government of 64 seats: Likud took 32 seats, 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 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies?	4.004
	4.004

The Central Elections Committee (CEC) is responsible for ensuring the fairness of elections. It is composed of delegations representing the various parties in the Knesset and chaired by a Supreme Court judge. Elections are generally conducted in an impartial and orderly manner.

B Political Pluralism and Participation

B1 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 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

Israel hosts a diverse and competitive multiparty system. To register a new party, groups must obtain at least 100 signatures from Israeli citizens and pay a small fee. However, legal rules prohibiting parties or candidates that deny Israel's Jewish character, oppose democracy, incite racism, or support terrorism have occasionally been invoked against both far-right Jewish and far-left Arab parties and candidates. In a number of such cases, the Supreme Court has overturned initial disqualifications by the CEC.

In November 2024, the Knesset Ethics Committee imposed a six-month suspension of speaking and other privileges on leftist lawmaker Ofer Cassif, after he made a series of public statements about alleged Israeli war crimes in the Gaza Strip. An earlier bid to fully oust Cassif from his seat—using a 2016 law allowing such expulsions for inciting racism or supporting armed struggle against Israel—failed to garner the required three-quarters majority in the Knesset.

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?	4.004
	4.004

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, such as the municipality of Tel Aviv.

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?	4.004
	4.004

Israeli voters are generally free from coercion or undue influence by forces outside the political sphere. Political parties rely mostly on public funding, which is allocated based on their electoral performance. Private donations are strictly limited.

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

Political rights are unevenly protected. Political power in the country is held disproportionately by Jewish men.

Women generally enjoy full political rights in law and in practice, though they remain underrepresented in leadership positions. In 2024 they held about 25 percent of the seats in the Knesset and 16 percent of ministerial posts in the cabinet. Women encounter obstacles in certain parties—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.

LGBT+ Israelis also have full political rights and have secured representation in the Knesset and the political system more broadly. The current parliament speaker and some other lawmakers are openly gay.

Arab citizens of Israel, who often identify as Palestinian and make up about 20 percent of the population, face political discrimination. 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, though Arab-majority municipalities are mostly run by parties or independents from the Arab community. Arab representation in the Knesset reached an all-time low after the 2022 elections, with only 10 non-Jewish members in the 120-seat body. 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.

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 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.

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 1.00-4.00 pts 0-4 pts

Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government?	4.004
	4.004

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 the coalition government’s wider efforts to weaken independent checks on its authority, including from ministerial legal advisers overseen by the attorney general. In January 2024,

however, the Supreme Court ruled that the law would only take effect after the next parliamentary elections.

C2 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? | 2.002 4.004

High-level corruption investigations are relatively common, with senior officials implicated in several scandals and criminal cases in recent years. Prime Minister Netanyahu was indicted in 2019 on charges of fraud, bribery, and breach of trust for allegedly accepting expensive gifts, for his apparent attempt to collude with the owner of the newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth* to secure positive coverage, and for the granting of regulatory favors to telecommunications operator and media conglomerate Bezeq in return for positive coverage. Netanyahu denied the charges and accused law enforcement bodies of perpetrating “an attempted coup,” an idea that has been amplified by right-wing media outlets. His trial, which began in 2021, continued throughout 2024.

Much of the current government’s legislative agenda has been dedicated to reforms that would allow greater political control over independent institutions responsible for preventing and punishing corruption, including the judiciary, the attorney general’s office, and the professional civil service. The proposed legal changes had made little progress as of 2024, but disputes over the government’s appointments to auditing bodies and other such positions were ongoing during the year.

C3 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency? | 3.003 4.004

Israel’s laws, political practices, civil society groups, and independent media generally ensure a substantial level of governmental transparency. Plenary meetings and most committee meetings in the Knesset are broadcast live on the parliament’s website. The executive branch is less transparent, and 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. Authorities often fail to respond to freedom of information requests in a timely manner, particularly in the context of the war in Gaza, leading applicants to turn to the courts for enforcement.

CL Civil Liberties

D Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media? | 3.003 4.004

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 war with Hamas that began in October 2023 led to a surge in the number of news items that were completely or partially redacted, following many years of declines. 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 a small number of

international journalists to enter Gaza from Israel in the company of military forces after October 2023, none were granted independent access to the territory.

In April 2024, the Knesset adopted a temporary measure empowering the government to withdraw broadcasting licenses from foreign media outlets for renewable 45-day periods. Officials used the authority in May to shut down the local operations of the Qatar-based news outlet Al Jazeera, and a court in June upheld the government's assertion that the network had substantially harmed state security through its broadcasts on the war in Gaza. The Israeli military has accused Al Jazeera correspondents in Gaza of working with Hamas, which has been designated as a terrorist organization by the United States, the European Union, and other democracies in addition to Israel; the outlet has denied the allegations. Also in May, the government briefly confiscated equipment from the Associated Press, accusing it of providing live video images of Gaza to Al Jazeera. In October, a US journalist for the far-left news website *The Grayzone* was detained for several days due to reporting on Iranian missile strikes that allegedly violated military censorship rules.

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, and have sought ways to support friendly outlets while punishing those they perceive as politically hostile. In June 2024, a politician with close ties to Netanyahu was appointed as chief executive of the influential broadcaster Channel 13, but strong objections from staff and outside observers led to her removal in August. Separately in November, the government announced that it would halt all state advertising purchases and official interactions with the liberal newspaper *Haaretz*; the paper's journalists filed a petition with the Supreme Court, asking it to block the move.

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

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. This system has drawn objections from non-Orthodox Jews, and from Israelis of various backgrounds who would prefer not to be subject to religious laws or ceremonies.

Orthodox Jewish 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 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 by Jewish extremists. There have been reports of harassment aimed at visibly Muslim residents since the war with Hamas began. Media outlets and civil society groups have also noted an increase in such pressure against Israel's Christian population since the current right-wing government took power.
D3 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

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

3.003

4.004

Academic freedom has largely been protected despite growing pressure in recent years. 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.

The Council for Higher Education, the chief policy body for higher education in Israel, continued to suffer from attempts to politically influence its makeup and decisions in 2024. In August, the government was criticized for attempting to appoint new council members who had political connections to the ruling coalition, leading two of the four nominees to withdraw.

The war with Hamas has reportedly raised tensions and contributed to self-censorship on university campuses. Some students and faculty members have faced disciplinary measures or intimidation in response to explicit or perceived expressions of support for terrorist groups.

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

Public and private discussion in Israel are generally open and free, and residents regularly critique the government and its policies on social media and elsewhere. However, there are some legal 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 its 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.

In the months following the October 2023 attack on Israel, police carried out hundreds of arrests and interrogations for alleged incitement to terrorism and other such offenses, often for statements on social media. Arab Israelis have been disproportionately affected by such accusations, and many cases have been initiated without due process or sufficient evidence. The initial rise in arrests was attributed in part to a reported decision by the state prosecutor's office to temporarily waive a rule requiring police investigations of online incitement to be preapproved by prosecutors, though problematic enforcement continued after the rule was reinstated, according to rights activists. In addition to police scrutiny, social media posts or other public statements about the conflict in Gaza have led to consequences such as job losses or expulsion from school.

In late 2023, the Knesset approved an amendment to the Counterterrorism Law that criminalized the "consumption of terrorist materials," prescribing 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 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly?

3.003 4.004

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 been more forceful against certain demonstrations, particularly those organized by ethnic or religious minority groups such as Arabs, ultra-Orthodox Jews, and Ethiopian Jews.

During 2024, mass demonstrations against the government's management of the Israel-Hamas war and the impasse in negotiations for the exchange of hostages and prisoners took place on a weekly basis and sometimes more frequently. 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. While demonstrations that went forward were largely peaceful and typically did not encounter undue obstacles, police sometimes used excessive force and made unnecessary arrests. Detained protesters were generally released by the courts.

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?

2.002

4.004

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.

In the context of the Israel-Hamas war, human rights organizations, particularly those that focused on conditions for Palestinian civilians, faced public criticism and harassment from both government officials and right-wing activists in response to their allegations of rights violations by Israeli forces.

F3 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

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

4.004 4.004

Workers may join unions and have the right to strike and bargain collectively, although employers often attempt to prevent such moves. Most workers either belong to the Histadrut, the national labor federation, or are covered by its social programs and bargaining agreements. The 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 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary?

3.003 4.004

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 from 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, change how judges are appointed, and allow the Knesset to override Supreme Court rulings. In July 2023, the Knesset passed one of the proposed bills, barring judicial review of government decisions on the basis of "reasonableness." However, the Supreme Court struck down the new law in January 2024.

For much of 2024, with a bill to overhaul the judicial appointment system stalled in the Knesset, Justice Minister Yariv Levin continued his refusal to convene the existing Judicial Selection Committee and advance nominations to fill a growing number of vacant judicial posts, including that of the chief justice. The Supreme Court repeatedly instructed Levin to proceed with the pending appointments, setting a January 2025 deadline in a December ruling.

F2 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Although due process is guaranteed in ordinary civil and criminal cases, those suspected of security-related offenses are subject to special legal provisions. Under criminal law, during war, individuals suspected of security offenses can be held for renewable periods of 45 days with court approval. Israeli citizens who are held on security offenses are allowed access to legal counsel and largely enjoy the benefits of due process.

Individuals can also be held in administrative detention without trial for renewable six-month terms. Within Israel, only the defense minister is authorized to order an administrative detention, and detainees must be brought before a judge within 48 hours. For suspects in the occupied territories, warrants can be issued by military officials and are reviewed by military judges. The number of people in administrative detention in Israeli prisons—nearly all of whom are Palestinians from the occupied territories—has risen sharply in recent years, from fewer than 500 in 2021 and about 1,300 as of September 2023 to more than 3,300 at the end of June 2024. There were also about 1,400 Palestinians from Gaza being held, without access to counsel, as “illegal combatants” as of June 2024, and more than 4,000 other Palestinian security detainees awaiting legal proceedings or serving sentences.

Scores of Palestinian children (aged 12–17) from the occupied territories are held in Israeli detention, including administrative detainees, those deemed “illegal combatants,” and those awaiting trial or serving sentences. Many of those serving sentences—handed down by a special military court for minors created in 2009—were charged with 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 has been affected by the ongoing blockage in judicial appointments under Justice Minister Levin, 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.

F3 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Hamas’s terrorist attack on October 7, 2023, consisted of a large-scale raid into Israel from the Gaza Strip. The attackers killed some 1,200 civilians and soldiers and abducted more than 250 others, bringing them back to Gaza as hostages. Many of the hostages were reportedly subjected to starvation, sexual assault, torture, or execution, and as of December 2024, approximately 100 were still being held in Gaza.

Throughout 2024, Hamas and an allied network of militant groups supported by the Iranian regime continued to fire projectiles into Israel from Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. The attacks from Lebanon in particular forced the evacuation of roughly 60,000 Israeli civilians from their homes in the north, and most remained displaced at year’s end despite a cease-fire agreement between Israel and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah in late November. In April and again in October, the Iranian military itself fired hundreds of missiles and drones at Israeli territory. While these cross-border attacks caused few casualties due to the effectiveness of Israel’s missile defenses, warning systems, and assistance from foreign partners, they remained a constant menace to civilian life. In addition, Israeli security forces and civilians faced the ongoing threat of small-scale terrorist attacks using vehicles, firearms, or knives.

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 have long accused 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 attack, security-related detainees in Israeli prisons were reportedly subjected to overcrowding; confinement to cells; reduced access to visits, food, and electricity; and various forms of physical abuse and degrading treatment. A United Nations report in July 2024 cited accounts of torture and sexual violence. By the end of the year, about 50 Palestinian detainees had died in Israeli custody since October 2023.

Criminal violence remained a serious problem, with Arab or Palestinian citizens of Israel accounting for the vast 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. According to civil society data, the number of Arab murder victims rose to 244 in 2023, more than double the figure from the previous year, and a similar number was reported for 2024.

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

Jewish citizens of Israel enjoy practical advantages relative to the Arab and Palestinian population on socioeconomic and other matters, with disparities persisting despite some government investments aimed at reducing them.

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 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 Arab Israelis and other marginalized groups in practice.

About a third of Israel’s roughly 200,000 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.

Israeli Jews of Ethiopian origin also 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 the criminal and civil courts and have achieved substantial parity within Israeli society, though economic and other forms of discrimination persist, particularly in the 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.

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 are nearly always rejected. About 25,000 asylum seekers

remained in the country as of 2024, 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 1.00-4.00 pts 0-4 pts

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

2.002

4.004

Security measures can sometimes present obstacles to freedom of movement. Following the October 2023 terrorist attack and subsequent shelling from Hezbollah, access to large areas near the borders with Gaza and Lebanon was limited for security reasons. Up to 200,000 Israelis were evacuated as a result. While many were able to return to their homes in the south over the course of 2024, those evacuated from the north were internally displaced throughout the year.

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.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 because access to large areas of the country had been restricted since late 2023 due to cross-border shelling and other security concerns, and many civilians remained displaced from their homes.

G2 1.00-4.00 pts 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?

3.003

4.004

Property rights within Israel are effectively protected, and business activity is generally free of undue interference. While most land is owned by the state, it can be leased to individual “owners” for a set amount of time, often 99 years. The leases are routinely extended, and leaseholders are free to sell their rights to others. 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 1.00-4.00 pts 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?

3.003

4.004

Personal social freedoms are generally guaranteed. However, since religious courts oversee personal status issues, there are some restrictions and gender disparities regarding marriage, divorce, and other matters. 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. Same-sex marriages are illegal in Israel, though it recognizes same-sex marriages conducted abroad. Nonbiological parents in same-sex partnerships are eligible for guardianship rights. Since 2022, surrogacy rights have been available to women without a male partner, men without a female partner, and transgender people. A separate rule change that year 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. Many ultra-

Orthodox Jewish communities attempt to enforce unofficial rules on gender separation and personal attire, but have been blocked from doing so for the general public. Reports of domestic violence increased sharply in the first half of 2024 compared with the same period in 2023, with activists pointing to the effects of the war as a contributing factor.

G4 1.00-4.00 pts 0-4 pts

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

2.002

4.004

Most Israelis benefit from significant economic opportunity and protections against exploitative working conditions. However, more than a fifth of the population lives below the poverty line. Arab citizens of Israel are particularly vulnerable to abuses such as illegally low wages, wage theft, and illegal denial of pensions and other benefits. Ultra-Orthodox Jews also suffer from pervasive poverty, with a significant portion of working-age ultra-Orthodox men pursuing subsidized religious education rather than entering the workforce.

Many Palestinian laborers from the occupied territories allowed to work in Israel have been forced to pay illegal broker fees to obtain work permits, which can leave them in debt and less likely to quit when faced with abusive employment conditions.

Israel remains a destination for human-trafficking victims. Migrant workers and asylum seekers are especially at risk of forced labor and other forms of exploitation.