

STAY UP TO DATE: The Effects of the US Foreign Aid Freeze on Freedom House



FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2025

Saudi Arabia

NOT FREE

9
/100

Political Rights	1 /40
Civil Liberties	8 /60

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS

8 /100 **Not Free**

A country or territory's Freedom in the World status depends on its aggregate Political Rights score, on a scale of 0-40, and its aggregate Civil Liberties score, on a scale of 0-60. See the [methodology](#).

Overview

Saudi Arabia's absolute monarchy restricts almost all political rights and civil liberties. No officials at the national level are elected. The regime relies on pervasive surveillance, the criminalization of dissent, appeals to sectarianism and ethnicity, and public spending supported by oil revenues to maintain power. Women and members of religious minority groups face extensive discrimination in law and in practice. Working conditions for the large expatriate labor force are often exploitative.

Key Developments in 2024

- The authorities escalated their use of capital punishment during the year. According to Agence France-Presse, at least 338 people were put to death in 2024, the largest number in decades and up sharply from 170 in 2023. At least 117 of the total were executed for drug-related crimes.
- In a series of orders between February and August, the government instructed civil servants, local officials, teachers, and university students to wear traditional Saudi national dress when at work or in educational facilities, with specific guidelines on attire for different functions.
- In September, the king appointed new members to the Majlis al-Shura (Consultative Council), a 150-seat advisory body with no legislative authority. They included 19 new women members, increasing women's representation on the council to 20 percent.
- The government continued efforts to combat corruption, though without the benefits of transparency and due process. A law approved in February granted protections to whistleblowers, witnesses, and other individuals involved in criminal and judicial proceedings, and in July the Oversight and Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) announced that 155 Saudi officials had been arrested for various offenses after a series of raids over the past month. In September, the kingdom's former director of public security, Lieutenant General Khalid bin Qarar al-Harbi, was sentenced to 20 years in prison on corruption charges following an investigation led by Nazaha.
- In addition to the many political activists who were serving lengthy prison sentences in 2024, ordinary Saudi citizens and residents faced arrest and heavy prison terms for expression-related offenses, including use of social media to criticize the government or its laws. In September, law enforcement officials warned that those who drop or mistreat the Saudi flag

could face fines or up to one year in prison. In October, Saudi cartoonist Mohammed al-Ghamdi was sentenced to 23 years in prison for cartoons published in Qatar's *Lusail* newspaper that were deemed insulting to the Saudi government and sympathetic to Qatar.

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

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?

0 / 4

A2 0-4 pts

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

0 / 4

A3 0-4 pts

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

0 / 4

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, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings?

0 / 4

B2 0-4 pts

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

0 / 4

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 extrapartisan means?

0 / 4

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?

0 / 4

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?

0 / 4

C2 0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?

1 / 4

C3 0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency?

0/4

Civil Liberties

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media?

0/4

D2 0-4 pts

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

0/4

D3 0-4 pts

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

1/4

D4 0-4 pts

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

1/4

E. Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly?

0/4

E2 0-4 pts

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

0/4

E3 0-4 pts

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

0/4

F. Rule of Law

F1 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary?

1/4

F2 0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters?

1/4

F3 0-4 pts

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

0/4

F4 0-4 pts

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

1/4

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?

1 / 4

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 1 due to a series of legal reforms over the past decade that have eased women's access to driver's licenses, passports, and new places of employment, and other changes that have modestly increased freedom of movement for migrant workers.

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?

1 / 4

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?

0 / 4

G4 0-4 pts

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

1 / 4



On Saudi Arabia

See all data, scores & information on this country or territory.

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Country Facts

Population

36,410,000

Global Freedom Score

9 /100 **Not Free**

Internet Freedom Score

25 /100 **Not Free**

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Other Years

2024

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