

HUMAN RIGHTS MONITOR



AMMAN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS STUDIES

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HUMAN RIGHTS MONITOR

Monthly Press Monitoring of Human Rights News in The Middle East and North Africa

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AFGHANISTAN

No Improvement in Human Rights Says experts

Since the Taliban takeover in August 2021, human rights have been on continuous decline across Afghanistan, particularly for girls and women. Taliban authorities have been imposed rights violating policies persecuting, discriminating, and excluding women and girls from all spheres of society.

According to the UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Nada Al-Nashif, “Afghanistan is the only country in the world where girls are denied education beyond primary level” and “the only country in the world that bans women from working for international organisations, including the United Nations, as well as outside the home, in many sectors.”

In a recent report, presented by the Special Rapporteur for Afghanistan and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, experts revealed that “their plight was among the worst of the world,” and warned of systematic “gender apartheid” and “gender persecution.”

Following his visit to Kabul, Richard Bennett – the UN Special Rapporteur for Afghanistan – declared that he was unable to report improvements in the human rights situation “certainly not for women and girls whose predicaments has only worsened, nor for others in the population who are marginalized, associated with the former Islamic Republic, or who resist or even disagree with the Taliban’s ideology.”

Source: [UN News](#), [OHCHR](#)

ALGERIA

Ihsane El Kadi Sentenced to Seven Years in Prison: International Reactions and Calls for Release

Ihsane El Kadi, a journalist and media executive in Algeria, has been sentenced to a severe prison term for ‘foreign financing of his company.’ In the initial trial, he was sentenced to five years in prison, which included three years of hard labor. However, in his appeal, his sentence was increased to seven years, with five years of hard labor. This was the harshest punishment ever imposed on a journalist in Algeria.

Several human rights organizations, including Reporters Without Borders (RSF), MENA Rights Group, the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), and Amnesty International, have strongly criticized this conviction and called for the release of Ihsane El Kadi. They emphasize that this sentence is the result of judicial harassment and widespread repression against independent journalists in Algeria, within a period of extensive political crackdown.

As the head of Interface Media, which includes Radio M and the Maghreb Emergent website, El Kadi is also accused of receiving money and privileges from individuals and organizations, both domestically and abroad. This money is framed as encouraging El Kadi to engage in activities that would undermine the security and stability of the state. In addition to the imprisonment, his company has been dissolved, all his seized assets have been confiscated, and he has received a multitude of fines.

This conviction has sparked strong reactions from human rights defenders and the international community. Petitions have been launched, gathering thousands of signatures to demand the release of Ihsane El Kadi. Amnesty International had previously denounced his imprisonment as an example of the Algerian authorities’ campaign to silence dissenting voices through arbitrary detentions and media closures.

Despite this situation, El Kadi’s lawyer plans to appeal to the Supreme Court, The RSF and other organizations continue to advocate for his release, denouncing the political nature of this judicial decision.

Source: [Le Monde](#), [Maghreb Emergent](#), [Libération](#)

BAHRAIN

No News

No news related to human rights recorded

EGYPT

Government restricts internet access despite promise of a ‘national dialogue’

Abdel Fattah El-Sisi’s government has blocked national access to two online news outlets, Soult4 and Masr 360. There have been differing opinions on why these sites were blocked. The Journalists’ Syndicate cites the absence of up-to-date permits as a reason for it. However, the Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression believe that access to the websites was most likely restricted due to the nature of the content they published. Soult4 covered political news, notably of the opposition party Civil Democratic Movement, as Mars 360 focused on exposing human rights violations committed in Egypt.

These direct attacks on the right to information, knowledge and free media question the seriousness of the ‘national dialogue’ launched by the Egyptian government on World Press Freedom Day earlier this year. It further violates Article 71 of Egypt’s Constitution which states that ‘it is prohibited to censor, confiscate, suspend or shut down Egyptian newspapers and media outlets in any way.’ According to the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX), the country’s authorities began information blockades in May 2017 and have since blocked up to 562 websites, including 132 independent news outlets.

Source: [Africa News](#), [IFeX](#)



Photo source: Getty Images

IRAN

The independence of the Iranian Bar Association threatened by a recent vote by the Iranian parliament

The Iranian Parliament voted to investigate the Iranian Bar Association on June 27th, targeting lawyers who provide crucial legal support to defendants facing politically motivated charges in Iran’s judicial system. Hadi Ghaemi, the Executive Director of the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI) condemned this investigation as a form of “state-sponsored persecution disguised as a legal process.” The Iranian Parliament’s internal regulations only permit investigations into government bodies or organizations that receive funding from the national budget, making this investigation unlawful.

The independence of the Iranian Bar Association, which is one of the oldest professional institutions in Iran, is seriously threatened due to increasing governmental involvement in their affairs. The CHRI called for international condemnation of this assault on justice, drawing attention to the systematic denial of due process in Iran, particularly in death penalty cases where lives are at stake.

Source: [Iran Human Rights](#)



Photo source: Center for Human Rights Iran

IRAQ

Iraqi divides in governance halt rebuilding in the Sinjar district

The rebuilding of the Sinjar district in northern Iraq, which was heavily damaged in the conflict against the Islamic State, has been delayed due to a political dispute over its administration.

In April 2023, Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani ordered the government to open a reconstruction campaign for Sinjar and announced the allocation of \$34.2 million.

However, a recent division has incurred between the federal government of Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), which has delayed the allocation of the funding. As a result, stopping the return of over 200,000 displaced people to the region.

80% of public infrastructure and 70% of homes in Sinjar Town, the largest city in the district, were destroyed during the conflict against ISIS between 2014 and 2017. Residents said that electricity and water are not consistently available, and many education and health facilities remain damaged or destroyed.

“The allocation of funds is a positive development, but only if those funds are actually invested in services and infrastructure to improve access to health care, electricity, water, and housing for Sinjar’s residents,” said Sarah Sanbar, Iraq researcher at Human Rights Watch.

Source: [Human Rights Watch](#)

JORDAN

Human Rights activist and lawyer faces harassment for teaching about feminism

Hala Al-Ahmed, a renowned Jordanian human rights defender and lawyer, has faced numerous backlash and online harassment after announcing that she will be teaching a course about feminism.

Al-Ahmed has been targeted by Jordanian state security services for her work in the past. However, the recent campaign to suppress her work has been described as organized and systematic. News website, The New Arab, states that this has included a creation of numerous fake accounts defaming her online.

Critics accused her of trying to adopt a western model of feminist ideology. One journalist even declared, in response to her announcement, that “Feminism’ is built on five [things]: disobedience to the father, hatred of the father, contempt for the husband, absolute hostility to the man, and belief in the female as a god who has no partner.”

However, Al-Ahmed states that her detractors are putting all forms of feminism in “one basket” harming “the legitimacy of the feminist struggle.” She insists that “We, Arab feminists, do not agree with western feminism because we believe that we have our own specific challenges in the region and we reject... interference under the pretext of protecting women’s rights.”

Source: [The New Arab](#)

KUWAIT

Newly elected parliament marked by opposition majority and the return of one woman MP

Kuwait held its second parliamentary election within a year on June 6th, as a response to an ongoing political crisis. A major disagreement between the government and the elected parliament regarding a bill on the government’s control over consumer and personal loans has resulted in a decline in social services, including healthcare and education.

Kuwait’s Constitutional Court annulled the September 2022 elections in March 2023, reinstating the 2020 assembly. This provoked the exclusion of women from parliament, as two were elected in 2022 but absent in the 2020 elections. However, as the crown prince dissolved the assembly in May, this decision implemented the latest elections.

In the recent elections, a majority of members from the opposition and one woman were elected to the Kuwaiti parliament.

Source: [Al Jazeera](#)



Photo source: Jaber Abdulkhaleg/AP

LEBANON

Lebanon continues to deport Syrian refugees

Lebanon continues to face international condemnation for its treatment of Syrian refugees. The Lebanese authorities have undertaken a prolific process of deportation of legal Syrian refugees.

UNHCR spokesperson Paula Barrachina has confirmed that at least 73 raids on Syrian communities took place in April. Al Jazeera reported that more than 1,100 Syrians have been arrested and 600 deported since the start of 2023. The current actions of the Lebanese Government break the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), that Lebanon is part of. CAT makes a nation obligated not to extradite any individuals who may be in danger of facing torture in their home country, known as non-refoulement.

Lebanese officials have been calling for a mass return of Syrians, stating that they are a burden on the country’s resources, and are fuelling the economic meltdown. This rhetoric has been increasing rapidly, with the federation of trade unions recently declaring a “National Campaign to Liberate Lebanon from the Syrian Demographic Occupation”. In an interview, Social Affairs Minister Hector Hajjar claimed that refugees make up 40% of Lebanon’s population, which “no country in the world would accept”.

Source: [Al Jazeera](#), [Amnesty](#)

LIBYA**Hundreds feared dead in shipwreck departed from Libya**

The recent tragic shipwreck involving refugees attempting to reach Italy from Libya highlights the ongoing challenges stemming from Libya's divided and fragmented political landscape. The absence of a unified national government in Libya has created a power vacuum, further exacerbating the issue of people smuggling and leaving Europe without effective allies to address this pressing concern.

The incident draws attention to the failure of Libya's divided leadership to effectively combat the profitable people-smuggling trade. Despite promises to address illegal migration, the inability to deliver on these commitments has perpetuated a dangerous environment for refugees seeking safer and better lives. Notably, the fact that the ship embarked from the eastern port of Tobruk in Libya is significant. Local leaders in Tobruk have actively campaigned against illegal migration, demonstrating a regional effort to address the issue.

However, this isolated effort is limited in its impact without a cohesive and unified national approach. The shipwreck serves as a reminder of the human cost of the ongoing political divisions within Libya and the EU's involvement. The lack of a stable and unified government hampers efforts to control and manage migration flows, leaving vulnerable refugees at the mercy of unscrupulous smugglers and perilous sea journeys. From a European perspective, the incident underscores the critical need for effective cooperation with Libya to address the people-smuggling trade. The absence of a reliable and unified partner in Libya makes it increasingly challenging for European countries to tackle this issue comprehensively.

Source: [Al Jazeera](#)

MOROCCO AND WESTERN SAHARA**Morocco signs parliamentary deals with Israel apartheid state**

Amir Ohana, the Speaker of the Israeli Knesset, and his Moroccan counterpart met in Rabat on the 15th. During this meeting, they successfully signed parliamentary agreements. The exact content of these agreements are still kept confidential, however, this agreement was a huge step in the normalization of ties between both Israel and Morocco, which started in early 2020. The normalization stems from a deal brokered by the United States in which Morocco attempt to create diplomatic ties with Israel. In return, the U.S. would recognize Morocco's sovereignty over the disputed territory of Western Sahara. This agreement is known as the "Abraham Accords."

The Abraham Accords were initiated by the United States and aimed at normalizing relations between Israel and Arab countries. Prior to Morocco, the other countries that had agreed to normalize ties with Israel under the Abraham Accords were the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, and Sudan.

While the contents of the deal between Morocco and Israel are still unknown, many Moroccan and Arab organizations criticized the decisions: the Moroccan Front in support of Palestine waved the Palestinian flag in a protest in front of the Chamber of Parliament while the discussions were happening.

Abdelhamid Amine, active member of the Moroccan Front in support of Palestine stated that: "We cannot accept that the head of the Israeli Parliament can come here with total impunity, even though the Israeli Parliament is currently an extreme right-wing parliament, dominated by fascists, and is coming here to be received by the Moroccan Parliament. So we're here as the Moroccan Front in Support of Palestine and against normalization, to protest against normalization in general and against this outcome of normalization, which is normalization between the Moroccan Parliament and the Zionist Parliament." He is only one of the many Moroccans sharing their disdain against this normalization of ties.

Source: [TVC News](#)

OMAN**No News**

No news related to human rights recorded.

PALESTINE**Violence in the occupied West Bank risks spiraling out of control**

On the 21st of June, Israeli forces stormed the Jenin refugee camp to arrest two suspects. With the use of helicopter gunships, they killed 5 Palestinians and injured at least 91, according to Al-Jazeera. The United Nations' Volker Turk warned that the raid was a "major intensification of the use of weaponry more generally associated with the conduct of armed hostilities, rather than a law enforcement situation."

As of the 29th of June, 27 Palestinian children have been killed by Israeli forces in 2023, the death of Mohammad Al-Tamimi on the 5th of June being the youngest with the age of two.

Despite this gruesome violence, the United Nations has shown contradictions in their silence regarding children's rights in Palestine. In the beginning of June, António Guterres, UN Secretary-General, placed Russian forces on the annual "list of shame" of countries that violate children's rights in conflict. Nevertheless, Guterres did not acknowledge that Israel's soldiers are as guilty as Russia's soldiers in "committing grave violations against children."

Source: [Al Jazeera](#), [Al Jazeera](#)

Unknown future for Palestinian refugees as UNRWA's funds dip

On the 20th of June, UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini announced that the agency may have to stop services as of next September if it does not obtain additional financial resources from member states. "UNRWA has received 57% of the total funds it needs, if we do not get the remaining funds soon, we will be no longer able to offer any of our services," Adnan Abu Hassna, the UNRWA representative in Gaza, stated.

Lazzarini added that emergency services in all of UNRWA's areas of operation will grind to a halt due to this lack of funding. As a result, this leaves millions of Palestinian refugees, who are reliant on assistance from UNRWA, on the threshold of starvation.

UNRWA provides all kinds of services varying from education, social safety to life saving humanitarian assistance in the occupied Palestinian territories, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.

Source: [MondoWeiss](#), [New Arab](#)

Israel takes major step towards annexation of the West Bank

According to Peace Now, Israel has approved the construction of 13,000 new settlement units, in the first half of 2023, breaking the previous mark for the most settlement units approved in a single year since tracking of the approvals in 2012.

As of the 2nd of July, Israeli settlers set up a new outpost near Ramallah, the 7th in 10 days. Outposts, like Settlements, are considered illegal under both international and national Israeli law, though according to the UN, approximately 700,000 Israeli settlers live in about 200 approved settlements and over 200 outposts. Palestinians say that they stifle hopes for an independent state.

Source: [MondoWeiss](#), [New Arab](#)

QATAR

No News

No news related to human rights recorded.

SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia sentences two Bahraini men to execution

Since King Salman of Saudi Arabia rose to power in 2015, more than 1,000 death sentences have been enacted according to a report published earlier this year by Reprieve and the European-Saudi Organization for Human Rights. Earlier this month, Saudi Arabia sentenced two Bahraini men to execution under the assumption of terrorism upon the kingdom.

These deaths count to over 40 reported executions this last year in Saudi Arabia, based on state media reports. Since the beginning of May, their executions have contributed to seven other executions of supposed terrorism convicts, as reported on Al-Jazeera.

The two Bahraini nationals were identified as Jaafar Sultan and Sadiq Tahmer. They were both arrested in May 2015 under charges related to smuggling explosives and planning an attack in the Kingdom. Six years after their initial arrest, they were sentenced to execution in October of 2021 where they faced their death this month.

Their deaths in addition to the many other executions in the kingdom come as the Kingdom employed campaigns to soften their image through their "Vision 2030" reform agenda. As ACHRS condemns the use of the death penalty and advocates for fair trial, we advise the Kingdom to halt their executions and investigate fairly and transparently into the accused cases. This much take place without intimidation or torture towards the accused.

Source: [Human Rights Watch](#), [Al Jazeera](#)

SUDAN

Continuous clashes raise human rights concerns

Entering into their twelfth week, the clashes between Sudan's army and paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) continues to intensify in the country's capital and western regions. In Darfur, a region of Western Sudan, there have been increased accounts of innocent civilians being killed on foot by the RSF-supported militia. This has been written in an account released by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner (OHCHR) for Human Rights earlier this month.

The violence in Darfur has mirrored violent accounts throughout history as they witnessed dead bodies scattered along the road – and the stench of decomposition plaguing the air. Spokesperson for OHCHR, Ravina Shamdasani, stated that OHCHR condemns the killing of people fleeing their communities and ending the hate speech enacted by the RSF.

Despite the violence, there are multiple concerns regarding humanitarian aid being sent and received to vulnerable Sudanese communities. Due to bureaucratic obstacles, funding shortages, and security constraints imposed by local authorities, the delivery of essential aid has been fundamentally hindered. Many of the local authorities have also made it difficult to receive access to conflict-affected areas due to the disregard for humanitarian laws and concerns.

The United Nations states that more than \$3 billion is needed from international donors to support the humanitarian response in Sudan and neighboring countries that are hosting large numbers of refugees. As ACHRS prioritizes the safety and security of vulnerable populations, we implore that the violence enacted by the RFS stops as well as local authorities accept and distribute humanitarian efforts to aid vulnerable Sudanese populations.

Source: [France24](#), [Arab News](#), [Un News](#)

SYRIA

Canada and The Netherlands initiate proceedings against Syria in International Court of Justice

Canada and the Netherlands submitted a joint application to the International Court of Justice to prosecute Syria for its violations of the Convention Against Torture, which Syria ratified in 2004. Given the scale of documented violations committed by the Syrian regime, the co-applicants and prominent lawyers and civil society members view this as a beneficial mechanism for much-needed accountability as well as a step to ending impunity for crimes committed in Syria.

Source: [Syria Direct](#)

Humanitarian aid enters Rukban Camp for first time since September 2019

In four years there was no humanitarian aid entering the Rukban Refugee Camp in the Northeast Region of Jordan. However, recently, the Syrian Emergency Task Force, a U.S. based NGO, has delivered an aid shipment to the nearly 8,000 Syrian refugees residing in Rukban. Even with the entry of aid, the situation in the camp remains dire. Many of the refugees there feel unsafe to return to Syria for fear of torture or retribution by the Syrian government.

Source: [Middle East Eye](#)

UN Resolution adopted to establish Independent Institution on Missing Persons in Syria

The UN General Assembly adopted a UN Resolution with 83 votes in favor to create an Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic. Introduced by Luxembourg, the document aims to offer a solution to better understanding the fate of at least 100,000 forcibly disappeared and missing Syrians. The mechanism is planned for launch within 100 days of the passing of the resolution.

Source:

[UN](#), [UN Docs](#)

TUNISIA

NGOs alert Human Rights Council to deterioration of human rights in Tunisia

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch (HRW) sent a letter to the Human Rights Council outlining a list of major concerns about the situation of human rights in Tunisia. They also provided recommendations to the Council on how to address the deterioration in the country. The primary topics discussed comprised of the destruction of judicial independence, attacks on the freedom of expression, the crackdown on opposition members, and the persecution of Black migrants.

Source: [Human Rights Watch](#)

TÜRKIYE

The month of pride, after the Turkish presidential elections

On June 25, 2023, LGBT+ groups marched through the streets of Istanbul to call for their rights. The demonstration was closely monitored by the police. According to The Guardian, there were no clashes. However, the march ended earlier than anticipated and according to the organizers of the demonstration 40 people were arrested.

The press was kept away from the demonstration by the police. Reporter Sans Frontières protested against the denial of press rights to cover the protest.

This march took place after the re-election of Recep Tayyip Erdogan on May 29, 2023. The Turkish president had accused Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, his first political opponent, of supporting the LGBT+ community. R.T Erdogan added that these members would never return to his own party.

Source: [The Guardian](#), [Amnesty International](#)

UAE

The United Arab Emirates at a turning point in democracy

According to Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN), the United Arab Emirates should soon release several prisoners, including convicts from "UAE 94".

Let's remember the facts:

On July 2, 2013 in Abu Dhabi, 69 Emirati out of 94 defendants had been sentenced for their political opinions and activism. Among those condemned were professors, lawyers and human rights defenders.

Amnesty International strongly condemned these arrests and the human rights violations that followed. Indeed, several defendants had been detained in secret places without the possibility of seeing their families for several years. Some have been victims of torture. Others had seen their children lose their nationality.

In the midst of the Arab Spring, the trial of the "UAE 94" and their subsequent conviction, up to 15 years in prison, had ended all hope of democracy for the country.

Today, according to Amnesty International the United Arab Emirates is at a crossroads. The state may decide to extend their detention indefinitely through anti-terrorism legislation, or may decide to release these convicts at the end of their sentence.

Source: [Amnesty International](#), [Dawn MENA](#)

YEMEN

At least 17 members of the Baha'i religious group detained in Sanaa

In a press release published on June 19th, the United Nations expressed concerns over the unknown conditions of 16 disappeared Bahá'í members, including 5 women. The individuals were detained last month by Houti forces in Sanaa' during a private community gathering. Since then, only one person has been released.

The United Nations released their statement following the alarming comments made during a Friday speech by the Houti Grand Mufti. During his sermon he accused the Bahá'í of threatening the country and invited Yemeni to fight them for their beliefs.

According to the UN experts, these forms of hate speech encourage hatred and discrimination towards a group exercising their legitimate right and reinforces the pattern of violence faced for decades by the Bahá'í and other religious minorities in Yemen.

Source: [Relief Web](#)



HUMAN RIGHTS MONITOR

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ABOUT ACHRS

ACHRS is an independent non-governmental Think Tank center advocating for the enhancement of democracy and human rights in Jordan and the MENA region. The center's five priorities are the right to life, the right to speak, the right to think, the right to participate and women's rights. ACHRS also has special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC).

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