



March 2025

HUMAN RIGHTS MONITOR



IN SPECIAL CONSULTATIVE
STATUS WITH UN ECOSOC
HONORARY OF THE UN HUMAN
RIGHTS PRIZE 2023

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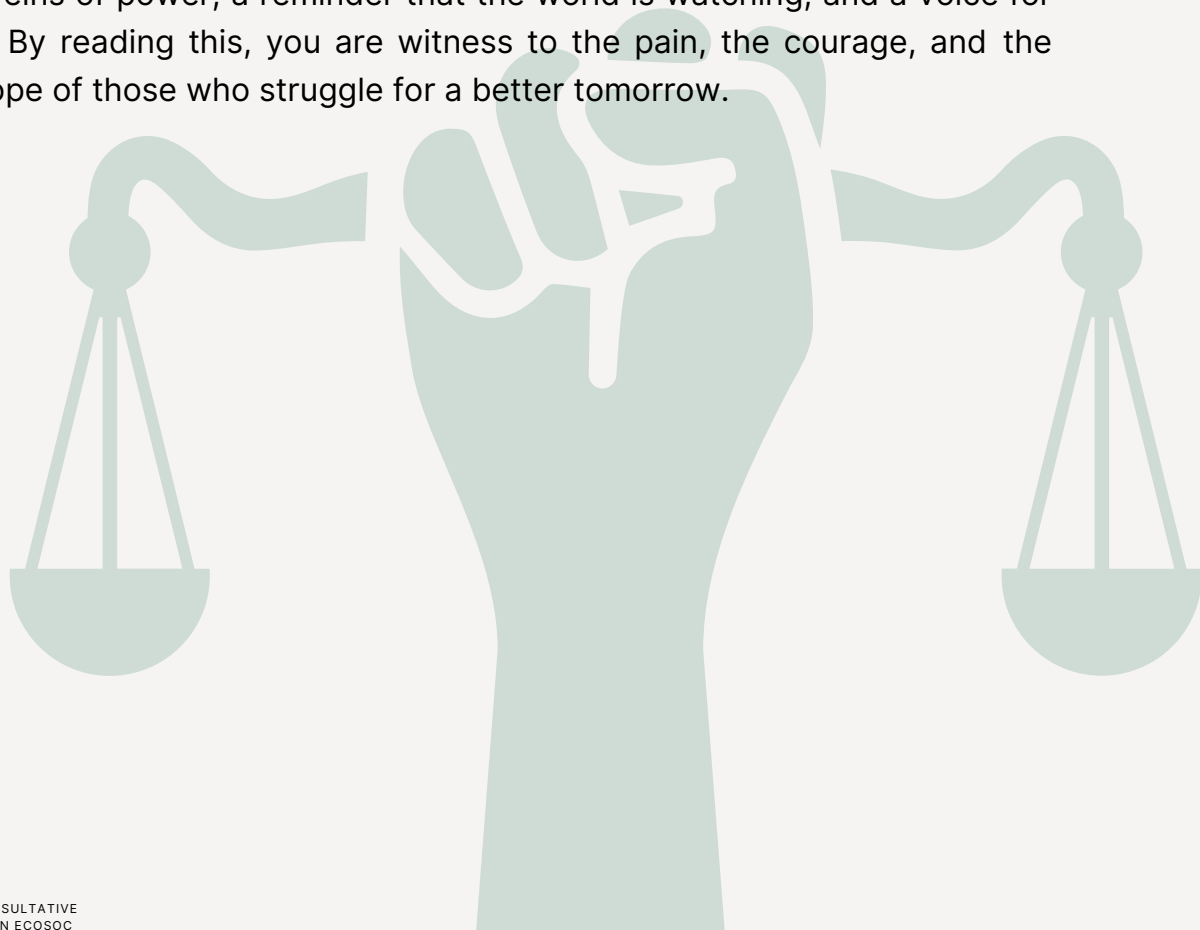


Introduction

At ACHRS, our monthly human rights monitor aims to review the most recent human rights development among our six priorities. We provide a fact-based review of how ongoing human rights development is affecting the Arab world. Our report is also not a dry catalog of events but rather seeks to give a voice to the voiceless, a demand for actions, and a document that preserves the struggle of our time.

This month we report more stories of tragedies as deadly attacks broke out in Syria. The Iranian regime continues their brutal oppression with execution and unlawful detainment. Although outside of our regular monitor, this month saw an one of the kind attack on the frailing Turkish democracy and subsequent demonstration against its perpetrator, Erdogan. Human rights activists, and NGOs working to better people's condition continue to face push back and persecutions from governments. Many of these repression such as the one in Morocco is not only violating international laws but also a contradiction of the government's own law.

This report is not just a record of human rights violations but an effort to shine a light on ways forward to justice. It is a call for accountability, an appeal to those who hold the reins of power, a reminder that the world is watching, and a voice for the voiceless. By reading this, you are witness to the pain, the courage, and the indomitable hope of those who struggle for a better tomorrow.



Right to Life

Iran, as it does every month, executed prisoners and used the death penalty as a punishment in trials. While Syria was beginning to recover and rebuild after the fall of the Assad regime, this month was horrific for the Syrian population, with a surge in massacres against them.

Iran

In the second week of March, members of the "No to Execution Tuesdays" campaign began the [59th consecutive week of hunger strike](#). On 8 March 2025, International Women's Day, the members of this campaign announced that the women's section of Sepidar prison had also joined the campaign. They point out that Iranian women have been fighting for their most fundamental Human Rights for many years, facing 46 years of blatant discrimination against them by the Iranian regime. On this day, the campaign honoured the memory of thousands of women who have lost their lives in the fight for freedom.

[On Friday 14 March](#) , the last day of the Iranian calendar year, the families of political prisoners executed during the 1980s held a commemorative ceremony behind closed doors in the Khavaran cemetery. This followed restrictions imposed by the Iranian regime's security forces, which prevented the families from honouring the memory of their loved ones by visiting their graves by keeping the cemetery gates closed for over a year. The cemetery was established in the summer of 1988, when the Iranian regime executed up to 30,000 political prisoners in just a few weeks. They were then secretly buried in the now Khavaran cemetery in unmarked mass grave.

Executions by the Iranian regime are nothing new, and they are still going on. It would appear that between 19 February and 20 March 2025, the regime hanged at least [104 people](#) in Iranian prisons. That's an average of four executions a day. In addition, according to the press agency for human rights activists in Iran, the Iranian regime has sentenced 22 people to death and confirmed the death sentences of at least 5 others this month. The agency also reports that a prisoner aged just 18 was sentenced to death this month. This is a violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Iran is a signatory.

Right to Life

The human rights situation in the country has continued to deteriorate. The authorities are attacking the right to life, with more than 900 people being executed in 2024 alone. It is for this reason that the United Nations Human Rights Council wishes to renew [the mandate of the United Nations Special Rapporteur](#) on human rights in Iran, and to ensure the maintenance of a complementary independent international investigation mechanism.

Syria

On the night of [6th of March 2025](#) violence was sparked off by an attack by former members of the al-Assad regime against the current security forces in the town of Jablé. Reports received by [the senior UN official](#), mentioned summary executions on a sectarian basis perpetrated both by members of the security forces of the transitional authorities currently in power, and by people associated with the al-Assad regime.

These attacks resulted in at least 111 civilian casualties, according to [the services of High Commissioner Volker Türk](#), "in a number of extremely disturbing cases, entire families were killed, with predominantly Alawite towns and villages targeted in particular". The perpetrators are said to have "raided homes, asking residents whether they were Alawites or Sunnis before killing or sparing them depending on their response".

[The OHCHR spokesperson](#) insists that "to ensure that such atrocious violations and abuses do not recur, it is imperative that the process of verification and integration of armed factions into Syria's military structures respects international law and fully addresses the responsibility of all those involved in past or recent human rights violations in Syria".

The violence was such that thousands of Syrians fled to [Lebanon](#) on foot.

[The members of the Security Council](#) condemn these attacks and welcome the fact that the interim authorities have publicly condemned the violence. It is therefore all the more urgent to initiate inclusive transitional justice and reconciliation processes to achieve lasting peace in Syria.

Right to Life

Yemen

Although the fall of the Al-Assad regime offers new hope for Syrian children, they continue to suffer from the severe impact of [landmines](#) and other unexploded ordnance. According to the UN, an average of four children are killed or injured every day.

According to UNICEF, at least [422,000 incidents](#) involving these devices have been reported in 14 Syrian governorates over the last nine years, half of them involving the loss of children. The acceleration in displacement since last month has only compounded the danger. For the thousands who are trying to return to their region of origin, they are exposing themselves to the constant and unavoidable danger of unexploded ordnance.

After a decade of devastating conflict, the country has an estimated [324,000 pieces of unexploded](#) ordnance scattered throughout the country. This danger affects more than 5 million children living in these contaminated areas, becoming the main cause of infant mortality in Syria.



Right to Think

Academic freedom and the unimpeded right to think have served as crucial bridge-building pillars throughout the annals of human history. Central to the concept of academic freedom is the fundamental principle that the pursuit of knowledge should remain free from constraints imposed upon those exercising their basic right to engage in critical thinking. In our interconnected global society, the uncompromised freedom to think, discuss, and criticize openly is paramount if we are to continue advancing. Yet, censorship and the stifling of scholarly voices are widespread in many corners of the globe, eroding the foundations of democracy and impeding the exercise of human rights. Whether good or bad news, at ACHRS, we monitor the state of the right to think and ways to collectively advance academic freedom in the MENA region.

Palestine

The repression against Palestinian's right to education and academic freedom continues this month. In the West Bank, the IOF has issued [a demolition notice to a primary school in Hebron](#). The region surrounding the school targeted is suffering from increasing attacks from settlers and their para-military crimes. The planned force demolition is a continuous effort to undermine Palestinian education. [Since October 7th, 2023 schools in the West Bank have suffered from increasing rates of settler violence and 'Israeli' oppression](#). Seven different Universities have been the target of one or multiple raids by IOF; up to 117 schools have been vandalized and attacked by both IOF and settlers. 94 students in the West Bank have unfortunately lost their lives in these attacks and raids, while another 1051 students have been directly harmed with injuries and unlawful detainment.

Whilst 'Israel' increases their oppressions and attacks, the Palestinian education system is also facing funding and resource cuts. Last month the 'Israeli' law that outlaws UNRWA went into effect. The law remains broadly unenforced but it has already been used to justify raids and temporary forced closure of UNRWA schools as reported by our monitor last month. [The operation of UNRAW schools is now at an existential risk of being forced to cease at a moment's notice](#). In addition, the cut of USAID as well as the lesser-known cessation of Swedish AID for Palestinian schools has led to a situation of [no money and more problems](#).

Right to Think

Egypt

Egyptian activist of the 2011 and 2014 protests Ahmed Kamel faced imminent deportation back to Egypt by Saudi authority earlier this month. [His deportation was scheduled on March 5th](#), but it so far remains unclear if the deportation has taken place. In Cairo he faces a lifetime imprisonment sentence for his role in the 2011 and 2014 protests, he also faces a high risk of torture in Egyptian prison. Saudi authority arrested him in November last year based on a supposed Interpol warrant. [Interpol has denied the existence of such a warrant.](#)

[This month there was a renewed call for the release of student Oqba Hashad.](#) Oqba Hashad has been held in pre-trial detention for the past six years with no end in sight. Oqba Hashad was [arrested based purely on his blood connection with his brother Amr Hashad](#), a student activist. Amr Hashad was arrested for his campus activism in 2014 and sentenced to three years imprisonment. He fled the country after his release and continues to be an outspoken critic of the Egyptian government as well as documenting human rights violations of the Egyptian government. Since Oqba Hashad's arrest, he has been repeatedly interrogated for his role in his brother's movement. [These interrogations often involve torture and he is consistently denied necessary medical care whilst in prison.](#) There is no evidence to suggest Oqba has any involvement in his brother's activism. His imprisonment is purely intimidation of activists by kin punishment that also violates the basic rights of their families.

Iran

This month Sweden also renewed the call for the Iranian government to release Iranian-Swedish academic Ahmedraza Jalali. He was originally arrested and sentenced to death in 2017 whilst on a visit to Tehran on the grounds of 'espionage.' Amnesty International has called the original trial '[grossly unfair](#)'. He has since been held on Iranian death row. He has not been part of the wave of Iranian-EU dual nationals released in the last few months. [Sweden has summoned the Iranian ambassador and called for his immediate release.](#)

Right to Speak

Algeria

In 2024, [Reporters Without Borders ranked Algeria 139th out of 180 countries on its press freedom barometer](#), highlighting that “the media landscape in Algeria has never been so deteriorated”. [Freedom of speech is at risk in the country](#), where individuals and associations critical of the Government face repression and intimidation. Since the Hirak protest movement in 2019, followed by Abdelmadjid Tebboune’s election, the country has significantly escalated its repression towards activists and journalists with terrorism-related offenses, leading to the banning of protests and more than 200 people being charged. [Algerian authorities have released at least 35 pro-democracy activists from jail in recent months](#). While this may be seen as a temporary de-escalation, human rights organizations argue that it falls short of countering the Algerian government’s growing repression.

[The incarceration of French-Algerian writer Boualem Sansal](#), who was arrested on November 16, 2024, exemplifies this ongoing crackdown. Sansal, known for his criticism of Algerian authorities and Islamists, began a hunger strike on February 17, 2025, to protest his detention. The authorities have also denied his lawyer’s visa to defend him, raising concerns about the fairness of his trial. On March 21, Algerian prosecutors announced that the writer faces a 10-year prison sentence. He was charged with "affecting national unity, insulting a constitutional body, practices of a nature likely to harm the national economy, and possession of videos and publications threatening the security and stability of the country" according to the Algerian media outlet TSA.

[The writer is prosecuted under Article 87 bis of the Penal Code](#), defining acts threatening state security as “terrorism”. The charges appear to relate his comments about the borders between Algeria and Morocco, [where he accused the Algerian government of inventing the Polisario Front](#) – seeking independence for Western Sahara from Moroccan control, with Algerian support - to destabilize Morocco.

However, human rights advocates consider the government’s constant use of article 87bis as a way to silence criticism of the regime. [According to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) (OHCHR), it is one of the most frequently cited laws used to prosecute human rights defenders.



Right to Speak

The Article 87 bis was first updated in the mid-1990s during the civil war, under the chapter “Crimes Defined as Terrorist or Subversive Acts”, defined as “Any act aimed at the security of the State, national unity, and the stability and normal functioning of institutions is considered a terrorist or sabotage act.”. After the Hirak movement six years ago, the authorities decided to expand Article 87bis, including two new offenses : “Working towards or inciting, by any means whatsoever, the seizure of power or the change of the system of governance through unconstitutional means.” and “Undermining the territorial integrity of the nation or inciting others to do so, by any means whatsoever”. It is under the last one that Boualem Sansal was arrested.

On March 27th, the authorities announced that the writer had received a five-year sentence. This decision led to public discontent in both Algeria and France, with politicians calling for a pardon from Algeria, as M. Sansal’s condition has deteriorated. Boualem Sansal’s case exemplifies the growing repressive tactics employed by the Algerian authorities. [In response, MENA Rights Groups, and other civil society organizations, have called on the UN Human Rights Council to take action against Algeria's shrinking civic space.](#) They emphasize the urgent need to condemn the criminalization of human rights defenders and demand an end to arbitrary arrests and detentions, ensuring that Algeria upholds its international human rights obligations.

Tunisia

In Tunisia, opponents of the President Kais Saied’s government continue to face escalating repression. According to *Human Rights Watch* and *Amnesty International*, [over 70 people have been subjected to arbitrary prosecutions since the end of 2022.](#) Authorities have relied on various legal instruments to justify these actions, many of which have been criticized for their vague language and potential for abuse.

One such instrument is [Decree-Law 2022-54 on cybercrime](#), which officially aims to prevent and prosecute offenses related to information systems. However, it also introduces severe penalties for vaguely defined speech crimes such as “spreading false information”. Additionally, [the Counterterrorism law, implemented in 2015](#), has been used by the government to charge major opponents with “terrorism” – often without clear evidence - raising concerns about expansive monitoring powers.



Right to Speak

The Penal Code has also been used against opposition figures, particularly Articles 67, 128 and 72. Article 67 criminalizes “insulting the president”, while Article 128 penalizes “accusing public officials of crimes related to their jobs without furnishing proof of guilt”. Article 72 punishes “an attack that seeks to change the form of government or to incite people to take up arms against one another”. The latter one is the most severe, as it carries the risk of the death penalty.

It is under Article 72 that [40 opposition figures are now on trial](#) in a case that began on March 4, 2025. Among the defendants are politicians such as Jawhar Ben Mbarek, leader of the National Salvation Front and the Citizens Against the Coup group, Abdelhamid Jelassi, the former leader of opposition party Ennahda, or Bochra Belhaj Hmida, a former member of parliament and human rights activist now living in France. They are accused of national security offenses, including “plotting against the state security” and “belonging to a terrorist group”. According to the authorities, [they were planning to overthrow Saïed’s government](#). Half of them risk the death penalty under Article 72. Earlier in February, the prosecutor of Tunis Court of First Instance requested that the defendants appear via video conference, a method criticized by human rights groups. Critics argue this method limits the judge’s ability to assess the legality and conditions of the defendants’ detention. Numerous human rights activists and organizations have denounced the trial as being politically motivated, reinforcing claims that Saïed’s is consolidating an authoritarian regime.

This month also marks [300 days since Moura Zeghidi’s imprisonment](#). He was a sports journalist formerly at *Canal Horizons* in Tunisia and later Canal+ in France. He was arrested in May 2024 under Decree Law 54 for criticizing certain decisions made by President Kaïs Saïed. While his release was expected on January 7, a new detention order was issued against him in December on charges of “money laundering”. His lawyers and defendants view this as an attempt by the authorities to suppress dissent. Throughout his trial, Zeghidi defended his work, insisting “*I was only doing my job*”.



Right to Speak

Since July 2021, when President Kais Saied took control of the government by shutting down the Parliament and dismissing its leaders, accusations have grown that he is reversing the democratic progress that Tunisia made since the 2011 revolution. [Soon after this authoritarian shift](#), the judicial power faced backlash as judges and prosecutors were dismissed, violating the right to a fair trial and strengthening the government's ability to silence opponents. The trials and imprisonments of critical figures highlight the ongoing repression of those who oppose the president.

Egypt

The case of [British-Egyptian activist Alaa Abd el-Fattah](#) remains a focal point this month. A key figure of the 2011 revolt against Hosni Mubarak, he was arrested in 2019 for "spreading false news". While his family had hoped for his release in September 2024, Egyptian authorities have declared that he will stay in prison until 2027. In response, his mother, Laila Soueif began a hunger strike in protest of his imprisonment. This month marks the sixth month of her strike. [Following her hospitalization in serious condition](#), Abd el-Fattah launched his own hunger strike on March 1.

Despite some progress in recent years, tens of thousands of political prisoners remain behind bars. Since 2022, President Abd el- Fattah el-Sisi released hundreds of detainees held in pretrial detention, but a significant number remain imprisoned. In 2022, [the Presidential Pardon Committee was reactivated](#) to address the political prisoner crisis, leading to the release of 754 individuals as of 2023.

However, Egypt has increased its crackdown on dissent, [specifically targeting opponents online](#). Since late December 2024, at least 59 people have been arrested solely for expressing dissatisfaction with the country's economic and political situation. On March 4, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) along with other human rights organizations, sent a joint letter calling for a presidential pardon for Abdel Fattah. This comes as domestic and international calls for the release of political prisoners continue to grow.

Another concerning case is that of [Oqba Hashad](#), an Egyptian student who has been detained for nearly six years. Arrested in 2019 due to his brother's activism - Ar Hashad who fled Egypt the same year - he has [reportedly been subjected to torture by Egyptian authorities](#). His case highlights Egypt's [repeated use of "case rotation" \(tadweer\)](#), a practice that extends pretrial detention beyond the maximum time limit of 2 years in Egypt's Penal Code by re-arresting individuals under new, often fabricated, charges.



Right to Speak

This practice has been widely condemned by international human rights organizations.

Several months ago, UN Member States expressed deep concerns about Egypt's escalating human rights violations, calling for the protection of freedom of expression and ensuring that journalists and human rights defenders can work without fear of repression. The situation has led to [30,000 people signing a petition](#), organized by Amnesty International calling for Oqba Hashad's freedom.

Thus, while some reforms in recent years, Egypt's human rights abuses persist. Authorities continue to detain political prisoners, employ torture and its frequently use case rotation to prolong arbitrary detentions. Recently, the [UN Human Rights Council reviewed Egypt's human rights record](#) and highlighted ongoing violations of freedom of expression, targeting journalists, lawyers, writers, activists, scholars and students for expressing their opinions.

Morocco

In Morocco, the 2011 Constitution extends and defines freedom of expression principles more explicitly. [They can be found in three main articles.](#)

Article 25 "guarantees freedom of thought, opinion and expression in all its forms" but also "the freedom of creation, publication and exhibition in the fields of literature and the arts". This article is also very important as it does not only guarantee freedom of speech for Moroccan citizens but to every individual without consideration of their status or nationality.

Article 27 introduces the "right to access information held by the public administration, elected institutions and bodies with public service missions"

Article 28 affirms the freedom of the press by prohibiting any form of prior censorship.

Despite these constitutional guarantees, Morocco has imposed growing restrictions on speech, particularly concerning topics known as "red lines": criticism of the monarchy, Islam, territorial integrity and the King. The 2016 amendments to the Criminal Code criminalized speech violating these limits, making it punishable by imprisonment. The UN Human Rights Committee has frequently reminded that the protection of a state's constitutional form does not justify restrictions on freedom of expression.



Right to Speak

On March 17, [nearly 300 rights advocates and experts signed a petition urging Moroccan authorities to free Fouad Abdelmoumnia](#), a well-known human rights activist. Abdelmoumni was arrested in early March and sentenced to six months in prison and a 2,000-dirham fine for a Facebook post alleging that Morocco had spied on France. Prosecutors considered his statement [to be “harmful to the kindom’s interests”](#).

This sentence follows years of Abdelmoumni being targeted by the authorities, including digital surveillance and repeated harassment by certain media. Abdelmoumni and other journalists have been victims of repeated smartphone hacking, allegedly carried out by Moroccan authorities. These actions undermine freedom of expression in the country, contradicting Morocco’s constitutional principles.

Also in March 2025, [activist Ait Mahdi](#), who had been detained since December 2024 for criticizing Morocco’s response to the September 2023 earthquake, had his prison sentence extended from three months to one year by Marrakesh court. He played a key role in assisting families and survivors of the earthquake that struck south of Marrakesh in September 2023. His group campaigned for rapid reconstruction and increased aid for those affected, many of whom were still living in tents months after the disaster. Since the earthquake, families have endured precarious conditions while waiting for government support. Additionally, three other defendants in the same case, who had previously been acquitted, were sentenced to four months in jail each.



Women's Rights

March was the month of Women's rights where we celebrate women's great contribution to our world, especially in history, culture, and society. Women did and do great things for our world and therefore it is important to celebrate them. Hence, a reason why there is also an International Women's day on the 8th of March. On this day we celebrate all women and this year theme therefore was "[For ALL women and girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment](#)". Hence, calling to "unlock equal rights, power and opportunities for all and a feminist future where no one is left behind". This is something that we as the world should be striving for, yet unfortunately many girls do not have equal right and so on also do not have the same opportunities as men have in their countries. Therefore, this part of the report will focus on women's rights breaches that this month have been made to women in the MENA region.

Iran

Iran has been known for their overly strict rule regarding dressing modestly. [Amnesty](#) wrote a report on "*New compulsory veiling law intensifies oppression of women and girls*". The report stated that "*the Law on Protecting the Family through the Promotion of the Culture of Chastity and Hijab*" will further "*erase the Human Rights of women and girls*". The law allows for the death penalty for peaceful activism against the "*compulsory veiling laws*". Furthermore, it imposes "*flogging, exorbitant fines, harsh prison sentences, travel bans, and restrictions on education and employment for women and girls*" - showcasing that in Iran women and girls are not obtaining the same equality and opportunities as men. This law intensifies prosecution and undermines women and girls to stand up for their own rights and hence women and girls are suffocated by laws like this. However, a [report of March made by the guardian](#) states that "*Iran intensifies surveillance on women to enforce Hijab law*". As aforementioned, women in Iran are used to feeling suffocated due to being under surveillance. Darya (a woman from Tehran) that the surveillance has increased a lot and "*that she never knows who could be watching her every move*". For example, she stated she had received several messages from police giving her warning regarding her violating the hijab law and that if she would continue "*her car would be impounded*" (as all those hijab violations were made when she was in the car). However, Darya does not know who reported her - "*When you receive these messages you don't know who has reported you - and the police never seem to have proof of the violation*".

Women's Rights

However, [the United Nations](#) reported on "Iran's increasing reliance on digital surveillance". Where they stated that the government of Iran "continues systemic repression and escalates surveillance to crush dissent in the aftermath of protests". Meaning that the Iranian regime has been using technology significantly more in order to use surveillance on women and girls through "State-sponsored vigilantism", as well as that the regime "has extended restriction on digital space, extending its repression beyond Iran's borders to silence human rights defenders, including journalists, who speak from abroad".

One way the regime has been able to conduct digital surveillance is through "Nazer mobile application" which is a state-back reporting platform that enables citizen and police to report on women and girls who are 'violating' the law of hijab. It thus, allows citizens of Iran to become "hijab monitor" and file cases against women. It therefore, puts the women and girls of Iran under a microscope regarding what they are doing and wearing which consequently make them look like they are dolls as men in this case tell them what to wear and if they do not follow that they are reported against. Furthermore, it violates their privacy as the app allows users to "upload the time, location and licence plate of a car in which a woman has been seen without a hijab" and therefore it starts to get to a point that women and girls in Iran are completely being monitored in every part of their lives causing them to not being able to live life the way they want.

Iraq

Iraq has been significantly in the global news due to new laws who are undermining women and girls their rights. In the previous 'Human Rights Monitor' we examined how the law that initially allowed child marriage to happen was halted. In this report we will examine ["an amendment to Iraq's Personal Status Law"](#) which entered the legal system of Iraq in February 2025. Although activist for women's rights "partly" reduced the amendment's harm by "retaining provisions for the minimum age of marriage, child custody, and polygamy" but the law still violates women's and girl's rights in other aspects.

One of such aspects is that when couples enter a marriage contract they either choose between i. *Personal Status Law of 1959* or ii. *Personal Status Code (developed by Shia Ja'afari school of Islamic Jurisprudence)* - the personal status law is known to be a *unified* law for all citizens of Iraq, whereas the personal status code is *only* meant for the Shia population of Iraq and therefore is rather a sect law. Furthermore, the personal status law used to give women *more rights* and is based on a mix of principles from Islamic and civil law and thus one was protected as equal before the law.

Women's Rights

However, the 'Personal Status Code' takes away women and girls their rights and prioritised men regarding their authority. These marriage contracts will have an influence on couples their marriage, divorce, children and inheritance and once a couple has decided which one they follow they cannot change their choice. Having these two different options "undermines the right to legal equality for all Iraqis found in article 14 of the constitution and international human rights law". Furthermore, by enacting both systems - Iraq actively empower patriarchal dominance and male authority. A situation that could have been easily prevented had the 'Personal Status Code' been rejected and therefore Iraq is systematically dismantling the rights and protections of women and girls. And although the minimum age of marriage was changed back, it does not make their new law good but rather as Sarah Sanbar described "these changes merely take the law from terrible to just plain bad".

Human Rights Watch in their report stated that according to UNICEF that "28% of girls in Iraq are married before the age of 18" - also known as that 28% of the girls in Iraq have gone through child marriage. This puts young girls at risk for sexual abuse as well as mental and physical abuse, as they might have to do things they do not want to do or are not yet knowledgeable in. Furthermore, by going through child marriage they are also denied access to education which according to Human Rights every child should have that opportunity. Yet when a child goes through child marriage they will have the responsibility of a 'married wife' and that strips them away from access to education for example. Moreover, regardless of legal age being 18 - the amendment "legalises unregistered marriages", this is something 'Human Rights Watch' has [documented](#) (please see their full article here). Through their research they found that "unregistered marriages function as loopholes enabling child marriages in Iraq". Illustrating that, girls rights are not only undermined but also completely ignored because of the way they found a loophole to still marry children.

Furthermore, for the allowance of the Ja'afari school of Islamic to become part of the 'Personal Status Code' they made another amendment. Through this, they were able to only obtain approval without public debate and thus it had directly an consequence of the removal of democratic oversight.

Right to Participate

Turkey

Istanbul's mayor and Erdogan's biggest political rival, Ekrem Imamoglu, was detained on March 19. The charges following his detention include bribery, [corruption](#) and illegally obtaining personal data for profit as part of a criminal organization. However, Imamoglu denies these accusations, and critics argue that his arrest is politically motivated.

Imamoglu's political party, the secular Republican People's Party (CHP), was about to elect him as next presidential candidate for the 2028 general elections. However, he was arrested a day before this vote. Ahead of his detention, the Istanbul University cancelled his degree, alleging that it was fake. Under the Turkish Constitution, only candidates with a higher education degree can run for president. Many believe this is a move to undermine his rise to power. This move clearly goes against academic freedom and the right to education, as universities should remain independent of politics and dedicated only to education and knowledge.

Imamoglu is perceived as a potential threat as he is considered the only candidate capable of beating Erdoğan in the 2028 election. Last year, he won a second term as Istanbul mayor, making the CHP win in Ankara and Istanbul, the two major cities in the country. This was the first time the AKP lost an election.

Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has been in power since [2003](#). He served first as Turkey's prime minister from 2003 to 2014. He then became the country's president in 2014 after the position of prime minister was abolished in 2017 following a constitutional change that shifted Turkey to a presidential system of government. Erdogan has been re-elected as president since then, and his current term will continue until 2028. Under the Turkish Constitution, he is unable to run for reelection unless he changes the Constitution or calls an early election before his term ends.

Thousands of people took to the streets the following day and in the weeks after in protest and support of Imamoglu, advocating for the defense of democracy. The government banned all protests for four days after his arrest. Furthermore, the government also blocked access to several media outlets, like TikTok, X, Instagram and Youtube.



Right to Participate

On March 29, a huge [protest](#) took place in the streets in Istanbul. The police used teargas, pepper spray and rubber bullets to disperse the crowd. Erdogan called these protests “street terror”. According to the CHP leader, Özgür Özel, 2.2 million people [attended](#).

Nearly 2,000 people have been arrested including some journalists who had been covering the protests. The mass arrests and use of force raise serious concerns about violations of due process rights, freedom of assembly, and freedom of the press, as protected by both Turkish domestic law and international human rights treaties to which Turkey is a party.

Syria

Regarding Syria, there have been significant steps taken towards establishing a more democratic and inclusive government. One of the most important events was the historic [agreement](#) reached on March 10 between the new government and the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). The Kurds have historically had strained relations with the central government. After the al-Assad regime fell in December, the new government was skeptical and hesitant to include them, as they were not invited to participate in the National Dialogue Conference held last month. However, the pact has been a crucial development, which includes a ceasefire and the integration of Kurdish forces into the government’s security apparatus.

Additionally, earlier this month, Syrian president al-Sharaa issued a [constitutional declaration](#), which will be in force during the five-year transitional period. Under this temporary constitution, similar to the previous one, the head of state must be Muslim and Islamic Law will be the main source of jurisprudence. The document also guarantees freedom of expression and the press and women’s rights in society, politics and the economy. Much of its focus will be on transitional justice, aiming to ensure that crimes committed under the previous al-Assad government are prosecuted.

The new legislative body, referred to as the people’s assembly, will be appointed by the president by about one third. The temporary assembly will have the authority to make and pass laws until elections are held. However, this move has faced criticism, as many believe the president should not have the power to appoint that many seats of the Parliament.

Right to Participate

Furthermore, on March 30, al-Sharaa formed a new government by [appointing](#) 23 ministers. Under the new cabinet, minorities will be included, such as the Alewite Yarub Badr, who has been appointed transport minister, and Druze Amgad Badr, who will serve as agriculture minister. Hind Kabawat, a Christian woman and long-time al-Assad opponent, has been appointed as social affairs and labour minister, making her the only woman in the new cabinet. There won't be a prime minister. There will be no prime minister, as al-Sharaa will lead the executive branch.

These political developments have come under increasing pressure by Arab and Western countries, which have urged the new government to include the different religious and ethnic minorities. On March 6, nearly 1,500 civilian Alewites were [killed](#) in the coastal cities of Latakia, Baniyas, Tartous and Jableh, after an altercation between pro-Assad regime fighters and government security forces. The pressure to form an inclusive government has intensified by these current events.

Tunisia

The Tunisian government decided on March 8 to [withdraw](#) individuals and NGOs access to the African Court on Human and People's Rights. This move will limit the ability of victims of Human Rights violations and Human Rights Defenders to seek justice. The African Court has ruled against Kais Saied's government (in power since July 2021) for human rights violations. This move represents a significant setback for political participation and the protection of human rights within the country.

United Arab Emirates

An Emirati court on March 4, 2025, [upheld](#) the convictions of 53 Human Rights defenders and political dissidents who were sentenced in 2024 following an unfair trial. The 84 defendants were sentenced up to 10 years to life sentence, after an unfair trial. Prominent activists like Ahmed Mansoor and Nasser bin Ghaith were among those convicted. They were accused of peaceful activism, including their involvement in a 2010 advocacy group. The charges were based on peaceful activities, including their involvement in a 2010 advocacy group. Human Rights Watch urged the UAE to release the detainees, citing the abuse of counterterrorism laws which target peaceful critics.

Right to Social Protection

Lebanon

In the past, access to social protection in Lebanon was not considered a universal right but was contingent upon affiliation with certain occupational groups and networks of clientelism. Historically, the [previous Lebanese governments' support](#) of laissez-faire economy and consequent minimal state involvement with public policy and social protection left significant portions of the population, namely informal workers, without adequate coverage.

However, the severe economic crisis, exacerbated by conflict and “Israeli” violence in Lebanon, has shed light on government’s flawed and fragmented approach to social protection. In 2024, the [government launched its first National Social Protection Strategy](#), attempting to establish a more inclusive and rights-based system by focusing on social insurance, social welfare, employment opportunities for the most vulnerable and financial support for access to education and health. A worker in the informal economy told [Amnesty International in 2023](#) “there is nothing called social protection here... we reach out on social media for cash, or we wait for loved ones to die”. This evidences the dire need to material government action, commitment to social protection and implementation of the aforementioned reforms in Lebanon.

The economic crisis, which hit Lebanon in 2019, is described by analysts as “man-made”: a result of years of elitist corruption and mismanagement, and the failure of successive governments to implement economic reforms. Political scientists describe the Lebanese post-civil war governance as a [“party cartel system”](#) characterised by pro-elite socio-economic policies and the looting of state resources. Other crises over the last decade, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, the [Beirut port explosion in 2020](#) which led to economic losses of between \$2.9 billion and \$3.5 billion and the “Israeli” assault in September 2024 – [the World Bank estimates the](#) cost of destruction to be at \$3.4 billion, with trade disruptions costing the country a further \$5.1 billion – have further exacerbated the economic situation.

Right to Social Protection

Even before the crisis, Lebanon had one of the largest poverty gaps globally. The [2024 Lebanon Poverty and Equity Assessment found](#) that poverty in households has tripled between 2012 and 2022 with over 80% living below the poverty line. This divide has been further widened over the course of the economic crisis; wealthier families were shielded by dollarized incomes and [Amnesty International details](#) accounts of elites transferring billions overseas whilst others [faced strict restrictions](#) on withdrawing money from banks.

Nevertheless, even during times of crisis the government has a duty to ensure the upholding of basic social and economic rights – an analysis conducted by [Amnesty International found](#) that government failed to mobilise the necessary funds to ensure that every person can access at least the minimum essential levels of social protection and failed to protect marginalised groups from further impoverishment. As of October 2024, more than a million are reported to be internally displaced in Lebanon rendering access to social protection more crucial than ever.

These challenges have thereby exposed significant shortfalls in Lebanon's National Social Protection Strategy. A [report written in August 2024](#) critiqued the means-tested approach to non-contributory social security, targeting only the poorest 20% and leaving many without support. Furthermore, the government's inability to generate sustainable domestic funding has left the country increasingly reliant on external assistance.

However, US aid cuts in early 2025 and broader declines in global humanitarian funding revealed flaws in Lebanon's reliance on aid to ensure social protections, a practice which renders the welfare system vulnerable to funding cuts and political shifts. Aside from cuts implemented by the Trump presidency, many international donors demand economic and governance reforms in exchange for financial support, which Lebanon's political elite has thus far failed to implement. In the Bekaa and Baalbek regions [nearly 80% of families are in need of urgent support](#), 31% of families do not have access to drinking water and the number of children facing food shortages has doubled in the last two years. A [UNICEF representative in Lebanon told reporters](#) that "more than half a million children and their families (in Lebanon) risk losing critical cash support from U.N. agencies this month. These cuts would strip the most vulnerable of their last lifeline, leaving them unable to afford even the most basic necessities". Furthermore, [US aid previously covered over 62% of World Food Program projects](#) in Lebanon.

Right to Social Protection

Furthermore, [volunteers in grassroots groups have expressed frustration](#) at the lack of assistance from the government to care for those in vulnerable situation, claiming that local groups did not see any of the aid that landed in airports. One volunteer explained to Al Jazeera how “drinking water [...], medication, schooling, everything is secured by private initiatives”. This demonstrates how the burden to provide consistent social protection has fallen on local charities – “there is no clothes, no food, nothing here, where is the state?”. As stated by Nasser Yassin, a representative from Lebanon’s governmental crisis group, “civil society has absorbed a lot of the strain of the situation”. Yassin went on to explain the government’s hindrances to meeting the needs of the population: “it is a huge responsibility catering for a quarter of the population in an understaffed, under-resourced administration that has little trust with its citizens”.

Additionally, it is important to draw attention to the [current vulnerability of migrant domestic](#) workers in Lebanon, and how the war has negatively impacted the situation of many. Many already have to cope with dire conditions, facing systematic exploitation under the Kafala labour system. Under the Kafala system, which has denounced by human rights groups, migrant workers are often trapped as their passports are confiscated and they are forced to work long hours whilst their wages are withheld. Many also experience sexual violence. According to the UN’s International Organization for Migration, an estimated 37 migrant workers have been killed and 150 wounded by “Israeli” violence in between October 2023 and December 2024. An [article written by AP News](#) details how many government-run shelters refused to take in migrant workers as they were not Lebanese, and how some were afraid to ask for support from shelters for risk of being deported or detained. A [report written in Politico](#) shared the story of a migrant worker who had been stranded in a house under “Israeli” bombardment by the family she was working for. Again, responsibility fell on NGOs and grassroots groups to support these women: a representative from the IOM told AP News how many workers are being hosted in shelters provided by NGOs, embassies and community-based organisations. Furthermore, as of November 2024, the IOM had funded the repatriation of over 400 migrants.

On the 8th February 2025, after a two-year caretaker cabinet, the new government of Lebanon was formed, headed by Prime Minister Nawaf Salam.

Right to Social Protection

On March 14th, [The Minister of Social Affairs organised a meeting to discuss “The Next Phase of Reform”](#), where discussions were centred around strengthening social safety programs, addressing rising poverty, and ensuring broader access to essential services – the Prime Minister stressed the necessity to prioritise social policy and transparent and accountable economic reform simultaneously. The Prime Minister went on to pledge the implementation of the National Social Protection Strategy, which will aim to expand poverty-targeting programs and disability support and ensure access to primary healthcare and public education. These meetings underline the potential of new government to address the concerning situation, however it is crucial that promises and commitments are converted into concrete action and improvement of the living conditions in Lebanon.

Morocco

In recent years, the aftermath of the [Covid-19 pandemic revealed large](#) deficits in healthcare access in Morocco. Significant [reforms adopted to ameliorate gaps instigated](#) notable advancements in the right to social protection in the state. The overarching aims of these reforms was the expansion of universal healthcare coverage and the improvement of the delivery of services.

The adoption of [Framework Law 09.21](#) in March 2021 paved the way for the expansion and generalization of welfare and development of a robust social protection system. The law outlined a phased approach of implementation: between 2021 and 2023, the focus was on universalising health and medical insurance, as well as family and child allowances. The following phase spanning from 2024 to 2025 underlined a commitment to the implementation of unemployment allowances and extension of pension schemes.

To enhance these reforms and attempt to bridge economic divides by extending coverage to vulnerable families in rural areas, [the World Bank approved a \\$70 million](#) loan for the Morocco Second Identity and Targeting for Social Protection Project. The initiative expands on achievements already made by the implementation of the National Population Registry and Unified Social Registry, streamlining identification and authentication for social protection programs and allowing digital/remote application submissions.

Right to Social Protection

Furthermore, Morocco announced its intention to extend social protection to those working in the informal economy at the [tripartite African Regional Forum's session](#) 'Extending social protection to the informal economy, including through leveraging digital technologies'. Morocco's national plan proposed to initially focus on independent workers and entrepreneurs before expanding coverage to more categories of the informal economy.

In 2018, with the intention of covering 80% of medical deserts in Morocco by 2025, [the National Telemedicine Initiative was launched](#). In 2018, the quantity of doctors stood at almost a third of the minimum rate recommended by the WHO, and regional disparities in distribution of doctors and the mountainous geography of Morocco intertwined to prevent many living in rural areas from accessing services. Telemedicine enabled the bridging of this gap by allowing specialists to guide local practitioners through video conferencing, among any other positive advancements. A report written in 2023 stated that by 2025 the initiative is set for nationwide implementation and projected to reach 1.3 million.

Notwithstanding, an [article published in September 2024 by Arab Reform Initiative](#) expressed some concerns regarding the implementation of digital healthcare; whilst digital healthcare affords expanded access, its effectiveness is limited by flaws in Morocco's broader social targeting system. Technical issues in data management pose risks of politicisation and exclusion. If Telehealth services are integrated into a flawed targeting framework, many vulnerable populations could be unintentionally excluded. Instead of relying primarily on algorithm-driven access, a more rights-based approach that codifies universal healthcare as a social entitlement would prevent the reinforcement of existing inequalities. Moreover, the government must ensure that Telehealth expansion does not serve as a pretext for reducing investment in physical healthcare services.

Critiques of the implementation of Telehealth expansion are in line with wider evaluation of the reality of Universal Health Coverage; as is often the case with the implementation of ambitious reforms, gaps continue to persist in converting policy commitments into concrete action. Key challenges highlighted by the [Arab Reform Initiative's report](#) include unclear program objectives, structural obstacles and the risk of perpetuating health inequalities, particularly for vulnerable populations. To ensure sustainability and effectiveness, the report recommends clearer policies, structural reforms to guarantee the sustainability of equitable health coverage.

Right to Social Protection

A [decree made by King Mohammed VI in 2022](#) ordered social protections to address the intersecting inequalities faced by persons with disabilities in situations of poverty. The 2024 budget demonstrated the longevity of this commitment: \$36.6 was dedicated to programs that were estimated to support 27,500 children living with disabilities. It is therefore vital that Morocco's commitment to social protection is sustained.

In particular, the [IOM underscores the need](#) to focus on the health of migrants in Morocco. Information taken from a sample of 1721 migrants living in Moroccan cities deduces that less than 50% of migrants are aware of free access to healthcare. The report also found that the HIV-AIDS prevalence in migrants is 40% higher than the general population, underscoring the crucial need to expand awareness of social protection.

A [report published at the end of 2024](#) detailed Morocco's commitment to promoting agricultural development. The World Bank has provided Morocco's Transforming Agri-food Systems Program with US\$250 million in order to improve climate resilience and sustainable development, as well as support the production and marketing of food, augmenting salaries for farmers by improving market access. The Program is predicted to benefit 1.36 million people by boosting food and nutrition security.

Another [aspect of the government's 2025](#) agenda to prioritise water, food and energy sovereignty includes plans to accelerate the construction of seawater desalination plants in order to address the current water crisis. By 2030, the plants are projected to provide potable water for more than 50% of the country, alongside strengthening national food security by facilitating irrigation for farmland.

It is important to note the gendering of poverty and unemployment in Morocco. [Unemployment in Morocco is rising](#) due to extreme drought affecting the farming sector, and many have denounced the government's inability to uphold its commitment to job creation. Women are disproportionately affected by unemployment; a [recent report by the IMF](#) found that female unemployment stands at 20%, in contrast to the national unemployment rate of 13.3%. A [policy brief drafted by MEI](#) emphasises the potential of the expansion of renewable energy and green industries to create employment opportunities for women and youth. ACHRS urges the government to meet promises made to prioritising agricultural and energy development in order to amplify job opportunities in Morocco.

Right to Social Protection

Recent strikes and trade union action in Morocco have revealed the reality of living and working conditions in Morocco. In December 2024, [unions met to discuss the conditions in factories](#) after accidents left workers severely injured, in one case fatally. Furthermore, [unions voiced criticism of a draft strike bill](#), considering it an “assault on trade union freedoms”. The UN considers worker’s ability to strike a [“fundamental right \[that must\] be preserved”](#); it is often the only tool workers have to protect themselves and amplify their voices to generate material improvement to their conditions.

Additionally, this month, the [prison sentence of activist Said Ait Mahdi was extended from three months to one year](#). Ait Mahdi was initially arrested for leading protests that criticised the government’s response to the catastrophic earthquake in September 2023, specifically the poor coordination of disaster response and aid distribution. A year later, out of the 57000 destroyed, only 1000 homes had been rebuilt. Many victims are still sleeping in plastic tents and have had to face severe winter conditions. The right to adequate housing should be considered a key aspect of social protection.

Silencing the voices of protesters risks diminishing accountability and reducing the exposure of injustice and abuse committed by power structures. Throughout history, protests have been a crucial instrument in the promotion of human rights, such as the right to social protection.

Sudan

After more than 22 months of escalated conflict, Sudan has been [labelled by the International Rescue Committee](#) as one of the world’s most devastating humanitarian crises for the second year in a row. This underscores the urgent need for the international community to uphold commitments to aid – The Guardian has recently accused the west of [“turning its back on Sudan”](#) after international organisations and states failed to deliver £500 million pledged a year ago.

Prior to the escalation of hostilities between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in April 2023, [Sudan’s social protection network was fragmented](#) and faced numerous challenges such as insufficient infrastructure, lack of funding and a heavy reliance on foreign aid.



Right to Social Protection

This subsequently meant that the inadequate systems in place have failed to provide social welfare to vast swathes of the population in the aftermath of extreme destruction inflicted by the warring factions. In short, the deterioration of social protection systems can be attributed to the paralysis of state institutions such as the Zakat Office and the Ministry of Social Development, the forced displacement of 14.6 million amounting to the [largest internal displacement crisis globally](#), the collapse of the local currency leading to high levels of inflation, and extreme disruption to aid flow especially into isolated and war-torn regions.

Prior to the eruption of the civil war, 15.8 million people in Sudan already relied on humanitarian aid. Over the course of the last 2 years, it has been proven that both sides have targeted civilians and committed violence that amounts to war crimes. Various human rights organisations have accused the RSF of deliberate targeting that amounts to genocide in the Darfur region, an allegation that was [backed by the US state department](#) in January this year. Consequently, [the International Rescue Committee have found](#) that now more than 30.4 million – around half of Sudan’s population – are in dire need of humanitarian assistance. The [World Health Organisation’s 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan identified](#) three key areas that need to be addressed to tackle this crisis: food security; health; and water sanitation and hygiene. International aid cuts, in particular USAID, [attacks on humanitarian workers](#), and looting and [arbitrary obstruction of aid at checkpoints by both fronts](#) have drastically hindered the provision of aid in Sudan. In a concerning [news update on March 25th](#), the RSF have placed further constraints on aid deliveries to territories where it is attempting to solidify its control, increasing the risk of starvation for thousands in the western region of Darfur.

In regions that are difficult to reach for global relief organisations, [Emergency Response Rooms](#) play a vital role in filling this gap and providing for vulnerably communities. With [25 million facing high levels of acute food insecurity](#) and [famine conditions confirmed in at least 5 locations](#), the work of ERRs has been so important that they were recently [nominated for a 2025 Nobel Peace Prize](#). Around 1.8 million rely on ERR kitchens for food. However, USAID’s recent decision to cut all funding has had a drastic effect on many humanitarian initiatives in Sudan as well as worldwide; after the cuts, [80 percent of the ERR kitchens have had to shut down](#).



Right to Social Protection

Last year, UN statistics reveal that USAID contributed 44% of Sudan's \$1.8 billion humanitarian response. According to the global hunger monitor, around 8 million are on the verge of famine conditions. It is therefore more vital than ever that the international community increase their commitment to funding aid projects in Sudan. In a recent [Al Jazeera report](#), spokesperson for Khartoum state's ERRs, Hajooj Kuka, warned that "hundreds and thousands of people will starve and die from malnutrition-related diseases" if no one fills the gap left by USAID cuts. It is also paramount that both sides of the conflict adhere to international law and cease deliberate targeting and blocking of aid.

Aside from this, famine conditions and extreme hunger are exacerbated by significant food related violence such as the damaging, destruction and looting of markets and food production factories, looting of livestock, and [incidents of violence against those travelling to and from markets](#). A recent case of deliberate [targeting of markets includes the SAF's airstrike on a market on March 25th](#), killing dozens; the Emergency Lawyers human rights group found that barrel bombs were used in what has been constituted a "systematic war crime". Famine conditions and severe restrictions on access to food, intersecting with pre-existing high rates of poverty and [19 million children unable to access education](#), have meant that both factions [have used food and stolen aid](#) as a way of bribing men and boys to join their ranks. Faced with high rates of poverty, some families driven by hunger see recruitment as employment and persuade their children to join the military. Girls are also abducted in the same manner and forced into sexual slavery. As [stated by Siobhán Mullally](#), the UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking, "the deteriorating humanitarian situation and lack of access to food and other basic services make children, especially unaccompanied and separated children on the streets, easy targets for recruitment by armed groups". This marks an extreme violation of international law: the participation of children under 18 is forbidden in the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, of which Sudan is a signatory.

Furthermore, it is also crucial to highlight the extremely concerning condition of health infrastructure in Sudan: [according to the World Bank](#), two-thirds of the population are unable to access essential health services. As shown by the [World Health Organization's research](#), in areas hardest hit by the war, less than 25% of health facilities are functional.



Right to Social Protection

Additionally, two-thirds of Sudanese states are experiencing more than three disease outbreaks; exacerbated by the climate crisis, cases of cholera, malaria and dengue fever are placing additional burden on health infrastructure. Bordering countries that have received thousands of refugees are also reporting spikes in disease cases. [Relief Web has emphasised](#) the prevalent need to “relocate refugees from the border to consolidated refugee sites and ensure access to protection services, water, shelter, food, non-food items, health, and education”. Moreover, the violence has meant that national vaccination coverage has plummeted by 35%, putting many lives at grave risk.

The deterioration in health infrastructure can be put down to deliberate targeting by both factions. Between April 2023 and November 2024, [Insecurity Insight identified](#) 519 attacks on the health system, including 119 healthcare workers killed and health facilities damaged on 128 occasions. The situation is further exacerbated by looting of medical supplies: on March 19th, [Reuters reported instances](#) of the RSF stealing therapeutic formula milk provided to the Alban Jadeed Hospital by UNICEF to tackle extreme malnutrition in children. This particular hospital had received more than 14000 children aged under five years old experiencing severe acute malnutrition last year. Staff also reported many cases of mothers unable to produce milk due to trauma, malnutrition and dehydration. The scale of the health crisis is unfathomable; this is one instance of many health-related issues experienced in this hospital, which is one hospital of thousands facing extreme shortages and impediments in aid flow.

Victims of the conflict in Sudan are caught in a vicious, unrelenting cycle of suffering. Extreme shortages of food and water, and lack of shelter and forced displacement, put individuals at risk of serious diseases and health complications. The targeting of health infrastructure and looting of aid and medical supplies mean that many are dying from otherwise treatable diseases. It is imperative that both factions of the war adhere to international law and cease the deliberate targeting of civilian infrastructure, and that the international community does not “turn its back” on Sudan.

Right to Social Protection

Yemen

Yemen's social protection system has been unable to support those in need, as years of civil war have created pressure on the state and undermined its ability to provide assistance to an [increasing number of people in need](#) due to poverty, hunger and displacement.

Most of Yemen is controlled by a [rebel group](#), the Houthis, which rose up against Yemen's government in 2014, making it step down but also causing a humanitarian crisis. With the backing of Iran, the Houthis have since been fighting against a coalition led by Saudi Arabia. The group controls the northwestern regions, while the former government administers the southern and eastern areas. Since the start of Israel's war on Gaza, the Houthis have been launching attacks on ships affiliated to Israel passing by the Yemeni coast, to show solidarity for Palestinians in Gaza. The attacks had stopped with the start of the ceasefire, but, after Israel reengaged in the bombing, the group said they would resume them. Citing this as a reason, the US launched air strikes in different sites in Yemen, resulting in more than 50 people being killed and hundreds wounded, among them children and women.

[Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies](#) identifies the main issues leading to the malfunctioning of the country's social protection system to be the lack of a central governing body, the instability of funding, with all being further aggravated by the ongoing conflict.

The lack of a central body leads to unequal resource distribution, lack of accountability, inadequate needs assessments and weak monitoring methods. On the other hand, funding is unstable due to fluctuating international support and lack of transparency that often fails to prioritize the needs of beneficiaries.

Vulnerabilities related to social protection include lack of necessities like food, housing, healthcare, education and pensions for the retired. As a result of the ongoing conflict, these vulnerabilities have been further deepened because of the violence the fighting has generated, the financial crisis and the disruption of public services. [Critical infrastructure](#) has been destroyed, reducing access to basic services such as water, health and education.

Yemen's civil war has created one of the worst man-made humanitarian crisis, with an estimated [19.5 million people](#), 15 million of them being women and children, needing humanitarian assistance and protection services in 2025. Data from 2025 presents a 7 percent deterioration compared to 2024, when the number of people in need amounted to 18.2 million.

Right to Social Protection

Yemenis are internally displaced, representing the fifth largest displacement crisis in the world.

Basic necessities and services are lacking. 17.1 million people (about half of the population) is food insecure, 55 percent of children under five suffer of chronic malnutrition and 17 million people do not have access to water to cover basic daily needs. Nearly 90 percent of the population lacks access to publicly supplied electricity.

Almost half the number of Yemen's health facilities are either partially or fully non-functioning and 3.2 million children are not able to attend school. Moreover, more than 5 million people in the country are affected by disabilities, making them extremely vulnerable in a context of conflict.

Before the outbreak of the conflict in 2014, Yemen's national institutions had implemented various contributory social protection programs tackling different vulnerable groups in the public sector to provide them with services such as pensions, social transfers and targeted protection programs. At this time, these services are however not enough to suffice public needs. Because of a budget deficit, the payment of public sector salaries and pensions has been stalled since 2016.

Yemen also arranged for a series of non-contributory programs, like the Social Welfare Fund (SWF), which offers direct cash support to vulnerable categories such as orphans, women and people with disabilities. The conflict has however disrupted these deliveries due to the cessation of governmental funds.

With the outbreak of the conflict, funding and humanitarian programs by UN Agencies, NGOs and other local organizations have increased, but, as shown in the figures provided by the UN, lots of people are still in desperate need.

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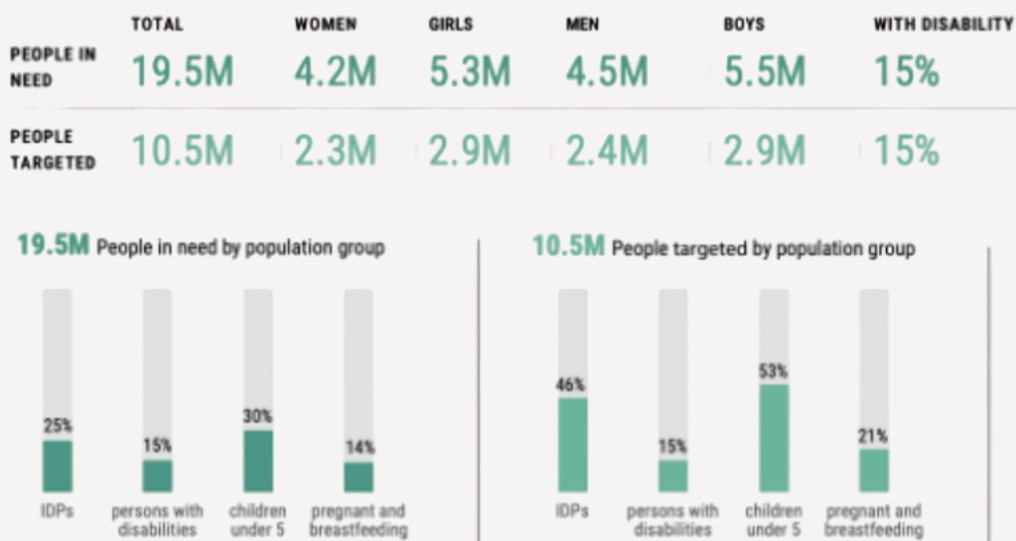
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Source: UN OCHA, January 2025

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OUR VISION & COMMITMENT

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