

# COMPENDIUM

**10 YEARS** Since The  
**Arab SPRING**

# CMME

The MIRROR To The MIDDLE East



**CMES**

**The Centre for Middle East Studies**  
*Promoting Peace Through Dialogue*

# TABLE OF CONTENT

<b>Editorial</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Saudi Arabia</b> <i>Himani Yadav</i>	<b>5</b>
<b>Lebanon</b> <i>Niharika</i>	<b>17</b>
<b>Turkey</b> <i>Tanvi Asang Dani</i>	<b>32</b>
<b>Jordan</b> <i>Pradeek Krishna</i>	<b>45</b>
<b>Syria</b> <i>Tanvi Asang Dani</i>	<b>55</b>
<b>Iraq</b> <i>Himani Yadav</i>	<b>65</b>
	<b>78</b>

## **Editorial Team**

*Devashish Kelkar*  
*Ayushman Thakur*  
*Nandini Modi*  
*Zeus Hans Mendez*  
*Sankalp Mishra*

# 10 Years Since the Arab Spring

The Arab Spring began as a movement which sought to bring an end to authoritarian rule and begin a democratisation process in countries which had seen very little popular political participation. Ten years on and countries like Syria and Iraq have seen some of the worst fallout among the Arab Spring countries while others have remained relatively stable. This issue of the Compendium will look at six different countries which faced the effects of the Arab Spring; attempting to delineate the different responses, outcomes and reasons behind them.

The first thing that emerges on a preliminary analysis of these eight countries is that the four which saw the worst outcome, i.e, Libya, Egypt, Iraq and Syria had already been brewing with social unrest and discontent. The fallout of popular protests, although long winding in some cases, led to severe bloodshed, factionalism and a stronger response against the democratization. Egypt and Syria both saw initial attempts at conciliation through reform before strong-arm parties came to the forefront and led to instability in the high offices of both countries. Assad cracked down on civilian protests with brute force and Iraq, Syria and Libya all went spiralling into a state of civil war. Though Egypt too saw great turmoil and factionalism, the government of Abdel Fatah al-Sisi has brought relative stability to the state, although his tenure has not been without alleged gross human rights violations.

The monarchies, on the other hand, have shown far greater progress. Jordan immediately began to introduce reforms and has, time and again, instituted measures to strengthen parliamentary democracy and the social unrest. The key fault lies not in the policies adopted towards democratization but in the economic position that Jordan holds. Being one of the worst economies among the Arab

countries, Jordan would undoubtedly have seen popular resentment; however, the Kingdom has dealt with issues in what seems to be a forthright manner, taking measures and appointing committees to look into vast reform.

Oman and Saudi Arabia have also sought to introduce reforms and have done so in certain realms- Saudi Arabia having allowed women rights which have long been withheld from them- but have also strengthened their grip through repressive measures. The Spring undoubtedly sent worry down the spines of monarchs who feared the fate suffered by Gaddafi and others, causing them to simultaneously entrench the power of the monarchy. For societies that have been entrenched with factional and sectarian differences, the monarchies which have continued for centuries may operate as an adhesive to hold the states together.

Another trend which has emerged throughout these nations is that of greater Islamic identity. Egypt, Iraq, Turkey and Lebanon have all seen rising trends of Islam becoming far stronger. Iraq and Syria saw the ISIL take over swathes of the region, imposing a strict Sharia order, casting doubt over demands for democratisation. There can be no denying that the strict Sharia order cannot be reconciled with democracy and true popular participation. The rise may be attributed either to a basic counter-consolidation factor or to a more deep-seated reason: where poverty and regression begins to take root, people seek adherence to a movement of any kind where they find a sense of purpose. Eric Hoffer points out just this in his seminal work, *The True Believer*. Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, the ISIL, the pro-Islam movement in Turkey may just be the other side of the coin which seeks democratisation.

# Saudi Arabia

*Himani Yadav\**

## Abstract

At the beginning of the decade, a series of uprisings, popularly known as the Arab Spring, fuelled by a desire for greater political participation, erupted in various parts of the Middle East and North African (MENA) Region. The uprisings impacted the societal and governmental functioning of the region. Saudi Arabia, one of the richest countries in the region and the world was also influenced by the Arab Spring. This paper delineates the various governmental and societal changes that took place in Saudi Arabia after the Arab Spring.

## Introduction

The ripple effect of Arab spring which began at the beginning of the decade can still be observed throughout the middle east. This effect manifests itself in national policies, political allegiances and foreign policy of the various governments functioning in the region. The pro-democracy desire of the people living in the region continues to be a trouble for the GCC countries. Saudi Arabia is one such country.

## Background

Saudi Arabia is the birthplace of Islam and home to the holy shrines of Mecca and Medina. It adheres to an absolute monarchy where the King is the supreme authority. It is currently being ruled by King Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. The Saudi Kingdom adheres to a strict form of Sunni Islam known as Wahabbism. The country has never had a formal written constitution. Islamic law, Shariah is the primary source of legislation. Although the country does not have a formal written constitution, in 1992 King Fahd released a document known as the Basic Law of Government (Al-Nizam al-Asasi li al-Hukm), which laid down principles for government functioning and also established the rights and duties of citizens.

---

\* *Himani Yadav is a student at the Jindal Global Law School and Research Assistant at the Centre for Middle East Studies*

The king is the supreme authority and combines legislative, executive, and judicial functions. As the head of the state, he presides over the Council of Ministers (Majlis al-Wuzara). The council is responsible for executive and administrative matters such as foreign and domestic policy, defence, finance, health, and education. Policies formulated to address these matters are executed through various agencies appointed by the government. The Basic Law of Government document released by King Fahd in 1992 led to the establishment of a new quasi-legislative body, the Consultative Council (Majlis al-Shura). The council consists of experts, all appointed by the king to draft legislations along with the Council of Ministers. Since the king is the supreme authority all policy decisions have to be approved by him before they can be implemented. Oil exports contribute to more than 87 % of government revenue (Forbes,2018). Saudi Arabia is the world's largest exporter of oil and one of the founding members of The Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) (Forbes,2018).

## **Changes in Governance After Arab Spring**

Saudi Arabia has not reacted very positively to the Arab Spring. The government has taken multiple steps to quash the desire for democratization. The various policy measures and steps adopted by the government to quash the pro-democracy wave and any kind of dissent are elaborated below.

### ***Wealth Distribution***

Saudi Arabia offers its citizens a social contract of “no taxation and no representation”. From the revenue it earns from selling the oil it provides its citizens' subsidies, jobs, healthcare and education; and in return expect their loyalty to the current regime. (Beblawi and Luciani 1987, Hertog 2010). To counter the effect of the Arab Spring, King Abdullah launched a public spending programme of 130 billion USD. The money was provided to citizens in the form of increased salaries, hiring of new employees in various public sectors, launching an affordable housing programme for 500,000 units. Throughout the first half of the decade, the government continued to maintain its populist policies in exchange for citizen loyalty. Further King Salman continued with the norm of wealth distribution by announcing two months of free public salaries when he ascended to the throne in 2015 (Hubbard 2015).

However, since 2014 there has been a decline in the oil prices and the regime is struggling to maintain its welfare policies. To maintain their social contract the Saudi government is implementing austerity measures and raising finances by taking out loans or issuing bonds. In recent years King Salman has been doing back and forth between cutting subsidies and reinstating them to maintain the government budget. To reduce their budget deficit during the COVID pandemic the Saudi government has tripled the Value Added Tax from 5 per cent to 15 per cent and suspended the cost-of-living allowance from July 2020.

### ***Repression/ Human Rights***

During the Arab Spring uprisings, protests erupted mainly in the eastern province of Saudi Arabia, which has a large Shiite minority living in the region. To manage the protests, the government deployed security forces, detained and jailed protestors and activists. Since then, the government has increasingly resorted to repression to quell any kind of dissent. There has been an all-time increase in authoritarianism, social media is censored, journalists are being killed and protests are labelled as ‘Iran Sponsored’ which allows the government to foster sentiments parallel to their diplomatic ambitions.

The repression is not limited to the minority population of the country but extends to the advocates of progressive policies- the liberals, youth, journalists and women. Citizens criticising the government on social media have been jailed. One prominent example is liberal dissident Raif Badawi who was arrested in 2008 under charges of “apostasy” and again in 2012 for apostasy and “insulting Islam through electronic channels”. Female activists initially advocating for the removal of the driving ban were arrested as well. Despite being one of the richest countries in the world Saudi Arabia is not a safe country for journalists. Saudi Arabia ranked 172nd out of 180 countries on the World Press Freedom Index (2019). Journalists are often threatened, killed, forced to exile or silenced when they report on government corruption, domestic and international policies. The gruesome murder of Saudi Journalist Jamal Khashoggi by Saudi Security Forces in 2018 for criticising the government in the *Washington Post* shed light on the deteriorating conditions and risk to the lives of journalists reporting in the region.

Further, there has been a decline in religious freedom in Saudi Arabia. According to the Human Freedom Index, (2019) Saudi Arabia has the lowest religious freedom (3.21) amongst all the Muslim majority countries. The law in Saudi Arabia is based on the Quran and does not allow the practice of any other religion other than Islam. Apostasy away from Islam, or blasphemy

against it, is considered a capital crime. Strict adherence to religious practice is imposed on society and checked by the “religion police”.

Due to fluctuating oil prices in the international market and other diplomatic reasons, Saudi Arabia has consistently put in efforts to diversify its economy and to reduce its dependence on oil. The Saudi nation has been ranked 83rd out of 180 countries on the Economic Freedom Index (2020) released by Heritage Organisation. The country’s economy falls in the category of moderately free. GDP growth has been modest (2.2% - 5 years compounded annual growth) for the past five years. The diversification efforts by the government which are a part of its ambitious ‘Vision 2030’ program seems to bear fruitful results, this is evident by the fact that the non-oil economy grew by 3.3 % during the year 2019 (Saudi Arabia’s general authority of statistics,2019). This growth has been the fastest since 2014 (Arab News, March 2020).

### ***Reforms***

Saudi Arabia has introduced various policies and measures to increase public participation since the Arab Spring. Although the power given to the people is limited, it is still seen as a step forward towards greater access to political participation. Political liberalization efforts in Saudi Arabia have been going on since the time of King Fahd (1982-2005). In 1992, King Fahd introduced a consultative council that provided constructive inputs to formulate laws and constitution in Saudi Arabia. After the uprisings in 2011, King Abdullah made efforts to strengthen the consultative council to ensure representation beyond the royal elites. Further, municipal elections which were to be held in 2009 finally took place in 2011. The election in 2011 saw a low voter turnout due to two reasons: a) the powers given to elected officials are minimal. Besides, half of the municipal leaders are appointed by the king. b) Public dissatisfaction for the regime reached its threshold in 2011 and such limited political reforms were seen as insufficient.

However, the municipal election in 2015 is considered to be historic. This is so because women were allowed to vote and run for office for the first time during this election. The voter turnout of women was impressive, one in ten voters were women. Over 900 women ran for office and 20 were elected which was seen as a huge step towards gender equality in the political arena.

Saudi Arabia is often criticized for having corrupt political motivations in encouraging electoral reforms. Scholars believe that municipal elections allow Saudi Arabia to maintain its image as a nation working towards modernization and democratization without actually giving



any binding powers to the elected officials. However, the fact that the government felt the need to polish their image of being relatively progressive than their counterparts in the MENA region is a testament to the threat that the government is facing from the pro-democracy wave.

### ***Transparency/Corruption***

Corruption was one of the reasons why Arab uprisings erupted in 2011. Although Saudi Arabia ranked 51 out of 180 countries on the corruption perception index, its score does not reveal a true picture. Due to the strong consolidation of power, lack of surveys and necessary assessments it is difficult to determine the extent of actual corruption prevailing in the Kingdom. According to Transparency International Organisation in the past few years, Saudi Arabia under the leadership of King Salman has spent millions of dollars to maintain its reputation and to promote the “anti-corruption reforms” implemented by the King. In 2017, King Salman launched an anti-corruption drive as a part of reform in the country. The government claimed that they recovered 106 billion USD through the anti-corruption drive but this claim is questionable since there was no transparent investigation or fair and free trial for suspects (Transparency International Organisation,2020). Besides, the people responsible for carrying out the anti-corruption programme were mainly from the royal family or their trusted allies which pose a big question on the credibility of the drive.

Further, there has been an enormous corruption in the judiciary of the Saudi Kingdom. Saudi Arabia relies on Sharia Law and individual judges determine what constitutes a crime. This discretionary power comes with an increased risk of corruption. Judicial corruption is extremely common in cases of political importance and land registration. Judges are often pressurized or given instructions internally to issue a certain decision or harsher sentences to certain people. A special court dealing with issues of terrorism is notoriously known for lack of transparency and severe rulings against human rights defenders.

There has been a lack of transparency when it comes to state finances. The auditing body in Saudi Arabia is not accountable to release government expenditure to the public and elected officials. This creates ambiguity regarding how much revenues are earned, spent or ends up in the pockets of the ruling elite.

There is a presumption that the efforts put by the government to create a positive image through anti-corruption drives are an attempt to consolidate and protect its power from dissenters or any political change.

## **Societal Changes After the Arab Spring**

The Saudi Arabian society witnessed a number of changes after the Arab Spring. Some have been for the better while others have been questioned incessantly. A few changes concerning gender and poverty amongst others are described below in detail.

### ***Gender***

Women rights in Saudi Arabia are determined by governmental laws, strict interpretation of Sharia Law and along the lines of customs and traditions followed in the country. Since Saudi Arabia is a patriarchal and conservative society, the rights of women in Saudi Arabia were severely limited in the first decade of the 21st century.

After the Arab Spring, and due to incessant campaigning by women rights activists, King Abdullah allowed women to vote and contest in the 2015 municipal elections. Further, in 2017 the only driving ban on women in the world was lifted and women in Saudi Arabia were allowed to drive.

The anti-male guardianship campaign by women rights activists led to a reform which allowed women to access government services like healthcare and education without the consent of their male guardian. Women were also allowed to travel abroad or obtain a passport without permission from their male guardian. The country also repealed a law which required women to obey her husband. The women in Saudi Arabia can now choose where to live in the same way as men. The country removed a provision from the law that made the husband's home the default residence for a woman. Moreover, a husband can no longer sue his wife for leaving the marital home.

According to the World Bank Report "*Women, Business and The law 2020*" Saudi Arabia made the biggest improvement since 2017 concerning women rights' reforms in the areas pertaining mobility, sexual harassment, pensions and workplace rights. In 2018, laws protecting women from sexual harassment at the workplace were enacted. Further amendments in the law in 2019 now protect women from discrimination in employment. This includes job advertisements and hiring. The laws also protect women from arbitrary dismissal from the job during their pregnancy and maternity leave. All of these regulations led to an increase in the percentage of women employed in the labour force from 18 per cent in 2017 to 23 per cent in

2018. It also made women's retirement age as same as men at 60 years. Women are also extended the right to obtain pensions after retirement. The country also made access to credit easier for women by banning any discrimination in accessing financial services. In 2019 women were also given the right to register for divorce or marriage and be eligible for guardianship of minor children.

All of these reforms are taking place due to several factors which are: a. incessant campaigning by women rights' activists, b. Saudi Arabia's efforts to diversify its economy and its realization that women constitute a crucial part in the diversification process and c. its efforts to achieve its 'Vision 2030'.

### ***Poverty***

Although the Saudi government rarely releases statistics it is estimated that approximately 20 per cent or more population of Saudi Arabia lives in poverty. (Al Jazeera 2019) Many of poverty-stricken families are female-headed households. (Aljazeera 2019). Historically, Saudi Arabia has mainly relied on charity to alleviate poverty. Every individual and corporation in Saudi Arabia is supposed to donate 2.5 per cent of their wealth to the government as part of the Islamic system of zakat. The government further takes the responsibility for distributing it to poor families.

In 2005, King Abdullah (who was crown prince at that time) implemented the National Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Supplementary Support Programmes. One-time monthly payments were distributed to poor families through the labour ministry. Despite these reforms, poverty remained constant. After the Arab Spring, the Saudi government did not do much to address the poverty issue in the country. In fact, in 2011 it arrested bloggers Firas Buqna and Hussam al-Darwish for posting a video which showed the tough living conditions in al-Jaradiyaa, a poor neighbourhood of Riyadh. In 2014, the government played down a report by Sami bin Abdul Aziz Al-Damigh, a professor at King Saud University in Riyadh, on the poverty problem in the kingdom. Al-Damigh proposed setting a poverty line for the country, which the government rejected. The government has continued avoiding using the term "poor" but rather prefers to call poor people as "vulnerable or needy or low-income families".

Soon after the announcement of 'Vision 2030' crown prince, Mohammed Bin Salman announced a reduction in subsidies for the citizens of the country. In 2016, the government announced pay cuts for public sector employees. In 2017, it released a timetable for decreasing

subsidies for fuel, natural gas, electricity and water over the next few years. In 2018, the government introduced a value-added tax of 5 per cent on most goods and services. All of these measures led to inflation which increased the hardship for poor and middle-income households in the country. Saudi economist Ihsan Bu Haliqa pointed out in 2016 that there exists an urgent need for the government to restructure the social safety net considering the reduction of public spending on subsidies. There was no buffer to protect lower-income households when cuts in public spending were implemented that could pacify the reaction of the public. Growing risk of social unrest forced Mohammed Bin Salman to roll back some of his plans, bring back bonus payments for public sector employees and introducing a new Citizen Account Program disbursing money to families in need.

According to a 2017 United Nations report, the anti-poverty measures taken by the Saudi government over the past decade were “inefficient, unsustainable, poorly coordinated and, above all, unsuccessful in providing comprehensive social protection to those most in need”. Saudi Arabia’s ‘Vision 2030’ delineates two measures concerning poverty alleviation. Firstly, The National Transformation Program (NTP) has some declared goals, such as “increasing the percentage of residential areas, including peripheral areas, covered by health service from 78% to 88%” and “increasing the percentage of population with access to water services from 87% to 92%”. Secondly, The Housing Program aims to “increase the percentage of home ownership among Saudi citizens to 60%”. However, the efficiency of these programmes cannot be ascertained. It remains to be seen whether and how Saudi Arabia will address inequality, injustice and poverty more comprehensively to achieve its ‘Vision 2030’.

### ***Islamization***

After Arab Spring there has been an intensification of the Sunni-Shia schism in Sunni dominated Saudi Arabia. There are mainly two types of Islamic ideologies that exist in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. On one side there is Wahhabism whose core tenets emphasize the oneness of God and the avoidance of things which might lead to polytheism, such as idols, amulets, and talismans. Wahhabism is followed and imposed by the ruling monarchy of the Saudi Kingdom on the citizens of the country. Their biggest competitor in the region is the Muslim Brotherhood; a regional political organisation that also once resorted to extremism and radicalism. After the successful political gains during the Arab Spring by the Muslim Brotherhood in Libya and Tunisia, the current regime in Saudi Arabia started seeing the organisation as a threat to their political power. In 2014 Saudi Arabia declared the Muslim

Brotherhood as a terrorist organisation which is mobilizing the Shiite minority and the youth against the government. In 2017, Saudi Arabia and its allies severed their diplomatic ties with Qatar for supporting Muslim Brotherhood, allowing Al-Jazeera to report negative information about GCC countries and for supporting Arab Spring; and for its relations with Iran.

Scholars have observed that Saudi Arabia's hostile actions towards Muslim Brotherhood show the two-fold threat which the regime is experiencing: a. Muslim Brotherhood's interpretation of Islam poses a threat to the religious legitimacy of Wahhabism in the country. Wahhabism is more conservative while Muslim Brotherhood is more accommodating and therefore is more appealing especially to the youth, women and minority. The Muslim Brotherhood directly challenges the political legitimacy of the current Saudi Regime. Although the current Saudi Regime strongly held onto its power during the Arab Spring, the regime now lives in constant threat concerning its political power. It appears to be cautious and proactive when it comes to taking steps to quash any threat to their political power.

### ***Impact of COVID-19***

The very first case of novel Coronavirus in Saudi Arabia was recorded in March 2020. The kingdom imposed several curfews and lockdown to mitigate the spread of the virus. Due to the imposition of lockdown across the world, the oil demand decreased severely and the economy of Saudi Arabia was heavily impacted. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia registered a budget deficit of 9 billion US dollars in the first quarter of 2020. Several measures such as an increase in value-added tax from 5 per cent to 15 per cent from 1st July 2020, reduction in subsidies and cutting government spending by 100 billion riyals were adopted to stimulate the economy and to reduce the budget deficit (BBC, May 2020; Al Jazeera, May 2020; Al Arabiya, May 2020).

A budget deficit of 40.768 billion riyals was reported by the government in its third quarter of 2020. The reported deficit was more than half of the deficit calculated in the previous quarter. The change in figures resulted due to an increase in non-oil revenue, which kicked off a continued fall in oil income. The economy is said to further shrink by 3.8% in the remaining months of 2020, as per government estimates due to the impact of coronavirus crisis on the global demand for crude (Reuters, October 2020). The Kingdom further plans to cut down on its spending in 2021 to 990 billion riyals (Reuters, October 2020).

## Conclusion

After the Arab Spring, Saudi Arabia has witnessed a number of changes, some desirable while some not. If changes in governance are considered, Saudi Arabia mainly adopted two categories of measures- a. Repression based Measures; b. Incentive-based Measures to counter the effect of the Arab Spring. While it has introduced some appreciable reforms such as allowing women to vote, drive, having elections and diversifying its economy, it continues to suppress all forms of dissent. The gross violation of human rights that is undertaken by the government in Saudi Arabia against the activists is alarming. Low political legitimacy and increased authoritarianism in the country continues to act as a barrier for the citizens to exercise their freedom of expression and speech.

Any attempt at making one's voice heard in the political arena comes with grave consequences. Limited international solidarity and support concerning the freedom of speech and political debate in the country make the matter worse. Western Countries have often resorted to securing their economic interest and have refrained from making any controversial statements. The current political climate of Saudi Arabia suggests that the monarch might further ease out restrictions on social and cultural life but democracy and increased political participation do not seem to be a desirable endeavour for the government. Further, it remains to be seen how the Saudi Government will address the poverty, inequality and injustice in the country to achieve its "Vision 2030". The coming decade will uncover how the government will balance between wooing the citizens and consolidating its power amidst its decreasing oil revenues following the coronavirus crisis.

## References

Akyol, Mustafa. "Freedom In The Muslim World". *Economic Development Bulletin*, no. 33, 2020, <https://www.cato.org/publications/economic-development-bulletin/freedom-muslim-world#conclusion-burning-freedom-deficit>. Accessed 2 Dec 2020.

Al Jazeera. "Saudi Arabia To Impose 'Painful' Austerity Measures, Triple VAT". 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2020/05/11/saudi-arabia-to-impose-painful-austerity-measures-triple-vat/>. Accessed 2 Dec 2020.

Al-Khamri, Hana. "Vision 2030 And Poverty In Saudi Arabia". Al Jazeera, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2019/12/23/vision-2030-and-poverty-in-saudi->

arabia/#:~:text=Addressing%20poverty%20with%20charity&text=Being%20a%20Muslim%20country%20and,distribute%20it%20to%20poor%20families. Accessed 2 Dec 2020.

Amlôt, Matthew. "Jobs, Health Priority In Coronavirus Spending Cuts, VAT Hike: Saudi Finance Minister". Al Arabiya English, 2020, <https://english.alarabiya.net/en/coronavirus/2020/05/11/Jobs-health-priority-in-coronavirus-spending-cuts-VAT-hike-Saudi-Finance-Minister.html>. Accessed 2 Dec 2020.

"Authoritarianism And Corruption In Saudi Arabia". 2020, <https://www.transparency.org/en/blog/authoritarianism-and-corruption-in-saudi-arabia#>. Accessed 2 Dec 2020.

Barbuscia, Davide. "Saudi Arabia's Deficit Down In Third Quarter As Taxes Boost Revenue". Reuters, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/saudi-budget/update-1-saudi-arabia-reports-q3-budget-deficit-of-nearly-11-bln-idUSL1N2HJ15B>. Accessed 2 Dec 2020.

"Best Countries For Business 2018". Forbes, 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/places/saudi-arabia/?sh=11954c914e5c>. Accessed 2 Dec 2020.

Boserup, Rasmus Alenius et al. "Restoration, Transformation And Adaptation: Authoritarianism After 2011 In Egypt, Saudi Arabia And Iran". Middle East And North Africa Regional Architecture: Mapping Geopolitical Shifts, Regional Order And Domestic Transformations, no. 30, 2019, [https://www.cidob.org/en/publications/publication\\_series/menara\\_papers/working\\_papers/restoration\\_transformation\\_and\\_adaptation\\_authoritarianism\\_after\\_2011\\_in\\_egypt\\_saudi\\_arabia\\_and\\_iran](https://www.cidob.org/en/publications/publication_series/menara_papers/working_papers/restoration_transformation_and_adaptation_authoritarianism_after_2011_in_egypt_saudi_arabia_and_iran). Accessed 2 Dec 2020.

Cleveland, Catherine. "Local Elections After The Arab Spring". FOREIGN AFFAIRS, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2016-09-22/local-elections-after-arab-spring>. Accessed 2 Dec 2020.

"General Authority For Statistics". General Authority For Statistics, 2020, <https://www.stats.gov.sa/en>.

Joshua, Philby et al. "Saudi Arabia". Encyclopædia Britannica, 2020.

Leung, Hillary. "'An Intense Climate Of Fear Has Been Triggered.' Press Freedom A Rising Concern In 2019, Report Says". TIME Magazine, 2019, <https://time.com/5572179/reporters-without-borders-rsf-world-press-freedom-2019/>. Accessed 2 Dec 2020.

Lipp, Andrew. "The Muslim Brotherhood: Exploring Divergent Views In Saudi Arabia And Qatar". Graduate Theses And Dissertations, 2019. Iowa State University Digital Repository, <https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=8048&context=etd>. Accessed 2 Dec 2020.

Machmudi, Yon. "SAUDI ARABIA'S INTERNAL CHANGES AND ITS FOREIGN POLICIES IN RESPONDING THE ARAB SPRING". International Review Of Humanities Studies, vol 5, no. 1, 2020, pp. 1-12. Universitas Indonesia, Directorate Of Research And Public Service, doi:10.7454/irhs.v0i0.214.

## 10 Years Since the Arab Spring

Miller, Terry et al. 2020 INDEX OF ECONOMIC FREEDOM. The Heritage Foundation, 2020.

Rezaian, Jason. "Saudi Arabia's Press Freedom Masquerade". The Washington Post, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/12/04/saudi-arabias-press-freedom-masquerade/>. Accessed 2 Dec 2020.

"Saudi Arabia Triples VAT To Support Coronavirus-Hit Economy". BBC News, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-52612785>. Accessed 2 Dec 2020.

Women, Business And The Law 2020. WORLD BANK, Washington, DC, 2020, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/32639/9781464815324.pdf?sequence=10>. Accessed 2 Dec 2020.

World Press Freedom Index 2019. Reporters Without Borders, 2019, <https://rsf.org/en/2019-rsf-index-middle-east-journalists-deliberately-targeted>. Accessed 2 Dec 2020.



# Lebanon

*Niharika Kuchhal\**

## Introduction

As a result of religious warfare that dates back several centuries, sectarianism is deeply rooted in the governmental structure of Lebanon. The state is a parliamentary democratic republic characterised by confessionalism and consociationalism with power organised along ethnoreligious lines (Fakhoury, 2014). The major religious groups who are prime stakeholders in the politics of Lebanon are Maronite Christians, Sunni Muslims, the Druze, and the Shiite Muslims. Since the 1943 National Pact agreement, the Constitution provides that the president must be a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, and the Speaker of the Parliament a Shia Muslim. Thus, there is a requirement under law to have the religious communities represented in public employment, the formation of Council of Ministers/ Cabinet, and the selection of members of the Legislature (The Lebanese Constitution, 1926). Accordingly, the current president of Lebanon is Michel Aoun, Saad Hariri is the Prime Minister, and the speaker of parliament is Nabih Berri.

Other primary stakeholders in the politics of Lebanon are Syria and Israel. In 1975. Unresolved sectarian issues led Lebanon into a civil war that required the intervention of Syria. By 2004 Syria's influence in Lebanese politics had become so contentious that an anti-Syrian movement had begun drawing power. Even though the presence of Syrian Forces in Lebanon has ended now, Syria still has a strong influence in the country. In 2005, an Iranian backed group called the Hezbollah entered the government of Lebanon. It crossed the Israeli border in July 2006, kidnapped two of its soldiers, and killed others which started a two-week war with Israel. The conflict with Israel persists even now. Apart from this, Lebanon is also a site for proxy wars between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

The Arab Spring uprisings had gripped the Middle-east and Northern Africa in 2011 and toppled some long-standing authoritarian regimes. These uprisings were fuelled by religious

---

\* *Niharika Kuchhal is a student at the Jindal Global Law School and Research Assistant at the Centre for Middle East Studies*

tensions and a push for human rights amongst other various factors. In the aftermath of the movement, a decade later, some of the countries have changed for the better and some for the worst. Lebanon is one of the countries that stood on the side-lines of the revolution then, however, it has not been bereft of uprisings and protests. The protests in Lebanon, influenced by the Arab Spring, started on Feb 27, 2011, with only several hundred protestors (Wood, 2011). However, these were only episodic protests and not mass protests which called for the abolition of sectarianism. The waste management protests of 2015 were also significant. Even though Lebanon remained impermeable to the revolutions taking place in the Middle-east, it remained highly vulnerable to the spill-over effects brought on by these events (Fakhoury, 2014).

Another uprising took place after 17th October 2019, when a cabinet decision to tax WhatsApp calls and Facebook Messenger ignited the spark of an uprising against the government for accountability, the abolition of corruption, and the resignation of all political representatives in the wake of the severe economic and monetary crisis in the country ("The unprecedented mass protests in Lebanon explained", 2020). Prime Minister Said Hariri resigned on October 29, 2019, as a response to the protests. These protests were widespread and more significant than the 2011 protests. This was a protest which demanded sweeping changes with regards to economic policy, environmental protection, justice, and gender equality (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, 2020).

## **Governance in Lebanon**

### ***Lack of reform and political paralysis***

Since 2005 Lebanon has been in a state of permanent political paralysis as the result of this struggle over resources and power, preventing any important reforms from taking place. The two ideologically opposed camps in Lebanon are the March 14 Alliance and the March 8 Alliance. The March 14 Alliance was an anti-Syrian bloc that had organised the protests in Lebanon after the assassination of the former Prime Minister Rafiq-al-Hariri in February 2005. Even though the bloc dominated in the 2005-2009 elections, it became unpopular after that. It consists of the Sunni Future Movement, Christian Lebanese Forces, the Christian Phalange Party, and some independent politicians. The March 8 Alliance, on the other hand, is a pro-Syrian bloc that had aimed at eliminating Western Influence from Lebanon. It consists of the

Shiite Hezbollah Movement, the Shiite Amal Movement, the Christian Free Patriotic Movement, and other political parties.

During the Arab Spring in 2011, the friction between these two opposing blocs led to the resignation of the coalition government headed by Saad Hariri in January 2011. This brought about an extended political vacuum in the country. In June 2011, a new Hezbollah-dominated government was formed. The unstable administration and the political divides in the Lebanese government meant there was a lack of an effective, rapid and strategic response to the refugee crisis. This vacuum, particularly at the national level regarding the responsibilities and accountabilities of government actors, resulted in the municipalities playing a greater role in responding to and coordinating the crisis. There is no national administrative or legal framework for the management of refugee affairs and the response to the refugee crisis must be coordinated across several Ministries. As the central authority is weak, all activities on the behalf of the refugees, who are scattered across the country, have to be carefully negotiated with local religious leaders and municipal representatives.

Another political vacuum in the country occurred when the term of the then Lebanese President Michel Suleiman came to an end on 24 May 2014, without the parliament electing a new President in his place. A few months after the Presidential vacuum developed, because the security situation in the country did not allow for new parliamentary elections, the parliamentary mandate was extended for a second time by a majority of 95 votes since November 2014. Therefore, the prime minister designated Tammam Salam to manage the country. It was approximately 11 months after he was named that he announced the makeup of his government on 15th February 2014. The Lebanese government thus became functional and was supposed to perform its duties for two months only, until a new president was elected. However, because of the ongoing conflicts among Lebanese politicians, the interim government stayed in place longer than its intended term.

For two years, the tussle between the political parties of the government failed to make firm decisions that accomplish change in the current political deadlock. One example of this failure is how the government caused the rubbish accumulation in 2015. In July 2015, Lebanese authorities closed down the al-Naima landfill without making provisions for a replacement. The reason for the accumulation of the rubbish was that the government did not put out new tenders for contracts to enable other companies to carry out the removal work when the contract between the government and Sukleen waste-management company came to an end. They also

failed to extend the existing contract. As a result, the rubbish began to pile up on the streets of Beirut. The ‘You Stink’ protests started in 2015 where people demanded the resignation of prime minister-designate Tamam Saam and Environment Minister Muhammad al-Mashnuq. The government, however, refused to concede to public pressure, and hence, the anti-rubbish protests failed and gradually faded away. Even then, the government did not take any action regarding the rubbish, which continued to pile up in the streets.

The political deadlock could have ended when Saad al-Hariri, head of the strongest Sunni trend in Lebanon, nominated MP Sulayman Franjeh who was a key Christian politician, allied with the 8 March forces and the most prominent friend and ally of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. However, Samir Geagea, the most prominent Christian ally of Saad al-Hariri and the strong presidential candidate of the 14 March forces, supported the nomination of his political rival, General Michel Aoun. Despite both nominees being key members of the 8 March forces, the parliament remained incapable of electing a president as the 8 March forces refused to participate in the parliamentary sessions. Furthermore, the Free Patriotic Movement remained committed to its refusal to not participate in these sessions unless it could be sure of the victory of its candidate. This decision was further strengthened after Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri and his bloc did not confirm their support for the candidacy of General Michel Aoun against Berri’s strategic ally Sulayman Franjiyah. At the same time, the 14 March forces claimed that Hezbollah was the real party obstructing the presidential elections, arguing they could have unified the stances of its political team to nominate one of the two Christian allies.

In October 2016, Hezbollah-backed former general Michel Aoun became the president, hence ending a 29-month political vacuum which was caused by disagreement in the deeply divided parliament. In the same year, Saad Hariri was reappointed as prime minister. After the elections in 2018, in which the Hezbollah and its allies emerged victoriously, Hariri was elected as Prime Minister even though his party lost a third of its seats. However, the negotiations to form a new government dragged on till late January 2019. In October 2019, Hariri resigned from his post in response to the 2019 protests in the country.

A new technocratic government headed by Hassan Diab was formed in January 2020. It was after the appointment of Hassan Diab, that the protests had quelled. However, after the Beirut Blast on August 2, 2020, Prime Minister Hassan Diab offered his resignation due to the protests against the current political system, plunging the country into a political crisis. The Beirut blast was a result of negligence or malfeasance by the authorities to remove the tons of explosive

ammonium nitrate, which was stored in unsafe conditions at the seaport warehouse even after numerous warnings were given to them. The foreign ambassador to Germany, Mustapha Adib, who was appointed as the Prime Minister, had a very short tenure in his position as he stepped down from his post on 26th September 2020. This was due to his inability to form a government owing to the battle between Saad Hariri and the Hezbollah over nominations of Ministers. Soon after, in October, Saad Hariri was once again appointed as the Prime Minister.

In 2019, the key demand of the protestors had been the fall of the political system which places sectarianism at its heart and breeds a dynastic approach to politics in Lebanon. Saad Hariri's return to politics as the Prime Minister shows that the protests have not had a huge impact on the government as the politicians of Lebanon have managed to remain in power. There has been no meaningful change to the consociational system which fuels patronage networks and clientelism and further undermines the country's governance system.

### ***Corruption and Lack of Transparency***

A sectarian-based political system designed to keep the peace between the country's myriad sects and religions has over decades institutionalised the powers of warlords and political dynasties, while embedding a culture of cronyism and corruption.

As a backlash against the corruption of the Lebanese political system, the "You Stink" campaign was launched in 2015. Effectively, the rubbish crisis was centred around the way that the state was redesigned in post-war Lebanon. Since 1990, the ruling elite has often insisted that state institutions are weak and incapable of reconstructing the country. Along with seizing such institutions and turning them into major hubs for clientelist networks, the elites have simultaneously established and tolerated a non-public parallel state to provide major services. Consequently, the private utility service providers that are directly associated with the ruling elite have taken advantage of the shortage of public services such as household electricity and water, waste management, and reconstruction. The rubbish crisis is a clear example of how they have hollowed out state public institutions. Legally, elected municipal councils should be in charge of waste management. However, the government has used the funds allocated to the municipalities to pay the bills for these private service providers.

The destruction of the Port of Beirut on Aug. 4 which left more than 137 dead, more than 5000 injured while rendering 300,000, or 5% of residents homeless was caused by a large amount of

ammonium nitrate stored in Beirut since 2013 ("Beirut explosion: Before-and-after images", 2020)

The decision taken either by negligence or malfeasance to leave those materials in the proximity of the city and residential areas reflects that all of the officials and leaders are complicit in the destruction of Beirut. The reason that governance and oversight of the port were derailed was due to infighting among the country's political elite following the civil war. Essentially, each political alliance was invested in securing contracts for private companies that they backed, which led to the framework for the governance of the port that lacked clear oversight and opened the door for corruption.

Arkan El Seblani, the chief of UNDP's Anti-Corruption and Integrity Unit for the Arab States, said that corruption permeates the whole society and carries a huge cost. He said that "According to some estimates, the cost of corruption in Lebanon is equal to \$5 billion a year. So, putting that number in perspective, it is about nine percent of the country's GDP. And this is only the direct cost and does not include indirect costs, opportunity costs and also the social costs in terms of the health and well-being of citizens" (Schlein, 2020).

### ***Economic Crisis***

The decline of the economic infrastructure of Lebanon started with the civil war in 1975. To recover from the damage done by the war, which lasted fifteen years, Lebanon borrowed heavily from its domestic banks and incurred a huge debt.

The turbulent situation in Syria, owing to the civil war which had occurred after the Arab Spring movement, has led to nearly 1 million registered and thousands of non-registered Syrian refugees seeking employment in Lebanon and has had a severe impact on cross-border trade. All these factors combined have led to a decline in the economic growth from an average of 8% to 1-2% in 2011-17 ("Economy of Lebanon - Fanack.com", 2020). In October 2019 the country's economy plunged into a financial crisis brought on by a stop in capital inflows which affected the banking sector and the exchange rate. As a response to their lack of liquidity due to the stop of capital inflows, local banks imposed informal controls since late 2019 which resulted in the loss of savings of the Lebanese citizens.

The economic condition of the state only became worse after the Covid-19 lockdown. On March 7, 2020, the Government defaulted on the redemption of a US\$1.2 billion Eurobond,

marking Lebanon's first-ever sovereign default ("The World Bank in Lebanon: Overview", 2021).

It is estimated that between October 2019 and June 2020, the Lebanese currency lost 70% of its value ("Lebanon protests: Hundreds take to streets for the second night", 2020). This condition has only worsened due to the Beirut Blast on Aug 4, 2020. The economy is contracting by 25 percent in 2020 amid spiralling hyperinflation, throwing millions deeper into poverty as they lose their jobs and see their real incomes rapidly erode (Elghossain, 2020). The Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment done in the aftermath of the blast and Covid-19 lockdown, found that the damage from the explosion had a valuation of US\$3.8 to 4.6 billion, with losses to financial flows of US\$2.9 to US\$3.5 billion.

The Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment are done in the aftermath of the blast and the Covid-19 lockdown found that the damage from the explosion had a valuation of US\$3.8 to 4.6 billion, with losses to financial flows of US\$2.9 to US\$3.5 billion.

The economic crisis that has engulfed the county has resulted in a legitimacy crisis for the government. The political paralysis of the country coupled with the economic crisis was the reason behind the protests in 2019 where the people demanded complete overhaul of the current governance system in Lebanon.

## **Society in Lebanon**

### ***Women's Rights***

Lebanon maintains that personal status laws fall under the jurisdiction of religious rather than civil courts. Hence, 15 separate religion-based personal status laws, including but not limited to marriage, divorce, custody, alimony, or inheritance are regulated by sect-specific religious courts, which are highly discriminatory against women. A Human Rights Watch report on Lebanon's status laws reviewing more than 400 legal judgments issued by religious courts found "A clear pattern of women from all sects being treated worse than men when it comes to accessing divorce and primary care for their children ('custody') (Human Rights Watch, 2015)." This is because the religious laws do not grant them the same rights as men when it comes to inheritance or children custody or even the right to divorce in the Shia community.

Another gender-based discrimination that women face is under the nationality law as women cannot pass their citizenship to foreign spouses and any subsequent children (Decree No15 on Lebanese Nationality, 1925). This right is granted to only men. In 2014, Lebanon had passed legislation to protect women from domestic violence, but it did not criminalise marital rape. USAID's gender assessment in 2012 identified the structural constraints that are the foundation of discrimination and women's vulnerability, as rooted in laws and regulations, sectarian dynamics, socio-cultural values, decision-making structures, and public policies and development strategies ongoing conflict and security problems, and a rise in social conservatism (GENDER ASSESSMENT FOR USAID/LEBANON, 2012). Apart from the laws, women also face discrimination under court procedures due to high fees, lack of legal and material assistance during legal proceedings which keeps them from accessing religious courts and enforcing their rights.

Aya Majzoub, a Lebanon Researcher at the Human Rights Watch has said that "Another five years have passed, and Lebanon has done little to end discrimination against women and girls under its international obligations". Even though Lebanon has ratified international conventions that protect and promote women rights, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) other internationally recognized norms and standards on gender equality, such as the Beijing Platform of Action and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the prevalence of religious courts in the country hinder the effective implementation of these conventions. According to the 2020 Human Development Reports by the United Nations Development Programme, The Gender Inequality Index of Lebanon is 0.411 and the Gender Development Index is 0.892, while that of the world is 0.436 and 0.943 respectively (Human Development Reports, n.d.).

Hence, it is no surprise that the Protests in 2019 saw women at the frontlines of demonstrations, standing in the faces of soldiers and their tanks, and forming buffers between security forces and protestors to prevent outbreaks of violence (In Lebanon, the Revolution Is a Woman, 2019).

### ***Media Suppression***

Lebanon's media in the 21st century is expansive with radio stations, television channels, newspapers, and online publications. However, all the major outlets have affiliated themselves with a particular sect or a political viewpoint. . Lebanon ranks at 102 out of 180 countries in



the 2020 World Press Freedom Index, with the 180th country having the worst situation. Although Lebanon's constitution guarantees freedom of expression, the penal code criminalizes defamation against public officials with prison terms of up to one year. The penal code also authorizes sentences of up to two years for insulting the president and up to three years for insulting religious rituals. This limitation on freedom of expression has been misused by the state against the people in Lebanon to suppress them.

In August 2015, during the protests regarding the waste-disposal system in the country, at least eight journalists were physically assaulted by security in Beirut. The Anti-Cybercrime and Intellectual Property Rights Bureau (Cybercrimes Bureau) is the unit within the Internal Security Forces that specializes in combatting cybercrime and enhancing online security, investigated 341 cases in 2015 regarding defamation, libel, and slander (Majzoub, 2019). The number of defamation cases has only increased thereafter.

After the protests of 2019, the government and politicians have prosecuted several people for allegedly defaming them. There were 15,252 cases investigated by the Cybercrimes Bureau in 2019. "Instead of heeding the protesters' demands for accountability, those in power in Lebanon are bringing criminal charges against activists and journalists exposing corruption and peacefully expressing their opinions on social media," said Michael Page, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch (Lebanon: Spate of Free Speech Prosecutions, 2020). Since the protests, Lebanon's security and military agencies have summoned and interrogated dozens of individuals with an intent to intimidate them, in reaction to social media posts criticizing the authorities (Stop the Crackdown on Freedom of Expression in Lebanon, 2021). Research conducted by Amnesty International shows that there were 75 cases of individuals, including 20 journalists summoned for interrogation concerning charges against defamation.

Hence, the law on defamation is used as a tool by the authorities, religious groups, public officials, etc, to retaliate and repress the people in wake of protests in the country.

### ***Refugees***

In a country of around 4.5 million citizens, almost one in four people today is a refugee. Lebanon records the highest number of refugees per capita in the world, whereby its population size increased by 40% in less than five years after the start of the Syrian crisis.

According to a report the Syrian Civil War has a huge impact upon Lebanon (World Bank, 2015).

In 2011, the Syrian civil war spilled over into Lebanon, which caused incidents of sectarian violence and armed clashes between sects. In 2015, the number of registered Syrian refugees living in Lebanon was 1,846,150 even after excluding the numbers of unregistered refugees from Syria, Palestine, Iraq, etc. As of 2020, the number of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is 180,000. This inflow of refugees has placed a burden on the resources of Lebanon such as public services and infrastructure, including health, water, energy, education, and waste collection.

International donor aid has been insufficient: the \$1.87 billion Lebanon Crisis Response Plan, designed to address the country's refugee crisis, was only 62.8 percent funded in 2015 (Khawaja, 2016). Apart from a strain on Lebanon's resources, the conflict in Syria has influenced Lebanese politics, security, economy, and social conditions as well. A world bank team has prepared a report in 2013 which gives details of the impact of the Syrian Conflict in Lebanon (World Bank, 2013).

According to a 2019 joint assessment conducted by UNHCR, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the WFP, 73 percent of Syrian refugee households live below the poverty line and 55 percent live in extreme poverty. UNHCR provides monthly cash assistance of \$175 per month to 33,000 Syrian refugee households in Lebanon. According to a 2019 joint assessment conducted by UNHCR, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the WFP, 73 percent of Syrian refugee households live below the poverty line and 55 percent live in extreme poverty. UNHCR provides monthly cash assistance of \$175 per month to 33,000 Syrian refugee households in Lebanon.

### ***Health***

Lebanon is a party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which places a positive obligation for the government to take steps to ensure that everyone has the right to "the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health." These steps must be deliberate, concrete, and targeted toward the full realization of the right.

The Lebanese health care system is pluralistic, due to the public-private mix involved in the financing and provision of health services. Private hospitals account for 82 percent of Lebanon's healthcare capacity. Private hospitals are centred on hospital-based curative care. The influx of Syrian refugees in Lebanon placed a huge strain on the healthcare services. The delay in the management of the refugee crisis by the government only made the situation worse. as a result of this inaction, the international community got involved and hence, the UNHCR supports the Government in addressing existing gaps and plays a lead role in coordinating the response to the Syrian crisis with other UN agencies, NGO partners, donors, and local stakeholders. The country has more than 950 dispensaries, offering limited services, and primary healthcare (PHC) centres that provide a range of services of variable quality to address pitfalls in the public healthcare system.

The economic crisis in Lebanon has had a grave impact on healthcare services. Sleiman Haroun, the head of the Syndicate of Private Hospitals, told Human Rights Watch that the Finance Ministry has not paid private hospitals an estimated US\$1.3 billion in dues since 2011, compromising their ability to buy vital medicines and medical supplies and to pay staff salaries (Lebanon: Hospital Crisis Endangering Health, 2019). Public hospitals also have not been receiving payments from the government. On November 16 2019 private hospitals carried out an unprecedented "warning strike" to sound the alarm about the shortages they were facing and to urge government officials to pay their dues.

The non-payment of dues severely affected the healthcare sector during the pandemic in 2020. The state owes the governmental Rafik Hariri University Hospital, Lebanon's biggest Covid-19 treatment centre, around 20 billion Lebanese Pounds (US\$13.3 million) in unpaid bills for 2020. Furthermore, the government also owes over 120 private hospitals 2,500 billion Lebanese pounds (US \$1.6 billion), according to Sleiman Haroun ("Lebanon: Health Workers' Safety Neglected during Covid-19", 2020). There was also a blatant disregard for the protection of the healthcare workers as they were not provided with adequate quantities of personal protective equipment. In April, the World Bank allotted \$40 million to help Lebanon respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, including to protect healthcare workers but this money was not received by the hospitals. The state also failed to protect these workers from violent attacks by the patients and their families. Four out of the fifteen doctors and nurses interviewed said that patients or their families subjected them to verbal or physical abuse while they were doing their job, and others said that they knew healthcare workers who had suffered such abuse.

## ***Education***

Education is a recognised fundamental right. Under international law, all children in Lebanon have a right to compulsory primary education without any fees and should have access to secondary education without discrimination. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education regulates the education system in Lebanon. The private education sector is more dominant in Lebanon with an enrolment of 71 percent of Lebanese students in 2018. The primary reason for that is the low expenditure by the government in the public sector. The government spends 2.4% of the GDP on education.

In males, although the expected years of schooling is 11.5 years, the mean years of schooling are 8.9 years (Human Development Reports, n.d.). The numbers are even lower for females. The reason behind the low number of educational and income-generating opportunities for girls and women is the patriarchal system enforced by the customary laws prevalent in Lebanon. In 2010, the National Adult Education Program, with the help of the Lebanon Young Women's Christian Association, introduced literacy programs which have aided almost 800 women in Lebanon. There are other such programs which also focus on education for girls in Lebanon.

Education of the Syrian Refugees is another issue in Lebanon. Under international law, the Children of Syrian Refugees also have a right to education without discrimination. The 2019 UNHCR report states that even though there has been an increase in enrolment of non-Lebanese children in public education, 58% of Syrian refugee children in Lebanon remain out of school, and around 319,000 Syrian refugee children (48%) are out of any learning opportunity ("Education programme", 2019).

The 2016 report by the Human Rights Watch said that unless Lebanon undertakes reforms to improve access to education that go beyond the current framework of its current education policies and receives increased donor funding, Syrian children will be able to realize their right to education. The stark condition of the education system was worsened by the Covid-19 and the Beirut blast in 2020. At least, 163 public and private schools were damaged in the blast.

## ***Poverty***

55% of the population in Lebanon lives in poverty, with an estimated 23% in extreme poverty according to estimates as of May 2020. The percentage of the population ages 15 years and older that is employed is 44.1% (Human Development Reports, n.d.).

The impact of diminished economic activity from the port along with the economic strain of COVID-19 has left an estimated 300,000 people homeless and 70,000 jobless (Hatch, 2020). This has made the people vulnerable to the risk of transmission of COVID-19 during relocation and also the economic challenges faced by the population.

## Conclusion

Lebanon is a country which is on the brink of being a failed state. The economic and political crises in the country have increased a severe need for international aid that is dependent on structural reforms that Lebanon has time and again failed to implement. The result is that short-term humanitarian aid has been provided to the country while negotiations are underway. The international community is waiting to see whether or not the government of Lebanon will implement the necessary reforms before aid is provided.

## References

- The Lebanese Constitution (1926)
- Wood, J. (2011). In Lebanon, a More Patient Protest (Published 2011). Retrieved 10 January 2021, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/14/world/middleeast/14iht-m14-anti-sectarianism.html>
- Fakhoury, T. (2014). Do Power-Sharing Systems Behave Differently amid Regional Uprisings? Lebanon in the Arab Protest Wave. *The Middle East Journal*, 68(4), 506. doi: 10.3751/68.4.11, [www.jstor.org/stable/43698180](http://www.jstor.org/stable/43698180). Accessed 10 Jan. 2021.
- The unprecedented mass protests in Lebanon explained. (2020). Retrieved 15 January 2021, from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/11/lebanon-protests-explained/>
- Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project. (2020). (Rep.). Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project. doi:10.2307/resrep26625
- Beirut explosion: Before-and-after images. BBC News. (2020). Retrieved 9 January 2021, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-53680772>.
- Schlein, L. (2020). Corruption Threatens Beirut Revival. *Voice of America*. Retrieved 5 January 2021, from <https://www.voanews.com/middle-east/corruption-threatens-beirut-revival>.
- Economy of Lebanon - Fanack.com. Fanack.com. (2020). Retrieved 7 January 2021, from <https://fanack.com/lebanon/economy/>.

The World Bank in Lebanon: Overview. The World Bank. (2021). Retrieved 15 January 2021, from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lebanon/overview>.

Lebanon protests: Hundreds take to streets for second night. BBC News. (2020). Retrieved 5 January 2021, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-53031683>.

Elghossain, A. (2020). A special briefing on Lebanon one year after the October uprising, featuring Anthony Elghossain, Randa Slim, Alia Moubayed, and Joseph Haboush. [Blog]. Retrieved 7 January 2021, from <https://www.mei.edu/blog/special-briefing-lebanon-one-year-october-uprising>.

Human Rights Watch. (2015). Women's Rights under Lebanese Personal Status Laws. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/01/19/unequal-and-unprotected/womens-rights-under-lebanese-personal-status-laws>

Decree No15 on Lebanese Nationality (1925). Lebanon.

2012. GENDER ASSESSMENT FOR USAID/LEBANON. [online] Social Impact, Inc. Available at: [https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PA00K9W6.pdf](https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00K9W6.pdf) [Accessed 6 January 2021].

n.d. Human Development Reports. [online] United Nations Development Programme. Available at: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/LBN> [Accessed 1 January 2021].

WILPF. 2019. In Lebanon, The Revolution Is A Woman. [online] Available at: <https://www.wilpf.org/in-lebanon-the-revolution-is-a-woman/> [Accessed 9 January 2021].

Majzoub, A., 2019. The Criminalization Of Peaceful Speech In Lebanon. There Is a Price to Pay. [online] Human Rights Watch. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/11/15/there-price-pay/criminalization-peaceful-speech-lebanon> [Accessed 10 January 2021].

Human Rights Watch. 2020. Lebanon: Spate Of Free Speech Prosecutions. [online] Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/12/lebanon-spate-free-speech-prosecutions> [Accessed 9 January 2021]

Amnesty International. 2021. Stop The Crackdown On Freedom Of Expression In Lebanon. [online] Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/take-action/lebanon-freedom-of-expression/> [Accessed 10 January 2021].

2015. Lebanon: Promoting Poverty Reduction And Shared Prosperity. A Systematic Country Diagnostic. [online] World Bank. Available at: <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/698161468179049613/pdf/97498-CAS-P151430-SecM2015-0202-IFC-SecM2015-0073-MIGA-SecM2015-0047-Box391476B-OUO-9.pdf> [Accessed 11 January 2021].

Khawaja, B., 2016. Barriers To Education For Syrian Refugee Children In Lebanon. Growing Up Without an Education. [online] Human Rights Watch. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/07/19/growing-without-education/barriers-education-syrian-refugee-children-lebanon> [Accessed 10 January 2021].

World Bank, 2013. Lebanon: Economic and Social Impact Assessment Of The Syrian Conflict. [online] World Bank. Available at:

<<http://www.undp.org/content/dam/rbas/doc/SyriaResponse/Lebanon%20Economic%20and%20Social%20Impact%20Assessment%20of%20the%20Syrian%20Conflict.pdf>> [Accessed 12 January 2021].

Human Rights Watch. 2019. Lebanon: Hospital Crisis Endangering Health. [online] Available at: <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/12/10/lebanon-hospital-crisis-endangering-health>> [Accessed 11 January 2021].

Lebanon: Health Workers' Safety Neglected during Covid-19. (2020). Retrieved 11 January 2021, from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/12/10/lebanon-health-workers-safety-neglected-during-covid-19>

Education programme. (2019). Presentation.

Hatch, R. (2020). Understanding Lebanon's Deepening Education Crisis. Retrieved 13 January 2021, from <https://www.eccnetwork.net/learning/understanding-lebanons-deepening-education-crisis>

# Turkey

*Tanvi Asang Dani\**

## Introduction

When the Arab Spring protests started in the Middle Eastern countries in 2011, Turkey was seen as the “model” by many nations due to its success of marrying moderate Islam and democracy (*BTI 2020, Turkey, pg. 5*). But since 2011, several factors have led to the reforms taken by the AKP being nullified by the increasingly authoritative and repressive role adopted by the ruling party and current President Erdogan.

In initial analysis, it is perhaps imperative to note the current system of governance that Turkey follows. The Turkish state follows a Presidential system, which it adopted post the 2017 constitutional referendum. The President is the head of the government and is elected for a 5-year term through universal suffrage. Turkey has a unicameral legislation, called the Grand National Assembly. In accordance with the constitutional reforms, the President was bestowed the authority to appoint his cabinet and the vice president. Furthermore, the military’s influence was negatively impacted through these reforms. Turkey has faced numerous military coups since the 1960s, and the new constitution puts the military under civil scrutiny of the State Supervisory Council.

The Justice and Development Party, *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* shortly called the AKP which was founded in 2001 has been a major player in domestic Turkish politics since the past 10 years. It has won six legislative elections since its formation in 2001 by Recep Tayyip Erdogan: those of 2002, 2007, 2011, June 2015, November 2015 and 2018. In the 2011 general elections, the AKP won a majority of 49.90% of the votes. This election was also the first time a party had won three consecutive elections since the adoption of a multiparty system in 1946 (*Brookings Institute- Turkey- the new model, 2012*). At the time, the AKP portrayed itself as a moderate and pro-Western party although the party had Islamic roots. But the AKP’s win in 2011 was motivated by the impressive economic performance in the healthcare and housing

---

\* *Tanvi Asang Dani is a student at the Jindal School of International Affairs and was Research Assistant at the Centre for Middle East Studies*



sector along with political stability, instead of ideological factors (*Brookings Institute- Turkey- the new model, 2012*). During the 2001 elections, the long-time founder and leader of the AKP Erdogan assumed leadership.

The first challenge to the relative peace that Turkey witnessed during 2011, came in 2013 with the Gezi Park, where the opponents of the AKP poured onto the streets to protest the ‘aggressive and dominant political style’ poured into the streets to protest the regime (Yilmaz and Bashiro, 2018). The AKP government conducted a heavy crackdown on the protestors and 8 people lost their lives in this crackdown. The BTI 2020 report of Turkey has noted, “Since the 2013 Gezi protests, the government has pursued a successful securitization policy and labelled any form of opposition an attempt to destroy the Turkish Republic’s achievements” (*BTI 2020, Turkey, pg. 32*). Osman Kavala, chairman of the Anadolu Kültür Foundation was arrested in 2017 for allegedly being responsible for the organization of the Gezi Park protests (*European Commission, Turkey 2020 Report*).

In August 2014, Erdogan had acquired the position of the President, succeeding Ahmet Davutoglu, and had transformed this symbolic position into the real seat of power in the government after a change in the electoral law (*Freedom House Report, 2020*). Since 2014, the major political event which altered the position and attitude of the Turkish government was the failed coup of 2016. The coup saw massive protests on the streets of Istanbul and Ankara which left 25 people dead (*Turkey Country Profile, July 2018*). Following the failed coup, the government cracked down heavily on supposed supporters of the Gulen movement. Subsequently, thousands of soldiers, judges, teachers, and civil servants were detained on the suspicion of involvement in the coup attempt, which President Erdogan claimed was inspired by Fetullah Gulen, his exiled opponent (*Turkey Country Profile, July 2018*). A state of Emergency was imposed on the country starting from July 2016 which lasted until July 2018.

In 2017, a referendum was held in the country to approve the constitutional amendments proposed by Erdogan, which included changing the Turkish parliamentary system into a Presidential one, after the AKP had failed to gain consensus even after gaining a majority in the parliament post the 2015 elections. The AKP won the referendum by a small margin by attaining 51% Yes votes (*Yilmaz & Bashirov, 2018*). In the elections conducted in June the following year, President Erdogan was able to transform the country into a presidential system, thus gaining control over all the executive functions such as the power to issue decrees, appoint his cabinet, form the budget, dissolve parliament early, and fill the courts with his appointees.

All powers of the Prime Minister and his cabinet were also abolished and transferred directly to the President, who is elected for a five-year term (*World Population Review- Turkey*). This election was concluded during the emergency, after which the emergency was annulled in July 2018.

Following the 2018 win, Erdogan suffered a major setback as the AKP candidates lost the mayoral elections in Istanbul and Ankara, as the CHP won by a comfortable margin. Despite the elections being conducted a second time as requested by Erdogan, the CHP emerged victorious again. Nevertheless, a range of constitutional amendments was also implemented after the parliamentary and presidential elections in November 2019, which bestow the right of dissolving parliament and calling for new elections to the president (*Fanack, Governance and Politics, July 2020*). Other significant constitutional reforms will be discussed in a later section.

## **Repression Under the AKP Rule Since the 2016 Coup.**

### ***Civil Liberties and Arbitrary Arrests/ Detention***

As mentioned earlier, the condition of human and fundamental rights has deteriorated during the Emergency imposed in the country. Since 2016, the government has shown disdain for civil liberties and has become more authoritarian. The glaring evidence of this is apparent in the terrorism charges levelled by Erdogan against his opponents, especially from the pro-Kurdish HDP. a constitutional amendment in 2016 removed parliamentary immunity and many of HDP's leaders have been jailed on terrorism charges since then. For instance, in September 2018, the HDP's presidential candidate Demirtaş was sentenced to 4 years and 8 months in prison for a speech he made in 2013 praising the PKK in context of the peace negotiations (*Freedom House Report, 2020*).

### ***Increased Executive Control***

In this period, the control over the military and judiciary was increased considerably and the constitutionally guaranteed fundamental and human rights have been undermined seriously. During the period of the Emergency, the Council of Ministers issued more than 30 decrees through which civil liberties were restricted and the police and prosecutors were given additional powers for investigations and prosecutions. Additionally, the executive power has been concentrated heavily into the president's hands post the 2017 reforms and he possesses

the authority to appoint and remove vice-presidents, has enhanced veto over the legislation, and power to issue discretionary Emergency powers (*BTI 2020, Turkey*).

### ***Condition of The Opposition Parties***

The opposition parties were unable to form a coalition government after the 2015 assembly elections in June and this enabled the AKP to receive 50% of the votes in November elections. The AKP also played “politics of fear” as the PKK attacks increased in 2015 post the ceasefire breakdown. Furthermore, the 2017 constitutional referendum was conducted at an unprecedented level of fear and restrictions against the opposition forces who campaigned for a “No” vote. The OSCE reported that ‘Lack of equal opportunities, one-sided media coverage and limitations on fundamental freedoms created [an] unlevel playing field in Turkey’s constitutional referendum’ (*Yilmaz & Bashirov, 2018*). Transparency International’s report has claimed that some opposition parties have been dissolved on the grounds of state security while some smaller opposition parties are provided with limited state aid (*Transparency International*). Despite the heavy restrictions against opposition parties, recently the CHP managed to win the mayoral elections of 2019 in Istanbul and Ankara. The opposition parties control nine of Turkey’s ten largest urban areas (*Freedom House Report, 2020*).

Apart from Selahettin Demirtaş, Canan Kaftancıoğlu, the Istanbul chair of the opposition CHP was convicted in September 2019 on charges of spreading terrorist propaganda and insulting the President. Philanthropist Osman Kavala remained in prison in 2019 December on the charges of attempting to overthrow the government during a 2013 protest, despite the ruling by the European Court of Human Rights calling for his release (*Freedom House Report, 2020*). Owing to these infractions, Turkey received a score of 16/20 for civil liberties in the Freedom House Index 2020.

### ***Media Repression***

Turkey ranks 154 in the 202 World Press Freedom Index. The state of media independence and effectiveness has become worrisome post the failed coup of 2016. According to the freedom house report, more than 150 media outlets were closed in the months following the attempted coup on suspicion of links with the Gulen movement. Furthermore, dozens of journalists were detained on the same suspicion. According to the 2020 RSF report, the notorious Article 299 of Turkey’s criminal court is routinely invoked in suspending journalist licenses and handing out prison sentences and fines. According to this “lèse-majesté” legislation, insulting the

president is a punishable offence. The latest example is of freelance journalist Mustafa Hoş and P24 website columnist Ahmet Sever, both of whom wrote books entitled, “The Big Boss” and “I had to speak out”, which recount Erdogan’s political past (*RSF, October 2020*). Broadcast and print media remain dominated by pro-government outlets like Hurriyat, and the state-sponsored outlet TRT, and ATV. Hurriyat and Posta newspapers and CNN Turk and Kanan D TVs are owned by government-friendly media group Demiroren (*Turkey Country Profile, July 2018*).

Media coverage during the elections is reportedly biased towards the ruling AKP government. During the election campaign preceding the 2017 constitutional referendum, it was found that the media coverage of the AKP “yes” campaign was 70% of all airtime. Additionally, it was found that the main opposition party appeared for about 3000 minutes while the AKP appeared for nearly 120,000 minutes. The HDP did not receive any airtime (*SGI 2018, Turkey*). The state-owned TRT media and the Hurriyat newspapers favoured the AKP in the 2018 election campaigns as well. Although some independent newspapers and media sources continue to operate, they face high political pressure and are targeted for prosecution. The Freedom House report of 2020 allocated 1 out of 4 points for free and independent media in Turkey.

Because of the immense number of restrictions on the mainstream media, political dissent is directed through social media platforms. Facebook is the most popular platform followed by Instagram and YouTube while Twitter is widely used for political debate (*Turkey, Country Profile, 2018*). For greater control and monitoring over social media users, In July 2020, the Parliament adopted a law on the ‘Arrangement of Internet Publication and Combating Crimes Committed through These Publications’, following whose obligations will result in users paying fines and having their bandwidth restricted. Furthermore, the Internet Law is routinely used to block, and censor online content based on a wide range of grounds, including the ban on Wikipedia which lasted until December 2019 (*European Commission, Turkey 2020 Report*).

### ***State of the Judicial System***

Similar to the media, the independent judiciary has come under threat post the 2016 constitutional reforms. Under the new presidential system adopted in June 2018, the President acquired the authority to directly appoint 12 out of 15 judges of the Constitutional Court and 6 out of 13 members of the Board of Judges and Prosecutors which is responsible for the appointment, transfer and evaluation of performances and promotions of judges and

prosecutors (*BTI 2020, Turkey*). Post the coup in 2016, more than 4200 judges were removed (Reuters Staff, 2017). Nevertheless, the judiciary has ruled against the government in some cases which include the case where academics had called for an end to state violence in Kurdish areas in 2016. Regardless, the Freedom House 2020 report has prescribed 1 out of 4 points for an independent judiciary, while the WJP Rule of Law index of 2020 gives Turkey 0.43 points out of 100, which places it at the 107th position out of 128 countries evaluated. Turkey also ranked 104th out of 141 countries concerning judicial independence in the World Economic Forum's 2019 Global Competitiveness Report (*European Commission, Turkey 2020 Report*).

### ***Corruption and Lack Of Transparency.***

As of 2020, corruption remains a widespread issue of concern. The most significant corruption scandal was unearthed in 2013 and Erdogan, his family and other high-ranked officials were found to be linked with it. Since then, the corruption charges against them have not been investigated properly as the police and judicial officers faced threats and harassment from the government (*BTI 2020, Turkey*). Although the AKP adopted an anti-corruption stand in the early years of its power, these allegations have resulted in backsliding of the tough measures adopted by them to combat corruption. Furthermore, there is a lack of an independent anti-corruption body. Additionally, due to the lack of strong institutional frameworks, corruption cases are often scrutinized under political influence. Hence, the European Commission has stated that "Turkey has failed to implement the majority of measures envisaged in the transparency and anti-corruption action plan announced in 2016. Turkey has also failed to implement the United Nations' anti-corruption convention" (*BTI 2020, Turkey*). According to the WJP Rule of Law index, Turkey secures 0.47 as its score and sits at the 60th spot in the list for the absence of corruption.

## **Society and Turkey**

### ***Gender***

#### **Condition of Women in Turkey**

Equality between men and women is enshrined in the legislative and institutional framework of Turkey. However, because of gaps in implementation, lack of coordination between institutions and lack of awareness and commitment of law enforcement officials on addressing gender-based violence, gender disparity and violence against women remains a serious

concern. Furthermore, there is a lack of political commitment to address gender-based issues and a reluctance to use the term 'gender equality' in official documents (*European Commission, Turkey 2020 Report*). Even though Turkey has ratified both the Istanbul Convention (The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1985, opposition has been growing to these two conventions on the pretext of them allegedly contradicting 'Turkish family values.' While the AKP's rhetoric does not generally serve women, some opposition parties, notably the HDP work on the expansion of women's and minorities' rights (*Freedom House Report, 2020*).

Overall, gender inequality has slightly declined. According to the UN Human Development Reports 2019, Turkey has reduced gender inequality from 0.419 in 2010 to 0.305 in 2019 and has secured the 66th rank in the world. Similarly, Turkey has a high Gender Development Index of 0.924. Nevertheless, women's labour force participation has remained very low. This is because of an increase in conservative rhetoric which emphasizes motherhood instead of gender equality and policies that incentivize marriages and childbirth which include mandatory paid maternity leave for 112 days. (*BTI 2020, Turkey*). Women labour force participation stands at 33.5% from 2015 to 2019. Additionally, the average unemployment rate for women is 16.8%, which has persistently remained higher than that of men (12.7%), according to the UN human development report. While there has been an increase in the absolute number of women in the labour force, the employment rate for women has decreased in 2020 from 32.9% to 32.2% (*European Commission, Turkey 2020 Report*). Female share of employment in senior or managerial positions between 2010-2018 is 16.3%. Nevertheless, Turkey has a high mortality rate of 16 per 100000 live births each year. The total fertility rate is 2.2 while the adolescent fertility rate (births per 1000 women aged 15-19) is 26.6% (*UN Human Development Index*).

To counter all these problems regarding women's development and safety, Turkey's most recent national action plan on gender equality was published for 2008-2013 but is yet to be renewed. Instead of that, a women's empowerment strategy document covering 2018-2023 was issued by the government. Furthermore, the national action plan on combating violence against women (2016-2020) remains (*BTI 2020, Turkey*). Additionally, services for women survivors of violence are limited and as of December 2019, there were only 146 women's shelters in the country. As mentioned earlier, the conservative stance taken against the Istanbul and CEDAW convention is adopted by state organizations like the Human Rights and Equality Authority of

Turkey. Furthermore, the state has consulted pro-government and other conservative organizations instead of independent women's rights organizations for drafting policies and laws regarding women's issues (*BTI 2020, Turkey*). Women's representation in the parliament also remained low at 17.4% while the percentage of women in public service was 38.4% in 2019 (*UN Human Development Index*). Representation of women at the local level is also low as only 6.6% metropolitan mayors, and 3.7% of all local representatives of the central government are women (*European Commission, Turkey 2020 Report*).

### **LGBTQ Rights**

Turkey's conduct towards the LGBTQI+ raises serious concerns among the international community. The freedom of expression and assembly for LGBTQ and other minority groups continue to be heavily censored. The military disciplinary system and the medical system define homosexuality as a 'psychosexual illness/disorder' while the law on disciplinary provisions for the security forces stipulates the dismissal for all security personnel for 'abnormal/pervert' actions. Additionally, smear campaigns and hate speech against the community by pro-government media and high-ranking government officials and ministries like the President of the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), the Human Rights and Equality Institution of Turkey and the Ombudsman Institution and the chair of the Red Crescent Society of Turkey is quite common and reflect the attitude of the government towards LGBTQ people. Although the blanket ban on all LGBTQ events in Ankara was lifted in April 2019, individual events are regularly banned by the authorities. Blanket bans were issued by the Izmir, Antalya and 38 Mersin governorates in June 2019 to prevent Pride week events taking place. The Istanbul Pride march was banned for the fifth year in a row without credible justification (*European Commission, Turkey 2020 Report*).

Although they remain politically under-represented throughout the nation, Sedef Cakmak of the CHP was the first openly LGBT+ candidate to take part in a city council race; she won her seat in Beşiktaş, a district of Istanbul, in 2014; while the first openly gay parliamentary candidate was backed by the HDP in the 2015 general elections, but did not win a seat (*Freedom House Report, 2020*). According to the Freedom House Report, although same-sex relations are not legally prohibited, LGBT+ people are subject to widespread discrimination, police harassment, and occasional violence. Furthermore, there is no legislation to protect people from discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.

## ***Education***

Turkey scores 0.712 on the UN Education Index as of December 2019 (*The World Bank, World Development Indicators 2019*). The overall percentage of the population has some level of secondary education according to the UNDP data of 2019 is 44.3% female and 66% men. This hints to a disproportionate number of women in higher education. The gross enrolment ratio of females to males in secondary education for the period of 2013-2018 was 0.98. Nevertheless, the average percentage of the population with secondary education in the period of 2010-2018 in Turkey was 53.1%. The expenditure on education in Turkey during 2013-2018 has been recorded as 4.3% of its overall GDP. The pupils per teacher ratio in Turkey for the period of 2013-2018 was 18 (*UN Human Development Index*). Additionally, the PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) can be used to assess the performance of Turkish students. As of recent statistics available from 2015, Turkish students score 420, 428 and 425 in Mathematics, Reading and Science respectively, putting Turkey in the 43rd, 40th and 41st position respectively with the other nations researched. Still, the OECD claims that “Turkey has a higher than average proportion of under-performing students” (*BTI 2020, Turkey*). According to an EU commission report of 2018, the enrolment rate in the academic year 2016/17 was 91% for primary, 96% for lower secondary and 83% for upper secondary education. Furthermore, 34% of students leave school early according to the same report.

## **Research and Development**

The Turkish government has set a target for 1.8% of its GDP as R&D expenditure. Although R&D expenditure has increased from 0.86% of GDP in 2014 to 1.03% in 2018, it is still below the target set for 2023 as well as the European average expenditure (*European Commission, Turkey 2020 Report*). On a positive note, Turkey joined the EU’s Erasmus Programme and is also involved in the EU’s Horizon 2020 program. But the research capacity of Turkey is limited due to the low number of researchers, currently only 1/3rd of the European average (*BTI 2020, Turkey*). Nevertheless, Turkey continues to score high in the Intellectual property filings despite having a low 49th rank in the Global Innovation Index. Nevertheless, within its national employment strategy and action plan of 2017-2019, “Turkey has taken some steps to align the education system with the requirements of the labour market, such as the Initial Vocational and Technical Education E-Graduate Tracking System and various active labour market programmes” (*European Commission, Turkey 2020 Report*).



According to the EU Commission report, Turkey is at an advanced stage of implementing the Bologna process. Furthermore, the Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC) has become the national authority mandated to independently evaluate Turkish Higher education institutions after its reorganization. The THEQC also became a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) in April 2020. The process for the implementation of a national vocational qualifications system by the Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA) is underway and it will also be responsible to implement the Turkish Qualifications Framework (QTF) (*European Commission, Turkey 2020*).

However, the 2016 coup and its aftermath have drastically reduced the number of academics, professors, and teachers in Turkey due to the extensive censorship and prosecution against all civil officials including teachers and university professors. According to the European Commission report (2020), thousands of educators from schools and universities were dismissed. Some schools and universities were closed altogether. This, coupled with thousands of professors, researchers, and PhD students, have emigrated under the state of emergency. The Turkish Institute of Statistics claims that about 113,000 highly-educated people emigrated in the year 2018, a sharp increase from the 69,000 people who emigrated in 2017. This massive brain drain is a cause of concern for the future of the Turkish education system due to the lack of skilled teachers and professors.

### **Inequality in Education**

The state of education in Turkey is a victim of inequality based on ethnic and religious identities. The ban on the official and unofficial use of Kurdish language extended in the field of education as well. Additionally, many Kurdish language schools have been shut down by the government since 2015 (*Freedom House Report, 2020*). While optional courses in public state schools in Kurdish, as well as university courses in Arabic, Syriac and Zaza remain, mother-tongue education in primary and secondary schooling remains restricted (*European Commission, Turkey 2020 Report*). Apart from Kurds, many minority communities like the Roma and persons with disabilities face difficulties in accessing education in Turkey. According to the European Commission report, “Many young Roma children received fake mental disability reports and attended "special education centres" for slow learners, hampering their prospects of proper education and future employment.” The Ministry of National Education conducts programmes to promote inclusive education and in-service training for

schoolteachers of children with special needs, however, school participation of children with disabilities remains low (*European Commission, Turkey 2020 Report*).

### **Islamization In Education**

The most radical shift in the formerly secular educational system of Turkey has been the increase in the number of religious schools known as *Imam Hatap* which preach Sunni religious values in schools during the AKP's rule. Furthermore, the Turkish public education curriculum includes compulsory religious education courses. Apart from this, evolution theory has been removed from the high school syllabus. Additionally, the number of mosques exceeded the number of schools in Turkey (90,000 mosques in 2018, 65,568 schools in 2018) (*BTI 2020, Turkey*).

### **Poverty**

According to the World Bank database on poverty, the total percentage of the population in poverty (Poverty Headcount Ratio) in Turkey has reduced from 16.3% in 2011 to a low of 13.5% in 2016. But it increased significantly from 2016 to 2018 (14.4%). In contrast, the GINI Index of Turkey increased from 40 in 2011 to 42.9 in 2015, decreasing to 41.9 in 2018.

### **Human Rights**

The condition of human rights in the country has been seriously deteriorating since the failed coup of July 2016. The Anti-Terror law has been widely misused after 2016, with the Ministry of Justice reporting that, as of July 2019, 69,259 people were on trial and 155,560 were under criminal investigation on terrorism charges linked to the Gulen movement. Out of these, 29,487 were held in prison either on remand or following a conviction. Furthermore, around 8,500 people, including elected politicians and journalists remain in prison on remand or following conviction for alleged links with the PKK, a designated terrorist organization (*HRC Report, Turkey 2020*).

The corruption scandal of 2013 led to the reassignment of 784 judicial and 104 administrative judges and prosecutors linked to the investigation. Similarly, after the coup attempt, the High Council of Judges and Prosecutors issued a list of 2,745 judges and prosecutors for suspension because of alleged association with the Gulen movement. Likewise, on 27 July 2016, the Ministry of Interior had announced that 1,684 judges and prosecutors had been jailed (*HRC Report, Turkey 2016*). Apart from judges and journalists' civil liberty restrictions, human rights

defenders themselves have been prosecuted and in some cases, even killed. Businessman and civic leader Osman Kavala remains in pretrial detention since November 2015 along with 15 others who were charged for organizing and financing the 2013 Gezi Park protests. The trial of nine human rights defenders, which includes Amnesty International Turkey honorary chair Taner Kılıç, who spent over a year in detention, and former director İdil Eser continues till date (*HRC Report, Turkey 2020*).

## **Conclusion**

As outlined in this brief, when the Arab Spring protests emerged in its neighbourhood, Turkey was seen as a model for Islamic country achieving impressive economic performance, democratic governance and adopting a moderate version of Islam. Despite this admiration, Turkey itself has slid into authoritarianism and increased incline towards aggressive Islamization and a move away from its Kemalist secularist outlook. This trend of Islamization is visible in the overhaul of education system as highlighted in the brief. Since the attempted coup in 2016, the government has cracked down heavily on opposition and critics, in the administrative apparatus, judiciary, universities and civil society. Moreover, Turkey's Human Rights record has deteriorated every year since 2011. Furthermore, while the poverty headcount ratio decreased from 16.3% in 2011 to 14.4% in 2018 (the most recent figure available), the pandemic could destabilize the economy and lead to increased dissatisfaction.

## **References**

2019 UN Human Development Index. United Nations Development Program, Human Development Reports. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/2019-human-development-index-ranking>

Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2020 Country Report- Turkey. Gutersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020. <https://www.bti-project.org>

European Commission Staff Working Report. Turkey 2020 Report. Brussels. 6 October 2020. [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/turkey\\_report\\_2020.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/turkey_report_2020.pdf) World Population Review- Turkey Government. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/governments/turkey>

Freedom House Index 2020- Turkey. Sara Repucci. 2020. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/turkey/freedom-world/2020>

Human Rights Watch. Turkey judges and prosecutors unfairly jailed. 2016.  
[www.hrw.org/news/2016/08/05/turkey-judges-prosecutors-unfairly-jailed](http://www.hrw.org/news/2016/08/05/turkey-judges-prosecutors-unfairly-jailed)

Human Rights Watch. World Report 2020. Turkey- Events of 2019.  
<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/turkey>

Ihsan Yilmaz & Galib Bashirov (2018) The AKP after 15 years: emergence of Erdoganism in Turkey, *Third World Quarterly*, 39:9, 1812-1830, DOI: 10.1080/01436597.2018.1447371.  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01436597.2018.1447371>

PISA 2018 Results. [https://www.oecd.org/pisa/PISA-results\\_ENGLISH.png](https://www.oecd.org/pisa/PISA-results_ENGLISH.png)

Reuters Staff. 2017 Turkey has removed more than 4,000 judges, prosecutors after coup, minister says. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-idUSKBN18M0Q9>

RSF, October 2020. <https://rsf.org/en/news/rsf-condemns-abuse-turkeys-lese-majeste-legislation>

SGI 2018, Turkey. [https://www.sgi-network.org/docs/2018/country/SGI2018\\_Turkey.pdf](https://www.sgi-network.org/docs/2018/country/SGI2018_Turkey.pdf).

The World Bank data- Turkey. <https://data.worldbank.org/country/turkey?view=chart>

Transparency International- Fighting corruption in the Western Balkans and Turkey. <https://www.transparency.org/en/publications/fighting-corruption-in-the-western-balkans-and-turkey-priorities-for-reform>

Turkey- Governance and Politics. Fanack. <https://fanack.com/turkey/governance-and-politics-turkey/>

Turkey- the new model Ömer Taşpınar. April 25, 2012. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/turkey-the-new-model/>

Turkey- the new model. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17988453>. July 2018.

WJP Rule of Law Index 2020- Turkey. <https://worldjusticeproject.org/our-work/research-and-data/wjp-rule-law-index-2020>

# Jordan

*Pradeek Krishna\**

## Introduction

Jordan boasts of the largest female literacy rate in all of the Middle Eastern Region but the literacy rate does not necessarily depict the state of women and the gender gap in the country. The country's patriarchal family structure and discriminatory legal framework inevitably result in women getting a lower position in society with respect to men. Women's participation in the social, economic, and political spheres is also vastly limited. In recent times, the government has introduced several initiatives and has outlined its intentions to attempt to close the gender gap. The following sections of this essay will look into the legal framework of the country, the initiatives announced by the government, and the social problems faced by the women in Jordan.

Jordanian legal system is based on the Islamic Shari's law and the French Civil Code. The legal system has also been subject to influence by tribal traditions (UNICEF, 2009). Sharia courts hold jurisdiction over matters related to inheritance, marriage, and divorce. For the citizens belonging to minority religions, communities' own religious standards are applied in personal statues related matters. This implies that there is no uniform civil code in Jordan. Additionally, there is a clear discrepancy between the perception of a woman in civil courts and Shari'a courts. In the civil courts, the testimony of a woman is equal to that of a man, while in Shari'a courts, the testimony of two women is equal to that of a man. (Husseini, 2010).

The Jordanian constitution which has been in power since 1952 guarantees equality before the law for all Jordanians and many constitutional provisions affirm basic rights and political representation for all. Article 22 of the constitution states that each Jordanian has an equal opportunity to be appointed to and serve in public offices and that these appointments would be made based on merit and qualifications (World Bank, 2005). However, Jordan was fairly late to grant suffrage to women and women did not receive the right to vote until 1974.

---

*\* Pradeek Krishna is a student at the Jindal School of International Affairs and Research Assistant at the Centre for Middle East Studies*

However, in a bid to increase women's political participation, Jordan has issued quota legislation through amendments to electoral law (UNDP Human Development Report, 2008). In 2003, women were entitled to 6 seats in the national parliament. In the 2010 elections, the number of seats was increased from 6 to 12. However, despite the existence of reservations, the representation of women in Jordan's parliament remains limited. In the recent parliament, women have not been able to win one seat outside the number of seats reserved for them.

In the legal system, there are 40 female judges in the civil court system of Jordan however not a single female judge is employed in the Shari'a courts (Freedom House, 2010).

With regards to nationality, Jordanian women cannot pass citizenship to non-Jordanian spouses and their children, contrary to the Jordanian men who can transfer citizenship to a foreign spouse (Freedom House, 2010). Moreover, there are severe differences in divorce rights as well. A woman filing for divorce has to provide valid reasons for seeking a divorce, while no such rule exists for men. Recently, an amended personal status law of 2010 broadens the reasons for which women can file a divorce but the discriminatory law remains in power (UNICEF Jordan, 2011). On this issue of guardianship and custody rights, the father is the legal guardian of his children and is responsible for their support. The mother can be granted custody in the event of a divorce, but the father remains the legal guardian (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2010). Jordan's male guardianship system is the centre of a web of discriminatory provisions. The system grants men the power to control women's lives and limit their personal freedoms. Further, Jordan still allows the detention of women if they disobey their male guardians or have relationships deemed inappropriate (Amnesty International, 2019).

Differences could be observed even in the case of laws regarding inheritance. Jordanian women have the right to inheritance according to Islamic law, but generally, women's share and men's share are highly dissimilar with women's share being considerably less. In Jordan, Islamic inheritance law applies even to non-Muslims (Freedom House, 2010). In 2009, the Jordanian government withdrew reservation to CEDAW Article 15, which grants men and women the same rights relating to the movement of persons and the freedom to choose their residence and domicile (United Nations Treaty Collection). The 2003 passport law allows women to obtain a passport without the permission of a male guardian (Freedom House, 2010). Jordan offers little protection for women against child marriages. The minimum age for marriage for both girls and boys is 18, however, exceptions can be made if the girl is over 15 years of age

(Freedom house, 2010). 10 percent of young women aged 20-24 were married before the age of 18 and among the women from the poorest households in Jordan, 17 percent were married before the age of 18 (DHS, 2007).

Concerns have been raised over Jordan's reduced penalties for honor crimes and punishment for rapes. Following this, Jordan responded by stating that the practice to treat honor killings the same way as other violent crimes have been put into effect. A specialized tribunal was set up by the Ministry of Justice in 2009 to hear such cases which ensure stricter sentences for honor killings (Freedom House, 2010). However, the Jordanian Penal Code allows the possibility of a perpetrator of rape escaping punishment by marrying the victim under certain circumstances which offer less protection for women against rapes. Additionally, marital rape is not illegal in Jordan (US Department of State, 2010).

Women's participation in the economic field is a notable case study in Jordan. Jordan's constitution provides for mandatory primary education of all the citizens including all men and women. Jordan has a highly educated female population with a huge potential to advance Jordan's development. Jordan has a 97% female literacy rate which is an impressive statistic in the Middle East Region. The primary school enrolment ratio is 90 percent for girls while in secondary school, the net enrolment ratio for girls is 83 percent (UNESCO, 2011). However, when it comes to employing women, Jordan lacks severely. Women's economic participation in Jordan is considerably low. The labour force participation rate among women aged 15 or above is only 23 percent, while the corresponding rate for men is 74 percent (United Nations 2010). Several regulations limit women's participation in the labour market.

Women are prohibited from working during the night between 1900 hours to 0600 hours and some jobs may be prohibited for them (European Training Foundation, 2009). Pre-school care is costly and domestic helpers are expensive, which makes women feel that it is more economically viable to stay at home (World Bank 2014). The constitution provides the basic right to work to all citizens, but despite this, disparities exist between constitutional provisions and actual reality due to Jordan's highly conservative society. Legal provisions such as maternal leaves and day-care are not followed and, in several cases, these provisions discourage employers from employing women (Sonobol, 2003).

Jordan has made several strides towards gender equality and empowerment of women in the past few years. From 2004 to 2009, the women's movement made several gains including the formation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

(CEDAW) in the official gazette (United Nations, 2017). The government has also made positive steps to address the issue of domestic abuse. This includes the opening of a major women's shelter, the Family Reconciliation House, and the amendment of the Family Protection Law which was designed to regulate the handling of domestic violence cases by medical workers and law enforcement bodies (Manjoo, 2012).

Women have continued to be politically active over recent years and have held several high-level government positions, including appointments as ministers and lawmakers (Husseini, 2010). Women's groups got a huge boost in their activities when legal restrictions on freedom of assembly and association were removed through an amendment to the Public Gathering Law which allows groups to hold internal meetings without prior approval (Human Rights Watch, 2010).

The Jordanian government has outlined several intentions to close the gender equality gap by 2030 through a plethora of actions including intensifying efforts to align national legislation with the Kingdom's international commitments. Jordan plans to expand the scope of economic, social, cultural, and political support to women and girls. The government plans to address social norms and stereotypes which result in gender-based discrimination (UN Women). The Kingdom also plans to empower the Jordan National Commission for Women (JNCW) in a bid to carry out its mandate. The JNCW will also support and facilitate the work of organizations offering protection and social and legal empowerment to women (Jordan Times, 2015).

The women of Jordan have benefitted from the investments of the government in its human resources. The government has spent more than 10 percent of its GDP on health and education and the quality of life among women has improved due to this (World Bank, 2013). Jordan has been making significant strides in the health sector. Jordan is categorized as making progress towards improving maternal health according to the Maternal Mortality Estimation Interagency Group (UNICEF, 2009). Further, Jordan also has to address the issue of early childbearing. 4 percent of young women aged 20-24 had their first birth before they reached the age of 18. The adolescent birth rate is 32 births per 1,000 girls aged 15-19.

Jordan has made efforts to close the gender gap in the education sector, and a high female literacy rate acts as evidence that they have been fairly successful at doing so. However, the high literacy rates have failed to translate into high participation of women in the economic and political sectors, which has slowed women's empowerment. The Jordanian government has worked constantly to bring in reforms however these reforms have been considerably slow



due to limitations in the legal framework which grant a lower position to the women with respect to the men. Especially in matters related to family rights, women have considerably fewer provisions than men. The discriminatory legal framework further makes the task of closing the gender gap in Jordan more difficult.

Further, the nationality law which dictates that Jordanian women cannot pass their citizenship to non-Jordanian spouses and their children creates further obstacles, especially for such children, who have to pay fees to attend government schools, which is free for the citizens (Husseini, 2010).

Another challenge remains in the issue of fighting crimes against women. The issue of honour killings is still prevalent in Jordan. Article 98 of the Jordanian constitution prescribes a sentence of 3 months to 2 years in prison for honour killings and there are an estimated 20 such murders each year. Despite the establishment of a special tribunal to hear such cases, such cases still prevail. Sentences in such cases can also be reduced if the victim's family decides to drop the charges, which often happens when the victim and the perpetrator belong to the same family (Ref World, 2010). Article 308 of the Jordanian penal code allows rape charges to be dropped if the perpetrator agrees to marry the victim. Additionally, he is not allowed to divorce the women for the next three years. This results in considerably less protection for women against violence.

Women's access to justice is limited in several ways. In Shari'a courts, the testimony of two women equals the testimony of one man. Female expert witnesses and female translators are not allowed. Women often fear social retribution if they were to testify against family, and the costs of court proceedings often prevent women who are not financially independent from accessing justice without the support of their family (Husseini, 2010).

Recent modernization efforts by the government have brought several sociocultural changes in Jordan, especially with regard to gender roles and the division of labour within the family structure. This instils a sense of optimism within the Jordanian women that there is a large possibility of a shift of gender roles and gender perception in the imminent future. However, there is a societal insistence on the preservation of the traditional gender roles which are based on rigid gender and generational hierarchies, with a woman's roles restricted to those of an adolescent child and then a dependent wife or mother (Shteivi, 2015). The traditional attitudes and inequities continue to limit women's participation in civil, political, and economic fields,

which implies that women are underrepresented in leadership positions including the cabinet, CSOs, professional unions, and political parties (USAID, 2017).

Despite fundamental rights and constitutional provisions, women lack stature as citizens and mostly interact with the state through their male relatives (Shteivi, 2015). Jordan has a patriarchal family structure which inevitably results in gender-based discrimination and suppression of women. Men are perceived as the primary breadwinners for their families and a women's main role is to uphold the family and to work as mothers (Hamid Rao, 2019). These gender perceptions which are deeply engraved within the patriarchal family structure of Jordan make it especially difficult for the government to bring in reforms. The provisions introduced on paper might not be effectively implemented in practicality due to social limitations.

This could prove to be fatal to Jordanian women in the long run because this hampers the opportunities for women to become financially independent and contribute more to the economy. The gender gap in Jordan is also manifested sharply in its media. The percentage of women's appearance in media, both public and private, is not more than 9%. Additionally, there is a lack of gender awareness prevailing among a large number of media professionals and many media organizations do not provide their staff with training on gender-related concepts. The TV reports are largely centred on the urban city centres, which lead to the exclusion of women in rural and tribal areas. Women are also notably absent from leadership positions in media (UNESCO, 2017).

Despite the progressive stance of the monarchy on Women's rights, they have actually receded in Jordan. Jordan was ranked 140 out of 145 countries in the gender gap index of 2015, which was its worst rank since the index started in 2006. Women's exclusion from the economy has been a key factor in the increasing gender gap and has also contributed towards the country's worsening track record on women's rights (Freedom House, 2016).

The US government has invested heavily in democracy and human rights programs in Jordan. Additionally, a huge number of NGOs have been working toward the promotion and protection of women's rights in Jordan. The said organizations have had success in raising the issue of domestic violence by lobbying high political offices to denounce and domestic violence. Despite the rejection of several draft legislation aimed at providing women equality by the parliament, these women rights activists have made great strides in bringing women's rights to the spotlight (Hassan, 2015).

The Jordanian government has outlined its intentions to close the gender gap and ensure equality by 2030 and it has put in efforts towards that. Jordan adopted a 5-year Women's Economic Empowerment Action Plan which aims to increase women's labour contribution rates to 24% by the end of 2025. This will be done by increasing the capacity of the government to address restrictions to women's economic participation, supporting the creation of family-friendly and non-discriminatory workplace environments, increasing the employment of women in the private sector, and supporting female-led cooperatives and MSMEs. The government also adopted the Jordanian National Action Plan (JONAP) for advancement on the implementation of UNSC resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security. The JONAP was developed in conformity with the government's intentions to commit towards the promotion of human rights, justice, and equality.

It also recognized the importance of women as key actors in combating extremism and violence. Furthermore, the amended Jordanian Labour Law added clear definitions on wage discrimination and flexible work, which could be seen as a step forward towards pay equality and non-discriminatory practices in the workplace (Kawar, 2019). In 2018, the ministry of education began implementing a five-year Education Strategic Plan (ESP) and complementary strategy for maintaining Gender Equality in Education, with support from UNESCO. These plans are backed by an institutional assessment and a gender-based analysis, which include a clear set of activities needed to reach the goals of the National Strategy for Human Resource Development (UNESCO, 2020).

The Government of Jordan has taken steps in recent years to close the huge gender gap in the country. The gender gap is deeply engraved within the country's socio-political structure due to its discriminatory and patriarchal family structure. The oppressive legal framework further makes it hard for women to participate in social and economic life. Despite introducing quotas for women in the political sphere, women's participation remains limited. Despite boasting about the highest female literacy rate in the Middle East region, these numbers fail to translate into the participation of women in the economic sphere. Jordan has seen several changes in recent times but still, it has a long way to go. For the recent initiatives to work, changes need to be made in the legal framework of the country.

For example, the government should work to amend the Family Law and remove provisions that give men an upper hand over women in marriages. Further, inheritance and citizenship laws also must be changed and women must be given equal rights. Further, civil society should

expand its efforts to raise public awareness of the issue of domestic abuse and the need to support the victims of violence against women. The government should look into providing clear penalties for cases of domestic and family violence, which includes honour killings and marital rapes. Further, the provisions of avoiding rape penalties if the perpetrator agrees to marry the victim should be removed. This law undermines the security of women against rape and violence.

## References

- UNICEF Jordan (2009). MENA Gender Equality Profile- Jordan from <https://www.unicef.org/gender/files/Jordan-Gender-Eqaulity-Profile-2011.pdf>
- USAID (2020, December 04). Gender equality and female empowerment: Jordan from <https://www.usaid.gov/jordan/gender-equality-womens-empowerment>
- UN Women (2016). Step it UP: Jordan pledges to align national laws with international commitments and expand support to women and girls in many areas from <https://www.unwomen.org/en/get-involved/step-it-up/commitments/jordan>
- Husseini, R. (2010). Women's rights in the Middle east and North Africa 2010 – Jordan from <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4b9901227d.html>
- World Bank. (2013, July 01). Jordan country Gender assessment : ECONOMIC Participation, agency and access to justice in Jordan from <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/16706>
- UNDP. (2008). Human development reports from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-report-20078>
- Freedom House. (2016). Why is JORDAN backsliding on gender equality? from <https://freedomhouse.org/article/why-jordan-backsliding-gender-equality>
- World Bank. (2014). Women in Jordan – limited economic participation and CONTINUED INEQUALITY from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2014/04/17/women-in-jordan---limited-economic-participation-and-continued-inequality>
- USAID. (2020, September 23). Women's economic empowerment and the path to prosperity in Jordan from <https://www.marketlinks.org/blogs/womens-economic-empowerment-and-path-prosperity-jordan>
- UNESCO. (2018). Gender Portrayal in the Jordanian Media Content from [http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Amman/pdf/Gender\\_in\\_Media\\_EN\\_25062018.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Amman/pdf/Gender_in_Media_EN_25062018.pdf)

Shteivi, M. (2015). Attitudes towards gender roles in Jordan from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/302581523\\_Attitudes\\_towards\\_Gender\\_Roles\\_in\\_Jordan](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/302581523_Attitudes_towards_Gender_Roles_in_Jordan)

Rao, A. H. (2019, May 12). Even breadwinning wives don't get equality at home from <https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2019/05/breadwinning-wives-gender-inequality/589237/>

World Economic Forum. (2015). Global Gender Gap Report 2015 from <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2015/economies/#economy=JOR>

UNESCO. (2020, July 26). MoE implements gender equality in education strategy with support from Canada, Norway & UNESCO from <https://en.unesco.org/news/moe-implements-gender-equality-education-strategy-support-canada-norway-unesco-0>

Kawar, M. (2019). Jordan's government adopts Women Economic Empowerment Plan from <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/jordans-government-adopts-women-economic-empowerment-plan>

# Syria

*Tanvi Asang Dani\**

## **Introduction**

### *The Arab Spring's Background in Syria.*

The first question to be asked in this regard is why did the protests start? High unemployment, corruption, and a lack of democratic reforms promised by President Bashar-Al-Assad were the primary answers. The Arab Spring had a far more drastic impact in Syria than in Tunisia and Egypt, where the authoritarian leaders were either forcibly removed or resigned voluntarily. In March 2011, the Syrian government adopted a hardened stance when the protests started going out of hand and security forces arrested adolescents for pro-democracy graffiti. The security forces cracked down on these demonstrators and a 100 people were killed. In the next 2 months, raids were conducted in several cities including Homs and Damascus to curb the protests. In the following months of 2011, the Free Syrian Army recruited enough volunteers to enable attacks on the Syrian security forces, and the IS in the same year dispatched secret operatives into Syria.

On August 23, 2011, the Syrian National Council was formed in Istanbul, and claimed to be the official representative of the opposition (United States Institute of Peace- Syria Timeline). The Syrian uprising quickly escalated into full-scale civil war with multiple poorly organized rebel groups emerging, often openly supported by foreign backers - most prominently, the Lebanese Hezbollah. The years following the beginning of the civil conflict saw the declaration of a Caliphate by ISIS, in 2014, which marked the start of the US involvement in the domestic conflict. While Assad held control over 2/3rds of the country, the remaining territory was a different battlefield in itself with multiple political rivalries playing out.

---

\* *Tanvi Asang Dani is a student at the Jindal School of International Affairs and was Research Assistant at the Centre for Middle East Studies*

As far as domestic politics in government-controlled regions was concerned, the Assad government relaxed some rules to allow for a multi-party system by enacting the new draft constitution and new party laws in 2012. While these reforms were a result of the protests escalating to drastic levels, they were unable to effect positive changes in the democratic process, as seen in the later years. Elections were also held in 2014, where President Bashar-Al-Assad secured a third seven-year term with 88.7% of the vote (Freedom House Report, 2020). The latest parliamentary elections to the People's Council were held in 2016, where the Baath Party's National Progressive Front secured 200/250 seats while the remaining 50 were secured by the Popular Front for Change and Liberation. Local elections were held in 2018, but more than half the country's population was unable to participate in the balloting process due to displacement and war (BTI Syria Report, 2020).

## **Domestic Governance Reforms of 2012**

### *New party law and Constitution change*

Once the protests started amassing huge numbers, President Al-Assad tried initiating domestic political reforms, most prominent being new party laws and a new Constitution replacing the 1973 Syrian Constitution. The new party laws were mentioned by Assad for the first time first in a speech on April 16, 2011, but both this reform was floated more aggressively following the steady increase in street violence and discontent. The new draft constitution was the most significant outcome of this series of initiated political reforms. The new constitution was supported by 89.4% of the voters in a referendum. The 2012 draft constitution included numerous changes to ensure the satisfaction of every constituencies' demands with gradual changes. The new constitution removed the old Article 8 which defined the Ba'ath Party as the "leading force in the society and the state" (ICL project, no date: article 8) and replaced this by the principle of political pluralism giving more importance to the democratic process and encouraging a multi-party system. Nevertheless, the new constitution still defined the parliament as having a reactive role to the proposals coming from the President and Prime Minister.

On a positive note, the parliament's powers were increased with respect to the selection of the president whereby a candidate is required to acquire at least 35 votes from the members of parliament with no parliamentarian allowed to support more than 1 candidate (Contextualizing the Syrian Uprising- Jörg Michael Dostal). Among all the changes in the governance structure

made though the new constitution, Article 3 of the previous constitution which stated that the president must be a Muslim, was retained. Article 7 dropped the reference to ‘unity, freedom, and socialism. Unsurprisingly, the constitution while endorsing a multi-party system bans the formation of political parties formed on religious, sectarian, tribal, regional or professional bases. A positive change in the system has been the 2017 “Local Administration Law” passed as Decree 107, through which decentralization with local councils would be established as a more direct form for citizens to interact with authorities underneath the state or governorate level, but its benefits remain to be seen (BTI Syria Report, 2020).

### ***Corruption***

Rampant corruption in the government system was one of the major reasons for the rise in civil discontentment leading to the Arab Spring in Syria. Corruption has been an ongoing concern since the start of the civil war in Syria. Nevertheless, detailed reports about the extent of corruption remain difficult to access due to the restrictions on media in the country (Syria 2019 Human Rights Report- US State Dept.). The Freedom House 2020 Report indicated that the regime usually distributed patronage in the form of public resources, and supported regime-loyalist companies and industries by enacting policies favouring their well-being. Further, welfare services and basic amenities and aid were initiated or withheld based on the group’s proven loyalty to the government. The groups for which the civil war has created a fertile opportunity for corruption are government allies, loyalist armed forces, private sector entities, government-loyal businessmen and family members of the Assad family, who had been encouraged by the material and political benefits to be accrued (Freedom House Report, 2020).

Along with the rampant corruption in government-held areas, the civil war and the following aid economy had provided numerous opportunities for corruption and lack of transparency by different rebel groups, foreign armed forces and others involved in conflict zone management. Various NGOs reported corruption by the SDF and its affiliates in northeast Syria, especially in civil councils in Deir Ezzour where the majority of the council consists of SDF members (Syria 2019 Human Rights Report- US State Dept.). The Freedom House also reported that in opposition-held areas, rebel commanders are accused of looting, extortion and theft, with local administrators complaining that very little of the foreign aid reached the people (Freedom House Report, 2020). Furthermore, Assad’s cousin Rami Makhlouf was engaged in bribe-leveraging operations in the new war economy post the start of the Arab Spring.



He appointed another Cousin Hussein Makhoul in charge of the construction of new developments like Marota city or other large-scale projects, which were enabled by the Decree 66 facilitated by Law 10 (2018). Naturally, these schemes generated huge revenues for the businessmen involved (BTI Syria Report, 2020). Owing to all the above discrepancies, Syria received a score of 0/4 for safeguards against corruption in the Freedom House report, while garnering 1 point for its anti-corruption policy in the BTI country report 2020. Syria ranks 178 in the corruption ranking index with a dismal score of 13 index points.

### ***Transparency***

Transparency in government procedures and documentation has been dipping at drastic levels since the beginning of the civil conflict. As illustrated earlier, the lack of a trustworthy media enables the government's functioning to be veiled and open to transgressions like corruption, money-laundering and graft. The Freedom House reported that government officials can withhold any information and are not required to disclose their assets. If a civil society group or media attempt to gather information, they are heavily prosecuted for trying to shed light on the government's policies (Freedom House Report, 2020).

### ***Freedom of the Press***

Syria received a ranking of 174 in the World Press Freedom Index of 2020. While the constitution of 2012 guarantees freedom of expression, private media outlets are harassed in government-controlled regions and face scrutiny while reporting about the ongoing civil war. All media needs permission from the Interior Ministry to operate in government-controlled areas and each local agency is pressurised to forward the sentiments of the leading faction in their area. Furthermore, the ownership of private media outlets generally rests in the hands of prominent regime figures, thus accruing greater censorship and threat. Moreover, since the start of the war in 2011-12, journalists face physical threats throughout the country, especially from regime forces and extremist outfits including the Syrian military and its allies, the Kurdish rebels, Turkish forces and radical groups like Islamic State and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham. The government also created special cyber-crime courts in March 2018, to censor and enhance the crackdown on internet activities (RSF, Syria, 2020). The death toll of journalists increased by seven in 2019, bringing the figure to a total of 134 journalists killed since the start of the civil conflict in 2011 (Freedom House Report, 2020). Syria received a score of 0/4 in the section of free and independent media of the Freedom House Index 2020.

### ***Elections standards, Opposition***

The elections in Syria have been termed as neither free nor fair by the BTI transformation report 2020. The elections are held only in government-controlled areas, which means a large part of the population is unable to participate in the voting process. The conditions during the balloting process are mired with difficulties due to war and severe repression in government-held areas. The 2014 election where President Bashar Al-Assad regained his seat as the President for his third seven-year term, was denounced as illegitimate by major democratic states. According to observers and media, state officials were forcibly transported to polling centres in Damascus while voters faced intimidation by security forces (Syria 2019 Human Rights Report- US State Dept.). Additionally, in the recent 2016 elections for the 250-seat People's Council, several opposition groups decided to boycott the polls, while there were reports of state workers being forced to vote. In this election, the ruling Baath Party secured 200 out of 250 seats while the other seats went to independents (Freedom House Report, 2020). Similarly, in the September 2018 local elections, less than half the population was able to participate due to displacement (BTI Syria Report, 2020).

In this environment, the opportunity for the opposition to gain significant representation and power is and has been abysmally low. According to the 2012 constitution, the formation of political parties on the basis of religion, sect, or class interests is prohibited by law and those parties which are formed are heavily influenced by the Baath party. According to the Freedom House, the government maintains a powerful intelligence and security apparatus to monitor and punish opposition movements that could emerge as serious challengers to Assad's rule. The opposition routinely suffers from gunfire, mass arrests and torture during detention when carrying out protests in government-controlled regions (Freedom House Report, 2020). Furthermore, the regime has shown little tolerance for some opposition parties and even their allies in the National Progressive Front and has harassed Communist Union Movement, Communist Action Party, and Arab Social Union and other parties. The police arrested members of banned Islamist parties, including Hizb ut-Tahrir and the Muslim Brotherhood of Syria (Syria 2019 Human Rights Report- US State Dept).

### ***Judiciary***

The judicial system in Syria is based on the constitutional guarantee of separation of powers. While an independent judiciary is guaranteed by the constitution, government interference in

the civil judiciary has been increasing. The Freedom House states that judges and prosecutors are required to belong to the ruling Baath Party thus dissolving the political independence of the judicial system (Freedom House Report, 2020). Furthermore, there have been reports of civilians being tried in military courts and the decisions of civil courts being arbitrary at times (Freedom of the net, 2020). The BTI report 2020 claims that while the independence of the judiciary has always had a poor track record, since the start of the civil war it has become a tool in the hands of security-relevant political actors. This factor is visible in the increase in the number of executions at the Sednaya prison.

Another judicial reform was initiated in the 2012 constitution whereby the Syrian Supreme Constitutional Court allowed for the trial of the president under high treason for the first time. This is a positive change; however, such a law is difficult to be implemented as the President himself appoints the members of this Constitutional Court (Contextualizing the Syrian Uprising- Jörg Michael Dostal).

### ***Governance in conflict-affected regions***

Local Councils and Sharia councils were established as early as 2011 during the start of the conflict in areas not controlled by the governments; they served as the pillar for the democratic process in conflict areas of Syria. The governance in regions which do not fall under regime control is divided among the authority of modern, Islamist, and radical jihadist rebels. The Arabs and Kurds in Kurdish areas have been administered by the Kurdish authorities since the fall of ISIS and are now under the control of the Turkish security forces after US withdrawal from the areas and subsequent Turkish invasion (Freedom House Report, 2020). The PYD (Democratic Union Party) is the dominant governance force in the local councils in the Kurdish-controlled areas. The BTI reports that while the PYD talks about integrating the Arab representative of Raqqa and Deir Ez-Zor, it dominates the decision-making process. The PYD has established complicated, multi-layered administrative responsibilities, where responsibilities overlap, thus making the participation of people in the political system challenging (BTI Syria Report, 2020). Nevertheless, the PYD, which represented the Arabs in their regions, have given up some authority to the government in exchange for their support against the Turkish forces.

## **Societal transformations since 2011**

### *Gender*

Women's status in the country has undergone a drastic change since the beginning of the war. Syria is one of the 10 lowest performers on the World Economic Forum's 2020 Global Gender Gap Report (Global Gender Gap Report, 2020). Syria also scored very poorly in the Women and Peace Security Index 2019 as it ranked 165/167 countries with an index value of 0.416 (Syria- GIWPS 2019). Part of the political and legal discrimination prevalent against women in Syria, and in general the lower 10 MENA countries, stems from the public opinion on women's standing in social and political life. A survey conducted by the Arab Barometer in 2019 in 12 Arab nations found that 67% of the survey respondents believe men to be better leaders, 67% think women should not be allowed to travel independently, 75% think men should have a higher share of the inheritance and 60% believe husbands should have the final say in family decisions (Women in the Middle East & North Africa- Issues for Congress).

According to the Women and Peace Security Index, women's representation in the Syrian parliament was 13.2%. On the other hand, women's participation in local government was even lower, at just 7.1% (HDR- Syria 2020). Women's labour force participation is a meagre 12.9%, while a staggering 25.8% of the female labour force is unemployed in contrast to the 5.36% of the unemployed male labour force. While women's literacy rate is 73.6%, the enrolment drops significantly from 67% during primary education to only 42.8% for tertiary education (Global Gender Gap Report, 2020). These statistics are coupled with women's mean years of education being a meagre 4.6 years (Syria- GIWPS 2019).

In terms of social standing, safety and health, the war has heightened the mortality risk of vulnerable populations, especially women and children. Women are the victims of strict Sharia codes and abuses at the hands of extremist groups. Nevertheless, women's equality is on a varied scale in areas outside government control with onerous dress and behaviour codes in extremist-held areas to formal equality in PYD-held areas. In terms of legal equality, the Syrian law prohibits women from passing on citizenship to their children, and the personal status law also puts women at a disadvantage on matters of marriage, divorce and child custody. Furthermore, in accordance with the penal code, perpetrators of honour crimes can avail reduced sentences, while rapists can escape punishment by marrying their victims (Freedom House Report, 2020).

## ***Poverty***

The economic condition of Syria before the start of the civil war was significantly better than it is today, with the country being classified as a rapidly-growing-middle-income country by the World Bank in 2010. In 2010, the GDP per capita was \$2,807, while today the GDP is only \$870. Since the start of the civil war, the unemployment rate has increased to be 55 % today, while more than 80% of the Syrian population lives under the poverty line. Additionally, due to inflation caused by the conflict, prices have risen by about 90% since 2010 while incomes have remained stagnant (BorgenProject- Poverty in Syria). According to the Human Development Index, Syria has 7.4% population in poverty according to the multidimensional poverty index, while its MPI is 0.029. These drastic poverty figures can be attributed to the loss of property, jobs and access to public services as a result of the civil war, as well as rising food prices, along with benefits accrued by crony capitalists and regime loyalists. Nevertheless, it is expected that the stabilization of food prices and a modest appreciation of the local currency in 2018 would bring poverty levels down in the coming years (BTI Syria Report, 2020). However, the pandemic has negatively affected the Syria economy, with the economy contracting by 7%, unemployment increasing from 42% in 2019 to 50% in 2020, and food prices soaring 240% since June 2019 (UN news-Security Council- Poverty deepens, along with needs, across Syria).

## ***Healthcare and COVID impact***

The civil war has resulted in severe deterioration of living conditions for a large part of the population. The displacement of millions within and outside the country has exasperated the health crisis in the country. Furthermore, the war has resulted in the destruction of healthcare centres across the nation. The earliest survey after the start of the civil war was conducted by the WHO in 2012, which found that, “about 43% of PHCs are partially functioning, 2% of PHCs are non-functioning, 13% PHCs are inaccessible due distance of PHC from patients (50%, mostly in Idlib); lack of safety (34%, mostly in Homs and Hama); difficulties in public transportation (8%, mostly in Tartous) or temporary relocation of patients (2%) while only 50% of hospitals are fully functioning” (Healthcare in Syria- Before and After the Crisis- NCBI). Furthermore, there is a severe shortage of medicines, healthcare equipment, and doctors in the conflict-affected country. The same WHO report of 2012 indicated a shortage of infant incubators, CT scans, doppler, echography, anaesthesia equipment, ambulances, antibiotics, anti-ulcer medication, sterilizers and antidotes in Primary Healthcare centres especially in

provinces of Idlib, Dara'a and Homs, which have borne the brunt of the civil conflict (Healthcare in Syria- Before and After the Crisis- NCBI).

This healthcare situation has been stabilised to an extent due to the efforts of numerous aid agencies and international NGOs like the UN. According to the Human development report of 2020, life expectancy is 72.7%, while the life expectancy index is 0.811. The latest data on state expenditure on healthcare is unavailable. Nevertheless, over the years of ensuing conflict and the destruction by ISIS, the healthcare infrastructure has accrued heavy damages. The welfare model is the way in which the government legitimizes its rule in certain areas, but the regime has attempted to block aid access to opposition areas, leading to shortages of food, water and medicines in those regions during the active conflict. In 2017, "The Lancet", a medical journal published a study noting that the Syrian regime used aid as a weapon of war and resorted to tactics of the targeted bombing of hospitals in Homs, Aleppo and Idlib; large-scale killings of health care workers; and blocking implementation of water chlorination and vaccines (BTI Syria Report, 2020).

### ***Education in Syria***

Syria has an education index of 0.416 according to the Human Development Report 2020. Until the Arab Spring, Syria was the regional leader in basic education. But the ensuing civil war has taken a huge toll on the educational infrastructure of the country. The displacement of millions of people, within and outside the nation's borders has been particularly detrimental to the achievement of educational standards in the country. Pre-conflict, 97% of primary school-aged children were attending school. In 2018, only 30% attend school in areas heavily affected by the fighting (BorgenProject- Education in Syria has continued despite the civil war). As of late 2019, over 6 million people had been displaced, more than half of them being children. These IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) face difficulties in completing education in refugee camps. Although various agencies like UNICEF have been implementing programs for educating refugees, the BTI reported that the war had cost the education system around \$11 billion and damaged an estimated 40% of school infrastructure. At the end of 2017, a total of 180000 teachers were no longer in service. A 2017 study of 171 camps also found that 74% of camps and settlements have no education services at all (BTI Report, Syria 2020). In addition, there is little to no coordination between the Non-Syrian government organizations including Islamist groups, the U.N. and the Turkish government in the refugee camps (Borgen Project- The Education Crisis in Syria). University education continues, despite scrutiny by state

security forces and lack of resources, materials and teaching staff. Additionally, an estimated 1/5th of university teaching staff has left the country since the start of the war (BTI Syria Report, 2020). Save the Children reported that 217 schools were abandoned or damaged due to the conflict in Idlib from December 2019 to March 2020 (Human Rights Watch- Syria 2020).

### ***Human Rights***

The state of human rights in the conflict-affected country has deteriorated since the start of the war. More than 500,000 people have died since the start of the war in 2011, owing to war, hunger, internal displacement and offensive actions including air raids in civilian areas. The citizens face repression and violence from the regime, pro-regime forces, extremist forces and terrorist groups, Kurdish authorities, Turkish and Russian forces and other proxy groups. The Syrian population in the northern regions has been affected by destructive air raids and advances by foreign militaries and fighters since 2012 which has resulted in the forced displacement of millions of people. The ISIS, which established a Caliphate in Syria, perpetrated massive human rights violations including kidnappings, torture, executions, and other abuses on Syrian residents. The Freedom House reported that both the regime and extremist groups have engaged in the indiscriminate bombardment, extrajudicial killings, and torture of detainees. The Syrian regime has also been accused of repeatedly using chemical weapons against its citizens, for example, when 40 people died in the Damascus suburb of Douma in 2018. The Syrian government's offensive in Idlib in April 2019 led to the internal displacement of 440,000 people, while another 200,000 got displaced after the ceasefire broke down in August 2019 (Freedom House Report, 2020).

### ***Torture/detention prisons***

The human rights abuses occurring in detention centres across the nation have garnered worldwide scrutiny. The notorious Sednaya Prison was in news in 2019 for reportedly carrying out prisoner executions and not returning the bodies of the deceased despite releasing death notices in 2018. The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) observed that "more than 14,361 individuals died due to torture between 2011 and September, including 178 children and 63 women" (Syria 2019 Human Rights Report- US State Dept.). Torture of male and female detainees in detention facilities, either regime-owned or extremist forces-owned has been increasing over the years. Human Rights Watch and the COI (UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria) reported the "use of torture against perceived regime opponents at checkpoints and

regime facilities run by the Air Force, Political Security Division, General Security Directorate, and Military Intelligence Directorate and in detention facilities including the Mezzeh airport detention facility; Military Security Branches 215, 227, 235, 248, and 291; Adra and Sednaya Prisons; the Harasta Air Force Intelligence Branch; Harasta Military Hospital; Mezzeh Military Hospital 601; and the Tishreen Military Hospital” (Syria 2019 Human Rights Report- US State Dept.). The COI also reported that since 2011, detainees have been subjugated to torture and other inhuman practices in military hospitals and at least 34 men, one woman, and 10 children were disappeared in Daraa, Homs, Quneitra, Rif Damascus, and Sweida governorates. The coronavirus pandemic has heightened the health concerns of prisoners in detention centres where healthcare access denial is a state policy (Human Rights Watch- Syria 2020).

### ***Social development since 2011***

The ongoing civil war and extremist violence have had a long-lasting impact on the social structures and dynamics of Syria. The Syrian Centre for Policy Research (SCPR) conducted a study in 2017 to analyse social degradation and its causes in conflict-affected Syria. The research is multidimensional in its definition of social capital where it is defined as being constituted of social values, bonds, and networks, which have been accumulated within a given society, whether by individuals, communities, or institutions (Social Degradation in Syria, Pg.6). Social capital is a useful indicator to measure the health of a certain society and this research thus calculated a social capital index (SCI) for Syria consisting of three components- social networks and participation, social trust and shared values and attributes. It was found that the SCI in Syria had declined by 30% during the crisis in comparison to the period before 2011. The highest contributor to this decline was the 58% dip in the social trust component, while the areas affected by the war most, like Raqqa, Hasakah and Idlib displayed heavy dip in all the three components (Social Degradation in Syria, Pg.6). It was also found that high rates of displacement and lack of decent living conditions in refugee camps have led to the deterioration of societal and familial structures, leading to the collapse in a sense of security and social trust (Social Degradation in Syria, Pg. 9).

### **Conclusion**

Overall, Syria has been struggling in the domains of human rights and poverty indicators since the start of the Arab Spring protests. Various governance reforms including constitutional reforms indicate a positive step for greater political participation in the country. Similarly, the



positive effects of the judicial reforms of 2012 remain to be seen. Governance in conflict-affected regions is much more complex with various groups including the PYD, Turkish forces and others vying for administrative dominance. In addition to the governance issues, Syria faces a massive challenge in the educational arena, but continued efforts from the administration and international help can improve the quality over the years. The COVID-19 pandemic, nevertheless, has dealt a huge blow to the social progress being achieved in the country, and will require consistent rebuilding efforts from all the actors involved.

## References

Analyzing the domestic and international conflict in Syria: Are there lessons from political science? Jörg Michael Dostal. Contextualising the Syrian Uprising. file:///C:/Users/danit/Google%20Drive/CMES%20research%20docs/822-Article%20Text-1851-1-10-20140205.pdf

Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2020 Country Report — Syria. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020. <https://www.bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report-SYR-2020.html>

Connor Bradbury. The Education Crisis in Syria. September 12, 2020. The Borgen Project. <https://borgenproject.org/education-crisis-in-syria/>

Elise Ghitman. 10 Facts about Poverty in Syria. April 24, 2020. The Borgen Project. <https://borgenproject.org/poverty-in-syria-2/>

Freedom House Index 2020- Syria. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/syria/freedom-world/2020>

Global Gender Gap Report 2020. World Economic Forum. [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2020.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf)

Hayley Newlin. Education in Syria Has Continued Despite Civil War. February 8, 2019. The Borgen Project. <https://borgenproject.org/education-in-syria-has-continued-despite-civil-war/#:~:text=The%20State%20of%20Education%20in%20Syria&text=Attendance%20rates%20have%20taken%20a,children%20were%20attending%20school%20daily.>

Mazen Kherallah, T. A. (2012, July-Sep). Healthcare in Syria before and during the crisis. *Avicenna Journal of Medicine*, 2(3), 51-53. DOI: 10.4103/2231-0770.102275. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3697421/>

RSF- World Press Freedom Index 2020- Syria. <https://rsf.org/en/syria>

Security Council- Poverty deepens, along with needs, across Syria. Peace and Security. July 29, 2020. UN News. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/07/1069261>

Syria 2019 Human Rights Report. Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 United States Department of State • Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1258956/download#page=53>

Syria- Events of 2019. Human Rights Watch. World Report 2020. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/syria#634b1d>

Syria- Human Development Indicators. Human Development Reports 2020. UN Development Programme. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/SYR>

Syria's Performance on the Women, Peace and Security Index. Georgetown Institute of Women, Peace and Security (GIWPS). <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/WPS-Index-2019-Data-1.pdf>

The Conflict Impact on Social Capital- Social Degradation in Syria. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. Syrian Centre for Policy Research. 2017.

Zoe Danon & Sarah Collins. Women in the Middle East and North Africa- Issues for Congress. Nov 27, 2020. Congressional Research Services. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46423>

# Iraq

*Himani Yadav\**

## Abstract

At the beginning of the 2010's, a series of uprisings, popularly known as the Arab Spring, fueled by a desire for greater political participation, erupted in various parts of the Middle East and North African (MENA) Region. The uprisings impacted the societal and governmental functioning of the region. The Arab Spring protests exacerbated the intra-state violence and social unrest which was already brewing in Iraq. This paper aims at delineating the various socio-political changes that took place in Iraq following the Arab Spring.

**Keywords:** Arab Spring, MENA Region, Governmental Changes, Societal Changes, Iraq

## Introduction

Iraq got independence from British colonial rule in 1932. It was subsequently declared a republic in 1958; but in reality, it was led by several authoritarian figures, the last being Saddam Hussein who was overthrown in 2003. Since Saddam Hussein's removal from power by a coalition led by the United States of America, the country has been a battleground for competing interests of various ethno-sectarian groups. Since then, the Shia-led governments are struggling to maintain political stability and calm amidst a staggering economy, growing inequality and persistent conflict. The ripple effect of the Arab Spring can still be felt throughout Iraq. This effect has manifested itself in national policies, political allegiances and the foreign policies of the various parties that have come to power. The desire for reform, accountability, and an end to nepotism, has led to multiple protests in Iraq since 2011. The first portion of this paper (Part I) seeks to identify the changes that took place in governance following the Arab Spring. The latter portion (Part II) aims at identifying the societal impact of the revolution.

---

\* *Himani Yadav is a student at the Jindal Global Law School and Research Assistant at the Centre for Middle East Studies*

## **Part I: Changes in Governance After Arab Spring**

The government in Iraq was already going through several changes before the Arab Spring protests erupted in February 2011. Arab Spring protests in Iraq were citizens' way of showing their anger towards the government for the prevailing high unemployment rate, poverty, corruption and its inefficiency to manage the country. To quell the protests, the then Prime Minister of the country Nuri al-Maliki announced several initiatives such as ensuring transparency in governmental processes, increased accountability and fighting corruption.

Although the government did announce measures, it failed to implement them. This led to anti-government protests in 2013 mainly by the minority Sunnis in the country. The anti-government protests erupted in the cities of Ramadi, Fallujah, Samarra, Mosul and Kirkuk. The minority Sunni population of the country alleged that the Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki engaged in exclusionary sectarian politics. Maliki's criticism increased severely across various ethnic communities in the country. The Shia-dominated government's failure to adhere to the demands put forward by the Sunni minority paved the way for the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) to reemerge. The extremist movement recruited thousands of Sunnis from Iraq and beyond. It established itself in Syria and renamed itself as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

ISIS began establishing its control across Iraq. It first captured Al-Fallujah a city in Iraq in December 2013. By June 2014, ISIS was controlling one-third of the country. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi ISIS's leader declared Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city as an Islamic State and himself its caliph. ISIS unleashed a reign of terror in the regions where it was in power. There was a gross violation of human rights under ISIS's regime. Rapes, abductions, executions, mass murder, pillaging, extortion, seizure of state resources, and smuggling were all prevalent in the regions where ISIS was in power.

ISIS's increasing control over Iraq led to a further split amongst the Sunni and Shia communities in Iraq. Shia community's top religious leader, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, issued a fatwa asking Iraqi men, mainly from the majority Shia community, to unite and fight against the Sunni extremist movement. This call led to thousands of men, from the Shia community joining various armed groups to fight against the extremist movement in Iraq. These armed groups which were 60 in number eventually merged under the umbrella of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF).

Increasing political instability in Iraq led to foreign intervention for the second time in the 21st century. Iran was the very first country to provide military assistance mainly because Sunni militants came within 25 miles of its border and Iran wanted to stabilize its border and keep the Shia-led government in power. The United States constituted “The Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS”, in September 2014. This coalition consisted of 79 countries and various organisations such as NATO, the European Union, and the Arab League. The U.S. government deployed its troops in Iraq to retrain and advise the Iraqi Army.

It also launched airstrikes on the areas which were captured by ISIS. The airstrikes lasted for more than three years until the ISIS was finally defeated in 2017. On the other hand, Turkey also deployed its troops in northern Iraq to help and protect the Sunnis and the Turkmen. Along with that, through the deployment, Turkey also tried to limit the influence of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) the operated in both Iraq and Turkey. Between 2015 and 2017, Iraqi security forces, Kurdish Peshmerga forces and the PMF with the support of U.S.-led coalition gradually retook territory from ISIS. Tens of thousands of militants from ISIS were killed. In December 2017, Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declared victory.

National elections were held in May 2018 after the government retook control of the entire country. An unlikely coalition consisting of secular Sunnis and communists led by Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr won the maximum number of seats. Kurdish politician Barham Salih was elected as the president and Muhammad al-Halbusi, a 37-year-old Sunni lawmaker, was elected as the speaker of the parliament. Salih, the president appointed Adil Abdul al-Mahdi, a 76-year-old economist and Shia politician as the prime minister. The elected leaders were unable to bring the changes in governance and reforms that were needed in Iraq. Their failure to bring in significant changes led to widespread protests in October 2019. The protestors wanted to replace the U.S established political system set up after the removal of Saddam Hussein’s government, which distributed power along sectarian lines and consisted of restrictive electoral laws favouring the ruling elite.

The protestors were mainly young Shiites who constitute the majority of the population in Iraq. The 2019 protests were bigger in scale than the 2011 protests. But the U.S government’s attack on Soleimani and the COVID-19 pandemic allowed the Iranian-backed Iraqi government to quell the protests. The Iraqi security forces cracked down on the protestors. The government and the security forces used live ammunition, raids and tear gas to threaten and disperse the protestors. According to Amnesty International by the first month of January 2020 more than

600 people had died in the protests. According to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), 8,758 people got injured in the protests by December 12, 2019. Incessant protests led to the then Prime Minister Adil Abdul Mahdi's resignation in December 2019. He was succeeded by Mustafa al-Kadhimi who pledged to fulfil the protestors' demands. However, little has been achieved till now. The protestors resumed protesting in October 2020, marking one year since the anti-government protests began in 2019. The security forces used water cannons and tear gas to disperse the crowd. Several journalists and political activists have either been assassinated or have disappeared since the protests began in 2019. Mustafa al-Kadhimi promised to investigate the killings but no one has been held responsible yet.

The situation in Iraq remains sensitive with a chunk of the population still manifesting its anger by protesting across various parts of the country. It remains to be seen how the newly appointed Prime Minister balances external influence from America and Iran while working towards peace at the homeland.

## **Part II: Societal Changes After Arab Spring**

Iraqis witnessed a whole lot of changes after the Arab Spring. A few changes concerning gender and poverty amongst others are described below in detail.

### ***Human Rights***

Even before 2011, Iraq has been a country where human rights have been violated repeatedly. Even in 2019, ISIS continued killing community leaders and security forces. Some of the crimes perpetrated by ISIS since 2014 amounted to war crimes and may have amounted to crimes against humanity and genocide. UN organisations and Iraqi authorities found 14 mass grave sites left by ISIS in Sinjar in 2019. Iraqi government still has not made war crimes and crimes against humanity as specific offences under Iraqi law.

According to an Iraqi law enacted in 2009 citizens impacted by terrorism and wars are supposed to receive compensations. However, many citizens who lived in areas controlled by ISIS have not received compensation even after sending compensation requests. Compensation commission has not paid many claims since 2014.

The security forces in Iraq continue detaining anyone that they suspect to be linked with ISIS. They do not allow the suspects to have a free and fair trial. Suspects are arrested without a court order and are often coerced to confess. Authorities keep the suspects in overcrowded and in some cases inhumane conditions.

Authorities prosecuted child suspects as young as 9 with ISIS affiliation, younger than the minimum age of criminal responsibility under international law, and in violation of international standards that recognize children recruited by armed groups primarily as victims who should be rehabilitated and reintegrated into society.

Iraqi families suspected to have ISIS affiliation, are often denied security clearances and are asked to get identity cards and other documents, thereby restricting their freedom. In 2019, thousands of children were prevented from enrolling in state schools because their relatives were suspected to have joined ISIS. Lawyers and social workers helping families are also threatened or detained for providing their services.

Iraq has long had one of the highest rates of executions in the world. In August 2019, authorities released Ministry of Justice data that showed 8022 detainees were on death row and the state had executed over 100 between January and August 2019.

For the past 30 years, Iraqi authorities have miserably failed to provide safe drinking water in southern Iraq. Their failure became a crisis in 2018 when 118,000 people were hospitalized due to drinking low-quality water. Authorities took no steps to address the cause of the crisis. This lack of action is worrisome in the light of existing severe water crisis in the MENA region.

During the 2019 protests, the government detained protestors, used lethal force, even arrested some Iraqis for expressing support for the movement on Facebook. Security forces fired doctors who treated protestors. The government repeatedly cut the internet services and blocked certain applications to prevent people from communicating and sharing pictures/videos of the protests.

### ***Poverty***

Poverty in Iraq started reducing alongside the reduction in violence from its peak in 2006. However, the oil crisis of 2014 and the ISIS caused poverty to reach an estimated 22.5 per cent in 2014 before falling again to 20.0 per cent in 2017 as the recovery process began (World Bank 2019). The gap between urban-rural fiscal poverty closed significantly from 2017 to

2017. The rural poverty rate was 39 per cent in 2007, while the urban poverty rate was at 16 per cent. In 2017, the rural poverty reduced to 27.5 per cent, while urban poverty was at 14.6 per cent.

While the gap between urban and rural poverty reduced, it is imperative to consider income inequality amongst various ethnic groups. Poverty is now divided between the historically poor Shia south and the newly poor Sunni north, on one hand, and the comparatively less poor Shia centre and Sunni Kurdish areas, on the other. Furthermore, the higher poverty rates in the Sunni north are prompted mainly by another group disparity i.e., between the displaced and the nondisplaced. The poverty rate for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in both the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the Sunni north (regions that account for the vast majority of the displaced) is approximately 2.5 times higher than the rate for non-IDPs, and in the north, about half of all IDPs live in poverty (World Bank, 2020).

Although the fiscal poverty gap between urban and rural areas has been closing sharply, the urban-rural gap in non-fiscal dimensions has remained comparatively uniform. For the past decade, Shia provinces have been significantly more deprived along non-fiscal dimensions of household welfare than other regional or ethnoreligious groups. The region's electricity deprivation has been 64 per cent poorer than the national average, and the sanitation deprivation has been 91 per cent poorer; all other regional and ethnoreligious groups performed significantly better than average on those two dimensions. Further, all Kurdish provinces have consistently outperformed the national average.

The tracks of Sunni provinces have deviated. Kirkuk and Diyala, among the northern provinces least affected by the ISIS crisis, were significantly less deprived in 2017 than the national average (37 per cent and 10 per cent lower, respectively). Anbar and Salahaddin were significantly worse than the average and deteriorating (13 per cent and 18 per cent higher, respectively). Nineveh had recovered to the national average.

The greatest intragroup variation could be found in Shia areas. There is a comparatively distinct divide between the Shia south provinces (Qadisiyah, Muthana, Thi Qar, Missan, and Basrah), all of which are more deprived than the national average, and the Shia centre.

### ***Gender and Minority Rights***

Women rights have been compromised in Iraq for a long time. Being a highly patriarchal and conservative society, women often find themselves as victims of honour crimes and domestic



abuse. Women also remain vulnerable to trafficking, sexual exploitation, forced prostitution due to constant political instability and financial hardships.

Female Genital Mutilation was highly prevalent in the Kurdish areas of Northern Iraq. According to a statistical study released by the Ministry of Health in 2010, 41 per cent of girls and women had undergone Female Genital Mutilation. In 2011, the parliament banned female genital mutilation by passing a law. Since then, multiple campaigns have contributed to its decline. However, according to German-Iraqi campaign group WADI, this practice continues for about half of all girls in Iraqi Kurdistan even today.

In October 2012, the parliament of Iraq passed legislation to lift Iraq's reservation to article 9 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Article 9 grants women equal rights with men to acquire, change, or retain their nationality and pass on their nationality to their children.

From 2013-2017 ISIS and the security forces, both engaged in gross violation of women's rights. Once it took over Mosul, ISIS abducted thousands of Yazidi women and children. They then subjected them to sexual assault, slavery and forced marriages with members of ISIS. If women refused to marry, they were punished or executed. In 2015 ISIS instituted a female "Khansa," or morality, department to enforce morality codes among women of Mosul. On the other hand, the security forces detained thousands of women along with their children on mere suspicion of them being related to ISIS. Women detainees were kept in inhumane and overcrowded conditions. They were deprived of female-specific health care. According to Human Rights Watch, women detainees were beaten, tortured, and sexually abused as a means of intimidating or punishing male family members suspected of terrorism

There are only a few legal provisions to protect women's rights even if they exist their implementation is extremely poor. There exists a law against trafficking but little has been done to prevent trafficking by enforcing the law. According to Human Rights Watch, the officers and judges are not educated about the law and continue to prosecute trafficking victims under laws criminalizing prostitution.

The Iraqi Penal Code criminalizes sexual assault but article 398 states that charges will be dropped if the perpetrator marries the victim. Besides, article 41(1) provides that a husband has a legal right to punish his wife, and parents can discipline their children within limits prescribed by law or custom and the penal code also provides for mitigated sentences for violent acts

including murder for so-called “honorable motives” or if catching his wife or female relative in the act of adultery/sex outside of marriage.

Further, the coded explicitly doesn’t talk about domestic violence which is prevalent at an alarming rate in Iraq. A 2010 United Nations factsheet stated that one in five Iraqi women were subject to domestic violence, and a 2012 Ministry of Planning study found that at least 36 per cent of married women have experienced some form of abuse at the hands of their husbands. Additionally, Iraqi Law doesn’t allow women to get an abortion if they are raped, women can only get an abortion if there’s a risk to the mother’s life.

When it comes to family law, Iraq has a Personal Status Code (1959). This law is highly discriminatory against women as it grants men a supreme status in matters of divorce and inheritance. The law allows Iraqi men to have as many as four polygamous marriages thereby furthering the discrimination against women.

Iraq’s criminal code does not prohibit same-sex sexual relations, but Paragraph 401 of the penal code holds that any person who commits an “immodest act” in public can be put in prison for up to six months, a vague provision that could be used to target sexual and gender minorities, although such cases have not been documented.

Currently, a bill against domestic violence is tabled in the Iraqi parliament. The 2019 version of the bill includes provisions for services for domestic violence survivors, protection (restraining) orders, penalties for their breach, and the establishment of a cross-ministerial committee to combat domestic violence. However, the bill has several gaps and provisions that would undermine its effectiveness, including that it prioritizes reconciliation overprotection and justice for victims.

### ***Islamization***

The Sunni-Shia divide, which is increasingly blurring, has existed in Iraq since the seventh century. The modern manifestation of this divide is witnessed in the political arena. The majority population of Iraq are Shias, but the Sunnis formed the government when Saddam Hussein was the ruler of Iraq. After the 2003 U.S. invasion and Saddam Hussein’s removal from power the sectarian divide in Iraq worsened.

The United States introduced ‘Muhasasa System’ which provided proportional government representation among Iraq’s various ethno-sectarian groups. This system allowed Shia majority

to form its government based on their population size and subjugate Sunni minority. This subjugation and frustration coupled with the anti-government protests in 2011 led to the rise of Sunni extremist group ISIS in 2013. From 2013-2017 the ISIS, which was Sunni led was at war with Iraqi security forces, government and other organisations mainly Shia led. Although the war with ISIS was Shia led, it would be incorrect to label it as a war on sectarian lines.

Rather than a Sunni-Shia war, it was a war between ISIS and its allies and the state and its allies, where the state and its allies although Shia-led were heterogeneous and far too layered to label it as a sectarian war. This blurring of sectarian lines can be observed by looking at reduced sect-violence in Iraq after the war with ISIS ended. Further, the elections in 2018 were contested on the appeals of reform and anti-elite anger rather than appealing to one's sect. Also, the anti-government protests in 2019 transcended sectarian lines and were embedded in socio-economic grievances including education, corruption, healthcare and end to nepotism.

The war against ISIS in Iraq moved Iraq beyond sectarian-division. Today, Iraq's political climate is far too complex and layered. This heterogeneity and unpredictability in Iraqi politics indicate that an approach rooted in the balance of power, cooperation and negotiation amongst various ethnic communities is the way to ensure political stability in Iraq.

### ***Impact of COVID-19***

Iraq recorded its first case of COVID-19 on 24th February 2020. From mid- March 2020 till mid- September 2020 the government imposed and lifted lockdown to contain the virus. But due to its depleting resources, the government permitted trade activities, opened borders and allowed non-essential activities from mid-September onwards. At present Iraq is going through multiple crises which include political instability, anti-government protests, depleting treasury, unemployment amongst youth and security threats.

The oil revenues fell from 6 billion USD in January 2020 to 1.4 billion USD in April which further added to the country's misery. The World Bank predicted a 9.7 per cent decrease in Iraq's GDP for 2020, a figure which is likely an underestimate. Iraq's healthcare system was already in ruins before the pandemic but COVID-19 exposed it brutally when it reached its limit and the healthcare workers started getting infected which led to many deaths.

Thousands of self-employed people in Iraq lost their livelihood due to the Pandemic and have no social safety net to fall back on. The situation is particularly critical in the Kurdistan region where the local government was already unable to pay wages for the public sector when the

pandemic hit. Mounting anger eventually led to protests in the region. Further, the ISIS liberated areas have no funds to restart schools and hospitals. Additionally, over 1.4 million internally displaced persons remain in refugee camps, where COVID-19 has made its way with no relief in sight. According to the World Bank, up to 5.5 million Iraqis were at risk of falling into poverty due to COVID-19. This would double the poverty rate from 20 to 40 per cent.

Approximately 60 per cent of Iraq's population is under 25, youth unemployment is at 36 per cent. COVID-19 has deprived young people of their employment, education and brought leisure activities to a halt. Dozens of young reported adverse mental health and significant psychological strain from the lockdowns. Anger by youth led to the resumption of anti-government protests in October 2020 which started in 2019. Although the crime in bigger cities has reduced due to increased security and lockdowns the crime in rural areas increased. Further, crimes against women especially murder, psychological abuse and domestic violence has increased significantly during the pandemic.

As parliament has not been able to meet, there is a backlog of critical legislation, including finalising the electoral law, the parties law, the 2021 federal budget and a vote for the parliament to agree to dissolve itself and allow for early elections. Additionally, peddling of fake news and misinformation during the crisis have increased the mistrust towards the government. Iraq is in imminent need of international support, large-scale domestic reforms and trust-building efforts if it wants to avoid social unrest due to increasing inequalities which are exacerbated by COVID-19. The pandemic can push Iraq from a fragile to a failed state.

## **Conclusion**

Iraq has witnessed multiple crises since the Arab Spring. The anti-government protests in 2011, the re-emergence of ISIS, control of Mosul by ISIS, human rights violation across the nation, a crumbling economy, growing socioeconomic inequalities, political instability and the plight of thousands of internally displaced persons have wreaked havoc on the country's state. The way forward seems unclear. Its current political system is not viable, especially considering the increasing anti-government protests in the country. If Iraq wants to maintain whatever limited political stability and reduced sectarian violence it has achieved since the defeat of ISIS in 2017, it would have to implement large-scale domestic and political reforms; and accommodate competing interests.

Amidst growing socio-economic inequalities and crumbling economy the protests are likely to grow; thereby exerting pressure on political elites to enact strong reforms. Despite being killed, injured, detained, and COVID-19 the protestors have stood relentlessly. This determination shows that the Iraqi population has had it enough and it is not going anywhere until it is given what it is demanding.

## References

- Awadalla, Nadine, and Aziz El Yaakoubi. "Violence Escalates In Iraq As Government Pushes To End Protests." Reuters. N.p., 2020. Web. 19 Jan. 2021 . <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-protests/violence-escalates-in-iraq-as-government-pushes-to-end-protests-idUSKBN1ZQ0XP>>.
- Barbarani, Sofia. "Will Anti-Gov'T Protests, Soleimani Killing Decide 2021 In Iraq?." ALJAZEERA 2020. Web. 17 Jan. 2021 . <<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/20/iraqs-2020-predicament-a-year-in-review>>.
- Blake, Gerald Henry, and Majid Khadduri. "Iraq." Encyclopædia Britannica 2020 : n. pag. Web. 18 Jan 2021 < <https://www.britannica.com/place/Iraq>>.
- Cordesman, Anthony H. "Iraq Is The Prize: A Warning About Iraq'S Future Stability, Iran, And The Role Of The United States." Csis.org. N.p., 2021. Web. 18 Jan. 2021 . <<https://www.csis.org/analysis/iraq-prize-warning-about-iraqs-future-stability-iran-and-role-united-states>>.
- "Facing Pandemic, Economic And Political Challenges, Iraq Government 'Operating In The Eyes Of Multiple Storms At Once'." UN News. N.p., 2020. Web. 19 Jan. 2021 . <<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/08/1071102>>.
- Haddad, Fanar. "The Waning Relevance Of The Sunni-Shia Divide." The Century Foundation. N.p., 2019. Web. 18 Jan. 2021 . <<https://tcf.org/content/report/waning-relevance-sunni-shia-divide/?session=1&session=1&session=1>>.
- Hamasaheed, Sarhang, and Garrett Nada. "Iraq Timeline: Since The 2003 War." United States Institute of Peace. N.p., 2020. Web. 17 Jan. 2021 . <<https://www.usip.org/iraq-timeline-2003-war>>.
- Ibrahim, Arwa. ""Demands Not Met': Anti-Government Protests Resume In Iraq." ALJAZEERA 2020. Web. 19 Jan. 2021 . <<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/25/demands-not-met-anti-government-protests-resume-in-iraq>>.
- "Iraq Country Profile." BBC News. N.p., 2020. Web. 18 Jan. 2021 . <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14542954>>.

Jiyad, Sajad. "Struggling Iraq Faces Another Crisis In COVID-19." IAI Commentaries 20.73 (2020): n. pag. Web. 18 Jan. 2021 .  
<<https://www.iai.it/en/publicazioni/struggling-iraq-faces-another-crisis-covid-19>>.

Mansour, Wael, and Bledi Celiku. Breaking Out Of Fragility : A Country Economic Memorandum For Diversification And Growth In Iraq. Washington D.C.: World Bank Group, 2020. Web. 19 Jan. 2021 .  
<<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/34416/9781464816376.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y>>.

Mikail, Barah. "Nation Or Religion? Iraq’S Hybrid Identity Politics." Middle East Institute. N.p., 2020. Web. 18 Jan. 2021 . <<https://www.mei.edu/publications/nation-or-religion-iraqs-hybrid-identity-politics>>.

Nadhmi, Faris. "The Power Of Political Islamization In Iraq: The Case Of Ending The Civil State – Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative (ICSSI)." Iraqicivilsociety.org. N.p., 2013. Web. 19 Jan. 2021 . <<https://www.iraqicivilsociety.org/archives/1526>>.

World Report 2011. New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 2011. Web. 18 Jan. 2021 .  
< [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/related\\_material/wr2011\\_book\\_complete.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/related_material/wr2011_book_complete.pdf) >.

World Report 2012. New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 2012. Web. 18 Jan. 2021 .  
< <https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/wr2012.pdf>>.

World Report 2013. New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 2013. Web. 18 Jan. 2021,  
< [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/wr2013\\_web.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/wr2013_web.pdf)>.

World Report 2014. New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 2014. Web. 18 Jan. 2021 .  
< [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/wr2014\\_web\\_0.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/wr2014_web_0.pdf) >.

World Report 2015. New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 2015. Web. 18 Jan. 2021 .  
< [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/world\\_report\\_download/wr2015\\_web.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/world_report_download/wr2015_web.pdf) >.

World Report 2016. New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 2016. Web. 18 Jan. 2021 .  
< [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/world\\_report\\_download/wr2016\\_web.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/world_report_download/wr2016_web.pdf) >.

World Report 2017. New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 2017. Web. 18 Jan. 2021 .  
< [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/world\\_report\\_download/wr2017-web.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/world_report_download/wr2017-web.pdf) >.

World Report 2018. New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 2018. Web. 18 Jan. 2021 .  
<  
[https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/world\\_report\\_download/201801world\\_report\\_web.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/world_report_download/201801world_report_web.pdf)  
>.

World Report 2019. New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 2019. Web. 18 Jan. 2021 .  
<[https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/world\\_report\\_download/hrw\\_world\\_report\\_2019.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/world_report_download/hrw_world_report_2019.pdf)  
>.

World Report 2020. New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 2020. Web. 18 Jan. 2021 .  
<[https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/world\\_report\\_download/hrw\\_world\\_report\\_2020\\_0.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/world_report_download/hrw_world_report_2020_0.pdf)  
>.

World Report 2021. New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 2021. Web. 18 Jan. 2021 .  
<[https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media\\_2021/01/2021\\_hrw\\_world\\_report.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2021/01/2021_hrw_world_report.pdf)>.

"12 Dead And Brutal Repression In Last 48 Hours Amid Ongoing Crackdown On  
Protests In Iraq, New @Amnesty Investigation Finds." Amnesty.org. N.p., 2020. Web. 19  
Jan. 2021 . <[https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/01/iraq-protest-death-toll-surges-  
as-security-forces-resume-brutal-repression/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/01/iraq-protest-death-toll-surges-as-security-forces-resume-brutal-repression/)>.

## 10 Years Since the Arab Spring