


Saudi Arabia Immigration Detention Data Profile

 <p>Map data ©2020 Google</p>	Quick Facts	
	Immigration detainees (2018)	1,996,069
	Detained asylum seekers (2017)	Not Available
	Detained minors (2017)	Not Available
	Immigration detention capacity (2017)	Not Available
	Persons expelled (2018)	525,871
	International migrants (2019)	13,122,338
	New asylum applications (2019)	266
	Number of immigration detainees on a given day (2018)	13,569

NOTES ON USING THIS PROFILE

- Sources for the data provided in this report are available online at: <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/countries/middle-east/saudi-arabia>
- "Observation Dates" indicate the timeframe statistical data correspond to or other data were last validated. More than one statistical entry for a year indicates contrasting reports.

STATISTICS

Detention, expulsion, and incarceration statistics

		Observation Date			Observation Date
Total number of immigration detainees by year	1,996,069	2018	Number of immigration detainees on a given day	13,569	2018
	301,314	2017			
	250,000	2013			
Top nationalities of detainees	Not Available	2017	Number of persons granted alternatives to immigration detention	758,570	2017
Number of detained asylum seekers	Not Available	2017	Total number of detained minors	Not Available	2017
Number of detained unaccompanied minors	Not Available	2017	Number of detained accompanied minors	Not Available	2017
Number of detained stateless persons	Not Available	2017	Number of apprehensions of non-citizens	1,996,069	2018
Immigration detainees as a percentage of total international migrant population	16	2018	Estimated total immigration detention capacity	Not Available	2017
Number of dedicated long-term immigration detention centres	Not Available	2017	Estimated capacity of dedicated long-term immigration detention centres	Not Available	2017
Number of dedicated medium-term immigration detention centres	Not Available	2017	Number of immigration offices	Not Available	2017
Number of transit facilities	Not Available	2017	Number of criminal facilities	Not Available	2017
Number of ad hoc facilities	Not Available	2017	Number of persons removed/returned (voluntary returns and deportations)	525,871	2018
Number of deportations/forced returns only	Not Available	2017	Percentage of persons removed in relation to total number of people placed in removal procedures	80.25	2018
Criminal prison population	66,197	2018	Percentage of foreign prisoners	48	2018
	47,000	2013		72	2009
Prison population rate (per 100,000 of national population)	198	2018			
	161	2013			

Demographics and immigration-related statistics

		Observation Date			Observation Date
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Population	34,800,000	2020	International migrants	13,122,338	2019
	33,413,660	2018		12,645,033	2018
	31,540,000	2015		10,185,900	2015
	27,448,000	2010		9,060,400	2013
	27,000,000	2006		7,288,900	2010
				8,024,885	2006
International migrants as a percentage of the population	37.84	2018	Estimated number of undocumented migrants	Not Available	2017
	32.3	2015			
	32	2013			
	27	2010			
Refugees	315	2019	Total number of new asylum applications	266	2019
	266	2018		50	2017
	155	2017		35	2016
	136	2016		12	2014
	125	2015		22	2013
	561	2014			
Refugee recognition rate	100	2013	Stateless persons	70,000	2017
				70,000	2016
				70,000	2015
				70,000	2014

DOMESTIC LAW				
LEGAL TRADITION				
Legal tradition	Name		Observation Date	
	Muslim law			
LAWS AND REGULATIONS				
Constitutional guarantees?	Yes/No	Constitution and Articles	Year Adopted	Last Year Amended
	Yes	The Basic Law of Governance. 1992.	1992	1992
LAWS AND REGULATIONS				
Core pieces of national legislation	Name		Year Adopted	Last Year Amended
	The Residence Regulations. Order No. 17/2/1337 on 11/09/1371H. 4 June 1952.		1952	2000
	Law of Criminal Procedure. Royal Decree No.(M/39), 28 Rajab 1422 [16 October 2001] Umm al-Qura No.(3867), 17 Sha'ban 1422 [3 November 2001].		2001	

LAWS AND REGULATIONS			
Additional legislation	Name	Year Adopted	Last Year Amended
	Border Security Law. Decree No. 85/5/SH	1993	2004
	Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law	2009	
	LABOR LAW. Royal Decree No. M/51 23 Sha'ban 1426 / 27 September 2005	2006	2015
	Decision No. 310 of 1434 on Domestic Workers	2013	
LABOR LAW. Royal Decree No. M/51 23 Sha'ban 1426 / 27 September 2005. First Edition 2006. As amended in 2013.	2006	2013	
LAWS AND REGULATIONS			
Regulations, standards, guidelines	Name	Year Published	
	The Imprisonment and Detention Law issued by Royal Decree No. M/31	1978	
	Law and Regulations of the Bureau of Investigation and Public Prosecution. Royal Decree No. M/56, 24 Shawwal 1409 (29 May 1989). Umm al-Qura No. 3264, 20 Dhu al-Qadah 1409H	1989	
GROUNDS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE IMMIGRATION-RELATED DETENTION			
Immigration-status-related grounds	Name	Observation Date	
	Detention for unauthorised entry or stay	2018	
	Detention to prevent unauthorised entry at the border	2018	
	Detention to effect removal	2018	
	Detention to establish/verify identity and nationality	2016	
CRIMINALIZATION OF IMMIGRATION-RELATED OFFENCES			
Does the country provide specific criminal penalties for immigration-related violations?	Fines	Incarceration	Observation Date
	Yes	Yes	2018
CRIMINALIZATION OF IMMIGRATION-RELATED OFFENCES			
Grounds for criminal immigration-related detention/incarceration and maximum potential duration of incarceration	Grounds for Incarceration	Maximum Number of Days of Incarceration	Observation Date
	Unauthorized entry	180	2018
	Unauthorised stay	180	2018
CRIMINALIZATION OF IMMIGRATION-RELATED OFFENCES			
Has the country decriminalized immigration-related violations?	Has the country decriminalized immigration-related violations?	Observation Date	
	No	2018	
LENGTH OF DETENTION			
Longest recorded instance of immigration detention.	Number of Days	Observation Date	
	1000	2015	

PROCEDURAL STANDARDS

Provision of basic procedural standards	Name	In Law	In Practice	Observation Date
	Access to asylum procedures		No	2015
	Right to appeal the lawfulness of detention		No	2015

VULNERABLE PERSONS

Is the detention of vulnerable persons provided in law? Are they detained in practice?	Name	In Law	In Practice	Observation Date
	Victims of trafficking		Yes	2013
	Accompanied minors		Yes	2005
	Unaccompanied minors		Yes	2005
	Women		Yes	2005

EXPEDITED REMOVAL AND RE-ENTRY BAN

Re-entry ban	Name	Observation Date
	Yes	2017

COVID-19 UPDATES

	Update Status	Observation Date
	<p>Amnesty International (AI) reported that at least three people died in detention centres housing thousands of Ethiopian migrants in Saudi Arabia (AI 02.10.2020). The rights group said that migrants were facing “unimaginable cruelty,” including being chained together in pairs, and using their cell floors as toilets. AI urged Saudi authorities to improve conditions in the centres. The migrants from Ethiopia and other countries had been working in northern Yemen but were forced out by Houthi rebels. According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), some 2,000 Ethiopians remain stranded on the Yemeni side of the border, without food, water or healthcare. Many Ethiopian migrants go to Saudi Arabia to work, making the kingdom a key source of foreign remittances for Ethiopia. The kingdom has been cracking down on irregular migrants and as of 2017, there were up to 500,000 irregular migrants from Ethiopia in Saudi Arabia, according to the IOM. Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, at least 10,000 Ethiopians on average were being deported each month. However, Ethiopian officials requested a moratorium because of the pandemic. BBC News reported that in recent months, Ethiopia has struggled to create sufficient space in quarantine to welcome their nationals back and make sure they are not bringing the virus with them. Amnesty International interviewed 12 detained Ethiopian migrants regarding conditions in the al-Dayer detention centre, Jizan central prison, and prisons in Jeddah and Mecca. Conditions are especially dire in al-Dayer and Jizan, where detainees report sharing cells with 350 people. Two migrants told Amnesty that they had personally seen the dead bodies of three men from Ethiopia, Yemen, and Somalia, in al-Dayer. The report did however mention that “all those interviewed said they knew of people who had died in detention, and four people said they had seen bodies themselves.” Amnesty International urged the Ethiopian government to urgently facilitate the voluntary repatriation of its nationals, while asking the Saudi authorities to improve detention conditions in the meantime. Ethiopia has planned to repatriate 2,000 detained migrants by mid-October, Tsion Teklu, a state minister at Ethiopia’s foreign ministry, told AFP last month. The minister said that the total number of Ethiopian migrants in Saudi Arabian detention facilities was 16,000 this year. In September, three migrants told AFP that visiting Ethiopian diplomats had warned them to stop speaking about detention conditions.</p>	2020
<p>Latest Update</p>	<p>Poor conditions of immigration detention in Saudi-Arabia have been called out several times by Human Rights Watch (HRW). Reports of migrant trafficking and overcrowding in the country’s facilities are numerous. In April, thousands of Ethiopians were expelled from Yemen as Houthi forces declared them “coronavirus carriers” (see our 4 August Yemen update). They were forced to the Saudi border where they waited for days without food or water, until Saudi Arabia allowed hundreds of them into the country. Immediately placed in detention, families were separated as the groups were divided between men and women. HRW reports that two facilities, in al-Dayer and Jizan, are likely to be holding the Ethiopian migrants. After conducting several interviews with migrants in these centres, HRW describes the detention as “arbitrary and abusive.” The reports uniformly describe the “overcrowding, blocked and overflowing toilets, lack of beds and blankets, lack of medical care including prenatal care for those who were pregnant, inadequate food and water, and poor toilet facilities. They described serious skin problems they said were caused by the unhygienic conditions.” In a video published by HRW, the floor in al-Dayer detention centre is flooded due to the poor quality of the roof. Women are seen walking and sitting in the water as one of them mentions “there are people’s faeces everywhere.” On 21 June, while confirming that there were no Covid-19 cases among prisoners, the Saudi Ministry of Interior announced that the government was working on establishing virtual communication channels between inmates and their families.</p>	2020
	<p>Although the UN urged Saudi Arabia to cease deportations in April, Riyadh has continued the practice throughout the pandemic. Since March, 2,870 Ethiopian migrant workers have been deported and Ethiopian officials have reported that as of the end of July, some 927 of these deportees were infected with the virus (although the true number is believed to be much higher.) In a country that has ill-equipped medical facilities and few medical resources in rural areas, the high numbers of cases amongst deportees is raising significant concerns. (For more on Saudi’s deportations, see 14 April update.) Many of those deported have previously been held in overcrowded facilities such as Al Shumaysi Detention Centre--an enormous complex that can hold up to 32,000 persons. Detainees in this facility are held in bunk-bed filled halls, which confine up to 80 persons. As one detainee reported to the Guardian, “We are packed as animals. We sleep on metal beds with no mattress, no proper sanitation. ... We drink water from the toilet if you have money you can buy clean water. If you don’t have any, you just take dirty water from the toilet.” Noting the dangers that squalid conditions such as these can pose on confined populations, Human Rights Watch has urged Saudi authorities to release detainees and take steps to reform its detention policies. In June, the country’s Interior Ministry announced that migrant workers found violating quarantine restrictions in the country (such as gathering in groups of more than five persons) would face fines of up to 200,000 SAR (approximately 53,000 USD), deportation, and a life-long re-entry ban.</p>	2020
	<p>Thousands of Ethiopian workers - including large numbers of domestic workers - were deported from Saudi Arabia (as well as the UAE) over the weekend (10-12 April). Deported on cargo planes, some were reported to be displaying symptoms of Covid-19, although none had been tested for the virus. According to the UAE government, they were vulnerable to spreading the disease and thus needed to be removed from the country. Ethiopia’s Health Minister confirmed that thousands had been deported from both UAE and Saudi Arabia, and that the country expected thousands more to be returned in the next 15 days. As the UN Humanitarian co-ordinator for Ethiopia has said, “This is simply not the moment for mass deportations from a public health perspective. ... These mass deportations, without any pre-departure medical screening are likely to exacerbate the spread of Covid-19 to the region and beyond.”</p>	2020
	<p>On 26 March, the state-backed Human Rights Commission (HRC) announced that 250 foreign detainees - held on non-violent immigration and residency offences - had been released from detention facilities. A HRC spokesman stated that more releases were to be expected. Previously, on 18 March 2020, Saudi authorities decided to close tribunals for two weeks and suspend visits to prisoners.</p>	2020

Relevant international treaties and date of ratification				
International treaties	Name		Ratification Year	
	CRPD, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities		2008	
	CTOCSP, Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime		2007	
	CTOCTP, Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children		2007	
	CEDAW, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women		2000	
	CAT, Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment		1997	
	ICERD, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination		1997	
	CRC, Convention on the Rights of the Child		1996	
	VCCR, Vienna Convention on Consular Relations		1988	
Ratio of relevant international treaties ratified	8/19			
Relevant international treaties and date of ratification				
Individual complaints procedure	Name		Acceptance Year	
	CRPD, Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities		2008	
Relevant international treaties and date of ratification				
Ratio of complaints procedures accepted	Number		Observation Date	
	1/5		2017	
Relevant international treaties and date of ratification				
Relevant recommendations issued by treaty bodies	Name	Recommendation Excerpt	Recommendation Year	
	Committee on the Rights of the Child	The Committee is deeply concerned about the imprisonment of female non-Saudi (migrant) workers for their "illegal pregnancies" and the living conditions of non-Saudi (migrant) workers' children living in prison with their parents. 70. [...] The Committee urges the State party to end as a matter of priority the arrest and imprisonment of unmarried non-Saudi (migrant) women who become pregnant, including victims of sexual violence. It further recommends that the State party develop and implement adequate alternative care for children who are removed from prison and allow them to maintain personal relations and direct contact with their mothers remaining in prison.	2006	
Regional treaties, regulations, and directives				
Regional legal instruments	Name	Year of Ratification (Treaty) / Transposed (Directive) / Adoption (Regulation)		
	AC, Arab Charter on Human Rights	2009		
Non treaty-based international human rights mechanisms				
Visits by special procedures of the Human Rights Council	Name		Year of Visit	Observation Date
	Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences		2008	2015

Non treaty-based international human rights mechanisms			
Relevant recommendations of the UN Universal Periodic Review	Recomendation Issued	Year Issued	Observation Date
	Yes	2009	2017
	No	2013	2017

INSTITUTIONAL INDICATORS

Governing structures

Federal or centralized governing system	Federal or centralized governing system	Observation Date
	Centralized system	2018
	Centralized system	2015

Governing structures

Centralized or decentralized immigration authority	Centralized or decentralized immigration authority	Observation Date
	Centralized immigration authority	2018

Institutions responsible for immigration detention

Custodial authority	Agency	Ministry	Ministry Typology	Observation Date
	General Administration of Passports	Ministry of Interior	Interior or Home Affairs	2018
	Saudi Immigration Police (Rijal Al-Jawazat)	Ministry of Interior	Interior or Home Affairs	2015
	Saudi Immigration Police (Rijal Al-Jawazat)	Ministry of Interior	Interior or Home Affairs	2007

Institutions responsible for immigration detention

Apprehending authorities	Name	Agency	Ministry	Observation Date
	Administrative Arrest Unit	Police		2018
	Criminal Investigation Unit	Police		2018

Institutions responsible for immigration detention

Detention Facility Management	Entity Name		Entity Type	Observation Date
	Expatriate Affairs Office at the General Administration of Passports		Governmental	2018
	Police		Government-local	2015
	Saudi Immigration Police (Rijal Al-Jawazat)		Governmental	2015

Institutions responsible for immigration detention

Types of detention facilities used in practice	Immigration detention centre (Administrative)	Immigration field office (Administrative)	Transit centre (Administrative)	Reception centre (Administrative)	Offshore detention centre (Administrative)	Hospital (Administrative)	Border guard (Administrative)	Police station (Criminal)	National penitentiary (Criminal)	Local prison (Criminal)	Juvenile detention centre (Criminal)	Informal camp (Ad hoc)	Immigration detention centre (Ad hoc)	Surge facility (Ad hoc)	Observation Date
	Yes								Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes

Detention monitoring institutions			
Authorized monitoring institutions	Institution	Institution Type	Observation Date
	National Society for Human Rights	National Human Rights Institution (or Ombudsperson) (NHRI)	2018
	Bureau of Investigation and Public Prosecution	Judiciary organs	2008
Detention monitoring institutions			
Is the national human rights institution (NHRI) recognized as independent?	Is the NHRI recognized as independent by the International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions?		Observation Date
	No		2018
Detention monitoring institutions			
Does NHRI carry out visits?	Does NHRI carry out visits in practice?		Observation Date
	Yes		2018
Detention monitoring institutions			
Does NHRI have capacity to receive complaints?	Does NHRI have capacity to receive complaints?		Observation Date
	Yes		2018
Detention monitoring institutions			
Does NHRI publicly release reports on immigration detention?	Does NHRI publicly release reports on immigration detention?		Observation Date
	Yes		2016

More information about immigration detention in Saudi Arabia is available at the website of the Global Detention Project (www.globaldetentionproject.org)