


# Saudi Arabia Immigration Detention Data Profile

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

|   |            |      |  |               |      |
|---|------------|------|--|---------------|------|
| <b>Population</b>   | 34,800,000 | 2020 | <b>International migrants</b>                    | 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 |
| <b>International migrants as a percentage of the population</b> | 37.84      | 2018 | <b>Estimated number of undocumented migrants</b> | Not Available | 2017 |
|   | 32.3       | 2015 |  |               |      |
|   | 32         | 2013 |  |               |      |
|   | 27         | 2010 |  |               |      |
| <b>Refugees</b>   | 315        | 2019 | <b>Total number of new asylum applications</b>   | 266           | 2019 |
|   | 266        | 2018 |  | 50            | 2017 |
|   | 155        | 2017 |  | 35            | 2016 |
|   | 136        | 2016 |  | 12            | 2014 |
|   | 125        | 2015 |  | 22            | 2013 |
|   | 561        | 2014 |  |               |      |
| <b>Refugee recognition rate</b>                                 | 100        | 2013 | <b>Stateless persons</b>                         | 70,000        | 2017 |
|   |            |      |  | 70,000        | 2016 |
|   |            |      |  | 70,000        | 2015 |
|   |            |      |  | 70,000        | 2014 |

| <b>DOMESTIC LAW</b>                        |  |                                    |                         |                          |
|--|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>LEGAL TRADITION</b>                     |  |                                    |                         |                          |
| <b>Legal tradition</b>                     | <b>Name</b>  |                                    | <b>Observation Date</b> |                          |
|  | Muslim law   |                                    |                         |                          |
| <b>LAWS AND REGULATIONS</b>                |  |                                    |                         |                          |
| <b>Constitutional guarantees?</b>          | <b>Yes/No</b>  | <b>Constitution and Articles</b>   | <b>Year Adopted</b>     | <b>Last Year Amended</b> |
|  | Yes  | The Basic Law of Governance. 1992. | 1992                    | 1992                     |
| <b>LAWS AND REGULATIONS</b>                |  |                                    |                         |                          |
| <b>Core pieces of national legislation</b> | <b>Name</b>  |                                    | <b>Year Adopted</b>     | <b>Last Year Amended</b> |
|  | 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 |
|----------------------|--|------------------|
| <b>Latest Update</b> | <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>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                     | 2015             |

| 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](http://www.globaldetentionproject.org))