

Yemen

Islam is the official state religion of Yemen and the constitution states that Islamic law is the source of all legislation. Freedom of religion, speech and the press are all severely restricted. Yemen is a member of the League of Arab States (LAS), as well as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Yemen has been devastated since March 2015 in a war between Houthi separatist rebels who took control of territory in the north (Saada province and surrounding areas), against government forces backed by a Saudi-led multinational coalition. As of January 2017 the United Nations said that at least 10,000 people had been killed in the conflict. A significant majority of fatalities appear to be civilians killed in airstrikes by the Saudi-led multi-national coalition, which receives logistical and intelligence support from the United States, UK and France. The conflict and blockade have left many dependent on aid. The Saudi-led coalition of predominantly Sunni Arab states considers that the Houthi rebels are supported by the Shia power Iran, and therefore the conflict may be considered a proxy war.

<bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-38646066>

<bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-29319423>

Constitution and government	Education and children's rights	Family, community, society, religious courts and tribunals	Freedom of expression advocacy of humanist values
<p><u>State legislation is largely or entirely derived from religious law or by religious authorities</u> <u>The non-religious are barred from holding government office</u></p>		<p><u>It is illegal to register an explicitly Humanist, atheist, secularist or other non-religious NGO or other human rights organization, or such groups are persecuted by authorities</u></p>	<p><u>Expression of core Humanist principles on democracy, freedom and human rights is brutally repressed</u> <u>'Apostasy' or conversion from a specific religion is outlawed and punishable by death</u> <u>It is illegal to advocate secularism or church-state separation, or such advocacy is suppressed</u></p>
	<p><u>Religious or ideological instruction is mandatory in all or most state-funded schools with no secular or humanist alternative</u></p>	<p><u>Systemic religious privilege results in significant social discrimination</u> <u>Prohibitive interreligious social control (including interreligious marriage bans)</u> <u>Religious control over family law or legislation on moral matters</u></p>	<p><u>'Blasphemy' is outlawed or criticism of religion is restricted and punishable with a prison sentence</u></p>

Constitution and government

Education and children's rights

Family, community, society, religious courts and tribunals

Freedom of expression advocacy of humanist values

There is an established church or state religion
State-funding of religious institutions or salaries, or discriminatory tax exemptions

There is state funding of at least some religious schools

Legend

Constitution and government

Yemen imposes substantial restrictions on freedom of religion or belief and the freedoms of expression, assembly and association. The constitution does not specifically protect religious freedom specifically, and other laws and policies restrict it.

The constitution declares that Islam is the state religion and that Islamic law is the source of all legislation. The local interpretation of Islamic law serves as a basis for all law, although Islamic jurisprudence coexists with secular common law and civil code models in a hybrid legal system.

The government prohibits proselytizing directed at Muslims.

A non-Muslim can run for parliament, although the constitution restricts candidates for president to those who practice their "Islamic duties." The law does not prohibit a political party based on religion, but states that a party cannot claim to be the sole representative of a religion, to be against Islam, or to restrict its membership to a particular religious group.

Education and children's rights

Public schools provide instruction in Islam and not in any other religion or secular alternative. The curriculum applicable in all state schools contains lessons on Quranic pseudo-science (i.e. claims that modern science is referenced in the Quran, by interpreting various passages that are usually ambiguous, abstract or poetic).

Muslim citizens may opt to attend private schools that do not teach Islam. Almost all non-Muslim students are foreigners and attend private schools.

Family, community and society

Family law prohibits marriage between a Muslim and an apostate; by law, apostates have no parental or child-custody rights.

Some local customs, codified in various laws and policies, discriminate against women and persons of non-Muslim religious groups.

This includes significant interreligious discrimination. By law, Muslim women may not marry non-Muslims; Muslim men may not marry women who are not Muslim, Jewish, or Christian, or who have renounced Islam.

Although these restrictions are enshrined in law and upheld in practice, the government does not in fact maintain records of an individual's religious identity. Religious groups do not need to register with the state. Government officials have stated that such records are not kept in order to avoid sparking sectarian rivalries.

Freedom of expression, advocacy of humanist values

The government does not respect freedoms of expression and the press. Article 103 of the Press and Publications Law bans direct personal criticism of the head of state and outlaws published material that "might spread a spirit of dissent and division among the people" or that "leads to the spread of ideas contrary to the principles of the Yemeni Revolution" or that "[distorts] the image of the Yemeni, Arab, or Islamic heritage." The state maintains a monopoly over terrestrial television and radio. Yemen's most popular newspaper, Al-Ayyam, was forcibly closed by the government in 2009 and remains closed.

Yemeni sources, including the Yemeni Journalist Syndicate and the Center for the Rehabilitation and Protection of Freedom of the Press, estimated nearly 500 cases of government harassment against local journalists during Arab Spring uprising in the first half of 2011. Access to the internet is not widespread, and the authorities block websites they deem offensive.

"Blasphemy" and "Apostasy" laws

The "blasphemy" laws prohibit "ridicule" of religion.

Article 194 of the penal code states:

"It is punishable by imprisonment not exceeding 3 years, and a fine, whoever:

1. Publicly broadcasts [or communicates] views including ridicule and contempt of religion, in its beliefs, practices, or teachings.
2. Whoever publicly incites contempt for people or communities, thus disturbing public peace."

There is conflicting evidence about whether an act of blasphemy could also be tried in a Sharia court and be subject to a death penalty as a *hudud* crime.

The act of "apostasy" is punishable by death. Under Yemeni law "denouncing Islam" or any blasphemy conviction may constitute evidence of "apostasy".

While the rate of capital punishment in Yemen is very high, the government does not enforce the death penalty for apostasy in practice: the law allows those charged with apostasy three opportunities to repent, which absolves them from the death penalty. It is unclear whether a moratorium is in place or whether an "apostate" who refused to repent would face the death penalty.

On 15 September 2018, criminal proceedings were initiated against 24 individuals, mostly from the Baha'i minority. The charges include apostasy, the teaching of the Baha'i faith, and espionage. If convicted, the latter is punishable with the death penalty. The defendants were not investigated nor were they informed by the prosecution of the pending charges against them prior to the start of the trial.

<ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23704&LangID=E>

Highlighted cases

Mohammed Atboush, a medical student living in the port-city of Aden, reportedly survived an assassination attempt in January 2017, which is suspected to be linked to a widely-known book he wrote criticising Qur'anic pseudo-science. The son of a judge, Atboush also takes an interest in philosophy, and his book, *Critique of Scientific Inimitability*, was published February 2016 by Masarat Publishing & Distribution in Kuwait. The book critically examines claims that the Qur'an contains references to modern science. Atboush told al-bab.com that on 29 December 2016 he was shot at outside his own family home. The shots missed. The masked assailant fired twice before getting back into his car which then drove off.

<al-bab.com/blog/2017/01/yemeni-who-questioned-quran-science-survives-assassination-attempt>

Omar Mohammad Bataweel was abducted and murdered in April 2016, having been accused of being an atheist over a number of social media posts. His body was found the day after his abduction from the Crater district of Aden. He had been shot dead. Bataweel had been accused of being an atheist after making Facebook posts deemed by others to be "critical of Islam". Bataweel had reportedly received death threats from extremists responding to the posts. Yemeni Nobel Peace Laureate Tawakkol Karman (journalist, activist and politician) commented on the killing, blaming extremist vigilantes, and saying it was a result of "takfiri ideology". She called on the authorities to bring the killers to justice.

<alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2016/4/26/yemeni-murdered-by-extremists-after-being-accused-of-atheism>

On 14 May 2017, **Amgad Abdulrahman**, a 22-year-old law student and member of a cultural club set up by secularists, was shot three times at an internet cafe in Aden. Although no one took responsibility for the killing, friends of the victim suspect that Abdulrahman was shot by Islamist Militants who are waging a campaign of persecution against secularists.

Soldiers from a local security force comprising Salafist Islamists, refused to let his family bury his body in the city cemetery as "he was not a Muslim". In December 2016, Abdulrahman had been detained at a military base for being an atheist but was freed days later.

<reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-assassination/secular-yemenis-live-in-fear-after-student-is-killed-in-aden-idUSKBN19H10E>