

SAUDI ARABIA 2022 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a monarchy ruled by King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud who is head of state. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud is prime minister and head of government. The 1992 Basic Law provides for the system of governance, rights of citizens, and powers and duties of the government, and it provides that the Quran and Sunna (the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad) serve as the country's constitution. It specifies that the rulers of the country shall be male descendants of the founder, King Abdulaziz (Ibn Saud).

The State Security Presidency, National Guard, and Ministries of Defense and Interior, all which report to the king, are responsible for law enforcement and maintenance of order. The State Security Presidency includes the General Directorate of Investigation (*mabahith*), Special Security Forces, and Special Emergency Forces; police are under the Ministry of Interior. Civilian authorities generally maintained effective control over the security forces. There were credible reports that members of the security forces committed numerous abuses.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: unlawful or arbitrary killings, including extrajudicial killings; enforced disappearances; torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment by government agents; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; political prisoners or detainees; transnational repression against individuals in another country; serious problems with the independence of the judiciary; arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy; punishment of family members for alleged offenses by a relative; serious abuses in a conflict, including related to civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure as a result of airstrikes in Yemen; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media, including unjustified arrests or prosecutions against journalists and others, and censorship; serious restrictions on internet freedom; substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, including overly restrictive laws on the organization, funding, or operation of nongovernmental organizations and civil society organizations; particularly severe restrictions of religious freedom;

bargaining power of the foreign workers' country. There were reports that some migrant workers were employed on terms to which they had not agreed and experienced problems, such as delays in the payment of wages, inability to change employers, or changes in working hours and conditions. There were reports that migrant workers, especially domestic workers, were vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, and conditions contravening labor laws, including nonpayment of wages, working for periods in excess of the 48-hour workweek, working for periods longer than the prescribed eight-hour workday without due compensation, and restrictions on movement due to passport confiscation. There were also reports of physical, psychological, sexual, and verbal abuse. Domestic workers were unable to remove themselves from dangerous situations.

Some employers physically prevented workers from leaving or threatened them with nonpayment of wages if they left. Sponsoring employers, who controlled foreign workers' ability to remain employed in the country, usually held foreign workers' passports, a practice prohibited by law. In some contract disputes, to prevent the employee from leaving the country until resolution of the dispute, sponsors asked authorities to coerce the employee into accepting a disadvantageous settlement in lieu of risking deportation without any settlement.

While some foreign workers were able to contact the labor offices of their embassies for assistance, domestic workers faced challenges when attempting to gain access to their embassies, including restrictions on their freedom of movement and telephone access, confiscation of their passports, and being subjected to threats and verbal and physical abuse. During the year several dozen (primarily) female domestic workers sought shelter at their embassies' safehouses to escape physical and sexual abuse by their employers. Those workers usually sought legal assistance from their embassies and government agencies to obtain end-of-service benefits and exit visas. In addition to their embassies, some domestic servants could contact the NSHR, HRC, Interministerial General Secretariat to Combat Human Trafficking, and the Migrant Workers' Welfare Department, which provided services to safeguard migrant workers' rights and protect them from abuse. Some were able to apply to the offices of regional governors and lodge an appeal with the Board of Grievances against decisions by those authorities.

Occupational safety and health regulations do not cover farmers, herdsmen,

