



WHO GUARDS THE GUARDIANS?

EVALUATION OF UNHRC CANDIDATES FOR 2026-2028



ABOUT THE COVER

Left to right: Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, President of Egypt, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, (*Reuters/Charles Platiau*), and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif (*Arif Hudaverdi Yaman/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images*).

ABOUT UN WATCH

Founded in 1993, UN Watch is a non-governmental organization based in Geneva, Switzerland that monitors the United Nations by the yardstick of its charter and protects human rights worldwide. For more information, please visit our website: www.unwatch.org.

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Evaluation of UNHRC Candidates

This report evaluates the candidate countries seeking election to the UN Human Rights Council for the 2026-2028 term in the vote slated to be held at the General Assembly on October 14, 2025. Our evaluations apply the membership criteria established by UNGA Resolution 60/251, which requires members to “uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights” and to “fully cooperate with the Council.” In particular, we examined each candidate’s (a) record of domestic human rights protection; and (b) UN voting record.

The report finds as follows:

UNQUALIFIED

Five out of fourteen candidates have poor records and fail to qualify:

Egypt, Iraq, Pakistan, Vietnam, Angola

QUESTIONABLE

Four candidates have problematic human rights and/or UN voting records:

South Africa, Mauritius, India, Ecuador

QUALIFIED

Only five out of fourteen candidate countries are qualified to be Council members:

United Kingdom, Italy, Estonia, Slovenia, Chile

The absence of competition this year in all five regional slates undermines the very premise and rationale for holding elections. Nevertheless, this report emphasizes to UN member states that they have the legal right, and moral obligation, to refrain from voting for Unqualified candidates, even if those happen to be running on closed slates.

Instead, as detailed in the report, during the ballot member states can defeat unopposed candidacies, thereby freeing up the process for qualified alternatives to come forward. In regard to candidate countries deemed Questionable, they should, at a minimum, be asked to commit to redressing the shortcomings identified in this report.

AFRICAN GROUP

CLOSED SLATE: 4 CANDIDATES FOR 4 SEATS

Replacing: Algeria, Morocco, South Africa, Sudan

COUNTRY	FH RATING	ECONOMIST RATING	RSF RATING	UN VOTING RECORD	MEMBERSHIP SUITABILITY
Angola	Not Free	Hybrid Regime	Difficult	Negative	Unqualified
Egypt	Not Free	Authoritarian	Very Serious	Negative	Unqualified
Mauritius	Free	Full Democracy	Problematic	Mixed	Questionable
South Africa	Free	Flawed Democracy	Satisfactory	Mixed	Questionable

ASIAN GROUP

CLOSED SLATE: 4 CANDIDATES FOR 4 SEATS

Replacing: Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Vietnam

COUNTRY	FH RATING	ECONOMIST RATING	RSF RATING	UN VOTING RECORD	MEMBERSHIP SUITABILITY
India	Partly Free	Flawed Democracy	Very Serious	Negative	Questionable
Iraq	Not Free	Authoritarian	Very Serious	Negative	Unqualified
Pakistan	Partly Free	Authoritarian	Very Serious	Negative	Unqualified
Vietnam	Not Free	Authoritarian	Very Serious	Negative	Unqualified

FH = Freedom House

RSF = Reporters Sans Frontières Press Freedom Index

LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN GROUP

CLOSED SLATE: 2 CANDIDATES FOR 2 SEATS

Replacing: Chile, Costa Rica

COUNTRY	FH RATING	ECONOMIST RATING	RSF RATING	UN VOTING RECORD	MEMBERSHIP SUITABILITY
Chile	Free	Flawed Democracy	Problematic	Positive	Qualified
Ecuador	Partly Free	Hybrid Regime	Difficult	Mixed	Questionable

WESTERN EUROPEAN AND OTHERS GROUP

CLOSED SLATE: 2 CANDIDATES FOR 2 SEATS

Replacing: Belgium, Germany

COUNTRY	FH RATING	ECONOMIST RATING	RSF RATING	UN VOTING RECORD	MEMBERSHIP SUITABILITY
Italy	Free	Flawed Democracy	Problematic	Positive	Qualified
United Kingdom	Free	Full Democracy	Satisfactory	Positive	Qualified

EASTERN EUROPEAN GROUP

CLOSED SLATE: 2 CANDIDATES FOR 2 SEATS

Replacing: Georgia, Romania

COUNTRY	FH RATING	ECONOMIST RATING	RSF RATING	UN VOTING RECORD	MEMBERSHIP SUITABILITY
Estonia	Free	Full Democracy	Good	Positive	Qualified
Slovenia	Free	Flawed Democracy	Satisfactory	Positive	Qualified

Methodology

The presence of gross and systematic abusers of human rights on the UN Human Rights Council contradicts its own charter. According to UNGA Resolution 60/251, which established the Council in 2006, General Assembly members are obliged to elect states to the Council by considering “the candidates’ contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights and their voluntary pledges and commitments made thereto.” The resolution further provides that consideration ought to be given to whether the candidate can meet membership obligations (a) “to uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights” and (b) to “fully cooperate with the Council.”

Guided by these criteria, this report evaluates each candidate’s suitability for election to the Human Rights Council by examining its record of human rights protection at home—and its record of human rights promotion at the UN. Under the criteria established by UNGA Resolution 60/251, it is clear that the UN should not elect any country to the Council which has either a poor record of respecting the human rights of its own people, or which is likely to use its Council membership to vote to frustrate the protection of human rights victims or to undermine the principles of individual human rights.

Citing these criteria, in June 2017, the Netherlands on behalf of 47 countries—including the U.S., UK, France, Germany, Italy, and Canada—issued a joint statement to further HRC membership requirements.¹ They pledged to “strive to ensure competitive HRC membership elections,” and to “engage in voting based on human rights considerations consistent with GA resolution 60/251.” The stated goal was to “help strengthen the Council’s effectiveness and credibility.” However, that pledge has not resulted in any change to the HRC election process. In fact, this year there is no competition whatsoever in all of the five regional slates.

The country evaluations in this report consider a totality of human rights indicators, including information, ratings, and analysis from the following sources:

- *The Economist Democracy Index (2024)*, which considers a country’s electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, government functioning, political participation, and political culture, and ranks it as: Full Democracy, Flawed Democracy, Hybrid Regime or Authoritarian Regime.

- *Reporters Sans Frontières Worldwide Press Freedom Index (2025)*, which measures the degree of freedom that journalists and news organizations enjoy in each country, and the efforts made by state authorities to respect and ensure respect for this freedom, ranking each country as Good, Satisfactory, Problematic, Difficult or Very Serious.

- *Freedom in the World (2025)*, the annual survey by Freedom House that measures political rights and civil liberties worldwide, ranking countries as: Free, Partly Free or Not Free.

- *Voting record at the UN General Assembly*, examining countries by how they voted at the UNGA on ten different thematic and country-specific human rights proposals (listed in the table below). Countries were credited with two points for voting to support human rights, zero points for opposing human rights and one point for abstaining or being absent. Countries scoring between 15 to 20 are ranked as having Positive voting records, those scoring 8 to 14 are Mixed and those scoring 0 to 7 are Negative.

1. *Joint Statement by the Netherlands on behalf of 47 countries, Human Rights Council* (June 23, 2017), available at www.unwatch.org/joint-statement-improving-unhrc-membership/.

Voting Record: Table of UN General Assembly Resolutions

RESOLUTION	EXPLANATION	DESIRED VOTE
Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran (A/RES/79/183)	Condemns Iran for widespread use of force against non-violent protesters, executions, and abuses against women.	Yes
Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastapol, Ukraine (A/RES/79/184)	Condemns Russia's occupation of Crimea and its human rights abuses therein.	Yes
Situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic (A/RES/79/185)	Condemns widespread and systematic gross violations of human rights by the Syrian regime.	Yes
Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia (A/RES/79/292)	Criticizes forced displacement of ethnic Georgians from their homes in connection with the 2008 conflict, calls for their return.	Yes
Suspension of the rights of membership of the Russian Federation in the Human Rights Council (A/RES/ES-11/3)	Expels Russia from the Human Rights Council.	Yes
Principles of the Charter of the United Nations underlying a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine (A/RES/ES-11/6)	Condemns Russia for war in Ukraine.	Yes
Promotion of a democratic and equitable international order (A/RES/79/168)	Cuban-sponsored text undermines concept of individual human rights by promoting new collective rights that have no clear definition, such as "the right to international solidarity."	No
Human rights and unilateral coercive measures (A/RES/79/167)	NAM-sponsored text that shields human rights abusers by denying the right to sanction such regimes. Submitted by China, Russia, and Cuba.	No
Promotion of peace as a vital requirement for the full enjoyment of all human rights by all (A/RES/79/169)	Co-sponsored by Cuba, China, North Korea, Russia, Venezuela, and others, this resolution empowers regimes to violate human rights under the pretext of peace, implying that the absence of peace could justify violating human rights. No Western democracy supported the resolution.	No

CALL TO ACTION

OPPOSE UNQUALIFIED CANDIDATES

In the upcoming October 2025 election, the UN General Assembly's 193 member states will be asked to fill 14 of the 47 Human Rights Council seats.

We call upon member states to refrain from voting in favor of Angola, Egypt, Iraq, Pakistan, Vietnam, and Angola. These candidates' records—on respecting human rights at home and in UN voting—fail to meet the UN criteria for Council membership. We also call on South Africa, Mauritius, Ecuador, and India to commit to improving their human rights and/or UN voting records before they can be deemed suitable.

CLOSED SLATES DEFEAT PURPOSE OF ELECTIONS

Regrettably, there is no competition in all five regional groups this year. Closed slates are typically the product of backroom deals fixing an equal number of candidates to the number of available seats. The result deprives UN member states of the opportunity to exercise the responsibilities given to them by the 2006 UNGA resolution creating the Council.

Because of the poor records of many of this year's candidates, this election also threatens to further weaken the Council, which still struggles to improve on the reputation of its widely disparaged predecessor, the Commission on Human Rights.

PROCEDURE FOR OPPOSING UNQUALIFIED CANDIDATES ON CLOSED SLATES

Many UN member states mistakenly assume that their task is simply to ratify the pre-selections of the closed slates fixed by regional groups. The truth, however, is that nothing obliges any country to vote for any candidate, even if they appear on a non-competitive list. Moreover, it is equally true that every candidate, including those on closed slates, must receive the affirmative votes of 97 countries, being an absolute majority of the GA membership.

Accordingly, to allow the Human Rights Council to live up to the ideals expressed in the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we urge UN member states to oppose all unqualified states in the secret ballot. For example, even though the African Group submitted a closed slate, UN member states should fulfill their duties under UNGA Resolution 60/251 by refraining to vote for Egypt and Angola.

This would allow other, better-qualified candidates to come forward. To successfully block an unqualified candidate, Rule 94 of the UNGA Rules of Procedure provides that a majority of states must vote against a candidate country on three successive ballots. As the Rule explains, "after the third inconclusive ballot, votes may be cast for any eligible person or Member." This would open the process to other states not already on the ballot. Moreover, by casting write-in votes for the best-qualified alternatives eligible, the UNGA could thereby convince hesitating governments that they would have a realistic prospect, thus encouraging them to present their candidacy.

ANALYSIS OF "UNQUALIFIED" CANDIDATES

Following is our analysis of the five Unqualified candidates:

Egypt, Iraq, Pakistan, Vietnam, and Angola

EGYPT

HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD

Egypt commits serious human rights violations, including:² Credible reports of: torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; arbitrary arrest and detention; instances of transnational repression against individuals in another country; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including unjustified arrests or prosecutions of journalists and censorship; significant restrictions on workers' freedom of association; and significant presence of some of the worst forms of child labor.

Egypt is an authoritarian regime under the rule of President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi who first took power

in a 2013 coup that overthrew the previous Muslim Brotherhood government of Mohammad Morsi.³ Political opposition is all but non-existent as regime critics face harsh imprisonment, death sentences, and state violence.

For instance, in the December 2023 presidential election, prominent presidential challenger Ahmad Al-Tantawi was forced to suspend his campaign after failing to secure the required signatures when over a hundred of his supporters were arrested. Months later, Al-Tantawi himself was sentenced to one year in prison on sham charges related to the election.⁴ Last year, Cairo's appellate court upheld his sentence despite reported due process violations.⁵

There is practically no freedom of expression in Egypt while independent media is completely repressed.⁶ According to Reporters Without Borders,

2. *2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Egypt*, U.S. State Department (August 12, 2025), <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/egypt/>.

3. *Freedom in the World 2025: Egypt*, Freedom House (February 2025), <https://freedomhouse.org/country/egypt/freedom-world/2025>.

4. *Id.*

5. *Comment by UN Human Rights Office spokesperson Marta Hurtado on Egypt*, OHCHR (May 31, 2024), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/state-ments-and-speeches/2024/05/comment-un-human-rights-office-spokesperson-marta-hurtado-egypt>.

6. *Freedom in the World 2025: Egypt*, Freedom House (February 2025), <https://freedomhouse.org/country/egypt/freedom-world/2025>.



Egyptian police arrest a child in Cairo, Egypt, 2 June 2017 [Tareq al-Gabas/Apaimages]

20 journalists were imprisoned in Egypt as of May 2025.⁷ This includes Egyptian-British blogger and activist Alaa Abdel Fattah who has spent most of the last fourteen years unlawfully and arbitrarily detained.⁸ Despite having completed his most recent five year sentence on illegitimate charges related to “spreading false news” about police brutality, his sentence was effectively extended until 2027 after state authorities refused to acknowledge the time he spent in pre-trial detention.⁹ In May 2025, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention ruled Egypt’s ongoing detention of Fattah to be arbitrary.¹⁰

This year, Egypt’s House of Representatives also approved a new Code of Criminal Procedure which will further limit due process and rights surrounding pre-trial detention.¹¹

Discrimination against women, LGBT+ people, and minority religious groups also remains a serious problem. For example, laws based on religious affiliation lead to discrimination against women in marital, divorce, and custody matters while different rules governing Muslims and Christians commonly result in discrimination against the latter.¹² In 2024, there were a spate of attacks against Coptic Christians by Muslim extremists.¹³

Despite being a member of the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, Egypt has discriminated against Palestinian refugees from Gaza, denying them refugee status, legal work rights, health coverage, bank access, and educational opportunities for their children.¹⁴ In December 2024, President Al-Sisi ratified a new asylum law which further restricts the right to seek asylum and limits due process guarantees.¹⁵

UN Voting Record NEGATIVE

Egypt was last a member of the Human Rights Council from 2017 to 2019. During that time, it opposed resolutions speaking out for human rights victims in Belarus, Burundi, Eritrea, Nicaragua, the Philippines, and Venezuela. It also supported counterproductive resolutions that undermined individual human rights or addressed issues beyond the competency of the Council.

At the General Assembly, Egypt failed to support resolutions on behalf of human rights victims in Iran, Syria, Crimea, and Georgia by abstaining. Egypt also supported counterproductive resolutions that undermined individual human rights by elevating vague and undefined rights such as the “right to peace” above universally recognized individual human rights and shielded human rights abusers through a resolution denying the right to sanction such regimes.

7. *RSF welcomes UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention’s Call for Egypt to Immediately release British citizen Alaa Abdel Fattah*, **RSF** (May 28, 2025), <https://rsf.org/en/rsf-welcomes-un-working-group-arbitrary-detention-s-call-egypt-immediately-release-british-citizen>.

8. *Egypt: Experts urge release of Alaa Abd El-Fattah and others silenced under repressive national security laws*, **OHCHR** (February 27, 2025), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/02/egypt-experts-urge-release-alaa-abd-el-fattah-and-others-silenced-under>.

9. *Egypt refuses to free jailed activist Alaa Abdel Fattah: sister*, **AFP** (September 29, 2024), <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2024/09/egypt-refuses-free-jailed-activist-alaa-abdel-fattah-sister>.

10. *RSF welcomes UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention’s Call for Egypt to Immediately release British citizen Alaa Abdel Fattah*, **RSF** (May 28, 2025), <https://rsf.org/en/rsf-welcomes-un-working-group-arbitrary-detention-s-call-egypt-immediately-release-british-citizen>.

11. *Egypt: Concerns over the draft Code of Criminal Procedure*, **OHCHR** (May 13, 2025), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2025/05/egypt-concerns-over-draft-code-criminal-procedure>.

12. *Freedom in the World 2025: Egypt*, **Freedom House** (February 2025), <https://freedomhouse.org/country/egypt/freedom-world/2025>.

13. *Copts attacked in Egypt, CSW reports*, **Church Times** (January 5, 2024), *Coptic Christians are attacked in two villages in Egypt*, **Christian Daily International** (April 26, 2024), <https://www.christiandaily.com/news/coptic-christians-are-attacked-in-two-villages-in-egypt>.

14. *It’s Time to Help Palestinians Left Behind in Egypt*, **Refugees International** (October 8, 2024), <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/perspectives-and-commentaries/its-time-to-help-palestinians-left-behind-in-egypt/>.

15. *22 NGOs in Joint Statement: Grave risks posed by the passing of proposed Foreign Asylum Bill*, **Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights** (November 1, 2024), <https://eipr.org/en/press/2024/11/22-ngos-joint-statement-grave-risks-posed-passing-proposed-foreign-asylum-bill>.

IRAQ

HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD

Iraq commits serious human rights violations, including:¹⁶ Arbitrary or unlawful killings; disappearances; torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; arbitrary arrest and detention; serious abuses in a conflict; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including violence or threats of violence against journalists, unjustified arrests or prosecutions of journalists, and censorship; significant restrictions on workers' freedom of association; and significant presence of any of the worst forms of child labor.

Although Iraq holds regular elections and includes representation from diverse political, religious, and ethnic factions, Freedom House classifies

it as “Not Free” due to corruption, lawlessness, and weak institutions.¹⁷ For instance, in Iraqi Kurdistan, rival ruling parties mobilize their own security forces on civilians to repress dissent and suppress peaceful protests.¹⁸ The power of Iranian-backed militias in the country and the increasing political and economic influence of the Islamic Republic over the Iraqi government also severely limits Iraqi independence.¹⁹

In the first six months of 2024 alone, Iraqi authorities carried out at least 30 arbitrary executions, including a mass execution of 13 prisoners in January without warning.²⁰ Moreover, criminal detainees are frequently denied due process, including through arbitrary arrest, forced confessions, and torture.²¹ In its 2022 Concluding Observations on Iraq, the UN Committee Against Torture expressed concern about “continued reports of torture and

16. *2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Egypt*, **U.S. State Department** (August 12, 2025), <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/iraq/>.

17. *Freedom in the World 2025: Iraq*, **Freedom House** (February 2025), <https://freedomhouse.org/country/iraq/freedom-world/2025>.

18. *Id.*

19. *The Popular Mobilization Force is turning Iraq into an Iranian client state*, **Brookings** (February 2, 2024), <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-popular-mobilization-force-is-turning-iraq-into-an-iranian-client-state/#:~:text=The%20PMF%20also%20oversees%20a,Iran%20and%20the%20Arab%20world>.

20. *13 Men Suddenly Executed in Iraq as Country Resumes Mass Executions*, **Time** (January 26, 2024), <https://time.com/6589057/iraq-mass-executions-capital-punishment/>; *Iraq must immediately stop mass, unannounced executions: UN experts*, **OHCHR** (January 30, 2024), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/01/iraq-must-immediately-stop-mass-unannounced-executions-un-experts>; *Scale and cycle of Iraq's arbitrary executions may be a crime against humanity: Special Rapporteurs*, **OHCHR** (June 27, 2024), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/06/scale-and-cycle-iraqs-arbitrary-executions-may-be-crime-against-humanity>.

21. *Freedom in the World 2025: Iraq*, **Freedom House** (February 2025), <https://freedomhouse.org/country/iraq/freedom-world/2025>.



Young women gathered in Tahrir Square commemorating youth killed during the early weeks of the Tishreen uprising, December 2019, Baghdad, Iraq
© 2019 Ivor Prickett/Panos Pictures

ill-treatment in detention facilities” and lack of accountability.²²

Reporters Without Borders ranks Iraq low on its Press Freedom Index (155 out of 180).²³ Freedom House reports that journalists have been harassed and attacked for their work both by Iraqi authorities and militias.²⁴ Similarly, Kurdish authorities routinely abuse journalists, including through arbitrary arrests, assaults, and denial of due process. In March 2025, Reporters Without Borders described “a climate of intimidation” due to Kurdish authorities’ detentions of two investigative journalists.²⁵ In July 2025, the Committee to Protect Journalists called for an investigation into the arrest of three journalists by Kurdish security forces. The journalists said they had been beaten and held in unsanitary conditions.²⁶

Minorities in Iraq are subjected to discrimination and other abuses. For example, Baha’i marriages are not registered leading their children to be born stateless.²⁷ In August 2024, Muslim leaders threatened nearby Yazidi communities leading many to flee their homes.²⁸

In Iraq, women, children, and members of the LGBT community are subjected to discrimination and violence. For example, women must obtain consent from a male guardian to obtain documents required to access employment, education, and many social services. Archaic marriage laws set the national minimum age of marriage for girls to as young as 15 years old. Unregistered marriages officiated by religious leaders have forced children into wedlock even younger.²⁹ Last year, Shia religious groups that dominate the political system in Iraq proposed a new law which would legally allow nine-year-olds to be married, a move seen by many women’s rights ac-

tivists as a way to “legalise child rape.”³⁰

Additionally, in April 2025, Iraq’s parliament adopted legislation criminalizing same-sex relationships. The Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights criticized the laws saying that they “legitimize prejudice, expose people to hate crime...” and “perpetuate discrimination.”³¹

UN Voting Record NEGATIVE

Iraq was last a member of the Human Rights Council from 2017 to 2019. During that time, it opposed resolutions speaking out for human rights victims in Eritrea and the Philippines and failed to support resolutions speaking out for human rights victims in Belarus, Burundi, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. It also supported counterproductive resolutions that undermined individual human rights or addressed issues beyond the competency of the Council.

At the General Assembly, Iraq voted against a resolution on behalf of human rights victims in Iran and failed to support resolutions on behalf of human rights victims in Syria, Crimea, and Georgia by abstaining. Iraq also supported counterproductive resolutions that undermined individual human rights by elevating vague and undefined rights such as the “right to peace” above universally recognized individual human rights and shielded human rights abusers through a resolution denying the right to sanction such regimes.

22. *UN Committee against Torture publishes findings on Cuba, Iceland, Iraq, Kenya, Montenegro and Uruguay*, OHCHR (May 13, 2022), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/05/un-committee-against-torture-publishes-findings-cuba-iceland-iraq-kenya>.

23. *Press Freedom Index*, RSF (Last visited August 11, 2025), <https://rsf.org/en/index>.

24. *Freedom in the World 2025: Iraq*, Freedom House (February 2025), <https://freedomhouse.org/country/iraq/freedom-world/2025>.

25. *Iraqi Kurdistan: RSF calls for the release of investigative journalists Bashdar Bazyani and Sherwan Sherwani*, RSF (March 14, 2025), <https://rsf.org/en/iraqi-kurdistan-rsf-calls-release-investigative-journalists-bashdar-bazyani-and-sherwan-sherwani>.

26. *Iraqi Kurdish authorities arrest, severely beat 3 journalists, assault another*, CPJ (July 16, 2025), <https://cpj.org/2025/07/iraqi-kurdish-authorities-arrest-severely-beat-3-journalists-assault-another/>.

27. *Freedom in the World 2025: Iraq*, Freedom House (February 2025), <https://freedomhouse.org/country/iraq/freedom-world/2025>.

28. *Threats of mass violence against of the world’s most persecuted minorities are growing*, NBC News (August 31, 2024), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/isis-massacres-2014-yazidi-iraq-rcna168783>.

29. *UN Child Rights Committee publishes findings on Brazil, Indonesia, Iraq, Norway, Qatar and Romania*, OHCHR (June 5, 2025), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/06/un-child-rights-committee-publishes-findings-brazil-indonesia-iraq-norway>.

30. *Draft Iraqi law allowing 9-year-olds to marry would ‘legalise child rape’, say activists*, The Guardian (August 9, 2024), <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/article/2024/aug/09/proposed-iraqi-law-change-would-legalise-child-say-activists>.

31. *Comment by UN Human Rights Office spokesperson Ravina Shamdasani on Iraq*, OHCHR (April 29, 2024), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/04/comment-un-human-rights-office-spokesperson-ravina-shamdasani-iraq>.

PAKISTAN

HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD

Pakistan commits serious human rights violations, including:³² Unlawful or arbitrary killings; disappearances; torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; transnational repression against individuals in another country; serious abuses in a conflict; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including violence against journalists, unjustified arrests and disappearances of journalists, and censorship; restrictions of religious freedom; threats of violence motivated by antisemitism; and significant or systematic restrictions on workers' freedom of association.

Pakistan is rated "Partly Free" by Freedom House because it holds regular elections under a multiparty system. However, the government is susceptible to

pressure from multiple outside actors, including the military and Islamic extremists. February 2024 parliamentary elections were marred by the detention of Prime Minister Imran Khan and members of his party. The military ultimately succeeded in ousting Khan from office.³³

Reporters Without Borders ranks Pakistan low on the Press Freedom Index (158 out of 180).³⁴ Journalists who antagonize the military have been subjected to enforced disappearances and other forms of intimidation and harassment, leading to a climate of self-censorship.³⁵ In March 2025, 20 armed men abducted two brothers of exiled journalist Ahmad Noorani after he published his investigation of nepotism by army Chief of Staff General Asim Munir.³⁶ A few weeks later, authorities abducted journalist Waheed Murad from his home in the middle of the night after he had spoken out online for Noorani's missing brothers. The Committee to Protect Journalists reported that two other Pakistani journalists were also

32. *2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan*, U.S. State Department (August 12, 2025), <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/pakistan/>.

33. *Freedom in the World 2025: Pakistan*, Freedom House (February 2025), <https://freedomhouse.org/country/pakistan/freedom-world/2025>.

34. *Press Freedom Index*, RSF (Last visited August 11, 2025), <https://rsf.org/en/index>.

35. *Freedom in the World 2025: Pakistan*, Freedom House (February 2025), <https://freedomhouse.org/country/pakistan/freedom-world/2025>.

36. *Pakistan: RSF demands immediate release of journalist Ahmad Noorani's brothers, forcibly disappeared in reprisal for his reporting*, RSF (March 21, 2025), <https://rsf.org/en/pakistan-rsf-demands-immediate-release-journalist-ahmad-noorani-s-brothers-forcibly-disappeared>.



Armed Pakistani Taliban members at a hideout in the semi-autonomous tribal district of Orakzai on April 22, 2009. Rehman Ali/AFP/Getty Images



Photo: AFP

detained in March.³⁷ In May, journalist Abdul Latif Balock was reportedly killed by a state-backed militia in his home in Balochistan.³⁸

Since February 2024 there has been a nationwide ban on the X (formerly Twitter) social media platform, and the government is seeking to further restrict social media access.³⁹

Persecution of religious minorities in Pakistan persists, particularly through the abuse of draconian blasphemy laws often leading to mob violence and murder.⁴⁰ As of the end of 2025, there were more than 700 people in prison on blasphemy charges ac-

cording to the US Commission on International Religious Freedom.⁴¹ In January 2025, four men were sentenced to death for allegedly blasphemous social media posts about the Quran and Islamic figures.⁴²

In December 2024, the Human Rights Committee expressed concern about the high levels of violence against women in Pakistan.⁴³ Hundreds of women are killed every year in so-called “honor killings.”⁴⁴ According to a report by a local NGO, at least 24,000 women were forcibly abducted across Pakistan in 2024.⁴⁵ The UNFPA Pakistan reports that 28% of women aged 15-49 have experienced physi-

37. *Pakistani journalist Waheed Murad seized from home in the night*, CPJ (March 27, 2025), <https://cpj.org/2025/03/pakistani-journalist-waheed-murad-seized-from-home-in-the-night/>.

38. *Pakistan: Journalist killed by militia in Balochistan*, International Federation of Journalists (May 28, 2025), <https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/press-releases/article/pakistan-journalist-killed-by-militia-in-balochistan>.

39. *Freedom in the World 2025: Pakistan*, Freedom House (February 2025), <https://freedomhouse.org/country/pakistan/freedom-world/2025>.

40. *Id.* See also *Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Pakistan*, UN Doc. CCPR/C/PAK/CO/2, Human Rights Committee (December 2, 2024), <https://docs.un.org/CCPR/C/PAK/CO/2>.

41. *International Religious Freedom: Pakistan*, USCIRF (March 2025), <https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2025-04/Pakistan%202025%20USCIRF%20Annual%20Report.pdf>.

42. *4 Sentenced to death for ‘blasphemous’ posts in Pakistan*, Radio Free Europe (January 25, 2025), <https://www.rferl.org/a/pakistan-blasphemy-death-sentence-online-posts/33288568.html>.

43. *Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Pakistan*, UN Doc. CCPR/C/PAK/CO/2, Human Rights Committee (December 2, 2024), <https://docs.un.org/CCPR/C/PAK/CO/2>.

44. *14 arrested amid national uproar over ‘honor killing’ in Pakistan*, NBC (July 22, 2025), <https://www.nbcnews.com/world/asia/pakistan-honor-killing-video-sparks-outrage-tribal-leader-arrested-rcna220164>.

45. *Violence Against Women is Widespread in Pakistan*, The Diplomat (March 7, 2025), <https://thediplomat.com/2025/03/vio->

cal violence, while 6% have experienced sexual violence. Among women who have been married, 34% have experienced spousal abuse (physical, sexual, or emotional).⁴⁶

Additionally, 18% of girls in the 20-24 age range were married before age 18.⁴⁷ In November 2024, UN Women reported that Pakistan is home to 19 million child brides.⁴⁸ Although laws have improved, gender-based violence remains a problem due to weak implementation.

Pakistan has long suffered from deadly terrorism. The U.S. State Department reported a disturbing 50% rise in terrorist attacks from 2022 to 2023.⁴⁹ A local Pakistani think tank reported that 1,600 civilians and security personnel had been killed in terrorist attacks in 2024.⁵⁰ On March 11, 2025, the Balochistan Liberation Army carried out a terrorist attack on a passenger train, killing at least 25. The UN Security Council condemned the attack.⁵¹ In June 2025, 13 soldiers were killed in a car bomb attack by Taliban-affiliated terrorists.⁵² In response to the rise in terrorism from Taliban-linked groups, Pakistan has embarked on a campaign to deport hundreds of thousands of Afghani refugees in the country.⁵³ As of mid-April 2025, more than 80,000 were already forced out, including many who never lived in Afghanistan.⁵⁴

UN Voting Record NEGATIVE

Pakistan was last a member of the Human Rights Council from 2021 to 2023. During that time, it opposed resolutions speaking out for human rights victims in Burundi, Eritrea, and Venezuela and failed to support resolutions speaking out for human rights victims in Belarus and Nicaragua. It also supported counterproductive resolutions that undermined individual human rights or addressed issues beyond the competency of the Council.

At the General Assembly, Pakistan voted against a resolution on behalf of human rights victims in Iran and failed to support resolutions on behalf of human rights victims in Syria, Georgia, Crimea, and Ukraine by abstaining. Pakistan also supported counterproductive resolutions that undermined individual human rights by elevating vague and undefined rights such as the “right to peace” above universally recognized individual human rights and shielded human rights abusers through a resolution denying the right to sanction such regimes.

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46. *Gender-Based Violence*, UNFPA (Last visited August 12, 2025), <https://pakistan.unfpa.org/en/topics/gender-based-violence-6>.

47. *Id.*

48. *Breaking tradition to end child marriage in Pakistan's remote village*, UN Women (November 13, 2024), <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/feature-story/2024/11/breaking-tradition-to-end-child-marriage-in-pakistans-remote-village>.

49. Country Reports on Terrorism 2023: Pakistan, U.S. State Department (April 2024), <https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2023/pakistan>.

50. *Militancy surge in Pakistan kills 1,600 civilians, security forces*, VOA (December 30, 2024), <https://www.voanews.com/a/militancy-surge-in-pakistan-kills-1-600-civilians-security-forces-/7919142.html>.

51. *Security Council Press Statement on Terrorist Attack in Pakistan*, UN (March 14, 2025), <https://press.un.org/en/2025/sc16019.doc.htm>.

52. *Car bomb attack in Pakistan kills at least 13 soldiers*, BBC (June 29, 2025), <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cjd2z0d8772o>.

53. *Why is Pakistan expelling Afghan refugees*, DW (February 25, 2025), <https://www.dw.com/en/why-is-pakistan-expelling-afghan-refugees/a-71732536>.

54. *Pakistan expels tens of thousands of Afghans*, BBC (April 19, 2025), <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c74z19pl7wgo>.

VIETNAM

HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD

Vietnam commits serious human rights violations, including:⁵⁵ Arbitrary or unlawful killings; torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment and punishment; involuntary or coercive medical or psychological practices; arbitrary arrest or detention; transnational repression against individuals in another country; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including unjustified arrests or prosecutions of journalists and censorship; restrictions of religious freedom; and systematic restrictions on workers' freedom of association.



A policeman blocks photographers from taking pictures during a protest in front of the Opera House in Hanoi, Vietnam, in 2012. (Credit: Nguyen Lan Thang/Reuters)

Vietnam is a one-party communist state which bans most opposition and imposes severe restrictions on basic civil liberties.⁵⁶ The government routinely cracks down on journalists, dissidents, and civil society actors, including through arbitrary detentions and political prosecutions. In March 2025, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention ruled that Vietnam's detention of environmental activist Nguyen Lan Thang under Article 117 of Vietnam's criminal code ("propaganda against the state") was arbitrary, finding the law to be overly vague.⁵⁷ The UN Working Group has issued similar rulings in other cases in recent years.⁵⁸

In February 2025, Vietnamese activist Nguyen Van Trang testified at the Geneva Summit for Human Rights and Democracy about being monitored, harassed, and expelled from university due to his human rights advocacy. Eventually Nguyen was forced to flee the country to escape arrest. He said that "the Vietnamese government is doing everything it can to silence activists for freedom, seeking revenge and persecuting them even beyond its borders."⁵⁹ At the 2024 Geneva Summit, former political prisoner Tung Tien Nguyen testified about how he and his family were routinely harassed and surveilled by state police due to his pro-democracy work which ultimately landed him in jail.⁶⁰ Dissidents who flee to neighboring Thailand and Cambodia are at constant risk of being extradited to Vietnam.⁶¹

Reporters Without Borders ranks Vietnam towards the bottom of its Press Freedom Index (173/180), describing Vietnam as "one of the world's biggest prisons for journalists."⁶² Vietnam has a special army unit, Force 147 with 10,000 cyber troops dedicated to defending the party line and attacking dissidents. Vietnam's 2019 Cyber Security law en-

55. *2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Vietnam*, U.S. State Department (August 12, 2025), <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/vietnam/>.

56. *Freedom in the World 2025: Vietnam*, Freedom House (February 2025), <https://freedomhouse.org/country/vietnam/freedom-world/2025>.

57. *Vietnam's legal system 'arbitrary,' ignores international agreements, UN group says*, Radio Free Asia (March 2, 2025), <https://www.rfa.org/english/vietnam/2025/03/03/un-blogger-thang-arbitrary-arrest/>.

58. See, e.g., *Pham Chi Dung v. Vietnam*, Opinion No. 39/2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/WGAD/2024/39, WGAD (October 1, 2024), <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/detention-wg/opinions/session100/a-hrc-wgad-2024-39-viet-nam-advance-edited.pdf>;

Nguyen Thuong Thuy v. Vietnam, Opinion No. 16/2023, UN Doc. A/HRC/WGAD/2023/16, WGAD (May 18, 2023), <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/detention-wg/opinions/session96/A-HRC-WGAD-2023-16-AEV.pdf>.

59. *Borderless Repression: The Long Reach of Vietnam's Regime with Nguyen Van Trang*, Geneva Summit (February 18, 2025), <https://genevasummit.org/speech/borderless-repression-the-long-reach-of-vietnams-regime/>.

60. *Beyond Bars: A Story of Defiance and Hope with Nguyen Tien Trung*, Geneva Summit (May 15, 2024), <https://genevasummit.org/speech/beyond-bars-a-story-of-defiance-and-hope/>.

61. *Thailand: Court ruling puts human rights defender in danger if extradited to Vietnam, say experts*, OHCHR (October 16, 2024), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/10/thailand-court-ruling-puts-human-rights-defender-danger-if-extradited-viet>.

62. *Vietnam*, RSF (Last visited August 12, 2025), <https://rsf.org/en/country/vietnam>.

ables the government to freely access internet user data.⁶³

Vietnam does not respect due process. The U.S. State Department reports that authorities often use torture to obtain forced confessions from political prisoners.⁶⁴ In July 2025, the Human Rights Committee expressed concern about torture and ill-treatment of detainees.⁶⁵

Additionally, Vietnamese authorities persecute ethnic minorities. In July 2023, the government stepped up repression against Montagnards (Vietnamese minority groups) in the Central Highlands region, after two attacks on government buildings.⁶⁶ In August 2024, a Vietnamese court convicted 100 people on terror charges in a mass trial, criticized for not meeting fair trial standards.⁶⁷ In December 2023, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed concern about restrictions and attacks on members of minority groups in Vietnam.⁶⁸

Despite some legislative improvements, women in Vietnam continue to suffer from widespread domestic violence. A 2019 national study found that more than 60% of Vietnamese women aged 15-64 have experienced some type of spousal abuse at least once and that reports of sexual abuse had increased over the previous ten years.⁶⁹ According to the study 90% of female victims did not contact the police. Since then, women continue to report that the police are not receptive to such complaints.⁷⁰

UN Voting Record NEGATIVE

Vietnam is currently a member of the Human Rights Council. In that capacity, it has opposed resolutions speaking out for human rights victims in Belarus, Burundi, Nicaragua, and Venezuela and failed to support resolutions speaking out for human rights victims in Eritrea. It also supported counterproductive resolutions that undermined individual human rights or addressed issues beyond the competency of the Council.

At the General Assembly, Vietnam voted against a resolution on behalf of human rights victims in Iran failed to support resolutions on behalf of human rights victims in Syria, Georgia, Crimea, and Ukraine by abstaining. Vietnam also supported counterproductive resolutions that undermined individual human rights by elevating vague and undefined rights such as the “right to peace” above universally recognized individual human rights and shielded human rights abusers through a resolution denying the right to sanction such regimes.

63. *Id.*

64. 2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Vietnam, U.S. State Department (August 12, 2025), <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/vietnam/>.

65. See, e.g., UN Human Rights Committee publishes findings on Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Kazakhstan, Latvia, North Macedonia, Spain, and Vietnam, OHCHR (July 18, 2025), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/07/un-human-rights-committee-publishes-findings-guinea-bissau-haiti-kazakhstan>.

66. Deadly conflict in Vietnam's Central Highlands ramps up persecution of ethnic minorities, Radio Free Asia (July 17, 2023), <https://www.voanews.com/a/deadly-conflict-in-vietnam-s-central-highlands-ramps-up-persecution-of-ethnic-minorities-/7183904.html>.

67. Experts condemn misuse of counter-terrorism law against Montagnards in Vietnam, OHCHR (August 28, 2024), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/08/experts-condemn-misuse-counter-terrorism-law-against-montagnards-vietnam>; UN experts challenge Vietnam's treatment of Montagnard minority, Radio Free Asia (August 23, 2024), <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/vietnam/un-rapporteurs-montagnard-letter-08232024010004.html>.

68. Concluding observations on the combined fifteenth to seventeenth periodic reports of Vietnam, UN Doc. CERD/C/VNM/CO/15-17, CERD (December 27, 2023), <https://docs.un.org/en/CERD/C/VNM/CO/15-17>.

69. Inside Vietnam's Fight against the Silent Epidemic: Domestic Violence, Heinrich Boll Foundation (November 25, 2022), <https://th.boell.org/en/2022/11/25/vn-domestic-violence>.

70. Domestic violence plagues Vietnam – but services offer hope, Radio Free Asia (September 28, 2024), <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/vietnam/vietnam-domestic-violence-09262024135050.html>.

ANGOLA

HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD

Angola commits serious human rights violations, including:⁷¹ arbitrary or unlawful killings; cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; arbitrary arrest or detention; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including threats of violence against journalists, unjustified arrests or prosecutions of journalists, or censorship; child marriage; and prohibiting independent trade unions or significant or systematic restrictions on workers' freedom of association.

Angola is rated Not Free by Freedom House due to the routine suppression of political dissent, restrictions on basic civil liberties, government corruption, and abuses by security forces.⁷² The government regularly cracks down on protesters. In August

2024, President João Lourenço signed a law intended to curb protests. It carries a prison sentence of up to 25 years for those who participate in protests that cause vandalism or disrupt services.⁷³

In July 2025, four were killed and property was vandalized at an anti-government protest regarding fuel prices.⁷⁴ The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights called for an investigation while criticizing “unnecessary or disproportionate use of force to maintain public order.” It noted that 1,000 people had been detained and called for their immediate release.⁷⁵

Arbitrary detention of anti-government protesters by Angolan authorities is common.⁷⁶

In August 2024, the President also signed the National Security Law which drastically expanded government power over the media and increased its authority for surveillance.⁷⁷ The Committee to Protect Journalists called the law “repressive” and said it did

71. *2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Angola*, U.S. State Department (August 12, 2025), <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/angola/>.

72. *Freedom in the World 2025: Angola*, Freedom House (February 2025), <https://freedomhouse.org/country/angola/freedom-world/2025>.

73. *Id.*

74. *Angola: Mass arrests as Luanda fuel protests turn deadly*, DW (July 29, 2025), <https://www.dw.com/en/angola-mass-arrests-as-luanda-fuel-hike-demos-turn-deadly/a-73449880>.

75. *Comment by UN Human Rights Office spokesperson Thameen Al-Kheetan on deaths during protests in Angola*, OHCHR (July 31, 2025), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/07/comment-un-human-rights-office-spokesperson-thameen-al-kheetan-deaths-during>.

76. *2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Angola*, U.S. State Department (August 12, 2025), <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/angola/>.

77. *Id.*



Protesters gather amid chaos following violent riots sparked by a diesel price hike in Luanda, 28 July, 2025 EPA Images.

not “comply with international human rights standards.”⁷⁸ Angola currently ranks in the bottom half of the Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index (100/180) and there is very little independent media in the country.⁷⁹

Government corruption is endemic in Angola. Transparency International ranks Angola in the bottom third of countries for corruption at 121 out of 180.⁸⁰ A 2024 survey of Angolans by Afrobarometer found that 54% of respondents said that corruption had increased in the previous year and 55% said they had to pay a bribe to get assistance from the police.⁸¹

According to government data, some 34% of Angolan women are victims of physical or sexual violence perpetrated by their partners.⁸² Angola also has a high rate of child marriage, with 30% of girls being married before age 18 and 8% before age 15.⁸³ The World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index ranks Angola only 117 out of 148 countries for gender parity.⁸⁴

UN Voting Record NEGATIVE

Angola was last a member of the Human Rights Council from 2018 to 2020. During that time, it opposed a resolution speaking out for human rights victims in the Philippines and failed to support resolutions speaking out for human rights victims in Belarus, Burundi, Eritrea, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. It also supported counterproductive resolutions that undermined individual human rights or addressed issues beyond the competency of the Council.

At the General Assembly, Angola failed to support resolutions on behalf of human rights victims in Iran, Syria, Crimea, and Georgia by abstaining. Angola also supported counterproductive resolutions that undermined individual human rights by elevating vague and undefined rights such as the “right to peace” above universally recognized individual human rights and shielded human rights abusers through a resolution denying the right to sanction such regimes.

78. *CPJ: Angola’s proposed national security law threatens press freedom, puts journalists at risk*, **CPJ** (April 1, 2024), <https://cpj.org/2024/04/cpj-angolas-proposed-national-security-law-threatens-press-freedom-puts-journalists-at-risk/>.

79. *Angola*, **RSF** (Last visited October 6, 2025), <https://rsf.org/en/country/angola>.

80. *Angola*, **Transparency International** (Last visited October 6, 2025), <https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/angola>.

81. *Angolans perceive rising corruption and say citizens risk retaliation if they report it*, **Afrobarometer** (November 22, 2024), <https://www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/AD906-Angolans-see-worsening-corruption-Afrobarometer-21nov24.pdf>.

82. *AD586: In Angola, gender-based violence is seen as the top challenge to women’s rights*, **AFRO Barometer** (January 3, 2023), <https://www.afrobarometer.org/publication/ad586-in-angola-gender-based-violence-is-seen-as-the-top-challenge-to-womens-rights/>.

83. *Angola, Girls Not Brides* (Last visited October 6, 2025), <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/regions-and-countries/angola/>.

84. *Global Gender Gap Report 2025*, **World Economic Forum** (June 11, 2025), <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2025/in-full/benchmarking-gender-gaps-2025/#in-focus-country-performances-top-10-and-most-populous>.

ANALYSIS OF SELECT “QUESTIONABLE” CANDIDATE

SOUTH AFRICA

HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD

South Africa commits serious human rights violations, including:⁸⁵ Arbitrary or unlawful killings; arbitrary arrest or detention; and the repression of racial minorities.

While Freedom House rates South Africa as a Free Democracy, the government suffers from widespread corruption.⁸⁶ A 2022 judicial commission of inquiry known as the Zondo Commission found that the ruling ANC party enabled corruption on a large scale and recommended criminally prosecuting several high-level ANC officials.⁸⁷ An August 2024 report found that South Africa had active investigations into corruption by state owned companies

totaling \$7 billion.⁸⁸ In July 2025, the South African Minister of Police was suspended over his alleged links to organized crime.⁸⁹

In January 2024, *NPR* reported that South Africa has one of the highest violent crime rates in the world, citing data of 75 killings and 400 aggravated robberies a day.⁹⁰ In March 2024, *CNN* reported that murder was at a 20-year high.⁹¹ According to UN data, South Africa has a disturbingly high homicide rate of 45 per 100,000 people.⁹² In one area of the country it is as high as 75 per 100,000 people.⁹³

The South African ruling party fosters close ties with terrorists and rogue regimes. In June 2023, *France 24* reported on the high rates of organized crime in the country, describing South Africa as a “nerve center for jihadist financing.”⁹⁴ Just ten days after the October 7th Hamas massacre in Israel, South Africa’s foreign minister spoke with Hamas

85. *2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: South Africa*, **U.S. State Department** (August 12, 2025), <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/south-africa/>.

86. *Freedom in the World 2025: South Africa*, **Freedom House** (February 2025), <https://freedomhouse.org/country/south-africa/freedom-world/2025>.

87. *Id.*

88. *South Africa is investigating alleged \$7B corruption at state-owned companies*, **AP** (August 28, 2024),

89. *South Africa’s president creates commission to look at police corruption allegations*, **NPR** (July 14, 2025), <https://www.npr.org/2025/07/14/nx-s1-5467245/south-africa-police-corruption-scandal-ramaphosa>.

90. *As police lose the war on crime in South Africa, private security companies step in*, **NPR** (January 7, 2024), <https://www.npr.org/2024/01/07/1223358578/as-police-lose-the-war-on-crime-in-south-africa-private-security-companies-step>.

91. *‘I knew I could be killed’: This cash van guard is just one of South Africa’s crime wave victims*, **CNN** (March 28, 2024), <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/03/27/africa/south-africa-violent-crime-wave-intl-cmd>.

92. *Violent crime in South Africa happens mostly in a few hotspots: police resources should focus there*, **Deutscher Pravektionstag** (May 26, 2025), <https://www.praeventionstag.de/nano.cms/daily-prevention-news/details/9953>.

93. *Global Study on Homicide*, **UN Office on Drugs and Crime** (2023), https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/gsh/2023/Global_study_on_homicide_2023_web.pdf.

94. *South Africa in the spotlight over terror funding*, **France 24** (June 13, 2023), <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20230613-south-africa-in-the-spotlight-over-terror-funding>.

chief Ismail Haniyeh.⁹⁵ Senior ANC officials also hosted Hamas officials in South Africa following October 7th.⁹⁶ South Africa has pushed a pro-Hamas narrative at the UN and its institutions, particularly through its filing of a case at the International Court of Justice accusing Israel of committing genocide in Gaza, effectively seeking to undermine Israel's ability to wage its war against Hamas in Gaza.⁹⁷

South Africa also has cultivated strategic alliances with Iran, Russia, and China, undermining the country's democratic values.⁹⁸ In March 2025, ANC's first deputy secretary-general hosted the Iranian ambassador to South Africa, saying she is "proud to associate with Iran."⁹⁹ In February 2023, South Africa conducted joint naval exercises with Russia and China.¹⁰⁰ At the same time, it is silent on human rights violations committed by those countries.



Protest against rising crime rates in South Africa, credit: Anadolu Ajansi

UN Voting Record

MIXED

South Africa is currently a member of the Human Rights Council. In that capacity, it has failed to support resolutions speaking out for human rights victims in Belarus, Burundi, Eritrea, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. It also supported counterproductive resolutions that undermined individual human rights or addressed issues beyond the competency of the Council.

At the General Assembly, South Africa failed to support resolutions on behalf of human rights victims in Iran, Syria, Crimea, and Ukraine by abstaining. It would have received a negative score if it had voted against these resolutions. South Africa also supported counterproductive resolutions that undermined individual human rights by elevating vague and undefined rights such as the "right to peace" above universally recognized individual human rights and shielded human rights abusers through a resolution denying the right to sanction such regimes.

95. *South African Foreign Minister's phone call with Hamas sparks ire*, **VOA** (October 18, 2023), <https://www.voanews.com/a/south-african-foreign-minister-s-phone-call-with-hamas-sparks-ire/7316507.html>.

96. *Embracing Iran, South Africa's ANC claims 'we can't hide our friends'*, **FDD** (March 7, 2025), <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/policy-briefs/2025/03/07/embracing-iran-south-africas-anc-claims-we-cant-hide-our-friends/>.

97. *South Africa institutes proceedings against Israel and requests the Court to indicate provisional measures*, **ICJ** (December 29, 2023), <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20231229-pre-01-00-en.pdf>.

98. *Ties to Tehran: South Africa's Democracy and its Relationship with Iran*, **MEARI** (July 16, 2025), <https://meari.org/project/ties-to-tehran-south-africas-democracy-and-its-relationship-with-iran/>; *Why South Africa is breaking away from its western allies – interview*, **Jerusalem Post** (February 20, 2025), <https://www.jpost.com/international/article-842904>.

99. *Id.*

100. *South Africa: Russia-China drills strain ties with West*, **DW** (February 16, 2023), <https://www.dw.com/en/south-africa-russia-china-drills-strain-ties-with-west/a-64709205>.

UN^Watch

United Nations Watch
Case postale 191, 1211 Geneva 20
Switzerland | unwatch.org



Human Rights Foundation
350 5th Avenue, #4202
New York, NY 10118
United States | hrf.org



Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights
4770 Avenue de Kent, Suite 205
Montreal, QC H3W 1H2
Canada | raoulwallenbergcentre.org