

The War on Words

Free Speech in Qatar and its Neighboring GCC countries

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What is Free Speech?

'The right to express any opinions without censorship or restraint.'

Laws and Regulations

Qatar:

Article 47: "Freedom of expression is guaranteed in accordance with the conditions and circumstances set forth in law."

UAE:

Article 30: Freedom of opinion and expression in speech and writing, and all means of expression are guaranteed within the law."

Saudi Arabia:

Article 39: Information, publication, and all other media shall employ courteous language and the state's regulations, and they shall contribute to the education of the nation and the bolstering of its unity. All acts that foster sedition or division or harm the state's security and its public relations or detract from man's dignity and rights shall be prohibited. The statutes shall define all that.

Cyber Crime Punishments

Qatar:

The maximum punishments for any cyber crime is jail term of up to three years and a fine of up to 500,000 Qatari riyals for the breach of intellectual property rights by using the internet article 13), be it copyrights, patents, trade secrets, trademarks, trade names, geographical indications and industrial designs, or designs of integrated circuits.

Saudi Arabia:

The maximum punishments for any cyber crime don't exceed five years and or a fine not SAR 3,000,000. Whoever transmits, publishes or stores materials that is "inconsistent with public order or morality, religious values or which breaches the privacy of a natural person", publishes pornography, or promotes the use or distribution of narcotics or psychotropic substances is subjected to these punishments. However, recent conviction of a criticizer of the crown include a -14year sentence given to Mohammed al-Otaibi for his online activities. Authorities also jailed several prominent human rights and womens rights activists for their online activities.

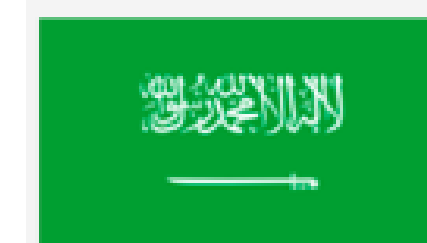
UAE:

There were changes made in August 2018 ,increasing penalties for cyber criminals in the UAE. They now face jail terms of up to 25 years and fines of as much as Dh4 million. Penalties apply for anyone who facilitates online communication between terrorists or unauthorised groups and their members with the general public. Penalties also apply to anyone who promotes or praises these illegal groups' ideas, finances their activities, or aids the manufacture of incendiary devices, explosives or any other materials used in terrorism acts, reported state news agency Wam.

Freedom of Press in the GCC

Press Freedom Status:

NOT FREE



Freedom of the Press Scores

Total Score



(0=Most Free, 100=Least Free)

Legal Environment



Political Environment



Economic Environment



Press Freedom Status:

NOT FREE



Freedom of the Press Scores

Total Score



(0=Most Free, 100=Least Free)

Legal Environment



Political Environment

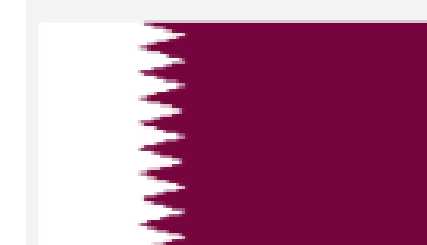


Economic Environment



Press Freedom Status:

NOT FREE



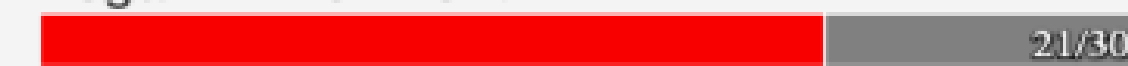
Freedom of the Press Scores

Total Score (↓1)



(0=Most Free, 100=Least Free)

Legal Environment



Political Environment (↓1)



Economic Environment



Press Freedom Status:

NOT FREE



Freedom of the Press Scores

Total Score



(0=Most Free, 100=Least Free)

Legal Environment



Political Environment



Economic Environment



" وراء الشمس "

Pronounced "Wara el Shams", which translates to 'behind the Sun'. A rough explanation of what that means is a reference to being imprisoned in a place where one can't see the Sun, i.e. 'disappearing' behind what is usually a state veil. It infers punishment, torture, etc. The phrase is used over the gulf region in the form of a question whenever one opens up a controversial subject in a place of public discourse for example the Majlis. It acts as a major influencer of self-censorship as the phrase would resonate in one's mind before opening up regional taboo topics.



Jamal Khashoggi

Jamal Khashoggi was a Saudi journalist, who was well-known for criticizing the Saudi government and its policies. He was murdered on the 2nd of October 2018 in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. He was assassinated for simply expressing his opinions .

