Saudi Arabia is an undemocratic and authoritarian state. There are no national elections and the governors of the administrative districts are appointed by the royal family. For the first time, women were also allowed to vote in the local elections in 2015, which were politically not very relevant.

**Freedom of speech**

Public debate on crucial political issues is dangerous. Critical remarks, including those made via social media, are punishable and penalized with flogging and imprisonment. Self-censorship is common among journalists, and it is not possible to criticize princes of the ruling family.

**Civil rights protection**

There is no legally guaranteed freedom of assembly or religion. The judicial system continues to apply corporal punishment according to its interpretation of Sharia law. While amputations are rare, flogging is more common. Executions, including beheadings, are conducted in public.

**Social inclusion**

Saudi citizens receive social benefits as well as free public education and health services, but millions of migrant workers live in poverty. Women, the Shiite minority, as well as Saudis without connections to influential families are structurally and heavily disadvantaged.

**Corruption prevention**

Corruption is widespread in the ruling family. The few existing integrity mechanisms are hardly effective. A wave of arrests made by the Anti-Corruption Commission under the direction of the crown prince in October 2017 affected several princes, ministers and media tycoons and is seen as a move against opponents motivated by power politics.

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- **poor playmaking**

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- **flawed fair play**

Look up the detailed BTI 2018 country report on Saudi Arabia here: www.bti-project.org/sau