

Saudi-American Forum



SAF Item of Interest

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OpEd: Saudi Constitution Guarantees Human Rights

By Raid Qusti, *Arab News*
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Editor's Note:

The **Basic Law**, which incorporates the arrangements for the Consultative Council and for regional government, established in written form both a description of the essential structure and organization of government and, in effect, a bill of rights for the citizen. The Basic Law sets out the general principles on which the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is founded.

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The Saudi-American Forum would like to thank *Arab News* for permission to share this article with our readers.



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That Saudi Arabia hosted a conference on human rights for the first time was not just important in itself but also essential to ward off the allegations against it waged from abroad that our country violates human rights in its teachings, laws, and culture. On the last day of the conference, Dr. Saleh Al-Shareedah spoke about the implementation of human rights in Saudi Arabia. I wish every Saudi citizen had been present at the conference to hear for himself how our constitution guarantees human rights. Dr. Al-Shareedah mentioned the following points:

The right to equality is mentioned in Article 8 of the Saudi Constitution, which states that the Saudi legal system operates on the basis of justice, consultation, and equality according to Shariah law. Also, Article 47 says that the right to sue is guaranteed to all citizens and residents alike.

The right to life is enshrined in Article 9, which states that the family is the core of society and

that citizens must respect the law and obey their leaders and follow Islamic teachings.

The right to security is found in Article 36, which states that the government provides security to its citizens and all those who stay on its land and that it is not allowed to apprehend or jail anyone without a ruling from the authorities.

The right to privacy is found in Article 37 which states that the home is sacrosanct. The state is not allowed to enter a house without approval from the owner and may not search homes unless the law permits it for security reasons. Article 38 states that there can be no punishment or imprisonment without a religious edict or a ruling from the judicial system according to the law. Article 40 also states that it is forbidden to open mail, or to spy on telephone conversations and other communication methods and that it is also unlawful to confiscate material or to look into it except in certain cases when the state deems it necessary.

Social and Cultural Rights:

- The right to social security is mentioned in Article 27, which states that the government ensures the well-being of citizens in emergencies, old age and sickness.
- The right to education and culture is mentioned in Article 29, where it says that the government provides scientific, cultural, and social education and encourages scientific research. Article 30 states that the government provides public education and commits itself to combating illiteracy.
- The right to health care is enshrined in Article 31, which guarantees free health care to every citizen.
- The right to take part in development: Article 16 protects public funds. Article 17 states that ownership, capital and labor are basic aspects in the economic and social structure of the Kingdom and that they are private rights.

Political and Civil Rights:

- The right to freedom is protected in Article 26, which says the government protects human rights according to Shariah, in addition to the rules about arrest mentioned above.
- The right to political participation is mentioned in Article 8, which states that the state of Saudi Arabia is based on justice, consultation and equality according to Islam. Article 34 states that the majlis of the king and the crown prince are open to anyone, and that every person has the right to speak directly to authorities - citizens and residents alike.
- The right to own property: Article 17 and Article 18 say that the government guarantees private ownership and that no one may take away private property except in the public interest and on condition that the owner be compensated. Article 20 states that the confiscation of public money is forbidden and that the confiscation of private funds in

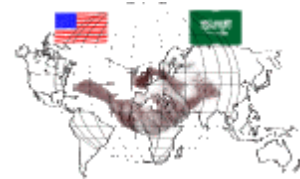
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punishment for an offense cannot happen without a judicial ruling.

The main elements of our constitution are there. So let the truth prevail. Every Saudi citizen should know his or her rights. Moreover, those who continue to attack this country should know that Saudi Arabia since its establishment has protected, and will continue to protect, human rights through its implementation of Islam - which protects the human rights of all mankind.

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The Forum is a resource for Americans who value the relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia and who want to act in response to erroneous and misleading depictions of the relationship in the media and elsewhere. The Forum is a vehicle for stakeholders in the Saudi-U.S. relationship to contribute their experiences and their ideas and opinions on the issues of the day.

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