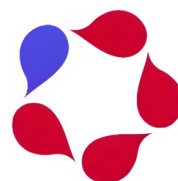


2024

HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

Oman

Prepared By:



**Washington Center
For Human Rights**

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Executive Summary

Oman continues to grapple with significant human rights challenges in 2024, marked by severe violations, limited progress, and ongoing concerns. The situation is characterized by restrictions on freedom of expression, gender discrimination, and inadequate protections for vulnerable populations.

Severe violations include intensified crackdowns on dissent, leading to harassment, detention, and prosecution of individuals critical of government policies. High-profile cases involve the imprisonment of businessman Hani al-Sarhani for online criticism and the detention of activist Talal al-Salmari for advocating better living conditions. Additionally, reports indicate that detainees often endure torture and inhumane treatment during arrest and imprisonment, including forced disappearances linked to peaceful protests, raising serious concerns about the government's commitment to due process and human rights protections. Women in Oman face systemic discrimination in various aspects of life, including legal rights related to marriage, inheritance, and domestic violence. Despite the criminalization of female genital mutilation (FGM), the practice persists, highlighting the need for effective laws and protections.

While the overall human rights situation remains dire, some efforts toward compliance with international standards have emerged. Oman has acceded to several international conventions aimed at improving human rights protections, such as the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Convention against Torture. A working group has also been established to align national laws with these international commitments, indicating a potential avenue for reform.

Ongoing concerns include a lack of accountability, as the Omani Human Rights Commission (OHRC) has been criticized for its ineffectiveness and lack of independence from the government, failing to address complaints or recommend reforms to oppressive laws like the Internal Security Service Law. The Kafala system continues to expose migrant workers to exploitation without sufficient legal protections, with reports of abuse among domestic workers remaining prevalent. Furthermore, authorities maintain tight control over civil society organizations, limiting their ability to operate freely and advocate for human rights reforms.

To address these issues effectively, recommendations have been proposed for various stakeholders. The government of Oman should reform oppressive laws that restrict freedom of expression and assembly, enhance accountability mechanisms for security forces, and implement comprehensive legal protections against gender-based violence and discrimination. International bodies are encouraged to continue monitoring Oman's compliance with human rights standards and foster dialogue between Omani authorities and civil society organizations. Civil society organizations should strengthen advocacy efforts to raise awareness about human rights violations and collaborate with international organizations to document abuses and push for reforms within Oman.

In summary, while there are indications of potential progress in aligning with international human rights standards, severe violations persist, particularly regarding freedom of expression and gender equality. Continued pressure from both domestic and international stakeholders is essential to foster meaningful change in Oman's human rights landscape.

Methodology

The methodology used in collecting data for human rights reports on Oman typically involves a multi-faceted approach, incorporating various sources of information and data collection methods. Here's a detailed overview:

Sources of Information

1. Government Reports:

Data is often gathered from official documents and reports published by the Omani government, including laws and decrees related to human rights.

2. Local NGOs:

Non-governmental organizations play a crucial role in providing insights into human rights issues. Reports from these organizations often highlight specific cases and broader trends that may not be captured in government documents.

3. International Organizations:

Contributions from international bodies such as the United Nations and UNICEF are significant. These organizations provide assessments and recommendations based on their observations and research conducted in Oman [1][4].

4. Media Reports:

Investigative journalism and media coverage can reveal human rights abuses and provide context that may not be present in official reports. For example, reports on labor conditions or specific incidents involving foreign workers have been noted [2].

5. Interviews with Stakeholders:

Interviews with affected individuals, activists, and experts are conducted to gather firsthand accounts of human rights conditions.

Data Collection Methods

1. Field Research:

Researchers often conduct field visits to gather qualitative data through direct observation and interaction with local communities.

2. Interviews:

Structured or semi-structured interviews with victims of human rights violations, activists, and officials provide qualitative insights into the situation on the ground.

3. Surveys:

Surveys may be employed to collect quantitative data on public perceptions of human rights issues or the prevalence of specific abuses.

4. Document Analysis:

This involves reviewing existing literature, reports, and legal documents to understand the framework governing human rights in Oman.

Limitations and Challenges

1. Access Restrictions:

Researchers often face challenges in accessing certain areas or groups due to government restrictions or fear of reprisals against informants [2][5].

2. Data Reliability:

The reliability of data can be compromised by a lack of transparency in government reporting and underreporting by local NGOs due to fear of censorship or backlash.

3. Cultural Sensitivities:

Cultural norms may inhibit open discussions about sensitive topics such as domestic violence or labor exploitation, making it difficult to obtain accurate data.

4. Political Environment:

The political climate can affect the willingness of individuals to speak out about human rights abuses, leading to potential biases in collected data.

In summary, the methodology for collecting data for human rights reports on Oman is comprehensive but faces significant challenges that can impact the accuracy and completeness of the information gathered.

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Human Rights Overview

The human rights situation in Oman remains precarious in 2024, characterized by significant restrictions on civil liberties, ongoing political repression, and limited accountability for human rights violations. This overview examines the political, economic, and social contexts influencing human rights in Oman, as well as notable events that have shaped the landscape.

Political Context

Oman is a hereditary monarchy where power is concentrated in the hands of Sultan Haitham bin Tariq. The political environment is marked by a lack of democratic processes; elections are limited, and political dissent is often met with harsh reprisals. The Omani Human Rights Commission (OHRC) has been criticized for its ineffectiveness and lack of independence from the government, which undermines its ability to protect human rights [1]. Reports indicate that the OHRC has failed to address serious issues such as arbitrary detention and freedom of expression violations, further entrenching a culture of impunity among state authorities [2].

Significant events in 2024 include ongoing crackdowns on dissent. For instance, the arrest of activists like Hani al-Sarhani for online criticisms of government corruption exemplifies the regime's intolerance towards free expression. Al-Sarhani was sentenced to two years in prison under laws that restrict freedom of speech [3][4]. Such incidents reflect a broader trend of targeting individuals who voice opposition to the government.

Economic Context

Oman's economy is heavily reliant on oil exports, making it vulnerable to fluctuations in global oil prices. Economic challenges have led to public discontent regarding rising living costs and unemployment rates. Protests against economic conditions have occurred, leading to increased government scrutiny and repression of dissent [2]. The government's response has included detaining individuals involved in peaceful protests, which raises concerns about the right to assembly and freedom of expression.

Despite some improvements in labor laws aimed at protecting workers' rights, particularly for migrant workers, enforcement remains weak. Many migrant workers continue to face exploitation under the kafala system, which ties them to their employers and limits their rights [3][4].

Social Context

Socially, Oman faces challenges related to gender equality and discrimination. Women continue to experience legal inequalities concerning marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody. Although there have been calls for reforms to protect women from gender-based violence, little progress has been made [3][5]. The practice of female genital mutilation persists despite its criminalization in 2019.

Additionally, the treatment of political prisoners remains a critical issue. Reports indicate that detainees often face torture and inadequate healthcare while imprisoned [2]. The lack of due process and transparency in legal proceedings further exacerbates these concerns.

Significant Events Influencing Human Rights

1. **Crackdown on Dissent:** High-profile arrests of activists and critics have continued into 2024, with individuals facing severe penalties for expressing dissent against government policies.
2. **Human Rights Commission Review:** The OHRC's re-accreditation process by international bodies has drawn attention to its shortcomings in addressing human rights violations effectively [1].
3. **Public Protests:** Economic grievances have led to protests that were met with swift government action against participants, highlighting ongoing tensions between state authority and civil liberties [2].

In conclusion, Oman's human rights landscape in 2024 reflects a complex interplay between political repression, economic challenges, and social inequalities. The government's continued crackdown on dissent and failure to uphold basic rights underscore the urgent need for reform and accountability within the country.

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[5] <https://freedomhouse.org/country/oman/freedom-world/2024>

Civil and Political Rights

The civil and political rights situation in Oman during 2024 remains characterized by significant restrictions on freedoms of expression, assembly, and association. Despite the formal guarantees of these rights in the Omani Basic Law, the reality is marked by systematic suppression and punitive measures against dissent.

Freedom of Expression

Oman continues to impose strict limitations on freedom of expression, with the government actively targeting individuals who criticize state policies or the Sultan. In 2024, Oman maintained a low score of 24 out of 100 on the Freedom House index, categorizing it as "not free". The legal framework allows for severe penalties against those deemed to insult the Sultan or undermine state authority. For instance, Article 269 of the penal code criminalizes actions perceived as hostile to Islam or damaging to public order.

Specific incidents highlight this repression:

- On August 9 and 16, 2023, businessman Hani al-Sarhani and cleric Masoud al-Maqbali were summoned for interrogation due to their online criticisms regarding corruption. Al-Sarhani received a two-year prison sentence under the Law on Combating Information Technology Crimes.
- In September 2023, activist Talal al-Salmani was detained without charge after calling for improved living conditions in a video.

Freedom of Assembly

The right to peaceful assembly is severely restricted in Oman. Protests are often met with police intervention, and participants face arbitrary arrests. For example, during protests in May 2021 demanding job opportunities, authorities discouraged media coverage and threatened outlets with permit revocation if they reported on the demonstrations. This atmosphere fosters a culture of self-censorship among citizens who fear repercussions for expressing dissent.

Arbitrary Arrests

Arbitrary arrests remain a common tactic employed by Omani authorities against critics and activists. Reports indicate that individuals are frequently detained without clear charges or legal representation. Notably:

- In 2021, several activists were arrested for participating in online discussions deemed controversial, with some receiving sentences that included years of imprisonment for expressing their views.
- Human rights organizations have documented cases where detainees were not informed of their charges or allowed legal counsel, violating both national and international legal standards.

Instances of Torture or Ill-Treatment

While specific instances of torture or ill-treatment are less frequently reported compared to other Gulf states, there are ongoing concerns regarding the treatment of detainees. Reports from human rights organizations suggest that detainees may face poor conditions and inadequate healthcare while in custody . However, detailed accounts of torture are not widely publicized, possibly due to the oppressive environment that discourages victims from coming forward.

Government Responses

The Omani government has largely dismissed calls for reform from both domestic and international human rights organizations. Instead of amending repressive laws or improving transparency regarding arrests and detentions, authorities continue to uphold stringent measures against dissenters. The lack of effective legal recourse for those affected by these policies further entrenches a culture of fear among the populace .

Overall Impact on the Population

The cumulative effect of these restrictions significantly impacts Omani society. Citizens are increasingly aware that expressing dissent can lead to severe consequences, including imprisonment or loss of citizenship under laws enacted since 2014 . This pervasive atmosphere of fear stifles public discourse and limits civic engagement, leaving many citizens feeling powerless to influence government policies or advocate for their rights.

In summary, Oman in 2024 remains a country where civil and political rights are heavily curtailed. The government's continued repression of free expression and assembly reflects broader trends seen across the region, where dissent is met with swift punitive measures rather than dialogue or reform.

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Rights of Specific Groups

In 2024, the human rights landscape in Oman remains complex, particularly for women, children, LGBTQ+ individuals, and ethnic or religious minorities. Each group faces unique challenges and experiences varying degrees of legal protection and social acceptance.

Women's Rights

Progress and Challenges

Oman has made strides in women's rights, particularly in political representation and education. Women now constitute over 50% of university students and hold positions in government, including three ministers in the cabinet. The ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2006 marked a significant step forward; however, reservations attached to this commitment hinder full implementation. Despite these advancements, women continue to face systemic barriers. Legal frameworks still favor men in matters such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance. The absence of formal laws addressing domestic violence leaves many women vulnerable. Moreover, women must seek permission from male guardians to marry foreign nationals, complicating personal freedoms and rights[2][3].

Case Study: Political Participation

The appointment of female leaders in various state institutions is noteworthy. For instance, the First Lady's involvement in police graduations symbolizes a shift towards greater female visibility in public life. However, women's representation remains low overall, indicating that while progress exists, substantial work is still required[3].

Children's Rights

Legal Protections and Violations

Children's rights in Oman are often intertwined with broader societal issues. The government has made some efforts to protect children's rights through various initiatives; however, issues such as child labor and limited access to education persist. In 2024, regulations emerged that disproportionately affect LGBTQ+ youth by restricting the marketing of rainbow-themed toys under the guise of protecting children from "immoral" influences. This reflects a broader trend of demonizing LGBTQ+ identities while neglecting genuine child welfare issues such as poverty and educational access[6].

LGBTQ+ Rights

Legal Status and Social Climate

LGBTQ+ individuals face severe legal restrictions in Oman. Homosexuality is criminalized under the Penal Code, with penalties including imprisonment for up to three years. Transgender individuals also face legal challenges, as gender-affirming care is banned, and cross-dressing can lead to prosecution. Despite some reports indicating that enforcement of these laws is sporadic, the social stigma surrounding LGBTQ+ identities remains pervasive.

Public discussions about sexual orientation are largely taboo, and there are no known LGBTQ+ organizations operating openly within the country【1】【4】.

Case Study: Censorship of LGBTQ+ Symbols

In August 2024, authorities confiscated rainbow-colored school supplies in Ash Sharqiyah South Governorate, citing threats to public morals. This incident underscores the ongoing repression faced by LGBTQ+ communities and highlights how governmental actions can further alienate marginalized groups【6】.

Ethnic and Religious Minorities

Oman is home to various ethnic groups, including a significant number of expatriates from South Asia and other regions. While there are no specific laws targeting ethnic or religious minorities, systemic discrimination can occur in practice. Expatriates often face challenges related to labor rights and social integration. The Omani constitution guarantees freedom of religion; however, societal norms can lead to discrimination against non-Muslim communities. There are no formal protections against discrimination based on ethnicity or religion within employment or housing sectors【4】【8】.

Conclusion

The human rights situation for specific groups in Oman during 2024 illustrates a landscape marked by both progress and significant challenges. While advancements have been made in women's rights and some protections for children exist, systemic issues remain pervasive across all groups discussed. The situation for LGBTQ+ individuals is particularly dire due to harsh legal restrictions and societal stigma. Continuous advocacy for human rights reforms is essential for fostering an inclusive society that respects the dignity of all its members.

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Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

In 2024, Oman continues to navigate the complexities of economic, social, and cultural rights, particularly focusing on the rights to health, education, and adequate housing. These rights are integral to the nation's development agenda as outlined in Oman Vision 2040, which aims to enhance the quality of life for all citizens through sustainable and equitable governance.

Right to Health

Access to Healthcare

Oman's healthcare system is predominantly government-funded and characterized by universal coverage. The Ministry of Health oversees a comprehensive network that provides free medical services to citizens. Recent investments have focused on expanding healthcare infrastructure, including new hospitals and specialized medical centers as part of the Vision 2040 initiative¹².

Despite these advancements, challenges remain. While Oman scores approximately 98% on fulfilling the right to health relative to its income level, disparities exist in access between urban and rural areas. Rural communities often face difficulties in accessing specialized healthcare services due to geographical barriers and resource allocation issues³⁴.

Healthcare Improvements

The government has made significant strides in improving public health outcomes through preventive care initiatives and public health awareness campaigns. The emphasis on chronic disease management and community health programs reflects a proactive approach to healthcare delivery².

Right to Education

Educational Opportunities

Oman has prioritized education as a fundamental right since the establishment of its Basic Charter in 1996. The government has invested heavily in educational infrastructure, aiming to produce a well-rounded generation equipped with modern skills⁴. As of 2024, access to primary and secondary education remains high, with efforts underway to enhance vocational training and higher education opportunities.

However, challenges persist in ensuring quality education across all regions. The quality of education varies significantly between urban centers and more remote areas. Reports indicate that while enrollment rates are robust, educational outcomes—particularly in terms of literacy and skills relevant to the job market—require further improvement³⁴.

Right to Adequate Housing

Housing Conditions

Oman's commitment to providing adequate housing is evident in its policies aimed at ensuring every citizen has access to affordable housing options. The government has

implemented various housing projects aimed at improving living conditions across the country¹⁵.

However, there are still barriers that hinder the realization of this right. Issues such as rising property prices and limited availability of affordable housing units in urban areas pose significant challenges for low-income families. The disparity between housing quality in urban versus rural settings also remains a concern³.

Barriers and Improvements

While Oman has made notable progress in safeguarding economic, social, and cultural rights, several barriers continue to impede full realization:

- **Geographical Disparities:** Access to healthcare and education is often limited in rural areas compared to urban centers.
- **Economic Inequality:** Rising costs of living and housing can disproportionately affect lower-income families.
- **Quality of Services:** Despite high enrollment rates in education, the quality of education remains inconsistent.

Improvements noted during 2024 include increased government transparency and community engagement in decision-making processes related to health and education policies. This participatory approach aims to foster a more informed citizenry that can advocate for their rights effectively¹⁵.

In conclusion, while Oman is on a promising path toward enhancing economic, social, and cultural rights through its Vision 2040 framework, ongoing efforts are necessary to address existing disparities and ensure that all citizens can fully enjoy their rights to health, education, and adequate housing.

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Refugees and Migrants

In 2024, Oman continues to host a significant number of refugees and migrant workers, primarily from neighboring countries. The treatment of these groups remains complex and often challenging due to various socio-economic and legal factors.

Living Conditions

Refugees and Asylum Seekers: Oman has a relatively small refugee population, with estimates indicating around 8,000 recognized refugees as of mid-2024, primarily from Somalia and Yemen[5]. Living conditions for these refugees are often subpar, with limited access to adequate housing, healthcare, and education. Many live in urban areas where they face economic hardships and social exclusion.

Migrant Workers:

The country is home to approximately 1.5 million migrant workers, constituting around 80% of the private sector workforce[4]. Many of these workers are employed in low-wage sectors such as construction and domestic work. While the new labor law implemented in July 2023 introduced some improvements—such as reducing the maximum working week from 45 to 40 hours and increasing sick leave—migrant workers still face significant challenges. Domestic workers remain particularly vulnerable as they are excluded from many protections granted to other workers[4][3].

Access to Asylum Procedures

Access to asylum procedures in Oman is limited. The country does not have a formalized asylum system, complicating the situation for those seeking refuge. Asylum seekers often face bureaucratic hurdles that delay processing times, leading to prolonged periods of uncertainty regarding their status[2]. Additionally, the lack of clear legal frameworks makes it difficult for refugees to access necessary services.

Instances of Exploitation or Abuse

Exploitation of migrant workers is a significant concern in Oman. Reports indicate that many migrant workers experience wage theft, poor working conditions, and lack of legal recourse against abusive employers. The Kafala system, which ties workers' residency permits to their employers, exacerbates these issues by limiting workers' mobility and freedom[4][3]. Furthermore, instances of physical abuse and sexual harassment have been reported but often go unpunished due to inadequate legal protections for vulnerable populations[4].

International and Domestic Responses

International Responses: Various international organizations, including the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Amnesty International, have highlighted the need for

better protection mechanisms for refugees and migrant workers in Oman. They advocate for reforms that address labor rights and improve living conditions[2][4].

Domestic Responses: While Oman has made some strides with the introduction of new labor laws aimed at improving worker rights, enforcement remains weak. Civil society organizations continue to call for more comprehensive reforms that include protections against discrimination and harassment for all workers, especially women in domestic roles[4][3].

Conclusion

The situation for refugees, asylum seekers, and migrant workers in Oman during 2024 reflects ongoing challenges related to legal protections, living conditions, and instances of exploitation. Although there have been some improvements in labor laws, significant gaps remain that require urgent attention from both domestic authorities and international bodies to ensure the rights and well-being of these vulnerable groups are upheld.

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Legal Framework and Accountability

Oman's legal framework regarding human rights is primarily governed by its Basic Law, enacted in 1996, which outlines the rights and freedoms of citizens. Despite this framework, significant challenges remain in terms of enforcement and accountability for human rights violations. [6]

Constitutional Provisions and Judicial Independence

The Basic Law guarantees several civil liberties, including equal access to justice (Article 17), personal freedom (Article 18), and protection against torture (Article 20). The judiciary is constitutionally independent, as stated in Article 60, which emphasizes that judicial authority is exercised by the courts without interference from other branches of government. However, in practice, the judiciary remains subordinate to the Sultan and the Ministry of Justice, which can undermine its independence. [1][3][2]

Recent Legislation and Reforms

In 2024, there have been no major legislative reforms specifically aimed at enhancing human rights protections. However, Oman acceded to the Arab Charter on Human Rights in March 2023, which could influence future legislative developments. While a new labor law improved some workers' rights, particularly for migrant workers, it did not address broader human rights concerns such as freedom of expression or gender-based violence. [5]

Judiciary's Role and Accountability Mechanisms

The judiciary's role in upholding human rights is hampered by a lack of resources and training. Although there are mechanisms for accountability, such as the Council of Administrative Affairs for the Judiciary, which oversees judicial appointments and conduct, these mechanisms often lack transparency. Furthermore, cases involving human rights violations frequently do not result in prosecution or punishment for perpetrators. [4]

Impunity for Human Rights Violations

Impunity remains a significant issue in Oman. High-profile cases illustrate this problem. In 2023, businessman Hani al-Sarhani was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for criticizing government corruption online but was released on bail after paying a fine. Conversely, cases like that of activist Talal al-Salmi highlight the ongoing suppression of dissent. He was detained without charge after advocating for better living conditions. These examples underscore a pattern where individuals critical of the government face severe repercussions while systemic issues like gender-based violence remain inadequately addressed. [5]

Conclusion

While Oman's Basic Law provides a framework for human rights protections, the practical enforcement of these rights is limited by judicial subordination to the Sultanate's executive

authority and insufficient accountability mechanisms. The persistence of impunity for human rights violations indicates a need for comprehensive reforms to ensure that justice is served and that citizens can exercise their rights freely. [6]

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International Relations and Human Rights

Oman's international relations in the context of human rights during 2024 reflect a complex interplay between diplomatic engagement and domestic challenges. Despite its commitments to various international human rights agreements, Oman continues to face significant scrutiny from global human rights organizations and the United Nations.

Engagement with International Bodies

Oman maintains a proactive stance in its engagement with international organizations, including the United Nations (UN). The Sultanate has been a member of the UN since 1971 and participates actively in various UN bodies, emphasizing its commitment to human rights and humanitarian efforts[4]. In 2023, Oman acceded to the Arab Charter on Human Rights, signaling an intention to align more closely with regional human rights standards[3]. However, despite these formal commitments, reports indicate that the implementation of human rights protections remains inadequate.

The Omani government has faced criticism for its restrictive laws that curtail freedoms of expression, assembly, and association. Human Rights Watch notes that authorities frequently target peaceful activists and critics of the government, leading to arrests and harassment[2]. Similarly, Amnesty International reported ongoing prosecutions related to freedom of expression and inadequate protections for women and migrant workers[3].

International Pressure and Sanctions

In 2024, Oman has not faced formal sanctions related to its human rights record; however, international pressure from organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International continues to mount. These organizations have highlighted issues such as gender discrimination, the exploitation of migrant workers under the Kafala system, and the lack of accountability for security forces involved in human rights abuses[2][3]. The absence of significant reforms or improvements in these areas has led to persistent calls from international bodies for Oman to enhance its human rights practices.

The Omani government's response to this pressure has been mixed. While it has made some legal adjustments aimed at improving labor conditions for domestic workers, these measures have often been criticized as insufficient and poorly enforced[3][5]. The international community remains vigilant regarding Oman's adherence to its commitments under various treaties and conventions.

Impact on Domestic Human Rights Situation

The international scrutiny and pressure have had a limited impact on improving the domestic human rights situation in Oman. Reports indicate that despite some external diplomatic engagements aimed at enhancing Oman's image, internal practices remain largely unchanged. The government continues to impose restrictions on freedom of expression, with laws that criminalize dissent and limit civil liberties[1][2].

Moreover, despite some advancements in women's representation in political roles, systemic discrimination persists in personal status laws affecting marriage, divorce, and inheritance rights[1]. The government's focus on maintaining stability often results in prioritizing security over individual freedoms, leading to an environment where dissent is not tolerated.

In conclusion, while Oman actively engages with international bodies and expresses a commitment to human rights, the reality on the ground reflects significant challenges. The interplay between international expectations and domestic practices highlights a gap that continues to affect the human rights landscape within the Sultanate[1][2].

Citations:

- [1] <https://ochrdoman.org/en/the-annual-report-2023/>
- [2] <https://www.hrw.org/middle-east/n-africa/oman>
- [3] <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east/oman/report-on-man/>
- [4] <https://www.fm.gov.om/policy/multilateral-relations/>
- [5] <https://freedomhouse.org/country/oman/freedom-world/2024>

Recommendations

To improve the human rights situation in Oman, specific recommendations can be directed to the government, international bodies, and civil society organizations based on the findings from 2024 regarding ongoing human rights violations.

Recommendations to the Government of Oman

1. **Strengthen Human Rights Institutions:** Reform the Omani Human Rights Commission to ensure its independence from government influence. This involves appointing members with no prior ties to the government and enhancing its authority to effectively address human rights complaints.
2. **Revise Repressive Legislation:** Amend or repeal laws that restrict freedoms, particularly the Internal Security Service Law of 2020 and certain provisions in the Penal Code that criminalize peaceful dissent. This will help protect activists and journalists from arbitrary detention and harassment.
3. **End Torture and Ill-Treatment:** Implement strict measures to prevent torture in detention facilities, including training for law enforcement on humane treatment and establishing independent oversight mechanisms to investigate allegations of torture.
4. **Ensure Fair Trials and Due Process:** Guarantee access to legal representation and a fair trial for all detainees. Address delays in legal proceedings and ensure charges are clearly defined and based on precise laws.
5. **Protect Vulnerable Populations:** Enforce labor laws that safeguard migrant workers from exploitation under the kafala system. Provide legal recourse for workers facing abuse and hold employers accountable for violations.
6. **Address Gender-Based Discrimination:** Take tangible steps to eliminate gender-based discrimination in law and practice, especially regarding domestic violence, inheritance rights, and guardianship issues for women.

Recommendations to International Bodies

1. **Monitor Human Rights Violations:** Encourage organizations like the United Nations to closely monitor human rights conditions in Oman, particularly regarding freedom of expression and the treatment of political prisoners.
2. **Support Civil Society Organizations:** Provide funding and resources to local NGOs focused on human rights issues in Oman, enabling them to document abuses and advocate for change more effectively.
3. **Engage in Diplomatic Pressure:** Use diplomatic channels to urge the Omani government to comply with international human rights standards, including those outlined in relevant treaties.

Recommendations to Civil Society Organizations

1. **Raise Awareness:** Conduct awareness campaigns on human rights issues in Oman, educating citizens about their rights and the legal protections available to them.

2. **Document Violations:** Systematically document instances of human rights abuses, including cases of torture, arbitrary detention, and discrimination against women, to build a solid evidence base for advocacy efforts both domestically and internationally.
3. **Foster International Solidarity:** Collaborate with international human rights organizations to amplify voices from Oman at global forums, ensuring that the challenges faced by Omani citizens receive adequate attention.

By implementing these actionable steps, stakeholders can significantly enhance the human rights situation in Oman, fostering an environment where freedoms are respected and protected.

Conclusion

The 2024 human rights report on Oman reveals a troubling landscape marked by numerous violations and inadequate protections for fundamental rights. Key issues identified include significant restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly, with activists facing harassment, arbitrary detentions, and prosecutions. Torture and inhumane treatment in detention facilities remain alarming, particularly against political prisoners and dissenters. Women's rights continue to be severely limited, with legal frameworks failing to provide adequate protections against gender-based violence and personal freedom issues. Additionally, the kafala system exposes migrant workers to exploitation and abuse, despite some labor reforms. Civil society organizations operate under severe restrictions, stifling public discourse and accountability.

The findings underscore the necessity for sustained monitoring and action from both domestic and international stakeholders. Continued scrutiny is essential to ensure the Omani government meets its international human rights obligations. Immediate reforms are critical to address these systemic violations, safeguard civil liberties, uphold due process, and create an environment conducive to civil society engagement.

In conclusion, improving the human rights situation in Oman is vital not only for the dignity of its citizens but also for the stability and progress of the region. Ongoing commitment to monitoring and advocating for change is imperative as Oman seeks to navigate its human rights challenges in the coming years.

Appendices

Appendix A: Statistical Data on Human Rights Issues in Oman

This section highlights significant human rights issues in Oman, reflecting current trends and areas of concern. Reports indicate a systematic use of torture methods by security forces, including practices such as mock executions and solitary confinement. In 2023, numerous individuals faced detention for criticizing the government. A notable case includes businessman Hani al-Sarhani, who was sentenced to two years for online criticism.

Despite the criminalization of practices like female genital mutilation (FGM), there are ongoing reports of gender-based violence, suggesting a lack of effective enforcement. Child labor remains a pervasive issue, with children often working in hazardous conditions across various sectors, including domestic work and agriculture. While new labor laws have improved some protections for migrant workers, significant exploitation and inadequate legal safeguards still exist.

Appendix B: Glossary of Legal and Human Rights Terms

This glossary provides definitions for key legal and human rights terms referenced in the report:

- **Arbitrary Detention:** Detaining individuals without legal justification or due process.
- **Torture:** The intentional infliction of severe pain or suffering for purposes such as punishment or coercion.
- **Gender-based Violence (GBV):** Harmful acts directed at individuals based on their gender, often rooted in gender inequality.
- **Freedom of Expression:** The right to express one's opinions publicly without governmental interference.
- **Child Labor:** Employment of children in work that deprives them of their childhood, potential, and dignity.