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Arab Democracy Index 5

Arab Reform Initiative

The Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research

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*The Arab Democracy Index is based on field studies carried out in ten countries: Jordan, Bahrain, Tunisia, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Kuwait, Lebanon, Egypt, and Morocco.

The collected data and the entire report are available on ARI's website: www.arab-reform.net

More information can also be found on the website of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research: www.pcpsr.org.

This report, in its opinions and results, does not necessarily reflect the views of the member-centres of the Arab Reform Initiative.



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Mission

The Arab Reform Initiative is the leading independent Arab think tank working with expert partners in the Middle East and North Africa and beyond to articulate a home-grown agenda for democratic change. It conducts research and policy analysis and provides a platform for inspirational voices based on the principles of diversity, impartiality and social justice.

- We **produce** original research informed by local experiences and partner with institutions to achieve impact across the Arab world and globally
- We **empower** individuals and institutions to develop their own concept of policy solutions
- We **mobilize** stakeholders to build coalitions for positive change
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Our aim is to see vibrant democratic societies emerge and grow in the region.

Founded in 2005, the Arab Reform Initiative is governed by a Plenary of its members and an Executive Committee.

Summary of the report

The intra-Arab collaborative Arab Democracy Index (ADI) provides an assessment of the democratic transition in selected countries based on the measurement of 42 key indicators, selected based on their immediate relevance to policy-making and on their sensitivity to change, allowing the measurement of change over time. The ADI seeks to influence the transition to democracy in the Arab world by documenting the process of transition and providing policy makers and pro-democracy groups with tools to mobilize public and government support for specific democracy-related recommendations.

In its fifth edition, this ADI report is divided into four sections: methodology, results, analytical articles, and recommendations. The methodology section reviews the selection criteria for 10 states under examination, and describes the indicators, their weight, and the considerations that went into choosing them. This also includes a review of the sources of data used to produce the indicators, a discussion of our understanding of democracy and the reasons we focus on the process of transition, a review of the categories used in the index (“means” and “practices”),¹ the values or necessary components of democratic transition, and description of the indicators associated with those values and necessary components. Finally, the methodology section explains how to read the index, suggesting that the goal of ranking these states is not limited only to describing a picture of the present, but rather to spur subsequent comparisons that quantify change.

The second part of this report deals with the analytical and overall results of the index, values, and indicators, as well as the results of the index for each individual state.

- The primary result from this fifth edition is the decline in the score of the index, from 581 in 2012 to 571 in 2015.

The primary reason for the decline in the index score is the inclusion of Saudi Arabia in the fifth edition. Excluding Saudi Arabia in the calculation sees the score rise to 588 – an increase of seven points from the previous edition. In addition, only the means portion of the index’s score fell, with the practices score actually rising.

As has been the case for the past few years, this tendency suggests the limitation of the democratic transition process and its ability to spur real transition in the Arab world. The process, in other words, is still fledgling. However, closer analysis of the numerical results suggests that the process of democratic transition seems to have been pushed from the outside, or aims to satisfy the “street” only superficially, as the score of the means index (which is the most sensitive to internal and external pressures) is 788 points, while the score of the practices index (which is

¹ The 42 indicators of the ADI are divided into those that measure the means that allow a democratic transition to happen (such as legal frameworks) and indicators

that measure the practices associated with the democratic transition (such as elections).

the least sensitive to external and mass pressures) is only 504 points.

- Morocco ranks first, followed by Tunisia then Jordan. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Egypt figure at the bottom of the list.
- Democratic practices are declining sharply in Egypt, Lebanon, Algeria, and Bahrain, but are improving in Tunisia, Morocco, Kuwait, and Palestine

These results point to a decline, albeit limited, in the democratic transition process. Likewise, the continued presence of a wide gap between the means and practices indicators raises questions over the seriousness of the role that legal and constitutional reforms play in the democratic transition process, and confirms the failure of the Arab Spring to cause meaningful change in this area.

The decline has only affected the means index. This index fell by 33 points – equivalent to the decline of Egypt’s score on the index. The means score would have risen in the current reading, if not for Saudi Arabia’s entry into the report, which received the weakest scores in the means index among the participating states. The practices index saw a rise of four points because of the improvement of the practices scores of Morocco, Kuwait, Tunisia, and Palestine. However, the score of the practices index fell sharply in Egypt, Lebanon, Algeria, and Bahrain, with the gaps between the means and practices remaining large.

The score of three values fell compared to the fourth index, with the score of one value rising. The biggest change came in respect for rights and freedoms, which fell from 584 to 535. The score for equality and social justice fell from 561 to 529, and the score for the presence of strong and accountable public institutions fell from 563 to 547. Meanwhile, the score for the

Four years after the Arab Spring, the scores for Respect for Human Rights declined by 49 points, Equality and Social Justice declined by 32 points, the Presence of Strong Public Institutions fell by 16 points, and the score for the Rule of Law increased noticeably by 114 points.

rule of law rose from 626 to 737 in comparison with the previous report.

It is worth pointing out that the means score has fallen in all values or indicators except for the rule of law, and in the score of values related to practices. The biggest increase came in the score of the rule of law in Tunisia, which rose from 692 to 952. The score of this value also rose noticeably in Kuwait, Morocco, Palestine, and Lebanon.

Morocco is in the lead for the fourth time since 2008: Morocco’s index score rose by 74 points (from 661 to 735), and includes improvements in the scores of practices, and two of the four democratic indicators. These improvements emerge especially in the data related to surveillance of the press, the hindering of political party activity, personal safety, and school dropout rates.

Only two indicators out of 42 achieved a full score in the ten states: the discussion of legal projects and the formal independence of the judiciary. Four indicators achieved average scores of over 900 points: the legislated right to a fair trial, the prevention of torture, the organization of protest activities, and the prosecution of executive branches. Meanwhile, two indicators achieved a score of less than 100 points: the use of patronage in public employment, and government funding of social sectors in comparison to security sectors.

Five indicators achieved an average score of between 100 and 300 points: the mistreatment of prisoners, the surveillance of the press and websites, the suppression of protest activities and the distribution of opposition newspapers, and corruption in public institutions.

For the second time since the Arab Spring, Tunisia has seen noteworthy progress, with the Democracy Index increasing by 80 points (from 610 to 690), including the rise of both the scores of practices and means, and in particular an increase of 87 points in the practices score. It also includes the rise of three out of four indicators of democracy.

Morocco came at the head of the 10 states included in the Index for the fourth time since 2008, when the Index began. Morocco scored 735 points, followed by Tunisia with 690 points, then Jordan with 640 points, Kuwait fourth with 631 points, and Algeria with 589 points.

- Lebanon fell by 50 points (from 582 to 532), especially in the indicators of government accountability, the hindrance of parliamentary activity, and the suppression of protest activities.
- Bahrain fell by 12 points (from 448 to 436), especially in the indicators of government accountability, the intervention of the security services, and the suppression of meetings and protests.
- Jordan fell by 7 points (from 647 to 640), especially in the indicators of surveillance of press and websites, political reform, and the efficacy of public institutions.

The results revealed that among all the participating states, Tunisia, Kuwait, and Morocco saw a comparable level of progress toward democratic transition. The most prominent improvement came in Tunisia in the

indicators related to the right to assembly, legislation considering the critique of executive power, the hindrance of parliamentary activity and political party activity, and non-civilian trials for civilians. In Kuwait, the most prominent improvement was in indicators related to personal safety, the organization of protest activities, the hindrance of parliamentary activity and elected councils, and the efficacy of public institutions. In Morocco, the most prominent improvement came in indicators related to surveillance of the press and websites, the hindrance of political party activity, personal safety, and school dropout rates.

Meanwhile, the situation deteriorated in five participating states: Egypt, Lebanon, Algeria, Bahrain, and Jordan.

Egypt saw the biggest decline, dropping 81 points from 584 to 503. The decline came especially in indicators related to the presence of strong, accountable public institutions and respect for rights and freedoms, as well as preventing torture, government accountability, the hindrance of parliamentary activity, the hindrance of political party activity, the suppression of protests, the intervention of security services, surveillance of the press and websites, and the organization of protest activities.

In Lebanon, the indicators of government accountability, the executive authority's hindrance of elected bodies, the hindrance of parliamentary activity, the suppression of protests, the participation of women in the workforce, and wage equality fell.

In Algeria, the indicators of the hindrance of parliamentary activities, the efficacy of public institutions, political reform, the hindrance of political party activity, the criticism of authority, the surveillance of the press and websites, and the accountability of executive branches declined.

In Bahrain, the indicators of government accountability, political reform, the suppression of meetings, and the intervention of the security services declined.

As for Jordan, the efficacy of public institutions, political reform, political and economic independence, opposition positions in the local press, the surveillance of the press and websites, and the participation of women in the labour force declined.

Following a meagre start after the Arab Spring in 2012, Egypt saw a noteworthy decline as its Democracy Index score fell by 81 points, as its Democracy Index score fell by 81 points, from 584 to 503. The decline includes practices and means scores, with a decline of 99 points in the practices scores. The decline also includes three of the four indicators of democracy.

Recommendations:

The general recommendations of the report point to four aspects of the lack of democratization in the Arab world: the significant decline in the level of political and civil liberties, the decline in key indicators of equality and social justice, the continued neglect of education, and the weakness of public institutions and their inability to ensure the process of transition.

The recommendations refer to the need to strengthen monitoring functions in the Arab political system, the need for a fundamental change in the priorities of government expenditure, the promotion of women's participation in the work force, and the need to allocate larger budgets to achieve education reform, combat illiteracy, and reduce the phenomenon of school dropout. Other recommendations include strengthening the independence of the judiciary, increasing control of the performance of the security services, and increasing freedom of the media.

The recommendations section of the report also provides country-specific recommendations, reviewed through the deliberations of the country-specific panels.



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