

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 6:01 CET/00:01 EST TUESDAY, 25 JANUARY 2022**

## **2021 CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX REVEALS A DECADE OF STAGNATING CORRUPTION LEVELS AMID HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES & DEMOCRATIC DECLINE IN THE MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA**

*No country in the region has registered a significant improvement in the last decade*

*Berlin, 25 January 2022* – The 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) released today by Transparency International shows that corruption levels remain at a standstill worldwide, and the Middle East & North Africa is no exception.

Across the region, systemic political corruption obstructs progress and exacerbates human rights abuses. The promise of renewal embodied in the 2011 Arab Spring has fallen short, with even those countries that established new governmental systems now struggling with democratic decline, notably in **Tunisia** (44). Coming on top of long-running violent conflicts in countries like **Syria** (13) and **Yemen** (16), the COVID-19 pandemic has allowed for further violations of rights across the region, as in **Jordan** (49) and **Qatar** (63).

*Kinda Hattar, Middle East and North Africa Regional Advisor of Transparency International said:*

*“In light of rampant political corruption across the Arab States, the region is struggling to achieve any tangible results in the fight for transparency, human rights and democracy. Not a single country has significantly improved since 2012. Political elites and private interests time and again overtake the common good to benefit themselves and maintain autocracy.”*

### **MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA HIGHLIGHTS**

The CPI ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption on a scale of zero (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean).

The Middle East and North Africa average holds at 39 for the fourth consecutive year, and over 70 per cent of countries rank below 50.

- **The United Arab Emirates** (69) and **Qatar** (63) lead the region.
- War-torn **Libya** (17), **Yemen** (16) and **Syria** (13) score the worst.
- **Lebanon** (24) hit its lowest score since the data has been comparable in 2012.
- Since 2012, **Lebanon** (24) and **Syria** (13) have significantly declined on the CPI.

## **CORRUPTION, HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY**

The Middle East and North Africa exemplify the dangers of political corruption preventing any democratic progress while enabling human rights abuses.

- In **Morocco** (39), an emergency law not only deprived citizens of their right to movement, assembly and free speech, but was also used as legal cover for targeting government critics and human rights defenders speaking up about (mis)management of the country's pandemic response.
- In **Tunisia** (44), which sparked the Arab Spring, new democratic gains have unfortunately been reversed. Elected President Kais Saied is consolidating control and eliminating checks and balances, including shutting down the parliament and closing the Tunisian Anti-Corruption Agency, leaving whistleblowers without protection.
- High levels of political corruption have caused crises across **Lebanon**, as it drops to its lowest CPI score ever of 24. After the "Beirut blast" led to economic collapse, widespread protests were ruthlessly broken up, and authorities repressed basic rights, persecuting participants. To make matters worse, Lebanese politicians including the current Prime Minister Najib Mikati were highlighted in the Pandora Papers for ownership of the most offshore companies in the world.
- For even the region's top scorers the **United Arab Emirates** (69) and **Qatar** (63), 2021 exposed corruption. The Emir of Qatar and the country's former prime minister, along with the vice president and prime minister of the UAE, were implicated in the Pandora Papers. Both also continue to attack human rights and freedom of expression, penalizing and imprisoning dissenters.

Transparency International calls on governments to act on their anti-corruption and human rights commitments and for people across the globe to join together in demanding change.

*Daniel Eriksson, Chief Executive Officer of Transparency International said:*

*"In authoritarian contexts where control over government, business and the media rests with a few, social movements remain the last check on power. It is the power held by teachers, shopkeepers, students and ordinary people from all walks of life that will ultimately deliver accountability."*

### **About the Corruption Perceptions Index**

Since its inception in 1995, the Corruption Perceptions Index has become the leading global indicator of public sector corruption. The Index scores 180 countries and territories around the world based on perceptions of public sector corruption, using data from 13 external sources, including the World Bank, World Economic Forum, private risk and consulting companies, think tanks and others. The scores reflect the views of experts and business people.

The process for calculating the CPI is regularly reviewed to make sure it is as robust and coherent as possible, most recently by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre in 2017. All the CPI scores since 2012 are comparable from one year to the next. For more information, see this article: [The ABCs of the CPI: How the Corruption Perceptions Index is calculated](#).

### **Notes to editors**

- The Middle East & North Africa regional analysis provided in the additional press products includes further detail.
- See also the 2021 CPI report, which contains recommendations from Transparency International.

### **Interview requests**

In case of country-specific queries, please contact [Transparency International's national chapters](#).

In case of queries around regional and global findings, please contact the Transparency International Secretariat: [press@transparency.org](mailto:press@transparency.org).