

# A world without the first amendment

Business



Every day in America we speak our voice, we worship who we want, and we write out our hearts. What if we never had those rights? What if we got punished just by protesting the government or even by simply wearing a necklace with a cross? What if we got thrown in jail just for listening to the radio or even watching BBC World News? We take these rights for granted, and many of us are not aware of other countries around the world without these rights. In the dry, arid land of the Middle East lays Saudi Arabia. Their government is based off of the Holy Qu'ran and Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (SWS), or Sharia (Islamic law).

Their citizens have almost no freedoms, especially of religion. Most of their population is Muslim with the exception of foreign workers. If you get caught practicing a religion publically or talking about a religion other than Islam, you may get imprisoned. However, non-Muslims are granted the right to practice their own religion at home. If a non-Muslim dies in Saudi Arabia, it is prohibited to bury them on their soil.

Also, in Saudi Arabia women have a limited amount of rights. It is illegal for them to drive (which eliminates part of their freedom of movement), and most women wear abaya (black cloaks) to avoid an encounter with the religious police (Mutawwa). Saudi Arabia also limits the freedom of speech and press. The government censors over 400, 000 Internet sites to block any website that may offend Muslims. With all these limited freedoms, Saudi Arabia has a relatively low crime rate compared to other countries (.017 crimes for every 1000 people). The crime rate is probably low, perhaps because of the cruel punishments for stealing (which could be right hand

amputations, eye gouging, beheading with a sword, stoning, or firing squad followed by crucifixion). For petty crimes, people may just be sentenced to jail. Another country with insufficient freedoms is Burma (or Myanmar ). The Heritage Foundation has ranked Burma 173rd freest in the world, which is a slight improvement from last year.

Recently, they released about 650 political prisoners all of whom were dissidents. Burma is slightly and slowly evolving, but they still have limited human rights. The military junta (or military dictatorship) has ruled the country since 1962. They also own all the daily newspapers, three television channels, and most of the radio stations. Some Burmese were even arrested just for watching BBC World News and Radio Free Asia in public. The Myanmar ISPs (Internet Service Providers) block proxy websites, but are unable to block all circumvention methods.

Therefore, they required alcybercafes to place video cameras to monitor users. The crime rate in Burma is also somewhat low, but slowly rising. There is not any cruel punishment except for death penalty. In an isolated country, the citizens are blind to the world. The only knowledge they have is what the government wants them to know. In this case the country is Turkmenistan.

In 1993, former president, Saparmurat Niyazov, declared himself “ Turkmenbashi”, father of the Turkmen. He was an absolute (and absurd) dictator until he passed away on December 21, 2006. His successor, Kurbanguly Berdymukhamedov, cozied into Niyazov’s position on February 2007, taking away many of the Turkmens’ rights. He declared an absolute monarchy on the media such as broadcasts, presses, outlets, etc. He even

ordered to take over infrastructure! Also, the government controls all radio and television stations.

The country denies all freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of movement, and freedom of expression. Furthermore, they have restricted rights on religion. For example, sharing one's faith with another is absolutely banned. In their Constitution (Article 11), it states that freedom of religion is guaranteed. Sadly, the laws are ignored in spite of Niyazov's previous writings, the Ruhnama. It affects all religious groups.

Though, the most repressed are Protestant Christian, Jehovah's Witnesses, Baha'i, and Hare Krishna. These groups have been imprisoned and some even punished by beating them. We have a numerous amount of freedoms compared to other countries. In America, if the government took away any freedom the one that would affect me drastically would be freedom of religion. If we never had the freedom to worship who we wish to, I wouldn't be here today. I wouldn't be the person I am, I wouldn't have the exceeding amount of education I have, but most of all I wouldn't have the people I know today.

My neighbors, teachers, and my friends wouldn't be the same. I would've never met who I know, and my fate would've changed tremendously. Today, what weighs out my destiny are my faith and my education. My faith motivates me to do well in this life, so I could also do well in the hereafter. I have to pray 5 times a day, and if the government takes away my religion, they are taking away part of me.

Religion is my way of life, and I don't know what I would do without it. After my in-depth research about countries without the rights of the first amendment, I learned that millions of people around the world don't have the rights we have. It's so disappointing to think that somewhere a teenager my age is trapped in a cage. They don't have the right to express their ideas that may change the world. Instead, they will grow in an environment where the government is boss.

This is an isolated place where no one has barely any freedom to do anything. Their words are in the back of their heads, never allowed to express the words they speak. It's a place where no one will be able to hear a single breath of words or thoughts. The wind just captures their words and sends it away into space, where no one will be able to hear anything.