

Governments of the Middle East

SS7CG5

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- The student will explain the structures of the national governments of Southwest Asia (Middle East).
 - A. Compare the parliamentary democracy of the State of Israel, the monarchy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the theocracy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, distinguishing the form of leadership and the role of the citizen in terms of voting rights and personal freedoms.

Different Countries, Different Governments

- The countries of the Middle East have different forms of government.
- **Israel: Parliamentary Democracy**
- **Iran: Theocracy**
- **Saudi Arabia: Monarchy**

Parliamentary Democracy of Israel

- Following World War II, the United Nations partitioned the area of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states.
- The Jewish state was **Israel**.
- Although it has been a country for a brief time, Israel has managed to assemble an effective government.

Parliamentary Democracy of Israel (cont'd.)

- Israel has a **unitary system** of government where the central government in Jerusalem handles most government functions.
- The Israeli chief of state is the president, who has little real power.
- The **head of government is the prime minister.**

Parliamentary Democracy of Israel (cont'd.)

- There are 120 seats in the Knesset, the legislative branch.
- The Supreme Court is the head of the judicial branch.
- Upon reaching 18, both men and women can vote.
- Israel has no written constitution.

Parliamentary Democracy of Israel (cont'd.)

- Though there have been ongoing efforts to draft a constitution, Israel relies on a system of basic laws and rights.
- The planned constitution will guarantee basic rights and liberties.
- Israel has a better than average record on matters of **personal freedom.**

Parliamentary Democracy of Israel (cont'd.)

- Some areas to improve are discrimination on all levels against Arab-Israelis, discrimination and domestic violence against women, and unequal education opportunities for Arabs and Israelis.

Theocracy: The Government of Iran

- The government of **Iran is a theocracy**, viewing all government matters through the eyes of its primary religion, Islam.
- Once they reach 18, both men and women can **vote** in the **Islamic Republic of Iran (Iran)**.
- The Assembly of Experts appoints the **Supreme Leader**, a religious position that lasts a lifetime unless the Assembly decides he is no longer fit for office.

Theocracy: The Government of Iran (cont'd.)

- The Supreme Leader has more power than the president, who is elected by popular vote for a four-year term of office.
- The legislative branch is an elected National Assembly of 290 members who also serve four years.
- The Supreme Court and the four-member High Council of the Judiciary supervise enforcement of all laws and establish legal policies.

Theocracy: The Government of Iran (cont'd.)

- The constitution guarantees certain personal freedoms and equal rights, regardless of ethnic group or tribe.
- While some freedoms are similar to democratic ones, others illustrate the theocracy of the government , such as the right to choose employment as long as it isn't contrary with Islam, and freedom of the press except when it is damaging to the principles of Islam.

Theocracy: The Government of Iran (cont'd.)

- The threads of Islam are woven throughout the government.
- If a person disagrees with the government, he or she could be arrested for treason.
- Women have far fewer rights than men, and their peaceful demonstrations for equality have been met with violence.

The Monarchy of Saudi Arabia

- The Arabic writing on the Saudi Arabian flag translates, “There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God.”
- The **government of Saudi Arabia is a monarchy**, and the king is both chief government and religious official.
- There is no constitution as Islamic law governs Saudi Arabia.

The Monarchy of Saudi Arabia (cont'd.)

- Saudi Arabia has no legislature or political parties.
- Men aged 21 and older can vote.
- A group called Human Rights Watch views the Saudi justice system as highly secretive and wants it open to the public.

The Monarchy of Saudi Arabia (cont'd.)

- Observers hope planned reforms in Saudi Arabia will improve civil liberties.
- Human rights and personal freedoms are often denied in Saudi Arabia.
- Examples include unfair trials and extreme physical punishments.

The Monarchy of Saudi Arabia (cont'd.)

- Because Saudi Arabia values its position in the world economy, its government is working to correct some of these injustices.
- In Saudi Arabia, a group of religious police called the mutaween roam the streets to make sure Saudi citizens follow strict codes of behavior and dress outlined by Islamic law.