

# Middle East



## Background Briefs

Country/region profiles

<b>Location</b>	‘The Middle East’ generally refers to the following nations: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Gaza Strip, Georgia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, West Bank and Yemen Map: <a href="https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/wfbExt/region_mde.html">https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/wfbExt/region_mde.html</a>
<b>Climate</b>	In general, Middle Eastern countries are very hot and dry, with little rain and extended periods with temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius; however, many Middle Eastern countries have diverse climates and geographies that include dense forests and mountainous terrain, along with regions that experience four distinct seasons.
<b>Geography</b>	The region’s terrain consists mostly of sprawling deserts and low-lying plains.
<b>Government</b>	The Middle East includes dictatorships, democracies, monarchies and military-dominated regimes. Many Middle Eastern governments (including Syria, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain, Iraq and Iran) have been criticized for human rights violations. In 2011, these violations prompted a widespread struggle for human rights and democracy across the region. Civilians revolted against numerous governments in demand for their rights. Protests in Tunisia sparked similar uprisings in Egypt, Yemen, Libya, Bahrain and Syria.
<b>Environment</b>	Fourteen of the 33 countries likely to be water-stressed in 2040 are in the Middle East. The region draws heavily upon groundwater and desalinated sea water, and faces exceptional water-related challenges for the foreseeable future. <sup>1</sup>
<b>Economy</b>	The Middle East is rich in minerals and fossil fuels, and most of the world obtains its oil supplies from the region. However, huge differences in income levels exist both within and among Middle Eastern countries. Qatar is the richest, with a gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of \$92, 400, while the West Bank is the poorest, with a GDP per capita of \$4,900. <sup>2</sup>
<b>People</b>	High birth rates and low death rates have led to young populations in the region. The overall standard of living for many countries has improved as a result of oil exports; however, high infant mortality and low education and literacy rates persist in some countries.
<b>Novels</b> <i>The Other Side of Truth</i> by Beverley Naidoo	Child labour is a growing problem in some poorer countries of the Middle East. For example, Yemen has over 1.3 million child labourers. <sup>3</sup> The government of Yemen has mandated that children not work more than seven hours per day and require breaks after four hours; however, it has not banned child labour. <sup>4</sup>
<b>Issue</b> Human rights	Many western companies send employees to the Middle East and provide housing in closed communities, set apart from the local residents. Understanding another culture can present challenges.

<sup>1</sup>World Resources Institute “Ranking the World’s Most Water-Stressed Countries in 2040” available from <http://www.wri.org/blog/2015/08/ranking-world%E2%80%99s-most-water-stressed-countries-2040>

<sup>2</sup>CIA World Factbook available from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2004rank.html>

<sup>3</sup>International Labour Federation, “More than 1.3 child labourers in Yemen”, available at [http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_201431/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_201431/lang--en/index.htm)

<sup>4</sup>UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Yemen: Focus on child labour,” available from <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=41043>

