The Right of The Human to Achieve Justice in the Saudi Judiciary

Abdullah Abdulrahman Al-Subhi
alsubhi@iu.edu.sa
Islamic University of Madinah, Arab Saudi

Abstract
Amid the crises and security, economic, and social challenges facing humanity today, the judiciary is considered a safety valve in the area of crime prevention, achieving security and stability, reassurance, and prosperity. A human's right to achieve and establish justice can only be realized through the existence of judicial institutions, as justice and judiciary are intertwined - there can be no justice without judiciary, and no judiciary without justice. If justice is lost, the judiciary loses its importance, power, and people will no longer trust it or view it to obtain their rights. Therefore, this paper comes in this conference to shed light on the most prominent pillars for achieving justice in the Saudi judiciary as a human right, and the adequacy of these pillars. My study will rely on the descriptive research method for its suitability in analyzing the provisions and regulations governing the Saudi judiciary, and to derive theoretical and practical conclusions in this context.

Keywords: Human Rights; Judiciary; Justice.

Introduction
Talking about human rights and freedoms is a topic that people all over the world have been eagerly discussing yesterday, today, and tomorrow. It is a conversation that hearts and souls receive with enthusiasm and joy, and how not, as it is the talk of the innate nature that God Almighty has created people on since their mothers gave birth to them as free beings. Therefore, this topic has become one of the important and prioritized issues, whether at the local or international level. Hundreds of conferences, dozens of agreements, and treaties have been held for it, until this issue has become the main concern of intellectuals and legal experts who have responded to its calls and used their pens to clarify, explain, demand and defend it. Thus, when it comes to the most important right among human rights, which is the right to establish justice in the judiciary, it becomes
even more crucial. This right is considered one of the most important rights, if not the most important, as it occupies the forefront of them. It is the strong shield that provides protection for all other rights. Through it, people can fend off any assault or encroachment that may occur to these rights, as they have the right to resort to the judiciary to obtain justice from any action that violates the immutable rights of humans, whether by initiating them or by granting them by the law. Therefore, some people see that the human right to litigation and establishing justice represents the first legal freedom.¹

The judiciary has been entrusted with the mission of achieving justice since the dawn of history. It is as ancient as human society, which has always recognized the urgent need for someone to provide security and peace of mind, to administer justice to the deserving, to reconcile between people, and to stand up for the oppressed. The judiciary is the path to justice and fairness, and it is the fortress that individuals resort to for the protection of their rights and their demands for them. That is why the judiciary in Islam was one of the pillars of the religion, as Ibn Abi al-Dam, may Allah have mercy on him, said, “Performing judicial duties among Muslims, standing up for the oppressed, and settling disputes between disputants are among the pillars of the religion, and it is the most important of the incumbent duties”.² In other words, the judiciary is one of the institutions that aim to achieve religion by achieving justice among people and lifting injustice from them.

The relationship between human rights and justice

The right to justice is one of the most important rights that all nations and societies have focused on, by enshrining it in laws and regulations, declarations, and international covenants, as it is a natural right of humans that is consistent with the human nature that is obliged to uphold justice, defeat injustice and aggression, by enabling people to resort to the judiciary, which must have all the elements and

guarantees that make it fair and neutral, to redress the wronged, deter the oppressor, and protect rights and freedoms.³

Therefore, the right to justice is one of the most important guarantees that the judiciary must ensure for humans in all lawsuits without exception⁴, and its essence is that the interest of the individual lies in being tried for what he is accused of before an independent and neutral court, in which all guarantees based on the source of judgments in the state are taken into account, as it is committed to fulfilling its requirements⁵. Looking at Islamic law, we find that justice is one of its noblest and most important objectives, and justice is even one of the beautiful names of Allah, a quality of His exalted attributes, and that is enough evidence of the highest place of justice in Islam.⁶

In addition to the Quranic verses that contain explicit and implicit references to the concept of justice, in the words and deeds of the ruler and the ruled, especially when practicing justice and ruling among people, as the judiciary is the balance of justice, and it is a means of achieving one of the greatest goals of Islamic law, which aims to redress the wronged and uphold the right in all aspects of life, and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, confirms the right to justice as one of the important principles in Islam that the system of government in the Islamic state is based on.⁷

Justice in the arena of the judiciary is one of the fundamental principles that Islam came to decide between human beings and establish judgment on it, and this was natural from Islam, which is keen on the dignity of humans and the delivery of their rights to them, as justice is a necessity for establishing the right, and ensuring it spreads peace of mind, spreads security, strengthens the relationships between individuals, and makes the bonds between them based on balance, harmony, and brotherhood.⁸

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⁵ Hatem Bakkar, Protecting the Accused in a Fair Trial (Alexandria, Egypt: Knowledge Establishment 1996).
⁷ Mohammed bin Ahmed Al-Saleh, ‘Human Rights in the Quran and Sunnah and Their Applications in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’ (Volume 2nd, 2003).
⁸ Othman (n 4).
Sources of the Saudi judiciary

If we consider that the judiciary is a protector of rights and freedoms and a balance for justice, because judges are tasked with establishing justice among people without discrimination and with complete independence that prevents interference in their affairs, then discussing the human right to justice in the Saudi judiciary leads us in one way or another to the components of this right in Islamic law. This is because the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia applies the provisions of Islamic law as its constitution, according to Article 1 of the Basic Law of Governance, which states that “the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a sovereign Islamic state. Its constitution is the Book of God and the Sunna (traditions) of His Messenger, God’s peace and blessings be upon him. Its language is Arabic and its capital is Riyadh”.9

Based on this, the Saudi judiciary applies Islamic law to all cases presented before it, as well as regulations that do not conflict with it, in accordance with Article 48 of the Basic Law of Governance, which states that “the courts apply Islamic law to cases presented before them, according to what is indicated by the Book and the Sunna, and what is issued by the ruler of the state in accordance with the Book and the Sunna”.10

Therefore, the Saudi judiciary takes into account the components of justice in Islamic law, as well as regulations that guarantee the protection of rights and freedoms according to Islamic law. This adherence to Islamic law and these regulations give the Saudi judiciary its distinctiveness, in terms of relying on them, which naturally leads to the achievement of justice.

Elements of Achieving Justice in the Saudi Judiciary

The reliance of the Saudi judiciary on Islamic law, as we have previously discussed, undoubtedly leads us to the components of justice in Islamic law, which are also the components of justice in the Saudi judiciary. Therefore, justice in the Saudi judiciary is firm and surrounded by many components taken from Islamic law.

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9 The Basic Law of Governance., ‘Issued by Royal Decree No. (A/90)’.
10 ibid.
that preserve and protect its existence and safeguard its entity. Any diminishment of these components will cause panic, fear, insecurity and naturally lead to injustice.\textsuperscript{11} In this paper, I will focus on the most prominent features of the human right to justice in the Saudi judiciary. It is impossible to address all of these features, but I will mention the most important ones, as established in this great principle, which is the human right to justice. These components include

- **Independence of the Judiciary**

  The independent judiciary is considered the strongest component for achieving justice in modern constitutions and systems, and the most effective means of protecting state institutions, preventing injustice and lifting grievances, and protecting public freedoms and individual rights.\textsuperscript{12}

  Islamic law emphasizes the independence of the judge from any authority, considering him a refuge for the oppressed, obligated to restore rights to their rightful owners. This cannot be achieved unless the judge is free to determine the truth and falsehood, the lawful and the unlawful. If this freedom is compromised or the independence of the judge is affected by any factor, there will no longer be justice and people will not be able to obtain their rights in the judiciary.\textsuperscript{13}

  In the Saudi judiciary, the legislator has shown a great interest in the independence of the judge as a component of human rights in judicial justice. This is evident in its designation as an independent authority alongside the executive and legislative branches, and its ranking as the first among these authorities, contrary to other constitutions which usually place it in the third place after the legislative and executive branches. This indicates the importance of this authority which represents the provisions of Islamic law.\textsuperscript{14}


\textsuperscript{12} Farouk Al-Kilani, *The Independence of Judiciary* (Beirut: Arab Center for Publications 1999).

\textsuperscript{13} Zafer Al-Qasimi, *The System of Governance in Islamic Sharia and Islamic History* (Dar Al-Nafa)i (1987).

\textsuperscript{14} See Article 44 of the Basic Law of Governance, which states: “The powers in the state shall be divided among the judicial, executive and regulatory authorities. These authorities shall cooperate in performing their functions in accordance with this system and other systems, and the King is the reference for these authorities”. 
The legislator did not stop at that, but also stipulated the independence of the judiciary in general through the Basic Law of Governance, which is the highest law in the hierarchical organization in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and represents the constitution for other countries. This confirms that the judiciary is an independent authority, and no one has the authority to intervene in it, regardless of their status or power. The independence of the judiciary and judges allows the judge to rule with justice, away from any influences that may lead to injustice. As for the independence of the courts, all courts in the Kingdom are independent, in accordance with the independence of the judiciary, which the legislator emphasized.\(^{15}\)

The legislator explicitly defined this independence by prohibiting any interference in the work of judges. There is no authority over them except the authority of Islamic law, and their reference in their judgments is the provisions of Islamic law and the regulations derived from it. They derive their main authority from this, and the legislator prohibited any interference in the work of judges from anyone, regardless of their status or power.\(^{16}\)

The Saudi legislator’s appreciation for judges and their status and the necessity of their independence is such that the appointment of judges is not done by the usual methods of appointing government employees, but rather by a royal decree, based on a proposal from the Supreme Council of the Judiciary. This confirms their high status and appreciation.\(^{17}\)

- **Causality of Judicial Rulings**

  It means a statement of a judicial ruling document with evidence and reasoning, and the reasons on which the judgment was based in the lawsuit.\(^{18}\) This

\(^{15}\) According to Article 46 of the Basic Law of Governance, “The judiciary is an independent authority, and no authority has power over judges in their judiciary other than the authority of Islamic law”.

\(^{16}\) See: Article One of the Saudi Judiciary System, which states: “Judges are independent, with no authority over them in their judgments except for the provisions of Islamic Sharia law and applicable regulations, and no one is allowed to interfere in the judiciary”.

\(^{17}\) See: Article 52 of the Basic Law of Governance, which states: “Judges shall be appointed and dismissed by royal decree, based on the recommendation of the Supreme Council of the Judiciary”.

includes the narration of the facts of the lawsuit and the presentation of evidence. The aim is to dispel any doubts that may arise, and to emphasize its freedom from arbitrariness and injustice. This is consistent with the keenness of the Sharia on the right of the human being to judicial justice, as the inference instills confidence and reassurance in the hearts of the litigants.\(^{19}\)

The Islamic Sharia has taken a beautiful approach in justifying and inferring judgments, as evident in the Quran and Sunnah. Judgments were not just narrated, but the reasons for the judgment, the influencing factors, and the relevant characteristics were also explained in certain places.\(^{20}\)

The legislator has made inference a cornerstone of achieving judicial justice as a human right, and this is evident in various legal systems. For example, the Saudi Arabian system of legal proceedings stipulates in Article 163 that “after closing the door of litigation and reaching a judgment in the case, the judgment must be recorded in the proceedings report, preceded by the reasons on which it was based, and then signed by the judge or judges who participated in the case”.\(^{21}\) Moreover, the Saudi Arabian legislator even made inference applicable to evidence procedures, not just limited to the wording of the final judgment. This is evident in Article 7 of the Evidence Law, which states that “the court may modify the evidence procedures ordered, provided that the reasons for the modification are clarified in the session minutes, and the court may not take the result of the evidence procedure into account, provided that the reasons for that are clarified in its judgment”.\(^{22}\)

- **Collective Judiciary**

  In the early days of Islamic judiciary during the time of Prophet Muhammad and his companions, legal judgments were issued by a single judge. However, with the development of the Islamic state, collective judiciary emerged.\(^{23}\)

\(^{19}\) Abood (n 11).
\(^{21}\) Issued by Royal Decree No. (M/43) 2021.
\(^{22}\) ibid.
This means that disputes are presented to a court composed of a group of judges who study, investigate, and rule on the case. This method is more in line with the justice that Sharia law seeks, especially with the complexity of cases, changing obligations, and the prevalence of tricks to deprive people of their rights. It also provides an opportunity for consultation among members of the judiciary and allows for careful consideration before issuing a judicial ruling, reducing the influence of the judge’s emotions on the ruling. Moreover, it is more acceptable to litigants, as people tend to prefer the opinion of a group over that of an individual.

In order to achieve justice, ensure the accuracy of judgments, and address different types of cases according to their severity and their impact on protected interests under Sharia law or the legal system, the Saudi legal system has adopted a system of multiple judges. The fourth paragraph of Article 10 of the Judiciary Law emphasizes the importance of multiple judges, stating that “the Supreme Court exercises its jurisdiction through specialized circuits as needed, each of which is composed of three judges except for the Criminal Circuit, which considers judgments issued in cases of murder, amputation, stoning, retribution for life or less, and it is composed of five judges, and each circuit has a president”. The appellate courts are also composed of the same number of judges as the Supreme Court, as stated in the first paragraph of Article 15 of the Judiciary Law. The Saudi legal system takes into account the severity of cases and their impact on protected interests under Sharia law or the legal system, and assigns a sufficient number of judges accordingly.

Article 19 of the Judiciary Law states that “General courts in the regions shall be composed of specialized circuits, among which are circuits for execution, conclusive evidence, and matters outside the jurisdiction of other courts and notarial writings, as well as circuits for adjudicating lawsuits arising from traffic accidents and violations specified in the Traffic System and its executive regulations, with each circuit consisting of a single judge or three judges as determined by the Supreme

\[24\] The Judiciary System, ‘Issued by Royal Decree No. (M/78)’.
Judicial Council.” As for criminal courts, Article 20 of the Judiciary Law specifies the number of judges for each specialized circuit, which are:

A - Circuits for retribution and boundaries issues.
B - Circuits for disciplinary penalties.
C - Circuits for criminal cases.

Each circuit is composed of three judges, except for cases specified by the Supreme Judicial Council, which are considered by a single judge.²⁵

As stated in Articles 21 and 22 of the Judiciary Law, the Personal Status Court, the Commercial Court, and the Labor Court are also composed of individual judges or more, as determined by the Supreme Judicial Council. The Saudi legal system emphasizes the balance between the individual judge system and the collective judge system, with a general emphasis on the collective judge system to promote the right to justice, especially in serious cases. The Saudi legal system ensures that the appropriate number of judges is assigned to each case to uphold justice and fairness.

• **Choose a Qualified Judge**

The selection of a qualified judge is considered one of the most important factors in achieving justice in the judiciary. The judge is responsible for deciding on the cases presented to him, and his ruling is final. Therefore, the judge must possess the qualifications stipulated by the jurists, including bravery in upholding justice, piety, intelligence, and knowledge of Sharia law, especially in matters related to judgments.²⁶

The efficiency of the judge, their knowledge, their belief in justice, and their determination to apply the law to all members of society are among the greatest factors in achieving justice in the judiciary and enhancing the right to justice for individuals.

The Saudi legal system has not overlooked this aspect and has given it great attention, as evidenced by Article 31 of the Judiciary Law, which stipulates the

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²⁵ ibid.
²⁶ Abood (n 11).
qualifications required for a judge. The article states that the judge must have a good reputation and conduct, which is a matter of subjective evaluation, and it is sufficient that nothing is known about the judge that would discredit them.\textsuperscript{27}

In addition to the requirement that the judge must have full legal capacity according to Sharia law, as stipulated by Article 31 of the Judiciary Law, the Saudi legal system emphasizes the importance of selecting a qualified judge for this position to enhance the right to judicial justice. Therefore, the law prohibits anyone who has been convicted of a crime, punished, or disciplined from assuming this position, even if their status has been reinstated. This provision takes into account past sins and does not drop them over time, which is more protective of the judiciary from those who have a bad reputation and may belong to this profession.\textsuperscript{28}(Al-Duraib, 1999, p. 356).

The practice of judiciary in the Kingdom is subject to the principle of scientific specialization, which requires that those appointed to the judiciary hold a degree from one of the Sharia colleges in the Kingdom or its equivalent from other institutions. The holder of such a degree must pass the examination prepared by the Ministry of Justice, as it is a condition for accepting other certificates and ensuring that the holder is familiar with the legal sciences.\textsuperscript{29}

\textbf{Multiple Levels of Litigation:}

Because judicial rulings are issued by judges who are subject to human fallibility, their judgments are susceptible to error and mistakes. It is natural for legal systems to provide a mechanism for reviewing these judgments to ensure their accuracy and fairness and to eliminate any defects or errors in them.\textsuperscript{30} (Al-
Shaibani, 2002, p. 87). Thus, the idea of multiple levels of litigation was introduced to enhance the right of individuals to obtain a balanced and just judicial ruling.

From this perspective, Islamic law has imposed protection for the right to justice of the individual by allowing the reversal of a judicial ruling that was made in error, provided that it violates consensus, rules, text, or clear analogy.\(^{31}\)

This multiple level of litigation achieves justice by allowing the dispute to be reconsidered at a higher court after a ruling has been issued by a lower court, whether to affirm, establish, or overturn the ruling. Reconsidering a case at a higher level than the court that issued the ruling is one of the most important factors in achieving justice in the judiciary, as it is a right of the individual. Denying a person the opportunity to appeal at a higher level than the first instance court violates their human rights, and it is fair to provide another chance.\(^{32}\)

The Saudi judicial system takes multiple levels of litigation as a means to enhance the right to justice, as stated in Article 9 of the Judiciary Law, which states that the courts consist of the following:
1. The Supreme Court.
2. Appellate courts.
3. Courts of first instance, which include:
   a. General courts.
   b. Criminal courts.
   c. Personal status courts.
   d. Commercial courts.
   e. Labor courts.\(^{33}\)

This gradation is one of the essential components in achieving justice in the judiciary, ensuring the individual’s right to object to judgments and to appeal them to a higher judicial authority for review, which undoubtedly achieves justice.

- **Openness of Sessions:**
  It means that all procedures taken by the court before and during issuing

\(^{31}\) Abood (n 11).
\(^{32}\) Al-Baqmi (n 6).
\(^{33}\) The Judiciary System (n 24).
a ruling are conducted openly in front of all parties involved. Undoubtedly, this procedure is established in Islamic law, as pleadings were held in the early days of Islam in mosques, markets, and streets, where both young and old would attend. Moreover, jurists have emphasized the importance of having scholars and experts in the judge’s council to consult them on complex matters.34

This openness is one of the essential components in achieving judicial justice because it allows the public to monitor the judiciary, making the judge more vigilant in ensuring equality between the litigants in his court, in his words, actions, and the proper conduct of the session, maintaining its etiquette, gaining its dignity and respect, and thus avoiding any mistakes, fraud, or bias. Furthermore, holding pleadings and discussions in front of the parties involved reassures them and makes them confident in the judicial process.35

This is what the Saudi legislator has adopted to achieve judicial justice, as stated in Article 64 of the System of Shariah Proceedings, which states that “the pleading shall be held openly unless the judge deems it necessary to hold it in secret, either of his own accord or at the request of one of the litigants, to maintain order, observe general etiquette, or protect family privacy”.36 This clearly indicates that the principle is to conduct the trial publicly and to ensure the individual’s right to achieve justice, except for the exceptions mentioned, which are subject to the judge’s discretion according to what the laws stipulate.

Conclusion

Through what has been discussed in these papers, it is evident that the sources of the Saudi judicial system are Islamic law and the enacted regulations that do not contradict Islamic law. The Saudi system has taken a leading role in adhering to everything that can achieve justice in the judiciary as a human right, by adopting the provisions of Islamic law in the laws of the Kingdom of

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34 Alduraib (n 28).
35 ibid.
36 The System of Shari’a Litigation, ‘Issued by Royal Decree No. (M/1)’.
Saudi Arabia and giving them precedence over all other laws, including the basic system of governance, which includes many components that aim to establish the right to justice for humans. In addition, the details of other judicial systems that enhance this right, such as the independence of the judiciary, the provision of judicial judgment, collective justice, the selection of qualified judges for this task, the multiple levels of litigation for litigants, and the openness of court sessions, confirm the distinctiveness of the Saudi judicial system and its preservation of human rights, including the right to justice.

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