

FREEDOM
IN THE
WORLD
2006

THE ANNUAL SURVEY OF
POLITICAL RIGHTS AND
CIVIL LIBERTIES

F R E E D O M H O U S E

Freedom in the World
2006

The findings of *Freedom in the World 2006* include events from December 1, 2004 through November 30, 2005.

Freedom in the World 2006
The Annual Survey of
Political Rights & Civil Liberties

Edited by Aili Piano, Arch Puddington, and Mark Y. Rosenberg

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Freedom in the World 2006: Middle East Progress Amid Global Gains

Arch Puddington

In a year in which the state of world freedom showed striking improvement in major countries from Ukraine to Indonesia, several places in the Arab Middle East saw modest but notable increases in political rights and civil liberties—even though none there yet approach the status of a free society. Although the region continues to suffer from a marked deficit of freedom, this progress was the most significant development cited by *Freedom in the World 2006*, Freedom House's annual survey of freedom worldwide. Furthermore, the positive trend in the Middle East was accompanied by gains in several majority Muslim countries in Asia and in sub-Saharan Africa.

In another significant development, the number of countries rated by Freedom House as Not Free declined from 49 in 2004 to 45 for the year 2005, the lowest number of Not Free societies identified by the survey in more than a decade.

Freedom showed improvement in the former Soviet Union, a region, like the Middle East, that has been resistant to the wave of democratization that brought positive change to much of the rest of the former communist world. In all, five countries that were once part of the Soviet Union recorded gains, the most significant being Ukraine's improvement from the status of Partly Free to Free. Ukraine thus becomes the first non-Baltic country of the former Soviet Union to attain a rating of Free, even while another important former Soviet republic, Uzbekistan, declined to the lowest possible score in the survey's methodology.

The survey shows that eight countries and one territory registered an increase in their freedom status. Along with Ukraine, Indonesia and Trinidad and Tobago moved to a Free status. Five countries and one territory moved from Not Free to Partly Free: Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Mauritania, and the Palestinian Authority.

At the same time, four countries registered negative status changes. Three countries declined from Free to Partly Free: Guyana, the Philippines, and Thailand. One country, Nepal, moved from Partly Free to Not Free.

To be sure, gains for freedom were not consistent across regions. There were approximately the same number of gains and losses in both Latin America and Asia, and slightly more gains than losses in sub-Saharan Africa.

Yet the overall picture was distinctly positive. As a result of these developments, at the end of 2005, there were 89 Free countries, in which there is broad scope for open political competition, a climate of respect for civil liberties, significant independent civic life, and independent media. This represents 46 percent of the world's 192 countries and 2.969 billion people—45.97 percent of the global population. The

Freedom in the World—2006 Survey

The population of the world as estimated in mid-2005 is 6,457.7 million persons, who reside in 192 sovereign states. The level of political rights and civil liberties as shown comparatively by the Freedom House Survey is:

Free: 2,968.18 million (45.97 percent of the world's population) live in 89 of the states.

Partly Free: 1,157.7 million (17.93 percent of the world's population) live in 58 of the states,

Not Free: 2,331.2 million (36.10 percent of the world's population) live in 45 of the states.

A Record of the Survey (population in millions)

Year under Review	FREE	PARTLY FREE	NOT FREE	WORLD POPULATION
Mid-1992	1,352.2 (24.83%)	2,403.3 (44.11%)	1,690.4 (31.06%)	5,446.0
Mid-1993	1,046.2 (19.00%)	2,224.4 (40.41%)	2,234.6 (40.59%)	5,505.2
Mid-1994	1,119.7 (19.97%)	2,243.4 (40.01%)	2,243.9 (40.02%)	5,607.0
Mid-1995	1,114.5 (19.55%)	2,365.8 (41.49%)	2,221.2 (38.96%)	5,701.5
Mid-1996	1,250.3 (21.67%)	2,260.1 (39.16%)	2,260.6 (39.17%)	5,771.0
Mid-1997	1,266.0 (21.71%)	2,281.9 (39.12%)	2,284.6 (39.17%)	5,832.5
Mid-1998	2,354.0 (39.84%)	1,570.6 (26.59%)	1,984.1 (33.58%)	5,908.7
Mid-1999	2,324.9 (38.90%)	1,529.0 (25.58%)	2,122.4 (35.51%)	5,976.3
Mid-2000	2,465.2 (40.69%)	1,435.8 (23.70%)	2,157.5 (35.61%)	6,058.5
Mid-2001	2,500.7 (40.79%)	1,462.9 (23.86%)	2,167.1 (35.35%)	6,130.7
Mid-2002	2,717.6 (43.85%)	1,293.1 (20.87%)	2,186.3 (35.28%)	6,197.0
Mid-2003	2,780.1 (44.03%)	1,324.0 (20.97%)	2,209.9 (35.00%)	6,314.0
Mid-2004	2,819.1 (44.08%)	1,189.0 (18.59%)	2,387.3 (37.33%)	6,395.4
Mid-2005	2,968.8 (45.97%)	1,157.7 (17.53%)	2,331.2 (36.10%)	6,457.7

* The large shift in the population figure between 1997 and 1998 is due to India's change in status from Partly Free to Free.

number of Free countries did not change from *Freedom in the World* ratings for the year 2004. There were 58 Partly Free countries (30 percent of the total), in which there is limited respect for political rights and civil liberties: an increase of four from the previous year. These states frequently suffer from an environment of corruption, weak rule of law, ethnic and religious strife, and often a setting in which a single political party enjoys dominance despite the facade of limited pluralism. Approximately 17.93 percent of the world's population, 1.158 billion persons, lived in such Partly Free societies. There were 2.331 billion people (36.10 percent of the global population) living in 45 Not Free countries (24 percent), where basic political rights are absent and fundamental civil liberties were widely and systematically denied: four fewer than the previous year.

The global picture thus suggests that 2005 was one of the most successful years for freedom since Freedom House began measuring world freedom in 1972. Not since 1992, the year following the collapse of the Soviet Union, has the percentage of Not Free countries been as low as in 2005. That year, 38 countries were assessed as Not Free: 21 percent of the global total.

This year saw an increase from 119 to 123 in the number of countries categorized as electoral democracies. This represented 64 percent of the world's countries—the highest number in the survey's 33-year history. The three additions were all from sub-Saharan Africa: Burundi, Central Africa Republic, and Liberia. While some electoral democracies had poor human rights records and weak democratic institutions, such states afforded considerable space for political opposition movements, provided opposition parties access to the media to express their viewpoints, and met

the minimum standard of a fair vote count in conditions of ballot secrecy and relatively open election campaigning.

In addition to the countries that registered a status improvement in 2005, 19 countries showed gains in freedom that, while significant, did not produce a change in their overall freedom designation: Brazil, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Colombia, Georgia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Israel, Latvia, Liberia, Lithuania, Namibia, Romania, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, and Vietnam.

Meanwhile, six counties experienced a decline that likewise did not merit a status change: Congo (Brazzaville), Gabon, Gambia, Suriname, Uzbekistan, and Venezuela.

The Global Trend

Year Under Review	Free	Partly Free	Not Free
1975	40	53	65
1985	56	56	55
1995	76	62	53
2005	89	58	45

Tracking Electoral Democracy

Year under Review	Number of Electoral Democracies
1995	117
2000	120
2005	123

THE MIDDLE EAST: MODEST GAINS IN A TROUBLED POLITICAL CLIMATE

Although the countries of the Middle East lag behind other regions in adherence to democratic standards, human rights, and basic liberties, the progress registered in 2005 may have important implications for freedom's future prospects in the region and globally. Despite the fact that countries with a Not Free status continue to predominate in the Middle East, an analysis of Freedom in the World scores over the past five years—a period beginning just before the terrorist assaults of September 11, 2001—indicates a positive regional trajectory.

The *Freedom in the World 2006* ratings for the Middle East represent the region's best performance in the history of the survey. Interestingly, this progress has taken place in an environment that many believe is not propitious for the spread of basic freedoms. It is one that during this period has seen a rise in terrorism, the continuing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, war in Iraq, high poverty and unemployment rates in non-oil-producing countries, and growing animosity towards the United States. Indeed, some have argued that the rise in anti-American sentiment has tarnished the democratic idea in the minds of ordinary Arabs, although several of their countries have taken steps towards expanded freedom.

While remaining mindful of the modest nature of progress in the Arab world, policymakers, journalists, and scholars should take heed of the changes that have occurred in the context of a difficult regional and global political atmosphere. Some advancement, of course, has been propelled by geopolitical developments. This is particularly the case in Lebanon, where the departure of a Syrian occupation force paved the way for competitive elections and a wide-ranging expansion of civil liberties. Likewise, the death of Yasser Arafat—whose autocratic methods, aversion to the strengthening of major governing institutions, and tolerance for corruption stifled democratic development in the Palestinian Authority—has opened the way for a series of competitive and relatively honest elections, and an improvement in the

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overall civil liberties environment. A further boost followed on the heels of the withdrawal of Israel from the settlements and military installations in the Gaza Strip. Meanwhile in Egypt, parliamentary elections were held that were considered the most competitive in the country's recent history, despite some acts of repression and violence by the authorities and supporters of the Mubarak government. In this case, it is possible that pressure from the United States and the European Union on the Mubarak government to open up the political process played a role in the decision to permit more pluralism. Modest gains were also noted in Iraq where, despite brutal violence carried out by insurgents and terrorists, elections for an interim parliament and a constitutional referendum were conducted. Kuwait saw the extension of suffrage to women during the year, while in Saudi Arabia there were improvements in the media environment and academic freedom. It is worth noting that until 2005, Saudi Arabia had earned the lowest possible *Freedom in the World* score—a 7 for political rights and a 7 for civil liberties in every survey year. This year the civil liberties score improved to 6.

It is also clear that some of the gains noted in this year's survey are fragile and could be reversed in the future. Gains made in Iraq could be wiped out if the current level of violence escalates into outright civil conflict among Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds. Lebanon's tradition of communal strife could reemerge, catalyzed by continuing political violence. Progress in the Palestinian Authority is in constant jeopardy from the government's inability to control violent militias like Hamas and from a possible escalation of conflict with Israel. The violence that accompanied the elections in Egypt, emanating principally from the state, is also cause for concern.

In addition to the progress in the core countries of the Middle East, the period since 9/11 has witnessed steady progress in majority Muslim countries in other regions. The most dramatic reflection of this trend has been the movement of Indonesia—the largest majority-Muslim country and one that has itself been the victim of acts of brutal terrorism—to the status of Free. Another large and geopolitically important majority-Muslim country, Turkey, has registered gains in both political rights and civil liberties during the past five years, gains that will be critical to its efforts to secure membership in the European Union. Improvements have also been registered in several African countries with Muslim majorities, including Mali, Senegal, and, in 2005, Mauritania.

This steady record of progress represents a powerful argument against the propositions that Islam is incompatible with democracy or that Islam is necessarily an impediment to the spread of freedom. Rather, the principal obstacle to further progress in the region remains an entrenched culture of political authoritarianism that predominates in the core countries of the Arab world. Progress in the Middle East also suggests that it may in fact be possible for the United States and Europe to implement policies to promote the growth of free institutions, and that these policies should be both strengthened and refined. The nascent openings in political space may lead to the normalization of political life in a part of the world notable for its political turbulence. On the other hand, the potential for a freer civic life might open the door to illiberal forces, who exploit democratic opportunities for what are ultimately undemocratic purposes. To the degree possible, the democratic world should seek to bolster those forces that are committed to peaceful change and to the building of the foundations of a stable, democratic society.

**PROGRESS AND REPRESSION:
THE FORMER SOVIET UNION'S DIVERGENT PATHS**

Aside from the Middle East, countries in the former Soviet Union showed the most notable improvements in freedom during 2005. While Ukraine saw its status improve to Free and Kyrgyzstan improved from Not Free to Partly Free, less significant improvement was also noted in three other former Soviet republics: Georgia, Latvia, and Lithuania. As Latvia and Lithuania had already moved into the ranks of Free societies and stable democracies, the developments in the three non-Baltic countries were the most significant.

This progress took place in a region that is widely perceived as experiencing a general decline in liberty. Indeed, in many former Soviet countries, the prospects for competitive elections, an independent media, an active civil society, a vibrant political opposition, and the rule of law are bleak. In Uzbekistan, state violence against demonstrators, the repression of civil society, and an overall decline in human rights conditions during the past year was sufficiently pronounced to warrant a drop in the country's *Freedom in the World* score to the lowest possible rating: a 7 for political rights and a 7 for civil liberties. Only eight countries worldwide earned a similar status as the worst of the worst, and two, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, are in Central Asia.

The prospects for further gains in the region will likely rest on the development of the kind of mature and credible alternative political movements that emerged in Ukraine and Georgia prior to their nonviolent revolutions. During the past year, the forces behind the "color revolutions" that succeeded in these two countries consolidated reforms that have significantly improved the democratic landscape of each. At the same time, the developments in both these countries, along with events in Kyrgyzstan—where the depth and durability of reform is less clear and where corruption and a lack of government transparency remain serious concerns—have provoked authoritarian leaderships throughout the region to adopt measures that will make it more difficult for the development of a genuine civil society. In Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Belarus, and, most significantly, Russia, policies were adopted this year that not only will impede the development of a democratic political opposition, but will constrict the activities of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other institutions of civil society that are committed to the expansion of democratic space and the strengthening of human rights.

In this, Russia's position is the most powerful and influential. One year ago, Freedom House lowered Russia's freedom status from Partly Free to Not Free because of the Putin government's actions to marginalize the political opposition, expand political control over the media, and undermine the independence of the judiciary. The Putin leadership's anti-democratic tendencies appeared, if anything, even more pronounced in 2005. At year's end, the government had proposed legislation that would severely squeeze think tanks, human rights organizations, and other members of the NGO sector, especially those that receive funding from outside Russia. Furthermore, Putin has taken initiatives to undermine the success of neighboring democracies—such as Ukraine, Georgia, and the Baltic states—while offering support to some of the region's most repressive regimes, most notably those in Belarus and Uzbekistan. Moreover, the Russian media, which is largely under Putin's control, has elevated anxieties that the democratic revolutions in Ukraine, Georgia, and

elsewhere have been led by forces hostile to Russia and made possible by support from the United States and other countries in order to reduce Russian influence in the region and thwart Russian geopolitical and economic ambitions.

LOOMING PROBLEMS FOR EUROPE AND THE U.S.

Although the United States and the majority of countries in Western Europe registered the highest possible ratings on the freedom index—a 1 for both political rights and civil liberties—*Freedom in the World 2006* noted several looming problems in a number of these established democracies. In addition to human rights concerns raised by counter-terrorism measures taken since 9/11, the survey pointed to the widespread use of sophisticated forms of gerrymandering in the drawing of congressional district lines in the United States as a weakness in that country's electoral process that has reduced competitiveness in congressional and state legislative elections. At the same time, the survey findings revealed that several European countries are facing challenges to their democratic institutions from a failure to effectively integrate non-European immigrants socially or economically, a problem whose most vivid reflection was the rioting that afflicted France during the past year. In addition to France, the survey pointed to Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, and Denmark as among a group of countries that face the challenge of integrating large immigrant populations of differing ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

NEW DATA TO BE RELEASED; NEW ATTENTION TO CORRUPTION

In order to enhance an understanding of the factors that underlie the development of freedom and democracy, Freedom House will release for the first time the scores that each country received in seven broad categories as part of the 2006 survey. Thus, in addition to the overall scores for political rights and civil liberties that have traditionally been made public, Freedom House will release scores in the following categories: electoral process, political pluralism and participation, functioning of government (including transparency and corruption), freedom of expression and belief, association and organizational rights, rule of law, and personal autonomy and individual rights.

These category scores will be published in spring 2006. However, a preliminary assessment by the *Freedom in the World* analytic team revealed that a critical impediment to the further expansion of democratic freedom is the combination of pervasive corruption and a weak or largely absent rule of law. The "rule of law" and "functioning of government" categories are generally where countries in all six regions covered by the survey have the weakest scores. Moreover, this constellation of issues—official corruption, lack of governmental transparency, a weak and often corrupt judiciary, a capricious or biased legal system, and abusive security services—is the principal obstacle to the consolidation of democracy in numerous countries where competitive elections are conducted and a reasonable array of civil liberties are enjoyed.

The impact of corruption and rule of law issues on democratic institutions is perhaps most vividly on display in Latin America. Although the region overwhelmingly consists of electoral democracies, it is also marked by government instability,

poverty, and weak public faith in democratic institutions. The region's countries score quite well on indicators evaluating the conduct of elections, freedom of expression (including press freedom, freedom of religion, and academic freedom), and right of association (including the right to demonstrate, form NGOs, and trade union rights). However, scores evaluating corruption, government accountability, and the rule of law reveal substantially weaker adherence to democratic standards. While, as stated above, all regions suffer from relatively poor performance in these areas, it is the wide discrepancy in Latin America's category scores that is particularly significant.

Indeed, the region's uncertain democratic future is likely the result of this comparatively weak performance in combating corruption, improving transparency, and fortifying the rule of law. By contrast, the countries of formerly communist Central Europe (a group that excludes the former Soviet Union), which are also predominately electoral democracies, are notable for the increasing stability of their political institutions, economic growth, and public faith in democracy. A comparison of *Freedom in the World* category scores shows that Central and Eastern European countries substantially outperform Latin America on issues of corruption and transparency and even more so on issues relating to the rule of law. This helps explain why many of the nascent democracies of formerly communist Central Europe have achieved a level of stability and popular support that continues to elude many countries of Latin America.

COUNTRY TRENDS IN 2005

According to the survey, outright improvements in freedom status—that is, positive movement across the threshold separating Not Free from Partly Free, or Partly Free from Free—occurred in eight countries and one territory in 2005. Lebanon moved from Not Free to Partly Free due to successful parliamentary elections in May and a general improvement in the civil liberties climate following large-scale, nonviolent protests against Syrian domination and the subsequent withdrawal of Syrian troops. The Palestinian Authority moved from Not Free to Partly Free due to an improved civil liberties environment—including greater freedoms of expression and assembly—that followed the death of Yasser Arafat and facilitated the success of the relatively competitive and honest elections, along with the enhanced freedom of movement that followed Israel's abandonment of settlements in the Gaza Strip. Indonesia moved from Partly Free to Free as a result of peaceful and mostly free elections for newly empowered regional leaders, an orderly transition to a newly elected president that further consolidated the democratic political process, and the emergence of a peace settlement between the government and the Free Aceh movement. Despite continuing security problems in various regions of the country, Afghanistan saw its status move from Not Free to Partly Free because of a strengthening of civil society and a modest improvement in the rule of law following the holding of relatively successful parliamentary elections. The Central African Republic moved from Not Free to Partly Free due to successful elections and an improvement in freedoms of expression and assembly. Mauritania improved from Not Free to Partly Free due to an enhancement of the civil liberties environment following the overthrow of President Taya. Trinidad and Tobago moved from Partly Free to Free because of improve-

ments in economic policies that enhanced equality of opportunity. Ukraine improved from Partly Free to Free due to overall changes in the political process and the civil liberties environment following the Orange Revolution of December 2004. Kyrgyzstan moved from Not Free to Partly Free due to relatively free presidential elections and modest improvements in freedoms of expression and assembly.

Only four countries registered an outright decline in status. Here the most significant development was the downgrading of the Philippines from Free to Partly Free, a decision based on credible allegations of massive electoral fraud, corruption, and the government's intimidation of elements in the political opposition. Nepal declined from Partly Free to Not Free due to a palace coup in which the king dissolved parliament and declared a state of emergency. Thailand declined from Free to Partly Free because of a progressive weakening of opposition political parties and a lack of political competitiveness. Guyana declined from Free to Partly Free because of the growing influence of the illegal narcotics trade on the country's political system.

In addition to the eight countries that registered changes in status from Partly Free to Free and Not Free to Partly Free, 19 countries showed gains that, while significant, did not result in a status change. Brazil showed modest gains due to diligence in pursuing corruption investigations by the legislature and the press. Burkina Faso saw progress on civil liberties score due to increased press freedom and improvements in the human rights environment. Burundi's political rights rating improved due to fair and competitive elections at both the local and national levels and a successful rotation of power. Colombia registered progress in both political rights and civil liberties due to a step up in the government's fight against corruption, an enhanced security environment, and a decline in violent attacks against journalists. Georgia's civil liberties score improved because of a continued consolidation of freedom of expression and individual rights. Ghana registered improvements in political rights due to fair and competitive presidential and parliamentary elections and a general maturing of its electoral institutions. Guinea-Bissau saw its ratings for political rights improve because of elections deemed fair and competitive. Iraq registered small gains in political rights due to modestly successful national elections and the referendum on the new constitution. Israel's score for civil liberties improved due to an increase in civic activism and a reduction in terrorist attacks. Latvia's civil liberties rating improved from 2 to 1 due to an increase in the activity and visibility of the nongovernmental sector. Liberia's political rights score improved because of fair and competitive elections for the presidency and legislature. Lithuania's civil liberties score improved because of an increase in judicial independence and the implementation of judicial reforms. Namibia's civil liberties rating improved due to improvements in the rule of law. Romania experienced an increase in political rights due to a presidential run-off election that resulted in a victory for the opposition candidate and that was widely viewed as fair and competitive. St. Kitts and Nevis's civil liberties score improved due to a consolidation of the rule of law. St. Lucia's civil liberties score increased due to an enhanced rule of law. Saudi Arabia registered a slight improvement in civil liberties because of the impact of regional private media and government reforms that enhanced academic freedom. Taiwan's political rights score improved due to a strengthening of the electoral process. Vietnam earned a modest increase in civil liberties due to improvements in cultural and religious expression.

Six countries experienced declines that did not merit a status change. Congo (Brazzaville) saw a decline in civil liberties due to a steady erosion of the rule of law, including the failure of the courts to sanction high-ranking military officials for a massacre of refugees. Gabon's political rights rating declined because of flawed, uncompetitive elections and continuing military influence over the electoral process. The Gambia's political rights score declined because of the failure to allow the opportunity for a rotation of power in the lead-up to elections in 2006. Suriname experienced a decline in political rights because of increased corruption and discrimination against the Amerindian population. Uzbekistan's civil liberties rating declined due to a violent government response to demonstrations in the town of Andijon that left hundreds dead, as well as greater overall government repression. Venezuela's political rights rating declined because of an increase in corruption and voter intimidation.

WORST OF THE WORST

There are 45 states that are rated as Not Free, in which a broad range of freedoms are systematically denied. Among the Not Free countries, 8 states have been given the survey's lowest rating of 7 for political rights and 7 for civil liberties. The eight worst rated countries represent a narrow range of systems and cultures. Cuba and North Korea are one-party Marxist-Leninist regimes. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are Central Asian countries ruled by dictators with roots in the Soviet period. Libya and Syria are Arab countries under the sway of secular dictatorships, while Sudan is under a leadership that has elements both of radical Islamism and of the traditional military junta. The remaining worst rated state is Burma, a tightly controlled military dictatorship.

There are two worst-rated territories: Tibet (under Chinese jurisdiction) and Chechnya, where an indigenous Islamic population is engaged in a brutal guerrilla war for independence from Russia.

REGIONAL PATTERNS

Democracy and freedom are the dominant trends in Western and East-Central Europe, in the Americas, and increasingly in the Asia-Pacific region. In the former Soviet Union, the picture remains quite mixed, while in Africa, Free societies and electoral democracies remain a minority despite recent progress. As noted above, the Middle East has experienced gains for freedom, though the region as a whole overwhelmingly still consists of countries in the Partly Free and Not Free categories.

Of the 48 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, 11 are Free (23 percent), 23 are Partly Free (48 percent), and 14 are Not Free (29 percent). Of the African countries, 23 (48 percent) are electoral democracies.

In Asia, 16 of the region's 39 countries are Free (41 percent), 12 are Partly Free (31 percent), and 11 are Not Free (28 percent). A solid majority of the region's countries, 23, are in the ranks of electoral democracies.

In East-Central Europe and the former USSR, there is now evidence of a deepening chasm. In Central Europe and parts of Eastern Europe, including the Baltic states, democracy and freedom prevail; in the countries of the former Soviet Union, how-

ever, progress has been decidedly mixed. Overall, 17 of the 27 post-communist countries of East-Central Europe and the former Soviet Union are electoral democracies. In addition, 13 of the region's states are Free (48 percent), 7 are Partly Free (26 percent), and 7 are Not Free (26 percent). Meanwhile, of the 12 non-Baltic former Soviet republics, 1 country is free (8 percent), 4 are Partly Free (33 percent), and 7 are Not Free (58 percent).

Western Europe consists largely of Free countries and democracies, with 24 states Free, 1 country (Turkey) Partly Free, and all 25 ranking as electoral democracies.

Among the 35 countries in the Americas, 33 are electoral democracies. In addition, 24 states are rated as Free (69 percent), 9 are Partly Free (26 percent), and 2—Cuba and Haiti—are Not Free (6 percent).

In the 18 countries of the Middle East and North Africa, only one, Israel, ranks as Free; Israel is also the only electoral democracy in the region. There are 6 Partly Free states (33 percent), and 11 countries that are Not Free (61 percent).

CONCLUSION: CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM DESPITE DIFFICULT TIMES

Under any circumstances, the state of global freedom at the end of 2005 would be cause for cautious optimism. The record is even more impressive given the conflicts and crises that dominated the news in 2005. These include war, civil conflict, ethnic cleansing, religious fanaticism, famine and epidemics, momentous natural disasters, terrorism, mass immigration, and the upheavals caused by economic globalization.

Since the events of 9/11, the United States has made the promotion of democracy—in the Middle East primarily but in other regions as well—a greater priority among the broad mix of foreign policy goals. As is often the case when governments set forth far-reaching and visionary objectives, the actual implementation has often fallen short of the leadership's bold words. Nevertheless, the administration of George W. Bush, building on policies initiated by his predecessors, has pushed forward an agenda in which the advancement of freedom plays a tangible role. Likewise, the European Union has incorporated democracy standards and human rights in its core mission. By insisting that new member states adhere to these standards, the EU has played an immense role in the process of democratic consolidation in the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The Commonwealth has also helped further the cause of freedom by insisting that member countries adhere to democratic standards and by sanctioning countries like Zimbabwe that violate democratic norms and commit human rights offenses.

While the precise impact of democracy promotion policies is often difficult to measure, it is by now clear that the efforts by the established democracies to expand freedom's reach are paying dividends. Democracy promotion has always had its critics, and the critics' objections, as might be expected, have been amplified during a controversial war. But if the gains for freedom revealed in this survey tell us anything, it is that the policies of the United States, Europe, and other free societies are achieving some crucial goals. These efforts should be strengthened, not diminished.

Aili Piano and Mark Rosenberg assisted in the preparation of this report.

Introduction

The *Freedom in the World 2006* survey contains reports on 192 countries and 14 related and disputed territories. Each country report begins with a section containing basic political, economic, and social data arranged in the following categories: **population**, **gross national income per capita (GNI/capita)**, **life expectancy**, **religious groups**, **ethnic groups**, **capital**, **political rights** [numerical rating], **civil liberties** [numerical rating], and **status** [Free, Partly Free, or Not Free], and a **ten-year ratings timeline**. Each territory report begins with a section containing the same data, except for GNI/capita, life expectancy, and capital.

The **population** and **life expectancy** figures are from the *2005 World Population Data Sheet* of the Population Reference Bureau. **GNI/capita figures** are from the World Bank's *World Development Indicators 2005* and www.internetworld.stats.com. Information about **religious groups** and **ethnic groups** are derived primarily from the CIA *World Factbook*, the ethnic group figures for the United States are from the U.S. Census Bureau. Population figures, and information about religious and ethnic groups for territories are from sources including the CIA *World Factbook*, World Gazetteer, Wikipedia, the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), and the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Russia.

The **political rights** and **civil liberties** categories contain numerical ratings between 1 and 7 for each country or territory, with 1 representing the most free and 7 the least free. The **status** designation of Free, Partly Free, or Not Free, which is determined by the combination of the political rights and civil liberties ratings, indicates the general state of freedom in a country or territory. The ratings of countries or territories which have improved or declined since the previous survey are indicated by asterisks next to the ratings. Positive or negative trends that do not warrant a ratings change since the previous year may be indicated by upward or downward trend arrows, which are located next to the name of the country or territory. A brief explanation of ratings changes or trend arrows is provided for each country or territory as required. For a full description of the methods used to determine the survey's ratings, please see the chapter on the survey's methodology.

The **ten-year ratings timeline** lists the political rights and civil liberties ratings and status for each of the last 10 years. Each year that is included in the time line refers to the year under review, *not* the edition of the survey. Thus, the ratings and status from the *Freedom in the World 2006* edition are listed under "2005" (the year that was under review for the 2006 survey edition).

Following the section on political, economic, and social data, each country and territory report is divided into two parts: an **overview** and an analysis of **political rights and civil liberties**. The overview provides a brief historical background and a description of major recent events. The political rights and civil liberties section summarizes each country or territory's degree of respect for the rights and liberties that Freedom House uses to evaluate freedom in the world.

Afghanistan

Population: 29,900,000 **Political Rights:** 5
GNI/capita: \$700 **Civil Liberties:** 5*
Life Expectancy: 42 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim (80 percent),
 Shia Muslim (19 percent), other (1 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Pashtun (42 percent), Tajik (27 percent),
 Hazara (9 percent), Uzbek (9 percent), other (13 percent)
Capital: Kabul



Ratings Change: Afghanistan's civil liberties rating improved from 6 to 5 due to improvements in the robustness of civil society and a modest consolidation in the rule of law.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	5,6NF	5.5PF

Overview: Afghanistan made further progress toward establishing the framework for an inclusive democratic state during 2005, when elections for the new lower house of parliament and the provincial councils were held on September 18. Despite some violence during the campaign period and instances of localized irregularities and intimidation on polling day, the vote was deemed to have reflected the will of the people. Limited progress has been made on various issues, including attempts by the central government to extend its authority over the provinces, the process of demobilizing armed groups, and the strengthening of judicial and law enforcement services. Nevertheless, an environment of pervasive insecurity and violence throughout much of the country continues to hamper the work of local and international humanitarian organizations in rebuilding Afghanistan's shattered infrastructure and institutions. In addition, numerous human rights abuses, including attacks on aid workers, political and social activists, journalists, and schools, as well as systematic violations of women's rights, were reported during the year.

Located at the crossroads of the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Indian subcontinent, Afghanistan has for centuries been caught in the middle of great power and regional rivalries. After besting Russia in a contest for influence in Afghanistan, Britain recognized the country as an independent monarchy in 1921. King Zahir Shah ruled from 1933 until he was deposed in a 1973 coup. Afghanistan entered a period of continuous civil conflict in 1978, when a Communist coup set out to transform this highly traditional society. The Soviet Union invaded in 1979, but faced fierce resistance from U.S.-backed mujahideen (guerrilla fighters) until its troops finally withdrew in 1989.

The mujahideen factions overthrew the Communist government in 1992 and then battled each other for control of Kabul, killing more than 25,000 civilians in the capital by 1995. The Taliban militia, consisting largely of students in conservative Islamic religious schools, entered the fray and seized control of Kabul in 1996. Defeat-

ing or buying off mujahideen commanders, the Taliban soon controlled most of the country except for parts of northern and central Afghanistan, which remained in the hands of the Tajik-dominated Northern Alliance coalition.

In response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States launched a military campaign in October 2001 aimed at toppling the Taliban regime and eliminating Saudi militant Osama bin Laden's terrorist network, al-Qaeda. Simultaneously, Northern Alliance forces engaged the Taliban from the areas under their control. The Taliban crumbled quickly, losing Kabul to Northern Alliance forces in November and surrendering the southern city of Kandahar, the movement's spiritual headquarters, in December.

As a result of the December 2001 Bonn agreement, an interim administration headed by Hamid Karzai, a Pashtun tribal leader, took office. The UN-brokered deal sought to balance demands for power by victorious Tajik, Uzbek, and Hazara military commanders with the reality that many Pashtuns, who are Afghanistan's largest ethnic group, would not trust a government headed by ethnic minorities. In June 2002, the United Nations administered an emergency *loya jirga* (gathering of representatives), presided over by the formerly exiled King Zahir Shah, which appointed a Transitional Administration (TA) to rule Afghanistan for a further two years. Karzai won the votes of more than 80 percent of the delegates to become president and head of the TA. The Tajik-dominated Northern Alliance filled more than half the cabinet positions, including the key positions of ministers of defense and the interior, while the remainder were given to Pashtuns and representatives of other ethnic groups.

Seeking to curb the power of regional strongmen, Karzai signed a decree in December 2002 banning political leaders from taking part in military activity; he has also undertaken several reshuffles of provincial governors and other key officials in the past three years. In a significant victory, the central government managed to oust regional strongman Ismael Khan from his position as governor of Herat in September 2004, and the ethnic Uzbek leader General Abdul Rashid Dostum was co-opted into the cabinet in March. The TA initiated a voluntary program of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) in October 2003, and when the first phase of the program ended in July, an estimated 60,000 men had been disarmed. However, there are still an estimated 130,000 armed men in Afghanistan.

In December 2003, a 502-member constitutional *loya jirga* met to debate a draft constitution, which had been widely circulated throughout the country earlier in the year. Because of disagreements among the delegates, proceedings stretched on for three weeks before the amended draft was ratified in January 2004. It describes Afghanistan as an Islamic republic in which no law should contravene the beliefs and practices of Islam, and provides for a presidential system of government and a National Assembly composed of two houses. Equal rights for women and men are guaranteed, as is the right to practice minority religions, although human rights advocates expressed concern that inadequate mechanisms have been put in place to guarantee the provision of these and other rights.

For the past two years, the primary focus has been on preparing for Afghanistan's first elections since 1969, a process overseen by the Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB). While a decision was taken to postpone legislative elections until 2005 because of logistical complications and security concerns, in Octo-

ber 2004, more than 75 percent of registered Afghans voted in a presidential poll contested by 17 candidates, including one woman. Karzai, the incumbent, won 55 percent of the vote, while main challengers Yunus Qanooni, Haji Mohammed Mohaqeq, and Dostum won 16, 11, and 10 percent, respectively. Initially, a group of opposition candidates contested the result, but the group agreed to respect the findings of a panel established to investigate these complaints. On November 3, the panel concluded that the shortcomings with the electoral process would not have affected the overall result, thereby confirming Karzai's victory. In December 2004, Karzai formed a cabinet that was a balanced mix of regional power brokers and technocrats.

In September 2005, relatively peaceful elections were held for the lower house of the National Assembly and the 34 provincial councils. In total, more than 5,000 candidates (over 10 percent of whom were women) stood for the elections. Slightly more than half of all registered voters took part, a lower level of turnout than that for the presidential election, which perhaps reflects an increasing level of disillusionment with the political process. The voting process itself was marred by what the JEMB termed "serious localized fraud," although the overall results were broadly accepted both by Afghans and by the international community. Disappointingly, a large number of warlords and others involved in organized crime as well as human rights violations were elected; according to the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), 80 percent of victorious candidates have links to militia groups.

Despite staging a heightened number of attacks in the months leading up to both elections (around 600 people were killed in Taliban-related attacks from January to August), the Taliban were unable to significantly disrupt the electoral process. In addition to targeting coalition troops and foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), Taliban supporters have increasingly staged attacks on local police forces, pro-government clerics, and ordinary Afghan citizens, with a growing reliance on using suicide bombers. In October, however, their murder of cleric Mohammad Khan led to anti-Taliban public protests involving several thousand people.

The UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), over which NATO assumed command in August 2003, is responsible for providing security in Kabul, and in August 2005, NATO announced its intention to expand its presence outside the capital. However, much of the country, particularly the south and east, remains unstable and lawless; in these areas, military commanders, tribal leaders, rogue warlords, and petty bandits hold sway and are reluctant to submit to the leadership of the central administration. Nearly 1,600 civilians, law enforcement personnel, officials, and foreign aid workers were killed and injured during 2005 by an increasing number of bombings, rocket attacks, and other sporadic violence by suspected Taliban sympathizers, as well as by recurrent fighting between various factional militias, criminal gangs, drug smugglers, and bandits, in Afghanistan's bloodiest year since the fall of the Taliban in 2001.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Afghanistan cannot change their government democratically. The political rights and civil liberties of most Afghans improved in 2005, although significant problems remain. The new constitution, adopted in January 2004, and the May 2005 electoral law provide for a directly elected president who has the power to appoint ministers (subject to parliamentary approval) and a bicameral National Assembly composed

of a directly elected, 249-seat *Wolesi Jirga* (House of the People), whose members stand for five-year terms, and an indirectly elected, 102-seat *Meshrano Jirga* (House of Elders). At least 68 of the 249 *Wolesi Jirga* seats (slightly more than a quarter) are reserved for women, while 10 are reserved for the nomadic Kuchi community. Provisions for women's representation have also been made for the *Meshrano Jirga* and provincial councils, and Afghanistan's first female governor was appointed in March.

The October 2004 presidential election was judged to be relatively free and fair despite allegations of intimidation by militias and insurgent groups, multiple voter registrations, partisanship within the JEMB, and other irregularities such as ballot stuffing and the improper use of indelible ink on voting day. Legislative elections originally scheduled for 2004 were postponed until September 2005 to allow more time for the government to map out district boundaries and conduct a census, enact election laws, and improve the security situation. As with the 2004 elections, these polls were marred by allegations of localized fraud, intimidation, and other irregularities that were not deemed by the Electoral Complaints Commission to have altered the overall results. During the campaign period, seven candidates and six election workers were killed, but the polling day itself was largely peaceful. However, the safety of winners in the postelection period was threatened by a law stating that if the winning candidate died or was disqualified prior to the convening of the new parliament, his seat would be filled by the candidate with the next highest number of votes. In September, the murder of a successful parliamentary candidate in Mazar-e-Sharif sparked riots and heightened fears of ethnic tension between Tajiks and Hazaras in the province.

Restrictions on political activity remain a concern. The AIHRC noted in 2004 that levels of political freedom were higher in Kabul and the eastern provinces, but that extremist violence and widespread self-censorship were prevalent in the south and west of the country and could be a significant factor in limiting people's political choices. Some candidates for the 2005 elections faced intimidation from local power brokers as well as the security forces. The 2003 Political Parties Law prohibits the registration of political parties that are backed by armed forces or that oppose Islam or promote racial, religious, or sectarian hatred and violence. A broad opposition coalition, the National Understanding Front, was formed by Yunus Qanooni in April 2005. By May, over 60 parties had been registered. However, concern has been raised that the vague provisions of the Political Parties Law could be used by the Ministry of Justice to deny registration to parties on flimsy grounds, and there is some evidence that Islamists have successfully obstructed the registration of leftist political parties, according to a June report by the International Crisis Group. In addition, the adoption of the single nontransferable vote system for the September legislative elections, in which voters elect individual candidates and party names or symbols do not appear on the ballot, was viewed by analysts as a disadvantage for new political parties.

The TA functioned as a central government with both executive and legislative authority. Its writ over areas outside Kabul remained limited, although regional strongmen did acknowledge its legitimacy, and the Karzai administration has been able to curb the power of several warlords by co-opting them into the central government. Three women and a broad range of ethnic groups were given positions in the cabinet, and the Pashtuns have been able to increase their representation, thus

blunting the domination of the Northern Alliance over state structures, particularly the security apparatus. In the absence of a legislature, input from Afghans into decision-making processes has taken the form of participation in the indirectly elected *loya jirgas*, in addition to voting in the 2004 and 2005 elections.

Widespread corruption, nepotism, and cronyism are growing issues of concern, although the TA has professed a commitment to improving transparency and accountability, particularly in the disbursement of foreign aid, which makes up a significant part of the national budget. During 2005, the government took a hard line against corruption, insisting that officials provide documentation of property and other assets, and initiating screening procedures for bureaucrats. In April, two former deputy ministers were jailed for three years on embezzlement charges. Afghanistan was ranked 117 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Afghan media faced a number of threats in 2005. The May 2004 press law guarantees the right to freedom of expression and prohibits censorship, but does retain certain restrictions such as registration requirements and overly broad guidelines on content. Authorities have granted more than 250 licenses to independent publications, and several dozen private radio stations and a number of television stations are now broadcasting. Some, such as Tolo TV, have been criticized by conservative clerics for airing programs that "oppose Islam and national values"; in May 2005, a popular female television presenter who had worked at Tolo was murdered, possibly by family members who did not approve of her job. Media diversity and freedom are markedly higher in Kabul, and some warlords display limited tolerance for independent media in the areas under their control.

A number of journalists were threatened or harassed by government ministers, politicians, police and security services, and others in positions of power as a result of their reporting. In one of several instances, two Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reporters were arrested in July by intelligence services in Konar province and were detained for a week without charge. Many practice self-censorship or avoid writing about sensitive issues such as Islam, national unity, or crimes committed by specific warlords. In a high-profile case that was criticized extensively by both local and Western groups, Ali Mohaqiq Nasab, editor of the monthly women's rights magazine *Haqooq-i-Zan*, was ordered arrested in October by the high court for publishing articles deemed to be "anti-Islamic." Despite the fact that the government-appointed Media Commission cleared him of blasphemy charges, he was sentenced by the high court to two years' imprisonment and also faced the threat of a court-issued fatwa that could have increased his sentence.

Religious freedom has improved since the fall of the ultraconservative Taliban government in late 2001, and the present government has attempted to pursue a policy of greater religious tolerance despite pressure from Islamist groups. The new constitution establishes Islam as the official state religion but does not prohibit the practice of other religions, according to the U.S. State Department's International Religious Freedom Report. The minority Shia population, particularly those from the Hazara ethnic group, has traditionally faced discrimination from the Sunni majority, and relations between the two groups remain somewhat strained. The small numbers of non-Muslim residents in Afghanistan are generally able to practice their faith. Although Hindus and Sikhs have had difficulty in building new houses of worship

and accessing their traditional cremation grounds, they have now been allotted alternative grounds and these are in use. During the year, there were a number of attacks on mosques and clerics who were openly critical of the Taliban.

Academic freedom is not restricted. However, two students at Herat University were suspended in May as a result of their comments during a debate on Islam. In 2004, government regulations were amended so that married women could attend high school classes. Particularly in the southern provinces, schools and teachers, predominantly those in which the teachers or pupils include females, have been the target of threats and violent attacks by fundamentalist groups, leading to the closure of schools in many rural areas.

Rights to assembly and association have been formally restored, subject to some restrictions, by the new constitution, but are applied erratically in different regions. In addition, police and security forces have occasionally used excessive force when confronted with demonstrations or public protests. Following news reports that a Koran had been desecrated at the U.S.-run detention center at Guantanamo Bay, riots broke out in Jalalabad and other cities in May in which 17 people were killed, 120 were injured, and a number of buildings were burned down.

Hundreds of international and Afghan NGOs and aid agencies are able to operate freely, but their effectiveness is impeded by the poor security situation in much of the country, particularly the south and east. Both foreign and Afghan NGO staff members have been targeted for attack, particularly in provinces with an active Taliban presence, and 31 were killed during 2005, according to the Afghanistan NGO Safety Office. Little progress has been made in the investigation or prosecution of the case of five Doctors Without Borders staff who were murdered in 2004, allegedly by a local strongman. Following government criticism that some aid agencies had squandered development funds, a group of 90 NGOs signed a voluntary code of conduct in May in an effort to improve accountability and transparency. Civil society activists, particularly those who focus on human rights or accountability issues, continue to face some threats and harassment.

Despite broad constitutional protections for workers, labor rights are not well defined, and there are currently no enforcement or resolution mechanisms. UNICEF has estimated that a quarter of Afghan children between the ages of 7 and 14 are involved in various forms of work, mainly in the domestic sector.

There is no functioning, nationwide legal system, and justice in many places is administered on the basis of a mixture of legal codes by judges with minimal training. Outside influence over the judiciary remains strong; judges and lawyers are frequently unable to act independently because of threats from local power brokers or armed groups, and bribery is widespread. In rural areas with no police or judicial institutions, unelected and often conservative tribal councils dispense justice. The Supreme Court, composed of religious scholars who have little knowledge of civil jurisprudence and headed by an 80-year-old conservative, is particularly in need of reform. In January, Karzai missed a chance to broaden the Court's makeup when he reappointed eight of the nine members; however, the one new addition became the first Shia judge appointed to the body. The administration's plans to rebuild the judiciary have proceeded slowly, although a new criminal procedure code was promulgated in early 2004, and some progress has been made with the construction of courts and correctional facilities. However, in April, the justice minister noted that

more than 50 percent of Afghans still did not have access to judicial or legal services, according to IRIN, a UN humanitarian news and information service. Prison conditions remain extremely poor.

Since taking power in 2002, the new administration has faced the question of whether to bring to justice, co-opt, or simply ignore perpetrators of past abuses. Thus far, the government has remained open to the idea of pursuing transitional justice (in which mechanisms such as truth and reconciliation commissions are used to bring abuses to light, and sometimes to punish perpetrators of such abuse), and the AIHRC has undertaken a series of consultations on the issue with victims of past abuse. However, many perpetrators remain in positions of power, and a number ran successfully for the legislature in the 2005 elections despite calls for them to be disqualified.

The Bonn agreement recognized the need to create a national army and a professional police force, and progress on both fronts has been slow but steady. By September 2005, only 30,000 recruits to the Afghan National Army had been trained, out of a proposed force of 70,000; however, desertion levels improved during the year. Afghan troops have been deployed several times to prevent factional clashes, and they also helped to provide security around polling centers during the elections. Operations of the Afghan National Police force have gradually expanded, and police now man checkpoints that were previously controlled by irregular militias. In 2003, the TA initiated a voluntary DDR program targeting members of various militia forces, and by July 2005, over 60,000 militiamen had been demobilized and a considerable amount of heavy weaponry had been collected. An estimated 1,800 illegal armed groups, with as many as 100,000 members, continue to operate. However, the government launched a new initiative in June that is aimed at disbanding and disarming these groups.

In a prevailing climate of impunity, government ministers, as well as warlords in some provinces, sanctioned widespread abuses by the police, military, and intelligence forces under their command, including arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, extortion, and extrajudicial killings. The AIHRC, which was formed in August 2002 and focuses on raising awareness of human rights issues in addition to monitoring and investigating abuses, received more than 4,000 complaints of rights violations during 2005, including torture, land-grabbing and forced migration, kidnapping and child trafficking, and forced marriage.

A 2004 Human Rights Watch report documents numerous cases of abuse of Afghan detainees by U.S. forces, and eight detainees are confirmed to have died while in U.S. custody. In August 2005, the BBC reported that two U.S. servicemen had been given prison sentences of up to three months as punishment for the deaths, a verdict that the Afghan government and human rights groups criticized as being insufficiently severe. The AIHRC has requested access to Afghans detained by coalition forces, but has not been allowed access to detention centers where some 500 Afghans are being held. In addition, some warlords, political leaders, and the national intelligence agency maintain private prisons and do not allow access to detainees, many of whom are being held without charge.

Hundreds of civilians have been killed as a result of bombings, rocket attacks, and other acts of terrorism by suspected Taliban sympathizers and other Islamist groups during localized fighting between ethnic factions, particularly in the north,

or during skirmishes between Taliban supporters on one side and government forces and the U.S. military on the other. Led by the United States, a 20,100-strong contingent of international coalition forces is active in hunting the Taliban and al-Qaeda in the south and east of the country. Meanwhile, the NATO-run ISAF, which focuses on peacekeeping, has a total strength of only 8,000, mainly because of continued reluctance on the part of the international community to significantly expand these forces. Despite the establishment of over a dozen Provincial Reconstruction Teams consisting of mixed groups of U.S. and NATO military forces and development personnel in various regional centers, the security situation in much of the country continues to be extremely poor. In addition to political and terrorist violence, criminal gangs kidnap both prominent Afghans and foreigners for money, while drug traffickers and local warlords employ violence to defend their operations and influence.

More than 500,000 Afghans returned to their homes during 2005, but several million refugees remain in Pakistan and Iran, and in addition, more than 150,000 civilians continue to be displaced within the country. Humanitarian agencies and Afghan authorities have been ill equipped to deal with the scale of the repatriation, while the poor security situation compounded by widespread land-grabbing meant that many refugees were unable to return to their homes and instead congregated in and around major urban centers. In the absence of a functioning legal system, the state remains unable to effectively protect property rights.

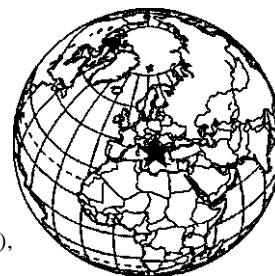
The end of Taliban rule freed women from the extremely harsh restrictions and punishments that had kept them veiled, isolated, and, in many cases, impoverished. Women's formal rights to education and employment have been restored, and in some areas women are once again participating in public life. The new constitution contains the significant provisions of guaranteeing equal rights for women and reserving a quarter of the seats in the Wolesi Jirga and the provincial councils for women. Record numbers of women were registered to vote—an average 41 percent of all registered voters were women—and have taken part in the recent elections. In addition, more than 500 women, approximately 10 percent of the total number of candidates, registered to contest the 2005 parliamentary elections. However, a Human Rights Watch report released in August noted that women in the political sphere, particularly those standing as candidates, faced significant threats and harassment from armed factions and conservative religious leaders. Social norms restricting women's ability to travel independently and appear in public, particularly in the south, also negatively affected their ability to run for office.

Despite women's political gains, societal discrimination and violence against women remain pervasive. Women's choices regarding marriage and divorce, particularly their ability to choose a marriage partner, remain circumscribed by custom and discriminatory laws, and the forced marriage of young girls to older men or of widows to a male relation of their husband is a problem. Nearly 60 percent of Afghan girls are married before the legal age of 16, according to a report by the IRIN news service. To the extent that it functions, the justice system discriminates against women; in most cases, according to a May 2005 Amnesty International report, complaints of violence against women, including abduction, rape, forced marriage, and murder, are not adequately investigated by authorities. In May, a 29-year-old woman was accused of adultery and was stoned to death in the northern Badakhshan province. Cases of self-immolation by women seeking to escape abusive marriages, par-

ticularly in the province of Herat, were a growing concern; in 2005, the AIHRC recorded at least 100 such instances. As a result of continued lawlessness, women and children are subject to abduction, trafficking, and sexual violence. In certain areas, ruling warlords impose Taliban-style dress and behavioral restrictions on women. However, the incidence of forced chastity examinations has reportedly declined. While record numbers of children have returned to school, a number of girls' schools were subject to attacks from Islamic fundamentalists during the year, and the illiteracy rate for women remains at 86 percent.

Albania

Population: 3,200,000 **Political Rights:** 3
GNI/capita: \$1,450 **Civil Liberties:** 3
Life Expectancy: 74 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Muslim (70 percent), Albanian Orthodox (20 percent), Roman Catholic (10 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Albanian (95 percent), Greek (3 percent), other (2 percent)
Capital: Tirana



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
4.4PF	4.4PF	4.5PF	4.5PF	4.5PF	3.4PF	3.3PF	3.3PF	3.3PF	3.3PF

Overview:

The July 2005 parliamentary elections brought opposition leader Sali Berisha to power as prime minister of Albania. While the election did not fully meet international standards, it marked the first peaceful change of power in the country's post-Communist history.

From World War II until 1990, former dictator Enver Hoxha's xenophobic Communist regime turned Albania into the most isolated country in Europe. The Communist government collapsed in 1990, and in March 1992, multiparty elections brought the Democratic Party (DP), led by Sali Berisha, to power. Continuing poverty and corruption weakened Berisha's government, and in 1997, the collapse of several popular pyramid investment schemes resulted in widespread arms looting and violence.

Between 1997 and 2005, Albania was ruled by the Socialist Party (SP), led by Prime Minister Fatos Nano. After the 2001 parliamentary (People's Assembly) elections, Berisha's DP announced a boycott of the Assembly to protest alleged electoral irregularities. The party returned to parliament, and political life resumed in January 2002 after the consensual election of President Alfred Moisiu and Chief Prosecutor Theodhori Sollaku. However, the truce between Berisha and Nano proved fragile, and by the beginning of 2003, Albania's short-lived national political unity again broke down. More signs of the continued turmoil within Albanian politics came with the resignation of Foreign Minister (and former prime minister) Ilir Meta,

a bitter Nano rival, in July 2003. Disagreements within ruling factions in the government prevented the nomination of a replacement for the rest of the year.

Because of such political infighting, little serious progress was made in combating organized crime and promoting economic reform. Although, in February 2003, the European Union (EU) opened negotiations with Albania for a Stabilization and Association Agreement—generally seen as the first step toward full EU membership—realistic analyses of the country's situation suggest that it has far to go before joining the EU.

The July 3, 2005, legislative elections, in which more than 20 parties fielded candidates, were considered the most unpredictable since 1991. Although the opposition DP won a clear victory, the ruling SP contested the results in many constituencies. The consequence was a lengthy delay in obtaining final results until September, when Prime Minister Berisha formed a government. The DP will have 56 seats, with a further 24 controlled by its allies. Former prime minister Ilir Meta formed his own Socialist Movement for Integration, which won seats away from the SP. The two major parties urged their voters to support smaller allies in hopes that those parties would clear the 2.5 percent threshold to enter parliament and thus supplement their own representation. The SP was perceived to have lost support owing to the country's corruption, internal party disputes, and voters' desire for change. While the election was not free from fraud, it was praised for bringing Albania's first change of power without significant violence in the post-Communist era.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Albanians can change their government democratically. However, elections held in July 2005 for the 140-seat Kuvendi Popullor (People's Assembly) were judged to have complied only partially with international standards. Observers noted flawed procedures, including multiple voting and violations of secrecy. Although there was one death due to election violence, this was minimal compared to the past. Single-member districts comprise 100 of the parliamentary seats; the remaining are filled by proportional representation. Assembly members are elected for four-year terms. The prime minister is designated by the parties that form a majority coalition. The president holds a largely symbolic post and is chosen by the Assembly for a five-year term.

With the involvement of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Albania began reforming its election process before the 2005 elections. Votes are now counted in a limited number of designated locations under the authority of local electoral commissions. Procedures for administrative and judicial review of postelection disputes were improved, and new campaign finance laws were put in place. A late agreement between the major parties on the boundaries of electoral zones cleared the way for approval of the new electoral code in January 2005, with a new law on the zones passed in March. The OSCE did not judge the reforms to solve all potential problems, although they mark a major step forward.

A number of political parties operate throughout the country. The most important political organizations are the DP and the SP; the differences between the parties are more a matter of the personalities leading them than of serious programmatic or ideological approaches. While, traditionally, Prime Minister Sali Berisha's DP found its support in the north of the country and Nano's SP in the south, these divisions are diminishing. The Greek minority is mostly represented through the Human Rights

Union Party, which has three seats in parliament. Other minorities are poorly represented and participate minimally in public life.

Corruption pervades all areas of life in Albania, and up to the elections it appeared to be increasing. Tackling corruption is a stated aim of the new government, and Berisha sold his stake in a hotel to avoid a conflict of interest. However, he and many of his associates remain tainted by past scandal. Although considerable anti-corruption legislation is in place, tangible results are lacking. Government regulations are not excessive, but implementation is unpredictable. The state does not pursue accusations of official corruption, except in the case of low-level officials. Albania was ranked 126 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution guarantees freedom of expression. Although freedom of the press has improved since the fall of Communism, problems remain. The intermingling of powerful business, political, and media interests inhibits the development of independent and objective media. The government controls crucial subsidies that are doled out to those outlets providing sympathetic coverage. A print media bill meant to address media unreliability and financial dependence was submitted to the parliament in March 2005, but it was not approved as of November. A controversial draft law on digital broadcasting was rejected by the parliament in May. Suits against journalists for legitimate criticism are common. Police used excessive force against a television correspondent filming their activities in May. The government does not limit internet access, although widespread poverty means that most people cannot afford it.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion and religious practice, and Albania has not seen the inter-religious turmoil typical of its neighbors. However, Albania's small Greek Orthodox minority has intermittently made claims of being subjected to various forms of discrimination. The restitution of church properties confiscated during the Communist period remains unresolved.

The government does not significantly limit academic freedom, although it has interfered in appointments at educational institutions. Corruption is rife in universities, especially in the form of bribes for entering school and passing exams. Just before leaving office, the Nanos government ended the requirement that high school students pass an admission exam in order to enter university, but the Berisha government reversed the decision due to lack of capacity in the universities.

Freedom of association is generally respected, although police have been known to use excessive force against protesters. Independent nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are active, and their impact on the government is slowly growing. In contrast, trade unions tend to be weak.

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, but the structure of the judiciary leaves room for government pressure. Both the judiciary and law enforcement agencies are inefficient and prone to corruption, and judicial proceedings can be unduly long as well as unjustifiably delayed. The government has undertaken measures to combat corruption, develop judicial infrastructure, and institute a case-management system, but problems continue. Enforcement of judicial decisions is weak, especially when rulings are against government interests. Police undergo human rights training and monitoring but often use excessive force and torture; punishment for these abuses, if carried out at all, is generally less than that war-

ranted by the offense. For example, a police officer accused of torturing a 17-year-old in custody was convicted in December 2004 only of leaving the cell where he was on guard; the court concluded there was insufficient evidence to determine whether the detainee might have injured himself. Prison conditions are poor.

Widespread lawlessness plagues large parts of Albania. Weak state institutions have augmented the power of crime syndicates, and international law enforcement officials claim that Albania has become an increasingly important transshipment point for drug smugglers. The weakness of state institutions in northern Albania has also resulted in the resurgence of traditional tribal law in these areas, most importantly blood feuds involving revenge killings among different families and clans.

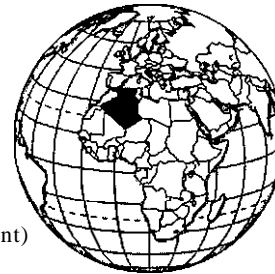
Roma and so-called Egyptians (a small group whose origins are unclear) in particular face discrimination and marginalization in Albania. A special state committee on minorities is to make recommendations to promote the rights of groups including Roma. However, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance considers funding to be inadequate, and Egyptians are excluded because they are not officially recognized. The government has developed a national strategy to combat racism against Roma.

Implementation of the 2004 law on property restitution and compensation for pre-Communist property owners has been slow; compensation is not likely to begin until 2007.

The constitution places no legal impediments on women's role in politics and society, but women are vastly underrepresented in most governmental institutions. Berisha promised to increase women's representation in government, and a woman is Speaker of the Assembly for the first time. Traditional patriarchal social mores pose significant problems for the position of women in society. Many groups, particularly in northern Albania, abide by a medieval moral code according to which women are considered chattel property and may be treated as such. A gender equality law was passed in 2004, but the situation for women has only improved slightly. Domestic violence is common and is not a criminal offense. Albania is a source country for trafficking in women and children. Roma and Egyptian children are disproportionately affected, and internal trafficking is increasing. A national strategy to combat trafficking has helped the situation, although implementation could be improved.

Algeria

Population: 32,300,000 **Political Rights:** 6
GNI/capita: \$1,720 **Civil Liberties:** 5
Life Expectancy: 73 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim (99 percent), Christian and Jewish (1 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Arab-Berber (99 percent), other (1 percent)
Capital: Algiers



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
6,6NF	6,6NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview:

In a September 2005 referendum, more than 97 percent of Algerian voters backed a government-sponsored general amnesty that pardons militants and government agents alike for crimes committed during Algeria's civil war. Known as the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation, the amnesty is the government's attempt to turn the page on more than a decade of civil strife. Yet serious crackdowns on civil and political liberties continued throughout the year. A number of politically motivated judicial proceedings against journalists took place, and rights of free association, assembly, and expression remain severely restricted. Despite a significant reduction in violence against women and in allegations of torture, both are still commonplace in Algeria.

Algeria's long anticolonial struggle culminated in an eight-year-long war of independence (1954-62) that ended 132 years of French colonial rule. In 1965, the military overthrew the country's first president, Ahmed Ben Bella, and installed Houari Boumedienne. The military has dominated Algerian politics ever since. The 1986 oil market collapse hit Algeria especially hard, reducing the country's key source of hard currency. Unemployment, housing shortages, and other social ills fed growing popular resentment. With no political outlet in sight, people took to the streets in violent riots in October 1988.

Once peace was restored, President Chadli Bendjedid legalized political parties after more than 30 years of single-party rule under the National Liberation Front (FLN). The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was formed in 1989 as an umbrella organization of Islamist opposition groups, with significant grassroots support. In January 1992, with the FIS poised to win a commanding parliamentary majority, the army intervened, forcing Bendjedid to resign, and canceled the vote. The FIS was banned and its leaders imprisoned. The FIS, whose two top leaders, Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj, had been arrested and put into jail six months earlier, was banned and the remaining leadership imprisoned. The country was placed under a state of emergency that remains in effect.

Violence ensued on a massive scale as Islamist militants took up arms against the regime. The FIS splintered into rival armed factions, and a guerrilla-style insurgency erupted in the countryside, while urban-based extremists resorted to terror-

ism. More than 150,000 were killed in massacres perpetrated by Islamic insurgents, the military, criminal gangs, and government-backed militias. Human rights groups have accused various Algerian security forces of "forcibly disappearing" at least 7,000 persons.

A presidential election held in 1999 was severely flawed. Citing government fraud and manipulation, six opposition candidates withdrew, leaving former foreign minister Abdelaziz Bouteflika to run unopposed. After Bouteflika took office, the government introduced a "civil harmony" law that granted amnesty to Islamist rebels who renounced violence. By January 2000, some 5,500 members of the armed groups had surrendered, but the Armed Islamic Group (GLA) and the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) continued operations, killing thousands in 2003. The attacks diminished significantly in 2004, but clashes with security forces and ambushes against civilians continued. In 2005, the Ministry of the Interior claimed that about 1,000 insurgents are still active.

The May 2002 elections to the lower chamber of parliament, the APN, witnessed a significant shift to the FLN, which secured 199 of the 389 seats. The principal loser was the army-supported Rassemblement National Democratique (National Democratic Rally or RND), whose number of seats fell to 48 from 155 in the outgoing parliament. *Islah* (an Islamist "reform" party) won 43 seats, with the *Mouvement de la Societe pour la Paix* (Movement for a Peaceful Society, or MSP, previously known as *Hamas*) securing 38. The remaining seats were shared between left-wing and Islamist parties and independents.

The most recent elections to the upper chamber of parliament, the *Conseil de la Nation* (CN) election, for half of the contested seats, took place in December 2003. The FLN took 22 seats, the RND took 17, the MSP claimed four, *Islah* 2, and one seat went to an independent. Given the fact that three-fourths of the CN members must approve bills passed by the APN before they can become laws and that the former body is totally controlled by the president, his FLN party, and its coalition partners (RND and MSP), it is virtually impossible for opposition forces to challenge centralized rule. What is most noticeable in the above-described processes is the absence of the FIS; it seems unlikely, however, that the Ministry of the Interior will legalize the FIS anytime soon.

In April 2004, Bouteflika won a landslide victory in a multicandidate election that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) declared free and fair. Political violence and terrorism in Algeria continued to claim lives but were considerably diminished compared with previous years. This change is attributed largely to the "civil harmony" program launched by Bouteflika involving a two-stage strategy for putting an end to the bloody civil war, or *fitna* (unrest), through back-to-back referendums that passed overwhelmingly in January 2000 (Civil Concord) and September 2005 (Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation).

The 2004 presidential election marked a difference from previous votes. Bouteflika ran against five other candidates, but his strongest opponent was his former right-hand man, Ali Benflis, a prime minister whom he had fired in 2002. The army, long at the political helm of the country, announced its neutrality. Other candidates included a woman, Trotskyite Workers' Party leader Louisa Hanoune; Saad Sa'idi of Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD); an Islamist leader popular in the poor districts of Algiers; and the chief of a nationalist party. Public apathy and a low turnout, com-

bined with support for Bouteflika by some Islamists groups, nationalist parties, and the Algerian unions, delivered him a resounding 85 percent of the vote. Opposition candidates denounced discrepancies and irregularities, but international monitors from the OSCE and other organizations declared the electoral process to be free of serious problems.

After his reelection, Bouteflika took steps to consolidate his power by reshuffling senior military positions and accepted the resignation, for health reasons, of the army chief, General Mohammed Lamari, who had been at the center of the anti-Islamist counterinsurgency. The daily *Al-Watan* hailed the move, saying, "The time has come for the military to... go back to the barracks." The inner circle of generals, believed by most to have orchestrated Bouteflika's 1999 victory, has recently been receding into the background and has largely deferred to the executive branch in formulating national policy.

As a result of increasing security and political stability in Algeria, the World Bank and a number of countries started talks in 2004 on economic growth programs and structural reforms. Nearly a quarter of the population lives below the poverty level, and Algeria still suffers from a 25 percent unemployment rate and serious housing shortages.

The government claims that the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation is the final chapter in over a decade of violence. The political opposition and human rights organizations alike, however, argue that the general amnesty is seriously flawed. They claim that it absolves government agents of responsibility for some of the gravest human rights violations of the 1990s, namely "forced disappearances." It also prevents the investigation of other serious crimes. The charter fails to recommend any mechanism to uncover responsibility for past crimes and hold perpetrators accountable. Critics also maintain that the criteria for determining which militants may benefit from the amnesty are far too vague and subject to political considerations. Human Rights Watch noted that the charter "offers more to perpetrators of human rights violations than it does to victims." While the charter proposes that the state compensate the families of the "disappeared," the government fails to acknowledge any responsibility for those disappearances. The amnesty is also widely criticized for failing to reintegrate the banned FIS into the political structure.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Algeria cannot change their government democratically. While the 2004 presidential election may have signaled a cautious new start, with opposition parties free to run nationwide campaigns, Abdelaziz Bouteflika enjoyed the army's support throughout his first term, and government control of the broadcast media gave him a clear advantage during the campaign. Bouteflika will serve a five-year term, and his changing relationship with the once all-powerful military may accrue to the benefit of the executive branch. There is speculation, for example, that the Algerian head of state is intent on amending the constitution to extend presidential terms from five to seven years and/or to allow the president to run for a third consecutive term, now constitutionally limited to two five-year terms. Yet all of this may become moot if rumors that Bouteflika is suffering from an incurable stomach cancer prove to be true.

Algeria has a bicameral parliamentary system. The lower house has 389 mem-

bers serving five-year terms, and the upper house has 144 members serving six-year terms. Parliamentary elections have been largely free of systemic fraud. Although there are a number of active political opposition parties, new parties must be approved by the Ministry of the Interior before they can operate legally.

The 1996 amended constitution's central feature has been the creation of a bicameral parliament. Members of the lower chamber, the 389-seat APN, are elected by direct universal suffrage. The new upper chamber, the CN, has 144 seats, 96 of which are chosen through indirect elections by local assemblies within each of the country's 48 wilayas (provinces). The president appoints another 48 members.

Algeria continues to experience high levels of governmental corruption. Bribery, embezzlement, and fraud have been exposed on a wide scale in both the private and public sectors. Algeria was ranked 97 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Despite heavy official oversight, Algeria has a vibrant press featuring more than 40 newspapers. The government enforces strict anti-defamation laws and influences content through the state-owned printing press and advertising company. Following Bouteflika's reelection, the state moved to stem reports revealing corruption or human rights violations. As a result, several newspapers were suspended, and a number of journalists were arrested and sentenced to jail terms. Mohammed Benchicou, publisher of the daily *Le Matin*, who received a two-year prison sentence in 2004 for allegedly violating foreign currency controls, remains in jail despite widespread claims of political motivation behind the charges. Benchicou fiercely criticized Bouteflika and other officials before and during the 2004 campaign. Hafnaoui Ghoul, a local correspondent previously imprisoned for his investigative reporting, continues to face legal proceedings for defamation stemming from his reports of police abuse and government mismanagement in the southern town of Djelfa.

Ahmad Benaoum, publisher of the dailies *Er-Rai* and *Le Journal de l'Ouest* and the weekly *Detective*, who was previously imprisoned for defamation, spent 11 months in pretrial detention before being found not guilty of tax evasion and other instances of business fraud in June 2005. Describing the charges as spurious, Algerian journalists insisted that they were leveled against him as punishment for his attempts to uncover corruption in Oran, Algeria's second largest city. International monitors observing his trial called it a sham.

While the print media is heavily regulated, access to the internet is virtually unrestricted, despite legislation ordering Internet service providers to monitor access to materials harmful to "the public order and morality."

Religious freedom is generally respected. Islam is the state religion, but the government rarely interferes in the practice of other faiths. Mosques are closely monitored in order to prevent political activity. The government does not actively restrict academic freedom, although self-censorship is commonplace.

Since the 1990s, Algerian authorities have exploited the state of emergency to curtail freedom of assembly. Government permits, sometimes difficult to obtain, are required for public meetings, and a decree bans demonstrations in Algiers. However, a number of groups violate this ban with little or no consequence. Security forces occasionally disperse peaceful demonstrations, sometimes violently. The emergency law has at times also impeded Algerians' right of association as well as their right to form political parties and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The

Algerian workers unions are widely believed to be allied with the government, and while other professional associations maintain relative independence, some have suffered government harassment.

Human rights activists insist that the judiciary is not independent, and that several judges have been subjected to disciplinary or other repressive measures. Although there have been improvements in specific areas, especially when compared to the previous decade, Algeria's overall human rights record remains poor. While torture has decreased significantly, it still continues. Virtually all cases of "forced disappearance" remain unresolved. Investigations into human rights abuses are rarely carried out, and arbitrary and incommunicado detention remain widespread. Pretrial detention continues to be prolonged. Illegal searches and nontransparent trial procedures are also prevalent.

Berbers comprise approximately 20 percent of the population. However, their cultural, ethnic, and linguistic rights are not fully recognized, and Berber riots have erupted in recent years, leaving scores dead. The government frequently targets Berber activists and often denies Berber NGOs operating licenses. Although Bouteflika's government has repeatedly engaged Berber groups in negotiations, to date no final resolution regarding Berber grievances has been reached.

The law provides for freedom of domestic and foreign travel, as well as freedom to emigrate, yet the government has at times restricted these rights, especially for former FIS leaders. The government also does not allow draft-aged men to leave the country without a travel permit. Under the state of emergency, the minister of the interior and the provincial governors may deny residency in certain districts to persons regarded as threats to public order.

Women continue to face discrimination in several areas. The 1984 family code, based largely on Sharia (Islamic law), places women under the legal guardianship of their husband or male relative. The code allows men to have up to four wives and makes divorce easy for men but nearly impossible for women. The government has vowed to press ahead with legislation to reverse many of the code's articles, despite protests by Islamist elements and clerics, and the past year has seen some positive modifications to the code. Moreover, the government has banned sexual harassment and commissioned a study on violence against women.

Andorra

Population: 100,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$16,990 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: na **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (predominant)
Ethnic Groups: Spanish (43 percent),
 Andorran (33 percent), Portuguese (11 percent),
 French (7 percent), other (6 percent)
Capital: Andorra la Vella



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

During national legislative elections in April 2005, the Liberal Party of Andorra (PLA) secured another victory with 42 percent of the vote. Alpert Pintat Santolaria became Executive Council president in May. The European Union (EU) Savings Taxation Directive, in which Andorra has agreed to participate, went into effect in July.

As a co-principality, Andorra was ruled jointly for 715 years, from 1278 to 1993 by French and Spanish leaders (since 1607 this has involved the president of France and the Spanish bishop of Seu d'Urgel, Spain, who, as of May 12, 2003, was Monsignor Joan Enric Vives I Sicilia). The 1993 constitution modified this feudal system, keeping the titular heads of state but transforming the government into a parliamentary democracy. Andorra became a member of the United Nations in 1993 and a member of the Council of Europe in 1994.

In April 2005, the country held national elections returning the Liberal Party of Andorra (PLA) to power with 42 percent of the vote and 14 out of the 28 seats in the Consell General. The PLA, however, lost ground and no longer has the absolute majority it had gained in the 2001 elections. The Social Democratic Party (PS) doubled its support, winning 12 seats compared with the 6 it had won in 2001. The remaining 2 seats in the Consell are held by the CDA-Segle-21, a union of the two center-right parties. PLA leader Marc Forne stepped down as Cap de Govern (Executive Council president) and was replaced by former foreign minister Albert Pinat Santolaria.

One of the main goals of the Pinat government will be to move forward with reforms required by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to remove the country from its list of tax havens. The European Union (EU) Savings Taxation Directive, which provides a way to tax revenue from savings accounts held by European citizens in a member state other than their own country of residence or in certain non-EU countries, came into effect on July 1, 2005. Andorra agreed to participate in the directive, which is intended to prevent harmful tax practices, in November 2004.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Andorrans can change their government democratically. About 80 percent of registered voters participated in elections in 2005 to choose the members of the Consell General,

which then selects the Executive Council president, who is the head of government. Popular elections to the 28-member parliament are held every four years. Fourteen members are chosen in two-seat constituencies known as "parishes," and 14 are chosen by a national system of proportional representation. The people have a right to establish and join different political parties, and an opposition vote exists. However, more than 60 percent of the population consists of noncitizens, who have no right to vote and face a number of hurdles that bar them from becoming citizens. As a result, there is little participation by non-Andorrans in government and politics.

The country currently participates in the EU Savings Taxation Directive, which is designed to reduce tax evasion in off-shore accounts like those found in Andorra. Because of a lack of available information, Transparency International did not review and rank Andorra in its 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech and religion are respected across the country. There are two independent daily newspapers (*Diari d'Andorra* and *El Peridico de Andorra*), access to broadcasts from neighboring France and Spain, and unlimited internet access.

Although Roman Catholicism is the predominant religion and the constitution recognizes a special relationship with the Roman Catholic Church, the state has ceased providing the Church with subsidies. There are no restrictions on proselytizing, and Mormons and members of Jehovah's Witnesses continue to do so, unimpeded. Despite the presence of close to 2,000 Muslims, there is no proper mosque in the country. The Muslim community's 2003 request to convert some public buildings into a mosque was turned down by the government. Similar requests made to the Catholic bishop to use a former church were not received well. Academic freedom is respected.

Freedom of assembly and association are generally respected. Domestic and international human rights organizations operate within the country with little government interference. Although the government recognizes that both "workers and employers have the right to defend their own economic and social interests," there is neither an explicit right to strike nor legislation penalizing anti-union discrimination. A law regulating collective bargaining has been expected from parliament for some time. There have been few advances in labor rights in the country since the creation of a registry for associations in 2001, which has enabled trade unions to gain the legal recognition that they had lacked previously.

The country's judicial system, which is based on Spanish and French civil codes, does not have the power of judicial review of legislative acts. The country does not maintain a military force and depends on France and Spain for the defense of its borders. Prison conditions meet international standards. However, the police can detain suspects for up to 48 hours without charging them with a crime.

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) criticized Andorra, in its 2003 report, for the country's restrictive naturalization criteria. Even though a majority of those living in Andorra are noncitizens, a person can become a citizen only by marrying a resident Andorran or by residing in the country for more than 25 years. Prospective citizens are also required to learn Catalan, the national language. Although noncitizens receive most of the social and economic benefits of citizens, they lack the right to vote.

Immigrant workers, primarily from North Africa, complain that they lack the same rights as citizens. Although the law gives legal status to 7,000 immigrants, many

immigrants hold only "temporary work authorizations." Temporary workers are in a precarious position, as they have to leave the country when their job contract expires.

Citizens have the right to own property, but noncitizens can own only 33 percent of a company unless they have lived in the country for 20 years or more. A proposed law to reduce this requirement from 20 to 10 years is still pending in parliament.

Women enjoy the same legal, political, social, and professional rights as men, although they are under-represented in government. Today, only four women occupy seats in parliament. There are no specific laws addressing violence against women, which remains a problem across the country. There are no government departments for women's issues or government-run shelters for battered women. Abortion is illegal, except to save the life of the mother.

Angola

Population: 15,400,000 **Political Rights:** 6

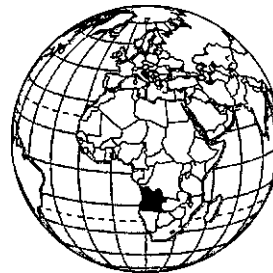
GNI/capita: \$710 **Civil Liberties:** 5

Life Expectancy: 40 **Status:** Not Free

Religious Groups: Indigenous beliefs (47 percent), Roman Catholic (38 percent), Protestant (15 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Ovimbundu (37 percent), Kimbundu (25 percent), Bakongo (13 percent), Mestico (2 percent), European (1 percent), other (22 percent)

Capital: Luanda



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview:

Angola remained stable more than three years after the end of three decades of civil war, and 2005 saw thousands more refugees and internally displaced persons return to the country. However, 30 years after independence, the country remains stricken by human rights abuses, dilapidated infrastructure, endemic corruption, heavily mined territory, and disease. While President Jose Eduardo dos Santos of the ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) did not set a date for long-anticipated presidential and parliamentary elections—the first since 1992—they are expected to take place in 2006; civil society groups and opposition parties have accused the government of violating electoral laws in the run-up to the elections. In the spring of 2005, an outbreak of the deadly Ebola-like Marburg virus in northern Angola led to more than 300 deaths.

Angola was at war continually for nearly three decades following independence from Portugal in 1975. During the Cold War, the United States and South Africa backed the rebel group National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) led by Jonas Malheiro Savimbi, while the former Soviet Union and Cuba supported the Marxist Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA)

government. A 1991 peace agreement—the Bicesse Accord—that led to general elections in 1992 under UN supervision disintegrated when Savimbi lost the first round of the presidential vote and resumed fighting. The Lusaka Protocol, a subsequent peace agreement signed in 1994, also fell apart. The collapse of the peace process, ineffective sanctions, and the shooting down of two UN planes caused the UN Security Council to vote in February 1999 to end the UN peacekeeping mission in Angola.

A 2002 ceasefire between UNITA and the ruling MPLA, spurred by Savimbi's death earlier that year and formalized in the Luena Memorandum of Understanding, has held. However, the resettlement of 4 million refugees and internally displaced people has exposed severe deficiencies in social services such as housing, education, and health care in this oil- and diamond-rich country. The conflict claimed 500,000 to 2 million lives, displaced more than 4 million people, and sent almost 500,000 fleeing to neighboring countries. The majority of resettled people today remain without land, proper shelter and food, health care, jobs, education, and even identification documents. They commonly lack transport to return to places of origin or are coerced to resettle elsewhere. The resettlement process has been slowed by the presence of an estimated 700,000 land mines and by a war-ruined infrastructure, which make large tracts of the country inaccessible to humanitarian aid. Women are vulnerable to sexual abuse and rarely receive demobilization benefits. Former child soldiers—estimates vary from 7,000 to 11,000—have also remained outside the disarmament process. In October 2005, a joint assessment by the United Nations and the government estimated that more than 91,000 people remain internally displaced within Angola.

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), a lead actor in the humanitarian effort, is shifting its focus from repatriation and emergency relief to reintegration, and its organized repatriation operation will come to an end in 2005. More than 700,000 Angolans are dependent on food aid from the UN's World Food Programme.

UNITA appears committed to peace and has made the transition from being a disarmed military organization to becoming Angola's largest opposition party. About 80,000 former rebel soldiers have been demobilized; 5,000 of them have been integrated into the armed forces and the police. However, the MPLA and UNITA disagree about how rapidly political and economic reforms can occur, and much disagreement surrounds the management of Angola's extensive oil and diamond resources.

Angola is Africa's second-largest oil producer. Petroleum accounts for up to 90 percent of government revenues, but corruption and war have prevented the average Angolan from benefiting from the wealth. More than \$1 billion in oil revenue goes missing each year, a situation likely to be exacerbated by an opaque, oil-backed, \$2 billion loan from China's Eximbank intended to finance infrastructure recovery projects. While the country's rich diamond areas have been carved up between MPLA and UNITA elites, 85 percent of the population engages in subsistence agriculture. The government has failed to make significant progress in reforms recommended by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which has urged greater transparency in accounting for the whereabouts of Angola's recent windfalls from high oil prices.

Accusations of human rights abuses against civilians in the oil exclave of Cabinda (located between the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo [Brazzaville]), perpetrated mainly by government soldiers sent in to crush a low-intensity separatist conflict that has simmered for decades, continued in 2005. A report by Human Rights Watch claimed Angolan authorities have not properly investigated or addressed incidents of torture, arbitrary detention, extrajudicial executions, restrictions on freedom of movement, and sexual violence. In February, a local human rights group, the Mbpalabanda Civic Association, released a report alleging numerous instances of rape, murder, and arbitrary detentions against Cabindan civilians since September 2003. Nevertheless, and despite a spate of renewed clashes between Angolan and rebel forces earlier in the year, August saw the first repatriation of refugees to Cabinda in two years.

An outbreak of the deadly Ebola-like Marburg virus—first discovered in the northeastern Uige province in October 2004—resulted in the deaths of more than 220 people by July 2005. The health minister and World Health Organization declared the outbreak over in November 2005.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Angola cannot change their government democratically. Angolans freely elected their own representatives only once, in UN-supervised presidential and legislative elections held in September 1992. International observers pronounced the vote generally free and fair despite some irregularities. However, UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi rejected his loss to MPLA president Jose Eduardo dos Santos in the first round of presidential voting and resumed fighting, preventing a run-off election.

Following the 2002 Luena Memorandum of Understanding, the two factions of the former rebel group UNITA merged into one party, representing the most significant opposition to the ruling MPLA. Eighty-seven other opposition groups have formed a coalition with negligible weight, and about 125 parties are registered in Angola. The MPLA dominates the 220-member National Assembly; UNITA holds 70 seats. The National Assembly has little power, but members engage in heated debates and legislation proposed by the opposition is sometimes adopted.

General elections planned for 1997 have continually been put off. In 2004, President Dos Santos and the MPLA set legislative elections for September 2006. Dos Santos has not yet set a date for presidential elections, though he has proposed holding them in 2006; the president is mandated to announce the election date only 90 days prior, causing widespread concern about the country's electoral readiness. UNITA and other opposition parties have accused the government of delaying the elections for political reasons. In 2005, debate intensified over pertinent issues such as voter registration, civil disarmament, and particularly the makeup of the National Electoral Commission (NEC). Before the NEC formally took office in August, UNITA and other opposition parties accused Dos Santos and the MPLA of unfairly dominating the proposed commission, pointing out that nearly two-thirds of the 11-member commission were appointed by Dos Santos. In August, UNITA asked the Supreme Court to rule on the constitutionality of government preparations for the legislative elections, accusing the MPLA of early campaigning and of diverting state resources to run preelection campaigns.

Political violence is still a problem. In March, clashes between MPLA and UNITA

supporters in Kuando Kubnago province resulted in 29 injuries. Opposition parties blame the MPLA, police, and army for acts of violence and intimidation against their members and offices, especially in the provinces of Huambo and Moxico, where UNITA has traditionally claimed strong support. In August, MPLA-aligned local officials reportedly prevented UNITA from setting up offices in the Balombo municipality in the Benguela province; resulting clashes between the two sides led to the serious wounding of two people. Recently, unidentified gangs have burned down homes of UNITA members and ransacked the party's offices. An opposition member of parliament was murdered in Luanda in July 2004, and several other members of parliament were beaten in June. The ruling party denies responsibility and says harassment is not official policy.

Corruption and patronage are endemic in the government. In February, the IMF delayed a mission to Angola after the Finance Ministry failed to provide the fund with data concerning the whereabouts of an extra \$600 million in oil revenues reaped by the country in 2004 as the consequence of high oil prices. In March, the Coalition of Reconciliation, Transparency, and Citizenship published a survey detailing the systematic practice of giving *gasosas*—literally "fizzy drinks" but in reality a small bribe—that underpins much of Angolan business in both rural and urban areas. Angola was ranked 151 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Following the 2002 ceasefire between the government and UNITA, media restrictions have become less stringent. However, despite constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression, journalists are often subject to intimidation, dismissal, and legal sanction by authorities; the result is self-censorship. In December 2004, Miguel de Carvalho, the head of the government news agency ANGOP, threatened to shoot a journalist working for the independent weekly *Agora* after the paper ran a series of articles on corruption and mismanagement at the agency. The detention of journalists still occurs, especially outside the capital. In July, journalist Celso Amaral was found guilty of mismanaging about \$42,500 in state funds while running the state-controlled Radio Nacional in the province of Huila and sentenced to 10 years in prison; Amaral's lawyers claimed the sentence was politically motivated.

Defamation of the president or his representatives is a criminal offense, punishable by imprisonment or fines. Private media outlets are often denied access to official information and events, and they report problems with funding. There are several independent weekly newspapers and radio stations in Luanda, but the government dominates media elsewhere. In 2005, authorities continued to prevent the outspoken Roman Catholic radio, Radio Ecclesia, from broadcasting outside Luanda. In addition, high-ranking government officials pressured independent media to cover the government in a more favorable light. The only daily newspaper and the sole television station are state-owned. Internet access is limited to a small elite, as most citizens lack computers or even electricity.

Religious freedom is widely respected, despite colonial-era statutes that ban non-Christian religious groups. The educational system barely functions, suffering from underpaid and often corrupt teachers and severely damaged infrastructure. According to UNICEF, only 6 percent of 10- to-11-year-olds attended school.

Hundreds of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and civic groups operate in Angola, demanding political reform and greater government accountability in

human rights; in particular, churches have grown more outspoken. However, the government often denies NGOs access to Cabinda on security grounds and has not adequately fostered the participation of civil society in postwar reconstruction. In July, a report by the World Bank urged greater donor support for, and higher coordination among, civil society organizations in Angola. In 2005, the government continued to block the registration of the Association for Justice, Peace, and Democracy (AJPD), pending since 2000; nevertheless, the AJPD continued to function throughout the year.

The constitution guarantees freedom of assembly, and increasingly authorities are allowing opposition groups to hold demonstrations in Luanda. However, crackdowns are common in the interior of the country. In December 2004, police killed two people while breaking up a protest following several prisoner deaths in Luanda-Norte.

The right to strike and form unions is provided by the constitution, but the MPLA dominates the labor movement and only a few independent unions exist. The lack of a viable economy has hindered labor activity.

The judiciary is subject to extensive executive influence. The government has yet to establish a Constitutional Court, as mandated by the constitution. Local courts rule on civil matters and petty crime in some areas, but an overall lack of training and infrastructure and a large backlog of cases inhibit judicial proceedings. Only 23 of the 168 municipal courts are operational; as a result, traditional or informal courts are utilized. However, the courts do occasionally rule against the government: in February the Supreme Court in Luanda overturned a 2004 conviction of the editor of the independent weekly *Semanario Angolense* for defaming the president. Prisoners are commonly detained for long periods in overcrowded, unsanitary conditions while awaiting trial. Prison conditions are atrocious and life threatening; prisoners are subject to torture, severe overcrowding, sexual abuse, extortion, and a lack of basic human services.

Severe human rights abuses—including torture, abduction, rape, sexual slavery, and extrajudicial execution—were perpetrated during the war by both sides. Though less frequently, security forces still perpetrate such actions. Displaced Angolans returning home have faced harassment, and police and security forces are rarely held accountable for shakedowns, muggings, rapes, or beatings. An estimated 4 million weapons in civilian hands threaten to contribute to lawlessness. In addition, Angola's lucrative diamond-mining industry continues to be beset by murders, beatings, and other human rights violations at the hands of government and private security forces. Such abuses became less frequent after the government mandated more humane methods in carrying out "Operation Brilhante," a recent campaign to curb illegal diamond mining that led to the expulsion of more than 120,000 Congolese and West African migrant miners. In January, the government established the office of the Justice Ombudsman as the national human rights institution, and former justice minister Paolo Tjipilica was confirmed for the post by the National Assembly. However, the government's failure to include civic actors in the process elicited protests from human rights organizations and civil society.

Eight provinces (about 50 percent of the country) contain areas that were heavily mined. At least 80,000 people have lost limbs to mines over the years.

Angolans have the right to own property. However, the government dominates

the economy and the war discouraged the development of a private sector. Prospects look better with peace, and the government in 2003 passed legislation aimed at facilitating private investment. According to the U.S. State Department 2005 human rights report, the property rights of traditional pastoral communities lack adequate protection. Child labor is a major problem, and there were reports of trafficking in women and children for purposes of prostitution or coerced labor.

Women occupy cabinet positions and National Assembly seats. Nevertheless, despite legal protections, de facto discrimination against women remains strong, particularly in rural areas. Violence against women is widespread; spousal abuse is common. Women are often the victims of land mines as they forage for food and firewood.

Antigua and Barbuda

Population: 100,000 **Political Rights:** 2
GNI/capita: \$9,190 **Civil Liberties:** 2
Life Expectancy: 71 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Anglican (predominant)
Ethnic Groups: Black, British, Portuguese, Lebanese, Syrian
Capital: St. John's



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
4,3PF	4,3PF	4,3PF	4,3PF	4,2PF	4,2PF	4,2PF	4,2PF	2,2F	2,2F

Overview:

Antigua and Barbuda continued to struggle throughout 2005 with the new political dynamic created by the historic defeat of Prime Minister Lester Bird by opposition figure Baldwin Spencer in 2004, particularly as the new government opened several high-level corruption investigations against its predecessor.

Antigua and Barbuda, a member of the Commonwealth, gained independence in 1981. In 1994, the elder Vere Bird stepped down as prime minister in favor of his son Lester. In the run-up to the 1994 election, three opposition parties joined forces to form the United Progressive Party (UPP), which campaigned on a social-democratic platform emphasizing the rule of law and good governance. Parliamentary seats held by Bird's Antigua Labour Party (ALP) fell from 15 in 1989 to 11, while the number for the UPP rose from 1 to 5.

After assuming office, Lester Bird promised a less corrupt, more efficient government. However, the government continued to be dogged by scandals. In 1995, one of the prime minister's brothers, Ivor, received only a fine after having been convicted of cocaine smuggling. In the March 1999 elections, the ALP won 12 parliamentary seats; the UPP, 4; and the Barbuda People's Movement (BPM), 1.

On March 23, 2004, after a hard-fought, and at times vitriolic, campaign, the UPP, led by Baldwin Spencer, defeated the ALP. The vote was deemed to be generally

free and fair by Commonwealth observers. The election's results, which were not contested, were a crushing defeat for the ALP, which retained only 4 out of the 17 seats in parliament. The UPP won 12 seats, while the BPM, an ally of the UPP, won the Barbuda seat in a runoff election. Both the prime minister and his brother, Vere Bird Jr., lost their seats in parliament. The election brought an end to the political dynasty of the Bird family, which had dominated politics in Antigua and Barbuda since 1976.

Steps have been taken to strengthen political institutions, but the country continues to struggle to overcome a deep legacy of corruption. Only 4 of the 14 people named in a 2002 Royal Commission of Inquiry, which concluded there were serious instances of fraud in the medical-benefits program, had been indicted before Bird left office. The Medical Association has alleged official obstruction and emphasizes that improprieties continue. One of the former prime minister's brothers, Vere Bird Jr., continued to serve until the 2004 elections as minister of agriculture despite an arms-trafficking inquiry that concluded he should be barred from government service. In 2005, the Bird family became the target of legal investigations for alleged corruption. The new government filed a lawsuit against Lester Bird and two associates, claiming that a company owned by the three men had occupied public land without paying rent for 18 years, and that the Bird government sold public land to the company at below market prices.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Antigua and Barbuda can change their government democratically. The 1981 constitution establishes a parliamentary system: a bicameral parliament is composed of the 17-member House of Representatives (16 seats go to Antigua, 1 to Barbuda), in which members serve five-year terms, and an appointed Senate. Of the senators, 11 are appointed by the prime minister, 4 by the parliamentary opposition leader, 1 by the Barbuda Council (an 11-member local government body that runs the internal affairs of the island of Bermuda), and 1 by the governor-general, a position that has been filled by Sir James B. Carlisle since 1993. Antigua and Barbuda's prime minister is typically the leader of the majority party or coalition that emerges from the legislative elections.

Political parties can organize freely. The government has been planning to reform the electoral system by establishing an Independent Electoral Commission to review electoral law and redraw constituency boundaries, creating a new voter registry, and introducing voter identification cards. However, the relevant legislation has not yet been introduced. The Electoral Office of Jamaica commission, a governmental body, was contracted to prepare a new voter list; deceased and absent voters have not been removed from the list since 1975.

Although the government introduced anticorruption and integrity legislation in parliament in October 2002, and in 2004 the Spencer administration passed legislation to improve governmental transparency, implementation has been slow. The Integrity of Public Life Bill, which parliament adopted in 2004, requires that public officials make an annual declaration of assets, with failure to comply becoming a punishable offense. In January 2005, the country became the fourth member of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States to ratify the Inter-American Convention against Corruption, which requires public officials to declare their assets and liabili-

ties, improves cooperation on the collective fight against corruption, and strengthens corporate accounting practices. Antigua and Barbuda was not ranked by Transparency International in its 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The family of former prime minister Lester Bird continues to control television, cable, and radio outlets. The government owns one of three radio stations and the television station. One of the Bird brothers owns a second station, and another brother owns the cable company. Opposition parties complain of receiving limited coverage from, and having little opportunity to present their views on, the government-controlled electronic media. In June 2005, Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer sought new legislation to curb slander and harassment on the radio, but the opposition claimed this was an effort to restrict free speech. There is free access to the internet. The Declaration of Chapultepec on press freedoms was signed in September 2002. In August 2005, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights praised the country's efforts to pass the Freedom of Information Act to improve public access to education. Additional steps were taken to end the state's media monopoly.

The government respects religious and academic freedom.

Nongovernmental organizations and labor unions can organize freely. The Industrial Court mediates labor disputes, but public sector unions tend to be under the sway of the ruling party. Demonstrators are occasionally subject to police harassment.

The country's legal system is based on English common law. The ALP had manipulated the nominally independent judicial system, which was powerless to address corruption in the executive branch. The UPP has sought to increase the transparency of public affairs through new legislation and establish clear guidelines for investment practices. The islands' security forces are composed of the police and the small Antigua and Barbuda Defence Forces. The police generally respect human rights; basic police reporting statistics, however, are confidential. The country's prison is in primitive condition and has been criticized for the abuse of inmates, though visits are permitted by independent human rights groups.

Increased patrols and the reintroduction of roadblocks and stiffer fines for firearms violations were offered as a response to higher levels of crime, which the government attributed to a new trend of gun possession among island youth and an influx of criminal deportees from the United States and Europe with links to the drug trade.

In March 2005, the government introduced the Equal Opportunity Act barring discrimination on the basis of race, gender, class, political affinity, or place of origin. Social discrimination and violence against women remain problems, however. The governmental Directorate of Women's Affairs has sought to increase awareness of women's legal rights. Women have gained ground in the political system, holding two cabinet posts and the positions of Speaker of parliament and president of the Senate. The first female police commissioner was appointed in 2005.

Argentina

Population: 38,600,000 **Political Rights:** 2
GNI/capita: \$4,220 **Civil Liberties:** 2
Life Expectancy: 74 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (92 percent),
 Protestant (2 percent), Jewish (2 percent), other
 (4 percent)

Ethnic Groups: White [mostly Spanish and Italian]
 (97 percent), other [including mestizo and Amerindian] (3 percent)

Capital: Buenos Aires

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
2,3F	2,3F	3,3F	2,3F	1,2F	3,3PF	3,3PF	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F



Overview:

Peronist president Nestor Kirchner in 2005 won a significant victory in midterm congressional elections, capitalizing on a third straight year of economic growth, his government's successful renegotiation with foreign investors of the country's crushing debt burden, and his continued efforts to bring about a full legal accounting for the illegal repression carried out during a former military dictatorship. However, Kirchner's promised reform of Argentina's corrupt and politicized judiciary remained incomplete, as did his anticorruption agenda. Meanwhile, his relations with the country's independent media remained tense, and diplomatic and economic ties to Hugo Chavez's Venezuela and other regional antidemocratic forces were strengthened.

The Argentine Republic was established after independence from Spain in 1816. Democratic rule was often interrupted by military coups. The end of Juan Peron's authoritarian regime in 1955 led to a series of right-wing military dictatorships that spawned left-wing and nationalist violence. Argentina returned to elected civilian rule in 1983, after seven years of a far-right military regime—strongly supported by the U.S. administrations of Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan—whose vicious and mostly clandestine repression of leftist guerrillas and other dissidents was known as the "dirty war."

As a provincial governor, Carlos S. Menem, running an orthodox Peronist platform of nationalism and state intervention in the economy, won a six-year presidential term in 1989, amid hyperinflation and food riots. As president, however, he implemented, mostly by decree, an economic liberalization program and unconditionally allied the country with U.S. foreign policy—moves that traditional Peronists criticized as betrayals of the party's principals.

In the October 1997 elections, voter concerns about rampant corruption and unemployment resulted in the first nationwide defeat of Menem's Peronists, whose macroeconomic stabilization had stalled as a result of international economic strife and popular disenchantment with his government. Buenos Aires mayor and Radical

Civic Union (UCR) leader Fernando De la Rúa, a middle-class favorite, was chosen as the nominee of the center-left Alliance for presidential elections to be held in October 1999. Menem's long-running feud with his former vice president, Eduardo Duhalde, the Peronist Party presidential nominee and governor of Buenos Aires province, sealed the latter's fate. Duhalde was defeated by De la Rúa, 48.5 to 38 percent.

Facing an opposition-controlled National Congress, De la Rúa sought to cut spending, raise taxes, and push forward an anticorruption agenda and unpopular labor reforms, the latter won through the purchase of congressional votes by illegally using state intelligence agency funds. De la Rúa appointed Menem's former economy minister to restore credibility to the government's failing economic program and to stave off default on Argentina's \$ 128 billion in public sector debt. Record unemployment, reduced and delayed wages to federal and provincial workers, and the closing of public schools created the kind of social mobilization and protest unseen for nearly a generation. In the October 2001 congressional by-elections, the Peronist Party bested the ruling Alliance coalition. However, angry citizens spoiled or nullified an unprecedented 21 percent of the votes.

In December 2001, government efforts to stop a run on Argentina's banking system sparked widespread protests. Middle-class housewives turned out in massive street protests. At the same time, riots and looting of supermarkets in poorer districts erupted, some of which appeared to have been organized by rivals within the opposition Peronists and by disaffected serving or former members of the intelligence services. As the death toll reached 27, De la Rúa resigned. He was replaced by an interim president, who himself was forced to quit less than a week later.

On December 31, 2001, Duhalde was selected by Congress as Argentina's new president. A decade-old law prohibiting the use of the military for internal security, a sizable reduction in military strength carried out by the Menem government, and continuing civilian abhorrence of the recent legacy of the dirty war kept the military from intervening in politics during the weeks-long transition.

The steep devaluation of the peso and a debilitating default on its \$141 billion foreign debt left Argentina teetering on the brink of political and economic collapse throughout 2002, as the restrictive fiscal policies urged by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and pursued by the government were not matched by increases in foreign investment. An attempt by Congress to impeach a highly politicized Supreme Court loyal to Menem was dropped, after international financial institutions said the move would endanger the country's access to foreign credit. Unemployment soared to levels unheard of since the founding of the republic, and violent crime spiraled out of control.

Nestor Kirchner, a relatively unknown governor from the Patagonian region supported by Duhalde, succeeded in getting into a runoff in the first round of the April 2003 presidential election, winning 22 percent to Menem's 24.3 percent. Menem's high negative poll ratings convinced him to drop out of the contest, leaving Kirchner with a weak popular mandate.

Upon taking office on May 25, 2003, as Argentina's sixth president in 18 months, Kirchner quickly moved to purge the country's authoritarian military and police leadership. The new head of the Federal Police was fired a few months after the election in a corruption scandal—a first in the country's history. Kirchner also took steps to

remove justices from the highly politicized Supreme Court, considered the country's most corrupt institution, and signed a decree that permitted the extradition of former military officials accused of human rights abuses. A former sympathizer of leftist guerrillas active in the country three decades ago, Kirchner also moved Argentina into closer alliances with Venezuela's Hugo Chavez and Cuba's Fidel Castro. Documents declassified by the U.S. State Department in 2002 and 2003 provided additional proof of former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's "green light" for the military-led "dirty war."

The 2004 admission by the IMF that it had significantly contributed to the Argentine economic crisis, and the role the international financial institutions and private banks played in financing the hated military, allowed the Kirchner government unaccustomed room to maneuver on how to repay foreign creditors. After making some efforts to put a brake on government spending, Kirchner presided over a long-hoped-for economic recovery. However, corruption and extrajudicial action by the country's law enforcement institutions continued to be a major problem, particularly in Buenos Aires province. Indigent street protestors also complicated the situation through uncontrolled demonstrations and the blocking of major thoroughfares. In October, a Buenos Aires court revoked the acquittal of Menem on charges of illegal arms running. The court's action added to his judicial predicament, as did the prosecution and conviction of top aides on other corruption charges.

By March 2005, Economy Minister Roberto Lavagna was able to declare the end of a three-year battle to restructure what had become a record \$103 billion in defaulted debt, with more than three-fourths of the holders of Argentine foreign bonds agreeing to a nonnegotiable offer of 30 cents on the dollar. Argentina's financial position was also helped by Venezuela's purchase of more than \$500 million in government bonds, which cushioned Buenos Aires's tense relations with the IMF. The economy grew some 7.5 percent in 2005, while during Kirchner's term in office unemployment fell from 21 to 13 percent and poverty rates went from 55 to 38 percent.

The country's improved economic fortunes, including the achievement of the largest debt reduction ever by a developing country, made Kirchner's wing of the Peronist Party the favorite going into October 23 legislative elections for 24 of 72 Senate seats and 127 of 257 Chamber of Deputies seats. The 2005 election was portrayed as a referendum on both his presidency and his prospects for reelection in 2007.

Kirchner allies significantly increased their congressional presence, winning 21 seats and a comfortable majority in the Senate, although they fell short of a legislative majority in the lower house, ending up with 115 seats, 14 less than the 129 needed for an absolute majority. Kirchner's wife, Cristina Fernandez, overwhelmed Hilda "Chiche" Duhalde, the wife of the former president, 46 to 20 percent, in the contest for senator from Buenos Aires province.

Tempering the Kirchner victory was the fact his allies lost in three of the five largest and wealthiest electoral districts, including the federal capital, where the center-right businessman Mauricio Macri handily bested Kirchner's pro-Cuba foreign minister, Rafael Bielsa, an official in both the former military dictatorship and Menem's Justice Ministry, in the race for congressional deputy. Menem, who in 2004 returned from his self-exile in Chile, where he had sought refuge from prosecution on corruption charges, experienced his first loss in an election by coming in second in the Senate race in his native La Rioja province.

In June 2005, the Supreme Court ruled that laws passed in the 1980s to protect military and security officers from prosecution—a move justified at the time of their promulgation as helping to avoid the possibility of a military coup—were unconstitutional, thus making Argentina a world leader in efforts to fight military impunity. By the end of 2005, nearly 1,000 former military and police officials either were imprisoned or faced trial for rights abuses committed during the dirty war, although some were released on grounds of not having received a speedy trial; few, if any, active duty officers were believed implicated in the atrocities. In July, the bodies of three founders of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo human rights group were identified after being located in a mass grave. The women disappeared in 1977 and were secretly killed by the military. On September 28, the Senate voted to remove Supreme Court justice Antonio Boggiano, the second high court judge forced out by the legislative body in two years. The removal brought to six the number of justices known as Menem's "automatic majority" who have left office since Kirchner's inauguration.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Argentina can change their government democratically. As amended in 1994, the 1853 constitution provides for a president elected for four years with the option of reelection for one term. Presidential candidates must win 45 percent of the vote to avoid a runoff. The current president, Nestor Kirchner, was elected to his first term in 2003.

The National Congress consists of the 257-member Chamber of Deputies directly elected for four years, with half the seats renewable every two years, and the 72-member Senate directly elected for six-year terms, with one-third of the seats renewable every two years. Two senators are directly elected in the autonomous Buenos Aires federal district.

The 2005 election in Buenos Aires province was marred by credible claims of vote buying by Kirchner and Eduardo Duhalde loyalists. The Interior Ministry reported that 82 percent of the 26 million Argentines who were registered to vote did so. Because Argentina's electoral system allows for three senators to be elected per district, former president Carlos S. Menem won a congressional seat despite losing 40 to 51 percent against his province's highest vote getter, and was thus immune from prosecution on corruption charges.

The right to organize political parties is generally respected. Major political parties include the Alternative for a Republic of Equals (ARI), the Justicialist Party (PJ; commonly known as the "Peronist Party"), the Radical Civic Union (UCR), and the Republican Initiative Alliance (PRO; including Federal Recreate Movement or RECREAR and Commitment for Change).

Kirchner's government initially made anticorruption pledges a central theme, and Decree 1172/03 established the public's right to information and other transparency guarantees. However, leading anticorruption activists have accused the Kirchner government of having stalled on its good-government agenda, particularly in not ensuring the effective functioning of administrative controls. For example, there are no specific legal protections offered to either government or private sector whistle-blowers, who are forced to seek redress in inadequate administrative or judicial remedies such as the Public Employees Law or the Work Contract Law. Ar-

gentina was ranked 97 out of 159 countries surveyed in the 2005 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index.

The press, which was frequently under attack during Menem's presidency, continues to enjoy broad credibility and influence, the latter due in part to the continued discrediting of public institutions and major political parties because of their corruption and clientelistic practices, although less so than in other years. The Kirchner government, whose officials are increasingly accused of verbally mistreating independent journalists, continues to boost the amount of official advertising in the media, and channels the advertising disproportionately in favor of news outlets it considers friendly. Kirchner refuses to hold press conferences, saying that he prefers press photographers "because they don't ask questions," and government spokesmen allege press conferences are unnecessary because the president "speaks directly to the people." The final passage of a Freedom of Information Act is still pending; its passage is in jeopardy because of several amendments that would undermine its open government provisions.

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion. Nevertheless, the 250,000-strong Jewish community, the largest in Latin America, is a frequent target of anti-Semitic vandalism. Neo-Nazi organizations and other anti-Semitic groups, often tied to remnants of the old-line security services, remain active. In 2004, a federal court acquitted five men of being accessories in the 1994 car bombing of the Argentine Jewish Mutual Association (AMIA) community center, which resulted in 85 deaths. At the end of the three-year trial, not a single person was convicted of having responsibility for the attack. During the trial, the investigating judge deliberately sidetracked the probe by bribing key witnesses with funds from a secret slush fund. Two prosecutors were removed for alleged irregularities, which increased already strong suspicions that complicity in the attack or its cover-up extended into Menem's inner circle. In 2005, Kirchner's government apologized to Argentina's Jewish community for a secret 1938 order barring Jewish immigrants fleeing the Nazis in Europe from entering Argentina.

Academic freedom is a cherished Argentine tradition and is largely observed in practice.

The right to organize civic organizations and labor unions is generally respected. Civil society organizations are robust and play a large role in society, although some fall victim to the corruption that continues to pervade Argentina's politics and economy. Labor is dominated by Peronist unions. Union influence, however, has diminished dramatically in the past decade because of corruption scandals, internal divisions, and restrictions on public sector strikes decreed by Menem to pave the way for his privatization program.

Menem's manipulation of the judiciary undermined the country's separation of powers and the rule of law. Although the tenure of scores of incompetent and corrupt judges remains a serious problem, positive steps have been taken under Kirchner, including the appointment of magistrates of professional quality. According to a study released in June 2005 by the University of Buenos Aires law school, of 26,000 laws on the books nationally in Argentina, only 4,000—about 15 percent—were actually in force. The arbitrary application of superfluous laws leads to juridical insecurity, the study contended.

Public safety is a primary concern for Argentines. Within the last decade, crime

in Argentina doubled, and in Buenos Aires, tripled. Much of it has been fueled by a marked increase in illegal drug consumption that began during the Menem years, and by the complicity of high-ranking judicial and law enforcement authorities in the drug trade.

In May 2002, the Argentine penal code was changed, and the penalty for being convicted of killing a police officer became a life sentence without the possibility of parole. Police misconduct includes growing numbers of alleged extrajudicial executions by law enforcement officers. The Buenos Aires provincial police have been involved in drug trafficking, extortion, and vice. Arbitrary arrests and abuse by police are rarely punished in civil courts owing to intimidation of witnesses and judges, particularly in Buenos Aires province. The torture of detainees in police custody in the province is endemic, and the provincial penal service is rife with corruption. Prison conditions are generally substandard throughout the country.

Argentina's estimated 700,000 to 1.5 million indigenous people are largely neglected. Approximately 70 percent of the country's rural indigenous communities lack title to their lands; however, the Kirchner government appears sensitive to their plight and has returned lands to several communities.

In 2002, the city of Buenos Aires significantly expanded the legal rights of gay and lesbian couples, although one poll conducted in 2005 reported that one in five gays say they have been the victims of violence related to their sexual orientation. Women actively participate in politics in Argentina. However, domestic abuse remains a serious problem, and child prostitution is reported to be on the rise.

Armenia

Population: 3,000,000 **Political Rights:** 5

GNI/capita: \$950 **Civil Liberties:** 4

Life Expectancy: 71 **Status:** Partly Free

Religious Groups: Armenian Apostolic (94 percent), other Christian (4 percent), Yezidi (2 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Armenian (93 percent), Azeri (1 percent), Russian (2 percent), Kurd and others (4 percent)

Capital: Yerevan

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
5,4PF	5,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF

Overview:

A November 2005 national referendum on establishing a clearer separation of powers among the judicial, executive, and legislative branches of government in Armenia was emblematic of the continued standoff between the country's ruling coalition and the political opposition. While the opposition encouraged a "no" vote, believing that the proposed reforms did not go far enough, Armenian election officials said 94 percent of voters who cast their ballots backed the amendments proposed by President Robert Kocharian. In a country known for its public apathy, the turnout of 64

percent of eligible voters was questioned by the Council of Europe and U.S. State Department, as well as the political opposition.

Following a brief period of independence from 1918 to 1920, a part of the predominantly Christian Transcaucasus republic of Armenia became a Soviet republic in 1922, while the western portion was ceded to Turkey. Armenia declared its independence from the Soviet Union in September 1991, following a nationalist movement for autonomy that had gained in strength during the Gorbachev period and became stronger once it became apparent by the late 1980s that the USSR would likely disintegrate.

The banning of nine political parties prior to the 1995 parliamentary elections ensured the dominance of President Levon Ter Petrosian's ruling Armenian National Movement (ANM) coalition. In February 1998, Petrosian stepped down following the resignation of key officials in protest of his gradualist approach to solving the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, the disputed enclave in Azerbaijan. Prime Minister Robert Kocharian, the former president of Nagorno-Karabakh, was elected president in March of that year with the support of the previously banned Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaksutiun.

Parliamentary elections in May 1999 resulted in an overwhelming victory for the Unity bloc, a new alliance of Defense Minister Vazgen Sarkisian's Republican Party and former Soviet Armenian leader Karen Demirchian's People's Party, which campaigned on a political platform of greater state involvement in the economy and increased social spending. In June, Sarkisian was named prime minister and Demirchian became Speaker of parliament.

The country was plunged into a political crisis on October 27, 1999, when five gunmen stormed the National Assembly and assassinated Sarkisian, Demirchian, and several other senior government officials. The leader of the gunmen, Nairi Hunanian, maintained that he and the other assailants had acted alone in an attempt to incite a popular revolt against the government. Meanwhile, allegations that Kocharian or members of his inner circle had orchestrated the shootings prompted opposition calls for the president to resign. However, because of an apparent lack of evidence, prosecutors did not press charges against Kocharian, who gradually consolidated his power during the following year. In May 2000, Kocharian named Republican Party leader Andranik Markarian as prime minister, replacing Vazgen Sarkisian's younger brother, Aram, who had served in the position for only five months following the parliament shootings.

In 2003, Kocharian was reelected in a presidential vote that was widely regarded as flawed. He defeated Stepan Demirchian, son of the late Karen Demirchian, in a second round runoff with 67 percent of the vote. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) described the elections as falling "short of international standards for democratic elections" and asserted that "voting, counting, and tabulation showed serious irregularities, including widespread ballot-box stuffing." During the runoff, which was held on March 5 of that year, authorities placed more than 200 opposition supporters under administrative detention for over 15 days; the detainees were sentenced on charges of hooliganism and participation in unsanctioned demonstrations. The Constitutional Court rejected appeals by opposition leaders to invalidate the election results, although it did propose holding a

"referendum of confidence" on Kocharian within the next year to allay widespread doubts about the validity of the election returns; Kocharian indicated that he would not comply with the proposal. In response to the problems associated with the election, a standoff emerged between Kocharian and the political opposition, formed by two major groups—the Artarutiun (Justice bloc) and the National Unity Party—with opposition parties choosing not to attend sessions of the National Assembly.

Protest rallies were organized in Yerevan from April to June 2004 over the failure of the government to redress the 2003 presidential vote. The authorities responded with violence, using police to disperse demonstrators in Yerevan with water cannons, batons, and stun grenades. After the crackdown by the authorities in April, these demonstrations grew ever smaller. In October, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) adopted a resolution expressing concern about the lack of investigation into the flawed 2003 elections and calling for steps to end pre-trial administrative detention, physical ill-treatment, and other abuses.

On November 27, 2005, a national referendum was held that was designed to bring about a clearer separation of powers among the judicial, executive, and legislative branches of government and to create a more even distribution of power between the executive and legislative branches by pruning back presidential powers. It also contained provisions to lift the ban on Armenians holding dual citizenship. The extensive powers enjoyed by the presidency, and the lack of checks and balances within the constitution, had been among the principal points of contention between the Armenian authorities and international bodies such as the Council of Europe, which took a strong role in encouraging the constitutional reform.

In spite of widespread apathy and a disconnection of average Armenians from public affairs, the official results of the referendum showed 94 percent in favor; turnout was reported to be 64 percent. The opposition, which believed that the proposed reforms did not go far enough, took issue with these figures, asserting that the authorities had inflated the numbers. In the aftermath of the referendum, opposition parties pledged mass protests. While some protesters took to the streets, their numbers were quite small.

There were few international observers for the referendum, although PACE sent 14 monitors, who voiced serious criticisms of the way the voting was conducted and suggested that the high turnout figure was questionable. While the monitors concluded that "the referendum generally reflected the free will of those who voted," they reported "serious abuse in several polling stations which cast a shadow over the credibility of the officially announced turnout." The monitors went on to say that "in a significant number of polling stations in Yerevan and other regions...the extremely low voting activity did not correspond to the high figures provided by the electoral commissions. There were also clear instances of forged additional signatures on the voters register and of ballot stuffing. The electoral regulations, requiring the stamping of the ballot after completion, created numerous situations where the secrecy of the vote was not respected." The U.S. State Department voiced similar concerns, concluding "We regret that the government of Armenia chose not to invite observers from the OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, who could have given greater credibility to the results of the voting."

The long-standing conflict over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh went unresolved in 2005, although a number of discussions between representatives of

the two sides suggested some possible promise. The region, which is formally part of Azerbaijan, is now predominantly ethnically Armenian and effectively under Armenian control.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Armenians cannot change their government democratically. The 1995 and 1999 parliamentary and 1996 presidential elections were marred by serious irregularities. The most recent presidential and parliamentary polls, in February-March and May 2003, respectively, were strongly criticized by international election monitors, who cited widespread fraud, particularly in the presidential vote. The 1995 constitution provides for a weak legislature (the National Assembly) and a strong executive, who appoints the prime minister. The president is elected by popular vote for a five-year term. Electoral reforms enacted in 2005 increased the number of parliamentary seats allocated by proportional representation from 56 to 90 and reduced the number of single-mandate seats from 75 to 41. Ninety-six of the 131 seats in parliament are occupied by pro-government parties or deputies that comprise the governing coalition.

At the exhortation of the Council of Europe and with the passage of the November 27, 2005, referendum, the Armenian government adopted modifications to the election code; the test of these amendments will be their implementation.

Political parties in Armenia are fractured. Opposition parties have pursued a policy of disengagement, including with respect to the constitutional referendum and the 2003 election, which the opposition has characterized as illegitimate. President Robert Kocharian, whose term expires in 2008, does not belong to any political party and relies on a three-party coalition to rule the country. The main opposition parties and blocs are Artarutiun (Justice) bloc, the National Unity Party, the Armenian National Movement (ANM), and the Communist Party of Armenia.

Bribery and nepotism are reported to be common among government bureaucrats, and government officials are rarely prosecuted or otherwise removed for abuse of office. Corruption is also believed to be a serious problem in law enforcement. Armenia was ranked 88 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

There are considerable limits on press freedom in Armenia. According to the 2005 U.S. State Department, senior officials within President Robert Kocharian's office continued to provide policy guidance to Public Television of Armenia (HI). Television is the dominant news source for most citizens. Armenia has some 40 television stations, most of which are privately run. While most newspapers are in private hands, the majority operate with limited resources and have a small circulation and consequently are dependent on economic and political interest groups for their survival. A media law adopted in 2003 abolishes the requirement that media organizations register with the Ministry of Justice, but the criminal code still includes libel as a criminal offense.

In 2002, the independent television station A1+ lost its license after the national television and radio broadcasting commission granted a tender for its broadcasting frequency to another channel. Journalists and opposition politicians criticized the closure of A1+, which had a reputation for balanced reporting, as a politically motivated decision to control media coverage in the run-up to the 2003 presidential and parliamentary elections. Following the decision, thousands of people demonstrated

in a series of weekly protests over the station's closure and to demand Kocharian's resignation. In 2003, additional bids by A1+ for a broadcast frequency were rejected. According to the 2005 U.S. State Department report on Human Rights, Armenia does not restrict access to the internet.

Freedom of religion is somewhat respected. The constitution provides for freedom of religion, but the law specifies some restrictions on the religious freedom of adherents of minority faiths. The Armenian Apostolic Church, to which 90 percent of Armenians formally belong, enjoys some privileges not afforded to other faiths. While 50 religious groups are officially registered, the Jehovah's Witnesses have been denied registration repeatedly because of the group's strong opposition to compulsory military service.

The government generally does not restrict academic freedom. In September 2002, the Ministry of Education ordered the compulsory display of the portraits of Kocharian and the head of the Armenian Apostolic Church in secondary schools. The history of the Apostolic Church is a required school subject.

Registration requirements for nongovernmental associations are cumbersome and time-consuming. The authorities abused administrative detention regulations to intimidate and punish peaceful demonstrators and political activists following the 2003 presidential election. This issue also arose in 2004 and 2005, with PACE condemning the use of violence by the Armenian authorities in April and criticizing them for the continued application of the administrative code to arrest protesters. While the constitution provides for the right to form and join trade unions, labor organizations are weak and relatively inactive in practice.

The judicial branch is subject to political pressure from the executive branch and suffers from considerable corruption. Police make arbitrary arrests without warrants, beat detainees during arrest and interrogation, and use torture to extract confessions. Cases of abuse go unreported out of fear of retribution. Although members of the country's tiny ethnic minority population rarely report cases of overt discrimination, they have complained about difficulties in receiving education in their native languages.

Freedom of travel and residence is largely respected. However, registering changes in residency is sometimes complicated by the need to negotiate with an inefficient or corrupt government bureaucracy.

Citizens have the right to own private property and establish businesses, but an inefficient and often corrupt court system and unfair business competition hinder such activity. Key industries remain in the hands of oligarchs and influential clans who received preferential treatment in the early stages of privatization.

Domestic violence and trafficking in women and girls for the purpose of prostitution are believed to be serious problems.

Australia

Population: 20,400,000 **Political Rights:** 1

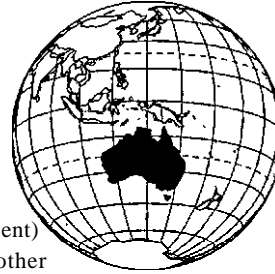
GNI/capita: \$21,950 **Civil Liberties:** 1

Life Expectancy: 80 **Status:** Free

Religious Groups: Anglican (21 percent), Roman Catholic (26 percent), other Christian (21 percent), non-Christian (5 percent), other (12 percent), none (15 percent)

Ethnic Groups: White (92 percent), Asian (7 percent), other [including Aboriginal] (1 percent)

Capital: Canberra



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1, 1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

The Australian government's handling of illegal immigrants continued to create political headlines during the year, while legal migration requirements were relaxed and quotas were greatly increased for 2005-2006. Two political asylum cases involving Chinese nationals stirred controversy at home and tensions with China. Meanwhile, the government's new antiterrorism and labor laws sparked intense domestic political debates.

Britain claimed Australia as a colony in 1770. The country became independent in 1901 as a commonwealth of six states. In 1911, the government adopted the Northern Territories and the capital territory of Canberra as territorial units. Since World War II, political power has alternated between the center-left Labour Party and a conservative coalition of the Liberal Party and the smaller, rural-based National Party. John Howard of the ruling Liberal Party-National Party coalition has been prime minister since 1996. Howard and his Liberal/National coalition again defeated Labour in the parliamentary elections of October 2004 with the help of a strong economy.

In recent years, there has been a dramatic rise in the number of illegal migrants, some claiming to come in small boats from as far as Afghanistan and Pakistan. Australia now has 900 detainees in its immigration camps, including 60 children. Canberra has introduced more stringent measures, for example, placing illegal migrants in detention camps and adopting more rigorous screening to establish asylum claims. This policy has won considerable public support, particularly among legal migrants, who have complained that boat refugees are "queue jumpers." However, human rights advocates at home and overseas have alleged wrongful detention and deportation. In June 2005, the government amended asylum laws to address some of the most controversial aspects of its policies. For example, families with children will be freed from detention while their asylum claims are processed. With regard to legal migrants, the government expanded quotas by 140,000 persons for 2005-2006—the largest increase in 35 years—and even relaxed rules on English proficiency and age to meet the labor demand of a booming economy.

The government's concern about Muslim extremism and its connection to ter-

rorism led to the opening of dialogues with moderate Muslim groups in 2005. In August, moderate Muslim leaders formed the first Muslim political party, the Best Party of Allah, to provide a national voice for Muslim. At the same time, the government said that it would work to keep mosques and Islamic schools from preaching or teaching anti-Australian materials and would monitor organizations for funding terrorists. Meanwhile, many of the approximately 350,000 Muslims residing in Australia are said to feel increasingly alienated.

The government's handling of two political asylum cases involving Chinese nationals caused controversy at home and tensions with China. A former Chinese police officer and a Chinese diplomat with the Chinese consulate general in Sydney sought asylum in February and May, respectively. The former claimed to have information about abuse and torture of dissidents in China; the latter professed knowledge of a large Chinese spy network in Australia. Canberra was slow to respond to their petitions for fear of creating diplomatic tensions with Beijing. Eventually, Canberra granted both individuals protection visas after the opposition criticized the government of mishandling their cases and national security.

Australia continues to be active in promoting peace, restoring rule of law, improving governance, and countering terrorism in the region. Canberra is particularly worried that weakened states in the South Pacific, particularly the "arc of instability" that stretches across Papua New Guinea (PNG), Vanuatu, and Fiji, will be vulnerable to terrorist activity. Australia has sent nearly 4,000 soldiers and monitors to PNG since a ceasefire was reached in Bougainville in 1998. In December 2004, Australia committed \$600 million and troops to help reform the PNG army. Australian troops were deployed to the Solomon Islands in July 2003 to lead a multinational force to restore law and order after years of ethnic warfare. Australia also sent troops, police, and other personnel to the Australia-funded Pacific Transnational Crime Center in Fiji to provide law enforcement and judicial training for Pacific island nations.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Australians can change their government democratically. The head of state is the British monarch, who appoints a governor-general to represent her in Australia. The governor-general is chosen at the recommendation of the prime minister, who is the leader of the majority party or leader of a major coalition. The governor-general has the responsibility of swearing in the prime minister when a new government is formed.

Citizens participate in free and fair multiparty elections to choose representatives to the parliament, and voting is compulsory. There are two houses of parliament, the Senate and House of Representatives. The Senate has 72 seats, in which 12 representatives come from each of the six states and 2 from each of the mainland territories. Half of the state members are elected once every three years by popular vote to six-year terms. All territory members are elected once every three years. The House of Representatives has 150 seats. All members are elected by popular preferential voting to serve up to three years. No state can have fewer than five representatives. The Liberal and Labour parties are the two major parties. Other parties are the National Party, the Green Party, and the Family First Party.

Australia is regarded as one of the least corrupt societies in the world and was ranked 9 out of 159 countries surveyed in the 2005 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution does not provide for freedom of speech and of the press, but citizens and the media freely criticize the government without reprisal. In a rare instance of government intervention, the government announced in March 2003 that it monitored and blocked e-mail messages sent to its troops in Iraq that were "negative, inappropriate, and not supportive" in order to protect the morale of Australian troops involved in the U.S.-led military coalition.

Freedom of religion is respected, as is academic freedom.

Although the rights of assembly and association are not codified in law, the government respects these rights in practice. Workers have the right to organize and bargain collectively. However, critics charge that the Federal Workplace Relations Act of 1996, which abolished closed shops and union demarcations, among other restrictions, makes it more difficult for unions to get into workplaces and organize workers. New labor laws approved on November 30, 2005, abolish centralized wage agreements and make holidays, meal breaks, and work hours negotiable, while companies with fewer than 100 employees are exempted from unfair dismissal laws. While critics maintain that the new laws will cut the negotiation power of trade unions in favor of individual contracts and will make it easier for employers to dismiss workers, the government insists that reforms are necessary to spur job creation and keep Australia economically competitive. To obtain enough parliament support for the bill, the government accepted amendments that fixed the work week at 38 hours, guaranteed four weeks of annual leave for full-time employees, and provided employees protection from dismissal if they refuse to work on public holidays. In mid-November, tens of thousands of people—including teachers, civil servants, firefighters, and religious groups—demonstrated across the country against provisions of the draft laws, staging possibly the largest nationwide public protest ever.

The judiciary is independent, and prison conditions are generally good by international standards. Allegations of abuse by guards at the Port Hedland Detention Center in Western Australia following a riot in November 2003 were investigated by Australia's Commonwealth Ombudsman. In September 2005, the government outlined proposals for tough new antiterrorism laws that include tagging and detaining suspects for 48 hours without charge, "shoot to kill" provisions, making violence against the public and Australian troops overseas criminal offenses, and allowing the limited use of soldiers to meet terrorist threats on domestic soil. Many political leaders and counterterrorism experts voiced concerns about the impact of the new legislation on human rights and civil liberties. Amendments to the most controversial aspects of the laws and inclusion of a 10-year sunset clause helped the government to secure support from enough states and territories to pass the legislation on November 30.

The indigenous Aboriginal people are under-represented at all levels of political leadership and suffer from discrimination. Unemployment among Aborigines is disproportionately high—three times that of the general population—they enjoy inferior access to medical care and education, and their life expectancy is 20 years shorter than that for the non-indigenous population. The imprisonment rate of Aborigines is 15 times higher than that of the general population, and they face routine mistreatment by police and prison officials. In November 2004, the death of an Aboriginal man in police custody sparked rioting on Palm Island situated off the country's northeast coast. Aboriginal groups have called for an official apology for

the "Stolen Generation" of Aboriginal children who were taken from their parents by the government from 1910 until the early 1970s and raised by foster parents and in orphanages. The government has firmly rejected such an apology, arguing that the present generation has no responsibility to apologize for the wrongs of a previous generation.

Although women enjoy equal rights and freedoms, violence against women is a problem, particularly within the Aboriginal population. The only legal grounds for divorce is an irretrievable breakdown of the marriage, which is defined as separation for a period of 12 months with no prospect of reconciliation. Federal laws do not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, although the Commonwealth Marriage Act of 1961 limits marriage contracts to between a man and a woman. However, the federal government grants legal residence to foreign same-sex partners of Australian citizens. Homosexuals can serve in the military and federal workers enjoy limited access to family leave benefits.

Austria

Population: 8,200,000 **Political Rights:** 1

GNI/capita: \$26,810 **Civil Liberties:** 1

Life Expectancy: 79 **Status:** Free

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (73.6 percent), Protestant (4.7 percent), Muslim and other (17 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Austrian 91.1 percent, former Yugoslavs

(4 percent), (includes Croats, Slovenes, Serbs, and Bosniaks),

Turks (1.6 percent), German (0.9 percent), other or unspecified (2.4 percent)

Capital: Vienna



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

The Freedom Party, a far-right party involved as a junior partner in government, split in April 2005, with its best-known figure and most of its leadership joining a new party, now the junior coalition partner. Austria's government continued to promote economic reforms, that aim to encourage jobs and investment but which could weaken the country's finances over the next several years.

Modern Austria emerged at the end of World War I, when the Austro-Hungarian Empire was dismembered. It was voluntarily annexed to Nazi Germany in 1938 and suffered the defeat of Hitler's regime. Postwar Austria, by consent of the World War II Allies, remained neutral between the Cold War blocs. Focusing instead on economic growth, Austria has developed one of the wealthiest economies in Europe.

From 1986 until 2000, the two biggest political parties—the center-left Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPO) and the center-right People's Party of Austria (ÖVP)—governed together in a grand coalition. Members of the two parties shared

in the administration of cabinet ministries, as well as in many other government functions. Labor relations were corporatist, with management and unions both represented not only in individual firms' decision making, but also in national policy making.

The election of October 1999 saw the emergence of the first government since 1970 not to include the SPO. Instead, the OVP formed a coalition with the Freedom Party, a far-right nationalist party with vestigial Nazi sympathies. The Freedom Party had grown steadily in the polls as voters became disaffected with the power sharing of the large big parties and the near impossibility of major political change. The Freedom Party won its biggest ever share of the vote, 27 percent, in the 1999 election and was thus included in a coalition with the OVP's Wolfgang Schuessel as chancellor. The reaction among fellow members of the European Union (EU) to the election results was immediate and dramatic. In 2000, the EU officially suspended ties with Austria. Though this move had little practical effect, technically it meant that the other 14 EU countries had to deal with Austria on a bilateral basis rather than through the EU. Moreover, support in Austria for the Freedom Party jumped, as Austrian voters resented the EU's attempts to interfere with the choice they had expressed at the polls. Later in 2000, the EU reinstated Austria.

One effect of the EU sanctions was that Joerg Haider, the Freedom Party's leader, withdrew from that post and contented himself with the governorship of the state of Carinthia. Haider had been both Freedom's biggest vote-winner and the source of its major controversies. For example, he referred to Nazi death camps as "punishment camps," though he also referred to the Nazi regime as a "cruel and brutal dictatorship." With Haider's official withdrawal, Austrian politics returned to near-normality, and the Freedom Party was forced to moderate its far-right stances as it dealt with the day-to-day reality of governing.

After a Freedom Party leadership struggle, the party withdrew from the coalition in September 2002. The parliamentary elections of November 2002 saw Freedom's vote share fall from 27 percent in 1999 to 10 percent. In subsequent cabinet negotiations, the Freedom Party rejoined the coalition with the OVP, but this time clearly as the junior partner.

The Freedom Party continued to lose support in 2004. Though Haider was re-elected governor of Carinthia in a March 2004 state election, the party fared badly in the European Parliament elections in June. Having captured 23 percent of the vote in those elections in 1999, the Freedom Party received just 6 percent in 2004. The poor performance fueled internal rifts in the party over whether it should remain in government and court unpopularity, or return to its role as an outsider and populist party. Most of the party's leadership and members of parliament, as well as Haider, chose in spring 2005 to leave the party and form the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZO), leaving the Freedom Party as a rump (though it retains many activists). The BZO is now the OVP's junior coalition partner. Opposition parties, including the SPO, have called for new elections, claiming that the new alliance has no democratic mandate. However, Schuessel has resisted this call, hoping his new coalition survives until the end of the parliamentary term in late 2006. In state elections in October 2005, the opposition parties, the SPO and Freedom Party, outperformed the OVP and BZO.

Relations with the EU remained Austria's most important foreign affairs issue

throughout the year. The enlargement of the EU to include former Soviet bloc countries in spring 2004 was also particularly important, as Austria borders four of them (the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Slovenia). However, Austria is skeptical about Turkey's application. The main parties' stances range from skeptically supportive (the OVP) to outright hostile, but the EU began official talks with Turkey on October 3, 2005, with the Austrians eventually accepting an earlier EU diplomatic formulation, that Turkey's accession was a goal but not a guaranteed outcome. Austria will assume the EU's six-month rotating presidency in the first half of 2006.

In his second term, Schuessel has sought to tackle several thorny economic issues, including pushing privatizations, trimming pensions, and generally keeping a tight rein on the budget. Economic growth, which was just 0.7 percent in 2003, improved somewhat in 2004 but began to slip again in 2005. In August, the government signed a "regional employment and growth offensive," which offered new inducements for business investment and worker training. The package aims to increase the long-term growth rate and bring down joblessness, but could be expensive.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Austrians can change their government democratically. The lower house of the federal parliament is the Nationalrat (National Council), with 183 members chosen at simultaneous district, state, and federal elections to ensure both regional representation and broad proportional fairness. Members of the Nationalrat serve a four-year term, and the chancellor, appointed by the president, requires the support of the legislature to govern. The members of the upper house, the Bundesrat (Federal Council), are chosen by state parliaments.

Perhaps ironically, the participation of the Freedom Party in government emphasized Austria's basic democratic rights when other European countries tried in 2000 to induce Austrians to forgo their duly elected choice. Though there are competitive political parties and free and fair elections, the traditional practice of grand coalitions in Austria disillusioned many with the political process. While frustration with the cozy relationship between the OVP and the SPO helped lead to the rise of the Freedom Party as a protest party, Freedom's participation in government brought it closer to the mainstream right.

Austria is less corrupt than during the 1980s, when campaign donation laws were tightened somewhat. Austria was ranked 10 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The media are free, though not highly pluralistic. The end of the monopoly by the state broadcaster ORF has not brought significant competition to the broadcast market, and print media ownership is concentrated in a few hands. Harassment and libel lawsuits by politicians (notably from the Freedom Party) against investigative and critical journalists have hampered reporters' work. There are no restrictions on internet access.

Religious freedom is respected in Austria and enshrined in the constitution. However, there are only 12 officially recognized religions, and these have the ability to draw on state funds for religious education. Joining the group of state-recognized religions requires a period of 10 years of observation. The Jehovah's Witnesses have complained that this practice violates their freedom of religion, although they are recognized as a "confessional community." Academic freedom is generally respected.

The rights to freedom of assembly and association are protected in the constitution. Civic organizations and nongovernmental organizations are able to operate without restrictions. Trade unions have traditionally been powerful. They not only are free to organize and strike, but have been considered an essential partner in national policy making. Strikes held in May 2003 against the government's controversial pension reforms did not stop those reforms from going through.

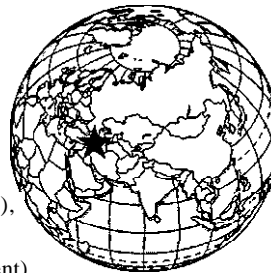
The judiciary is independent, and the Constitutional Court examines the compatibility of legislation with the constitution. Austria is a member of the Council of Europe, and its citizens have recourse to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France. The quality of prisons and police generally meet high European standards, though isolated incidences of police brutality, as well as crowded and sometimes harsh prison conditions, are reported.

Residents generally are afforded equal protection under the law. However, immigration has fueled some resentment towards minorities and foreigners: as of 2002, Austria had one of the highest numbers of asylum seekers per capita in the world. Since a tightening in December 2003, the asylum law is among the strictest in the developed world. Under that law, criticized by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), some asylum seekers could be deported while appeals of their cases are held. New arrivals will be asked for full statements within 72 hours. The UNHCR has also criticized shortages of qualified legal advisers and interpreters for detainees.

A 1979 law guarantees women freedom from discrimination in various areas, especially the workplace. A 1993 law sought to increase women's employment in government agencies where women were under-represented.

Azerbaijan

Population: 8,400,000 **Political Rights:** 6
GNI/capita: \$820 **Civil Liberties:** 5
Life Expectancy: 72 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Muslim (93.4 percent), Russian Orthodox (2.5 percent), Armenian Orthodox (2.3 percent), other (2.3 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Azeri (90.6 percent), Dagestani (2.2 percent), Russian (1.8 percent), Armenian (1.5 percent), other (3.9 percent)
Capital: Baku



Trend Arrow: Azerbaijan received a downward trend arrow due to parliamentary elections that did not meet international standards and to intimidation of independent media.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
6,5NF	6,4PF	6,4PF	6,4PF	6,5PF	6,5PF	6,5PF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview:

Flawed parliamentary elections in November 2005 capped a year of unfulfilled reform ambitions in Azerbaijan. The elections resulted in the opposition's securing only a small

fraction of the 125 seats in the Milli Majlis (National Assembly), with a substantial majority going to the ruling Yeni Azerbaijan Party (YAP) and its allies. The run-up to the election included claims by the regime of an attempted coup, which resulted in the detention and arrest of several former ministers.

After having been controlled by the Ottoman Empire since the seventeenth century, Azerbaijan enjoyed a brief period of independence from 1918 to 1920. It entered the Soviet Union in 1922 as part of the Transcaucasian Soviet Federal Republic, becoming a separate Soviet republic in 1936. Following a referendum in 1991, Azerbaijan declared independence from the disintegrating Soviet Union.

In 1992, Abulfaz Elchibey, leader of the nationalist opposition Azerbaijan Popular Front, was elected president in a generally free and fair vote. A military coup one year later ousted him from power and installed the former first secretary of the Azerbaijan Communist Party, Heydar Aliyev, in his place. In the October 1993 presidential elections, Aliyev was credited with receiving nearly 99 percent of the vote. Azerbaijan's first post-Soviet parliamentary elections, held in November 1995, saw five leading opposition parties and some 600 independent candidates barred from the vote in which Aliyev's Yeni Azerbaijan Party (YAP) won the most seats. In October 1998, Aliyev was chosen president with more than 70 percent of the vote in an election marred by irregularities.

In November 2000, the ruling YAP captured the majority of seats in the parliamentary election. The Azerbaijan Popular Front and the Communist Party came in a distant second and third, respectively. International monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe cited widespread electoral fraud, including the stuffing of ballot boxes and a strong pro-government bias in state-run media. Despite widespread criticism of the elections, the Council of Europe approved Azerbaijan's application for membership just days after the vote, a decision widely criticized by international human rights groups.

An August 2002 national referendum led to the adoption of a series of constitutional amendments, some of which critics charged would further strengthen the ruling party's grip on power. One controversial amendment stipulated that the prime minister become president if the head of state resigns or is incapacitated. Critics charged that the aging and ailing Aliyev would appoint his son, Ilham, prime minister in order to facilitate a transfer of power within the Aliyev family. Opposition groups and the OSCE charged that the referendum was marred by fraud, including ballot-box stuffing, intimidation of election monitors and officials, and inflated voter-turnout figures of nearly 90 percent.

In the months preceding the October 2003 presidential election, the political environment was marked by uncertainty over Heydar Aliyev's declining health and its implications for his reelection bid. Aliyev collapsed during a live television broadcast in April and left Azerbaijan that summer to receive medical treatment abroad. At the same time, government officials continued to deny that his health problems were serious, and he remained the official YAP candidate for the presidential election. In June, Aliyev's son, Ilham, was officially nominated as a presidential candidate, and the elder Aliyev withdrew his candidacy in favor of his son's on October 2, 2003.

In the 2003 presidential ballot, final election results released by the Central Election Commission showed Ilham Aliyev defeating seven challengers with nearly 77

percent of the vote. His closest rival, opposition Musavat Party leader Isa Gambar received only 14 percent of the vote, while six other candidates received less than 4 percent each. According to OSCE observers, the election was marred by widespread fraud. During violent clashes between security forces and demonstrators in Baku in October, in which at least one person was reportedly killed and several hundred were injured, the authorities unleashed a crackdown against the opposition in which more than 600 people were detained. Among those arrested were opposition party leaders and supporters who had not been directly involved in the preceding days' violence, along with many election officials who refused to certify fraudulent election results. Heydar Aliyev, who had long dominated the country's political life, died in December 2003.

Over the course of 2004 and 2005, Ilham Aliyev sought to consolidate his position among the country's ruling elite. In the immediate run-up to the November 2005 parliamentary election, a number of former and current senior officials were detained in response to what the regime claimed was a coup attempt. However, observers maintained that the detentions were a move on the president's part to further consolidate control over the country's political elites.

Less than half of all registered voters cast ballots in the legislative poll, the lowest voter turnout in a decade. More than 2,000 candidates registered for the 125 constituencies. However, about a fourth of these candidates ultimately withdrew, in some cases because of intimidation, leaving 1,550 to take part on election day. The elections resulted in the opposition's capturing 10 of 125 seats in the Milli Majlis (National Assembly), with a substantial majority going to the ruling YAP and its allies. Seats in four districts were invalidated by the authorities and were scheduled to be rerun after the end date of the coverage period of this report. The results of the elections were contested by the opposition, which organized a number of rallies in the country's capital.

A settlement for the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, over which Armenia and Azerbaijan fought in the early 1990s, was not achieved, although high-level talks provided a glimmer of hope that a process could be in the works to ameliorate the tense state of affairs. The region, which is formally part of Azerbaijan, is now predominantly ethnically Armenian and effectively under Armenian control.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Azerbaijan cannot change their government democratically. The country's constitution provides for a strong presidency and the country's parliament, the 125-member Milli Majlis, exercises little independence from the executive branch. Presidential and parliamentary terms are five years.

The 1993, 1998, and 2003 presidential and 1995 and 2000 parliamentary elections were considered neither free nor fair by international observers. The 2005 parliamentary elections were likewise afflicted by extensive irregularities. The OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights cited among the elections' shortcomings "interference of local authorities, disproportionate use of force to thwart rallies, arbitrary detentions, restrictive interpretations of campaign provisions and an unbalanced composition of election commissions." President Ilham Aliev issued two decrees, in May and October 2005, directing the administration of free and fair elections; these decrees effectively went unheeded.

Corruption is deeply entrenched throughout society, with government officials rarely held accountable for engaging in corrupt practices. The lack of judicial and parliamentary independence from the executive, among other institutional obstacles, creates an environment that enables corruption. Azerbaijan was ranked 137 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

While Azerbaijan's constitution guarantees freedom of speech and the press, the authorities use a variety of tools to intimidate the press. Journalists are subject to physical harassment and even risk death. In March 2005, Elmar Huseinov, editor of the opposition magazine *Monitor*, was shot to death in the lobby of his apartment building in Baku. The broadcast media are the main source of information in the country. Of the 16 television stations, 4 broadcast to a national audience; all 4 of these have clear or likely links to the regime. Independent and opposition papers struggle financially in the face of low circulation, limited advertising revenues, and heavy fines or imprisonment of their staff. State businesses rarely if ever advertise in opposition newspapers. While there is some pluralism in the print media, it is irrelevant to the extent that newspapers have relatively low print runs, are not distributed regularly in rural areas, and are frequently too expensive for many people to purchase on a regular basis.

A noteworthy development in 2005 was the unveiling of Azerbaijan's first public service broadcasting channel, which began operations in August. Following the flawed presidential election in 2003, the Council of Europe, of which Azerbaijan is a member, adopted a resolution demanding that the government of Azerbaijan immediately implement a series of measures that included the creation of public service television to allow political parties to better communicate with the country's citizens. The Council of Europe for months exhorted the authorities in Baku to establish a genuinely independent public broadcasting channel, but the regime was slow in implementing the directive. The channel's creation just weeks in advance of the November 2005 election minimized its impact on the election process. The opposition was afforded some television airtime during the election campaign, but overall news coverage was slanted toward the ruling YAP and its candidates.

The government restricts some religious activities of members of "nontraditional" minority religious groups through burdensome registration requirements and interference in the importation and distribution of printed religious materials. Islam, Russian Orthodoxy, and Judaism are considered traditional religions, and their members can generally worship freely.

The government generally does not restrict academic freedom. However, some faculty and students have experienced political pressure. After the October 2003 election and in advance of the 2005 parliamentary poll, some professors and teachers said they were dismissed because of their membership in opposition parties.

The government often restricts freedom of assembly, especially for political parties critical of the government. Registration with the Ministry of Justice is required for a nongovernmental organization (NGO) to function as a legal entity, and the registration process has been described as cumbersome and nontransparent. A week before the 2005 parliamentary elections, Azerbaijan lifted a ban on NGOs receiving more than 30 percent of their funding from foreign sources to serve as election monitors. Although the law permits the formation of trade unions and the right

to strike, the majority of trade unions remain closely affiliated with the government and most major industries are state owned.

The judiciary is corrupt, inefficient, and subservient to the executive branch. Arbitrary arrest and detention are common, particularly for members of the political opposition. Detainees are often held for long periods before trial, and their access to lawyers is restricted. Police abuse of suspects during arrest and interrogation reportedly remains commonplace, with torture sometimes used to extract confessions. Prison conditions are reportedly severe, with many inmates suffering from overcrowding and inadequate medical care.

Some members of ethnic minority groups, including the small Armenian population, have complained of discrimination in areas including education, employment, and housing. Hundreds of thousands of ethnic Azeris who fled the war in Nagorno-Karabakh have been prevented by the Armenian government from returning to their homes and remain in Azerbaijan, often living in dreadful conditions.

Significant parts of the economy are in the hands of a corrupt elite, which severely limits equality of opportunity. Supporters of the political opposition face job discrimination, demotion, or dismissal.

Traditional societal norms and poor economic conditions restrict women's professional roles. Domestic violence is a problem, and there are no laws regarding spousal abuse. In 2004, Azerbaijan adopted a new national program to combat human trafficking. According to the U.S. State Department's annual 2005 report on human trafficking, Azerbaijan is both a country of origin and a transit point for the trafficking of women for prostitution.

Bahamas

Population: 300,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$14,920 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 70 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Baptist (35.4 percent), Anglican (15.1 percent), Roman Catholic (13.5 percent), other (36 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Black (85 percent), white (12 percent), Asian and Hispanic (3 percent)



Capital: Nassau

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In 2005, the Bahamas maintained its relatively clean record of stable democratic governance. Nevertheless, the country continued to grapple with problems associated with narcotics trafficking and the illicit use of the country's offshore financial system. Meanwhile, the government worked to balance its relations with the United States and Cuba.

The Bahamas, a 700-island archipelago in the Caribbean, gained independence in 1973 and is part of the Commonwealth. Lynden Pindling served as the country's first prime minister and head of the Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) for 25 years. After years of allegations of corruption and involvement by high officials in narcotics trafficking, Pindling was defeated by the Free National Movement (FNM) in 1992. His successor, Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham, promised honesty, efficiency, and accountability in government. The FNM captured 32 seats in the House of Assembly, while the PLP took 17 seats. The number of Assembly seats was reduced to 40 in the next election.

In the 1997 legislative elections, Ingraham took credit for revitalizing the economy by attracting foreign investment, and his FNM won 34 seats to the PLP's 6. In April 1997, Pindling resigned as opposition leader and was replaced by Perry Christie. In the May 2002 parliamentary poll, the PLP won 29 seats, while the FNM received only 7, with independents claiming 4. Ingraham retired from politics, fulfilling a promise he had made prior to the elections. He was replaced as prime minister by Christie who, while not as popular as Ingraham, was able to capitalize on the large majority of the PLP. Christie and Ingraham are close personal friends and business partners, and the economic and political policies of the Bahamas remained remarkably consistent under both prime ministers.

Rising crime rates in the late 1990s, which undermined the early accomplishments of the Ingraham government, were linked to illegal trafficking in narcotics and gunrunning. Ingraham is credited with having subsequently improved the country's international reputation with policies that reduced money laundering and improved counternarcotics cooperation with the United States. His administration established a new antidrug intelligence unit and announced plans to bring the financial sector into full compliance with international standards and practices by strengthening requirements to report suspicious and unusual transactions. The Bahamas has promoted tourism and allowed the banking industry to grow. As the Caribbean's only upper income country, the Bahamas has established a model service economy, based on an impressive tourism sector—which accounts for 30 percent of national income—and offshore financial services.

However, the Christie administration has not been able to effectively curb narcotics trafficking, and the incidence of violent crime associated with drug-gang activity has proved difficult to contain. In addition, the offshore financial system, despite having undergone reforms, continues to be used for illicit purposes. Several banks have been named in U.S. fraud cases, while at least two individuals have been convicted domestically on fraud and forgery charges.

In August 2004, Christie was urged to disclose his knowledge of illegal contributions to the PLP coffers in the 2002 race. The Coalition for Democratic Reform (CDR) and the FNM—the main opposition parties—have joined in this call. The PLP denied that the political donations were illegal or improper, and the issue no longer poses a serious threat to the government.

The Bahamas has prioritized the effort to build closer ties with the United States. The government has allowed the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to place armed sky marshals on selected flights between the two countries. At the same time, the nation was under pressure from the U.S. government to reduce existing ties with Cuba. However, Bahamians are sensitive to the perception that their international

policy is determined by Washington and have continued to maintain independent foreign relations, including upgrading relations with Cuba, although the Bahamas still has not established a full embassy in Havana. Nevertheless, migration to the Bahamas from Cuba and Haiti remains a political flashpoint. In December 2004, a riot occurred at the Carmichael Detention Center, which houses Cubans and Haitians awaiting deportation. Detainees later complained to Amnesty International that they are sometimes beaten and denied sanitation and medical care.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of the Bahamas can change their government democratically. A 49-member House of Assembly, directly elected for five years, was subsequently reduced to 40 members, in keeping with a campaign promise by the FNM. The 16 members of the Senate are appointed—9 by the prime minister, 4 by the leader of the parliamentary opposition, and 3 by the governor-general. The head of the majority party in parliament typically serves as prime minister.

Political parties can organize freely. The two leading parties are Free National Movement (FNM), headed by Tommy Turnquest, and the ruling Progressive Liberal Party (PLP), led by Perry Christie; Christie was hospitalized following a stroke in May 2005. The Bahamas recognizes the British monarch as its formal head of state, with an appointed governor general serving as the Queen's representative.

The U.S. views the Bahamas as a key partner in combating drug trafficking, and in November 2005, the two countries renewed a bilateral agreement to continue U.S. funding for narcotics control and law enforcement. The Bahamas was not ranked by Transparency International in its 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Daily and weekly newspapers, all privately owned, express a variety of views on public issues, as do the government-run radio station and four privately owned radio broadcasters. Opposition politicians claim that the state-run television system, the Broadcasting Corporation of the Bahamas, gives preferential coverage to the ruling party. Full freedom of expression is constrained by strict libel laws. There is free access to the internet.

Rights to religious and academic freedom are respected.

Constitutional guarantees of the right to organize civic organizations are generally respected, and human rights organizations have broad access to institutions and individuals. Labor, business, and professional organizations are generally free from governmental interference. Unions have the right to strike, and collective bargaining is prevalent.

The judicial system is headed by the Supreme Court and a court of appeals, with the right of appeal under certain circumstances to the Privy Council in London. Some progress has been reported in reducing both the length of court cases and the backlog of criminal appeals. Nevertheless, some murder suspects have been held for up to four years before being brought to trial.

Violent crime is a continuing problem. Nongovernmental organizations have documented the occasional abuse of prisoners, arbitrary arrest, and lengthy pretrial detention. The Royal Bahamas Police Force has made progress in reducing corruption in the force, including introducing new procedures to limit unethical or illegal conduct. While the police have been recognized for their key role in regional efforts to stem the drug trade, coordination with the Royal Bahamas Defence

Force (RBDF) has been hampered by concerns about establishing the RBDF's role in law enforcement.

Although prior governments made important efforts to relieve prison overcrowding, there are persistent reports that this continues to pose a problem for the Christie administration, and poor medical facilities are still the norm. Children continue to be housed with adults, a situation that creates a permissive environment for sexual abuse. May 2005 marked the completed construction of a new "correctional training institute" that will provide job training to inmates and help to separate convict populations sentenced for different crimes.

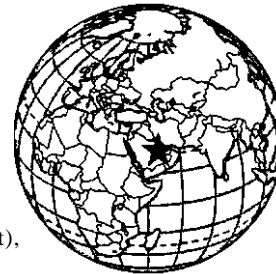
The Bahamas is an accessible transit area for illegal aliens seeking entrance to the United States. No laws specifically address trafficking in persons, but there are also no reports of such activity. The Bahamian government forcibly repatriates most asylum seekers, including Haitians and Cubans.

Discrimination against persons of Haitian descent persists, and between 30,000 and 40,000 Haitians reside illegally in the Bahamas. Strict citizenship requirements and a stringent work-permit system leave Haitians with few rights. No legislation regulates the processing of asylum seekers, whose influx has created social tension because of the strain on government services.

Violence against women is a widespread problem, and child abuse and neglect remain serious issues of concern. In the first eight months of 2005, the Ministry of Social Services reported 387 cases of child abuse, including 31 reports of incest, 120 reports of physical abuse, 47 reports of sexual abuse, 177 reports of neglect, 6 reports of verbal abuse, and 6 reports of abandonment. The ministry estimated that only one-third of cases were reported. A high incidence of child labor also continues to be a concern, and children who work face a high risk of sexual exploitation.

Bahrain

Population: 700,000 **Political Rights:** 5
GNI/capita: \$12,410 **Civil Liberties:** 5
Life Expectancy: 74 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Shia and Sunni Muslim (81.2 percent)
 Christian (9 percent), other (9.8 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Bahraini (63 percent), Asian (19 percent),
 other Arab (10 percent), Iranian (8 percent)
Capital: Manama



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	6,5NF	5,5NF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF

Overview:

Although power remains firmly in the hands of the ruling A1 Khalifa family in Bahrain, the country experienced several important incidents related to the struggle for greater freedom in 2005. Civil society groups demonstrated for constitutional reform in the spring, and women's advocates worked for legal reforms to enhance women's

rights. In November, Bahrain hosted the Forum of the Future, which brought together Middle East leaders with leaders from the industrialized countries of the Group of 8 (G-8) to discuss political, economic, and social reform in the Middle East

The Al Khalifa family, which has ruled Bahrain for more than two centuries, comes from Bahrain's minority Sunni Muslim population in this mostly Shiite Muslim country. Bahrain gained independence in 1971 after more than a hundred years as a British protectorate. The country's first constitution provided for a national assembly with both elected and appointed members, but the king dissolved the assembly in 1975 because it attempted to end Al Khalifa rule; the Al Khalifa family ruled without the National Assembly until 2002.

In 1993, the king established a consultative council of appointed notables, although this advisory body had no legislative power and did not lead to any major policy shifts. In 1994, Bahrain experienced protests sparked by arrests of prominent individuals who had petitioned for the reestablishment of democratic institutions such as the national assembly. The disturbances left more than 40 people dead, thousands arrested, and hundreds either imprisoned or exiled.

Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa's March 1999 accession to the throne following his father's death marked a turning point in Bahrain. Hamad released political prisoners, permitted the return of exiles, and eliminated emergency laws and courts. He also introduced the National Charter, which set a goal of creating a constitutional monarchy with an elected parliament, separation of powers with an independent judicial branch, and rights guaranteeing women's political participation.

In February 2001, voters overwhelmingly approved the National Charter. However, the process of political reform ultimately disappointed many Bahrainis by the time local elections and parliamentary elections were held, in May 2002 and October 2002, respectively. Leading Shiite groups and leftists boycotted these elections, protesting political campaigning restrictions and electoral gerrymandering aimed at diminishing the power of the Shiite majority. Sunni Muslim groups ended up winning most of the seats in the new National Assembly. Despite the boycott, opposition groups fared well at the polls, and the new cabinet included opposition figures.

In November 2005, Bahrain hosted the second meeting of the Forum for the Future, part of the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative inaugurated at the 2004 G-8 summit. Though the forum was aimed at advancing political rights and civil liberties, Bahraini authorities announced that public demonstrations would not be allowed during the conference. The Forum for the Future ended without agreement on a final declaration supporting democracy, with Egypt blocking a joint declaration over objections that the declaration did not give Arab governments a say over which nongovernmental groups (NGOs) would receive outside donor assistance.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Bahrain cannot change their government democratically. Bahrain's 2002 constitution gives the king power over the executive, legislative, and judicial authorities. He appoints cabinet ministers and members of the Consultative Council. The bicameral National Assembly consists of 40 popularly elected members of the Council of Deputies and 40 members of the Shura Council appointed by the king. The National As-

sembly may propose legislation, but the cabinet must draft the laws. A July 2002 royal decree forbids the National Assembly from deliberating on any action taken by the executive branch before December 2002—the date the new National Assembly was inaugurated.

Formal political parties are illegal in Bahrain, but the government allows political societies or groupings to operate and organize activities in the country. In August 2005, the king, Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, ratified a new political associations law making it illegal to form political associations based on class, profession, or religion and requiring all political associations to register with the Ministry of Justice. After months of protesting the new law, Bahrain's main political associations decided to register in the fall.

Although Bahrain has some anticorruption laws, enforcement is weak, and high-ranking officials suspected of corruption are rarely punished. Bahrain was ranked 36 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is limited in Bahrain. The government owns all broadcast media outlets, although the country's three main newspapers are privately owned. Though internet and e-mail access have generally been unrestricted, there are reports of government monitoring of e-mail communications. In March, Bahraini security forces detained Ali Abdul al-Imam, who runs an internet site criticizing the government and the ruling family, on charges of spreading hatred against the government and false news; Al-Imam was released after a few weeks. In April, Bahrain announced that it would require all websites to register with the Ministry of Information, raising alarm among press freedom advocates.

Islam is the state religion. However, non-Muslim minorities are generally free to practice their religion. According to the law, all religious groups must obtain a permit from the Ministry of Justice and Islamic affairs to operate, although the government has not punished groups that have operated without this permit.

Bahrain has no formal laws or regulations that limit academic freedom, but teachers and professors tend to avoid politically sensitive topics and issues in the classroom and in their research. In March, the government approved a measure to introduce democracy and human rights as required subjects in the curriculum of state-run preparatory and secondary schools.

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly, and the government generally allows demonstrations. In February, women activists demonstrated to demand the resignation of Attorney General Sheikh Abdul Rahman bin Jaber Al Khalifa and several judges for blocking legal complaints by women and to ask for a new civil status law. In March, civil society groups rallied for constitutional reform, including abolishing amendments that give the appointed upper house of parliament as much power as the elected house. In June, hundreds of human rights activists demonstrated against Royal Decree 52, which grants immunity to security officials who allegedly tortured detainees during civil unrest in the 1990s.

Bahrain has seen strong growth in the number of NGOs working in charitable activities, human rights, and women's rights, but restrictions remain on these groups. The Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) resumed activities in January. It had been closed and dissolved by the government in September 2004, and its executive director, 'Abd al-Hadi al-Khawaja, was arrested after he criticized the prime minister

and the government for its performance on poverty and economic rights. In late November 2004, Sheikh Hamad suspended Al-Khawaja's sentence.

Bahrainis have the right to establish independent labor unions without government permission. A royal decree giving workers the right to form labor unions also imposes limits, including a two-week notice to the company before a strike and a prohibition on strikes in vital sectors such as security, civil defense, transportation, hospitals, communications, and basic infrastructure. The law gives workers the right to strike after a strike action is approved by three-quarters of union members in a secret ballot.

The judiciary is not independent of the executive branch of government. The king appoints all judges, and courts have been subject to government pressure. In the spring of 2005, Bahrain announced a plan to reform its judicial system, with measures to improve court efficiency to make trials quicker. The Ministry of the Interior is responsible for public security within the country and oversees the police and internal security services, and members of the royal family hold all security-related offices. The constitution provides rule-of-law protections, and government authorities generally respect these protections. In the spring, the government proposed new antiterrorism legislation that provided the death penalty for terrorist groups and jail terms for those who use religion to spread extremism. The proposed legislation was criticized by several civil society groups for abridging freedoms and placing too much unchecked power in the hands of security services.

Although Shias constitute a majority of the citizenry, they are underrepresented in government and face discrimination in the workplace. Over the past five years, Bahrain has taken steps to integrate stateless persons, known as *bidoon* and consisting mostly of Shias of Persian origin, into the country, offering citizenship to several thousand. Nevertheless, *bidoon* and citizens who speak Farsi as their first language continue to face some social discrimination and special challenges finding employment.

Although women have the right to vote and participate in local and national elections, they are underrepresented politically. No woman has been elected to office in municipal or legislative elections. In November 2001, Lulwa al-Awadi became the first woman to receive a position of ministerial rank as general secretary for the Supreme Council for Women. The king appointed six women to the Consultative Council in November 2002. In January 2005, the king swore in a new cabinet, including Fatima al-Balushi as minister of social affairs, who became the second female minister in Bahrain's history. Women are generally not afforded equal protections under the law.

In June, the government charged a prominent women's rights advocate, Ghada Jamsheer, with publicly criticizing family court judges. Jamsheer, who heads the Women's Petition Committee, has led a campaign demanding reform of Bahrain's family courts and codification of the kingdom's family laws. As of the end of November, Jamsheer's case was still pending.

Bangladesh

Population: 144,200,000 **Political Rights:** 4
GNI/capita: \$400 **Civil Liberties:** 4
Life Expectancy: 61 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Muslim (83 percent), Hindu (16 percent), other (1 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Bengali (98 percent), other including non-Bengali Muslims (2 percent)
Capital: Dhaka



Trend Arrow: Bangladesh received a downward trend arrow due to increased political violence and the unwillingness of the authorities to investigate it thoroughly.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
2,4PF	2,4PF	2,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF

Overview:

Bangladesh continued in 2005 to be plagued by lawlessness, rampant institutionalized corruption, and violent political polarization, all of which impeded the efficacy of its democratic institutions. Although the opposition Awami League (AL) ended its parliamentary boycott in 2004, it remained reliant on national strikes and other forms of protest action to impede the effective functioning of the coalition government led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). For its part, the BNP continued to deploy army personnel to maintain law and order as part of an anticrime drive in which a number of human rights violations have taken place. Official harassment of journalists, human rights advocates, and leaders and supporters of the AL persisted throughout the year. In addition, the increased strength and influence of Islamist groups, as demonstrated by the coordinated detonation of nearly 500 bombs on August 17 as well as by other attacks, poses a long-term threat to Bangladesh's traditionally moderate interpretation of Islam.

With the partition of British India in 1947, what is now Bangladesh became the eastern part of the newly formed state of Pakistan. Bangladesh won independence from Pakistan in December 1971 after a nine-month war during which Indian troops helped defeat West Pakistani forces stationed in Bangladesh. The 1975 assassination of Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by soldiers precipitated 15 years of military rule and continues to polarize Bangladeshi politics. The country's democratic transition began with the resignation in 1990 of the last military ruler, General H. M. Ershad, after weeks of prodemocracy demonstrations. Elections in 1991 brought the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) to power under Khaleda Zia.

The political deadlock began in 1994, when Sheikh Hasina Wajed's center-left Awami League (AL) began boycotting parliament to protest alleged corruption in Zia's BNP government. The AL and the BNP differ relatively little on domestic policy. Many disputes reflect the personal animosity between Hasina, the daughter of independence leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and Zia, the widow of a former military ruler allegedly complicit in Mujibur's assassination. The AL boycotted the Febru-

ary 1996 elections, which the BNP won, but then forced Zia's resignation in March and triumphed in elections held in June. The BNP also marked its time in opposition by boycotting parliament and organizing periodic nationwide strikes.

In October 2001, the AL was voted out of office in elections marred by political violence and intimidation. A new four-party coalition, dominated by the BNP and including two hard-line Muslim parties—the Jamaat-e-Islami and the Islami Oikyo Jote—was sworn into power with a convincing majority of 214 of the 300 seats in parliament. The AL initially refused to accept the election results and since then has intermittently boycotted parliament as well as organizing countrywide *hartals* (general strikes) and other forms of protest action to pressure the government to step down.

Faced with a continuing deterioration in law and order, in October 2002, the government deployed nearly 40,000 army personnel in an anticrime drive that continued in 2005. Although the policy was initially popular among Bangladeshis weary of rising crime rates and a general climate of impunity for criminals, both domestic and international groups have criticized the police and army for excesses committed during their operations.

Despite these measures, lawlessness coupled with the growing threat of Islamist extremism continued to plague most of the country. On August 17, 2005, nearly 500 small bombs were detonated in 63 out of 64 districts, targeting primarily government buildings, courts, and press clubs. Suspects arrested after the attacks reportedly confirmed that the coordinated attacks were the work of a banned Islamist group, the Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), which had left leaflets at the scenes of some blasts calling for the imposition of Islamic law. The JMB and another group, the Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), were banned in February, and although hundreds of activists were arrested, the groups' leaders, including the notorious Bangla Bhai, remain at large. Further bomb attacks on judges and courthouses took place in November. Analysts have voiced concern that the reluctance of the government to crack down on radical Islamist groups as well as the presence of Islamist parties within the ruling coalition government pose a long-term threat to Bangladesh's stability as well as its tradition of tolerance.

After a series of crippling AL-sponsored demonstrations and hartals held in early 2004 failed to dislodge the government from power, the party returned to parliament in June, ending a 20-month periodic boycott. However, in December 2004, the AL organized two nationwide human chains as a form of extra-parliamentary no-confidence motion, and other forms of antigovernment street protest occurred with increasing regularity in 2005. One of the main demands of the AL is that the "caretaker government" (CG) system, by which a neutral, nonparty, temporary government organizes each parliamentary election, be reformed; the AL has alleged that the BNP is actively trying to subvert the neutrality of the CG scheduled to be formed in 2006.

Political violence has also increased since August 2004, when a series of grenades exploded at an AL rally in Dhaka, leaving 22 people dead and hundreds injured, including several top party leaders. Although the government announced that an independent commission would investigate the attacks, the commission's impartiality was soon called into question, and the perpetrators of the bombings have not been brought to justice. In January 2005, another grenade attack at an AL

rally left five people dead, including senior party leader Shah A. M. S. Kibria. A number of AL political gatherings held in August were raided by BNP party members, who attacked the participants and ransacked the premises. Political tension, as well as the inability of the two major parties to reach consensus on policy issues, is expected to remain high in the run-up to the forthcoming elections.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Bangladeshis can change their government democratically. A referendum held in 1991 transformed the powerful presidency into a largely ceremonial head-of-state position in a parliamentary system. Elections are held at least every five years to elect the prime minister and members of the unicameral parliament, composed since 2004 of 345 members, of which 300 members are directly elected and 45 are female candidates who are nominated by political parties and indirectly elected by other members of parliament. The 1996 vote was the first under a constitutional amendment requiring a caretaker government to conduct elections. The most recent national elections, held in October 2001, were described as generally free and fair despite concerns over polling irregularities, intimidation, and violence. More than 140 people were killed throughout the campaign period in what was Bangladesh's most violent election to date.

Both major parties—the BNP and the AL—have undermined the legislative process through lengthy parliamentary boycotts while in opposition. In recent years, political violence during demonstrations and general strikes has killed hundreds of people in major cities and injured thousands, and police often use excessive force against opposition protesters. Party leaders are also targeted, and several died during the year after being attacked. Odhikar, a local nongovernmental organization (NGO), reported that there were 526 people killed in political violence throughout 2004. Student wings of political parties continue to be embroiled in violent campus conflicts. Minority groups are underrepresented in parliament.

Endemic corruption, a weak rule of law, limited bureaucratic transparency, and political polarization have combined to undermine government accountability. The effectiveness of parliament is severely hampered by the fact that whichever party is in opposition routinely boycotts parliamentary proceedings. An Anti-Corruption Commission, which is authorized to conduct investigations and try corruption cases in special courts, was launched in November 2004. However, critics remain concerned that the new body is not truly independent, either politically or financially. The *Financial Express* noted in August 2005 that election financing was a major source of political corruption. Bangladesh ranked at the bottom of the 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Despite legal provisions for freedom of speech, media continue to face a number of pressures, the most striking of which is the high level of violence directed against members of the press and the impunity enjoyed by those who attack them. Journalists are regularly harassed and violently attacked by organized-crime groups, political parties and their supporters, government authorities, the police, and Islamist groups. Two journalists were killed during the year, and numerous others received death threats or were physically assaulted.

Many journalists practice self-censorship when reporting on topics such as corruption, criminal activity, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, or human rights abuses. Nevertheless, several were charged with sedition or contempt of court as a result of

their writings in 2005. Although the print media are diverse, the state owns most broadcast media, whose coverage favors the ruling party. Political considerations influence the distribution of government advertising revenue and subsidized newsprint on which most publications depend. Access to the internet is generally unrestricted.

Islam is the official religion. Religious minorities have the right to worship freely but face societal discrimination and remain underrepresented in government employment. Violence against the Hindu minority flared after the 2001 elections, when BNP supporters attacked Hindus because of their perceived support for the rival AL party. Atrocities, including murder, rape, destruction of property, and kidnapping, forced hundreds of Hindus from their homes, some across the border into India. Hindus and other religious minorities, such as Buddhists and Christians, continue to face occasional harassment and violence at the hands of orthodox Islamist political parties and their supporters.

In the last several years, according to a June 2005 report published by Human Rights Watch, the 100,000-strong Ahmadiya Muslim sect, which is considered heretical by some mainstream Muslims, also faced increased attacks from Islamist groups, including attacks on Ahmadiya mosques and homes, as well as killings, beatings, and economic and educational boycotts of Ahmadiyas. Bowing to pressure from such groups, in January 2004, the government announced a ban on the publication and distribution of the sect's publications, although this was temporarily suspended by the Supreme Court in December 2004.

While authorities largely respect academic freedom, research on sensitive political and religious topics is discouraged, according to the U.S. State Department's 2005 human rights report. Political polarization at many public universities, which occasionally erupts into protests and clashes between students and security forces, inhibits the ability of some students to receive an education. In March 2004, leading author and professor Humayun Azad was stabbed by suspected Islamist extremists on the Dhaka University campus.

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly, but the government frequently limits this right in practice. Demonstrators are occasionally killed or injured during clashes with police. Numerous world-class NGOs operate in Bangladesh and fulfill a wide variety of basic needs in fields such as education, health care, and microcredit programs. However, those that are perceived to have links to the opposition or that criticize the government, particularly on human rights issues, such as Proshika and the PRIP Trust, have been subject to intense official scrutiny and harassment since the 2001 elections.

A report published in August 2005 by Amnesty International noted that at least eight human rights defenders had been assassinated since 2000, and that numerous others have been injured or subject to other threats from attackers linked to criminal gangs or the armed factions of political parties. Others have been subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention at the hands of authorities in retaliation for expressing their views, and some have been tortured or otherwise mistreated while in custody. In February, two social development NGOs were firebombed by suspected Islamist groups, with at least eight workers injured, according to a BBC report.

Union formation is hampered by a 30 percent employee approval requirement and restrictions on organizing by unregistered unions. Employers can legally fire or

transfer workers suspected of union activities. The law prohibits many civil servants from joining unions; these workers can form associations but are prohibited from bargaining collectively. Child labor is widespread.

The Supreme Court displays "some degree of independence" and often rules against the executive, according to the U.S. State Department. However, lower-level courts remain subject to executive influence and are rife with corruption. The government continues to delay implementing the separation of the judiciary from the executive as ordered by a 1999 Supreme Court directive. In 2005, judges faced increased threats and attacks from Islamist groups, which culminated in the killing of two judges in Jhalakathi by the JMB on November 14.

The judicial system is severely backlogged, and pretrial detention is lengthy. Many defendants lack counsel, and poor people have limited recourse through the courts. Prison conditions are extremely poor, and severe overcrowding is common. According to the New Delhi-based Asian Centre for Human Rights, hundreds of juveniles are illegally detained in prisons in contravention of the 1974 Children's Act. Prisoners are routinely subjected to physical abuse and demands for bribes from corrupt law enforcement officials. Police frequently detain people without an arrest warrant, and detainees are routinely subjected to torture and other forms of abuse. The majority of police abuses go unpunished, which contributes to a climate of impunity.

As part of Operation Clean Heart, a government-initiated anticrime drive that began in October 2002, the army detained nearly 11,000 people, over 40 of whom died while in police custody. Legislation passed in February 2003 granted members of the security forces immunity from prosecution in civilian courts for the abuses committed during the operation. Further efforts were made to tackle criminal activity with the deployment of a new Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), composed of approximately 4,500 members of the armed forces and police, in March 2004. However, while some have praised the RAB's tough stance on suppressing crime, concern has been expressed by the European Union and others over the RAB's record on extrajudicial executions, either in custody or in shootout battles. According to local watchdog Odhikar, 168 alleged criminals were killed by security forces in the first five months of 2005.

Many of these forms of abuse are facilitated by the existence of legislation such as the 1974 Special Powers Act, which permits arbitrary detention without charge, and Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code, which allows individuals to be detained without a warrant. Authorities regularly detain thousands of political opponents and ordinary citizens (particularly prior to planned political agitation) and use serial detentions to prevent the release of political activists.

Amnesty International has highlighted a continuing pattern of politically motivated detentions, noting that senior opposition politicians and academics, journalists, and human rights activists critical of government policies are particularly at risk of prolonged detention and ill-treatment in custody. According to a 2002 UN Development Program report, almost 90 percent of "preventative detention" cases that reach the courts are judged to be unlawful. In April 2004, the high court directed the government to amend certain sections of the code within six months, but this directive has not yet been acted upon.

Tribal minorities have little control over land issues affecting them, and Bengali-

language settlers continue to illegally encroach upon tribal lands in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) with the reported connivance of government officials and the army. A 1997 accord ended a 24-year insurgency in the CHT that had sought autonomy for indigenous tribes and had resulted in the deaths of 8,500 soldiers, rebels, and civilians. However, as documented by the Asian Centre for Human Rights, the terms of the accord have not been fully implemented, tribal inhabitants continue to be forced off their land to make way for the construction of army camps, and refugees have been unable to reclaim possession of their lands on return to the CHT. The security forces have also been implicated in a range of additional human rights violations, including the suppression of protests and the arrest and detention of political activists on spurious charges. Indigenous peoples also remain subject to attacks from Bengali settlers, including murders, rapes, and the destruction of houses and other property, according to a 2004 Amnesty International report.

Roughly 260,000 Rohingyas fleeing forced labor, discrimination, and other abuses in Burma entered Bangladesh in the early 1990s; some 22,000 Rohingya refugees and 100,000 other Rohingyas not formally documented as refugees remain in the country. Bangladesh also hosts some 300,000 Urdu-speaking Biharis who were rendered stateless at independence in 1971, many of whom seek repatriation to Pakistan. In May 2003, a landmark high court ruling gave citizenship and voting rights to 10 Bihari refugees.

Rape, dowry-related assaults, acid throwing, and other violence against women occur regularly. A law requiring rape victims to file police reports and obtain medical certificates within 24 hours of the crime in order to press charges prevents most rape cases from reaching the courts. Police also accept bribes not to register rape cases and rarely enforce existing laws protecting women. The Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF), a local NGO, recorded 322 acid attacks in 2004 and 210 in the first nine months of 2005, with the majority being carried out against women. While prosecution for acid-related crimes remains inadequate, under the stringent Acid Crime Prevention Act of 2002, 36 people were convicted for acid attacks in 2004, according to ASF.

In rural areas religious leaders occasionally issue *fatwas* (religious edicts) that impose floggings and other punishments on women accused of violating strict moral codes. Women also face some discrimination in health care, education, and employment, and are underrepresented in politics and government. However, in May 2004, parliament amended the constitution to provide for 45 reserved seats in parliament for women. Trafficking in both women and children remains extensive, though the government has taken steps to raise awareness and to prosecute traffickers somewhat more vigorously.

Barbados

Population: 300,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$9,270 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 72 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Protestant (67 percent), Roman Catholic (4 percent), other (29 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Black (90 percent), white (4 percent), other (6 percent)
Capital: Bridgetown



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In 2005, the small island country of Barbados struggled to contain drug-related crime and sought to reinvigorate the use of the death penalty, which is legal, although an execution has not been administered since 1984. Despite these difficulties, a UN Development Program study ranked Barbados the top country in Latin America and the Caribbean in terms of human development. A March riot in the country's largest prison highlighted growing security problems in this otherwise well-governed country.

Barbados gained its independence from the United Kingdom in 1966 and is a member of the Commonwealth. In the 1994 legislative elections, the governing Barbados Labor Party (BLP) won 19 seats; the opposition Democratic Labor Party (DLP) won 8 seats; and the New Democratic Party (NDP), a splinter of the DLP established in 1989, gained 1 seat. Prime Minister Owen Seymour Arthur, an economist elected in 1993 to head the BLP, promised to build "a modern, technologically dynamic economy," create jobs, and restore investor confidence. The BLP retained power in 1999 by winning 26 of 28 parliamentary seats, leaving Arthur firmly in control of the country.

In the May 23, 2003, elections, the BLP won 23 seats in the House of Assembly, ratifying Arthur's administration. Meanwhile, the DLP, which was strengthened under the uncontested leadership of Clyde Mascoll, claimed the remaining 7 seats in the expanded 30-seat parliament. In June 2003, the Public Accounts Committee's independent oversight of government accounts was enhanced, which gave the DLP the ability to better monitor official expenditures.

In 2004, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago became embroiled in a bitter struggle over their maritime boundary and associated fishing rights. The dispute arose out of the 1990 Maritime Delimitation Treaty that Trinidad and Tobago signed with Venezuela. Barbados has decided to submit the issue to binding arbitration by the United Nations. In October 2005, the two countries began arguments in their maritime dispute case before the nongovernmental Arbitration Tribunal of the International Dispute Resolution Center in London, although the government of Trinidad and Tobago has questioned whether this forum has the authority to decide the matter.

Barbados has suffered from an increase in crime experienced by much of the Caribbean region. Joint patrols of the Royal Barbados Police Force and the all-volunteer Barbados Defence Force have been initiated to patrol the island as violent crimes, many linked to narcotics trafficking, have been on the rise. Narcotics seizures have increased; during a two-month period in the summer of 2005, Barbadian law enforcement seized more than US\$6 million in drugs. The country is also struggling to control its burgeoning prison population. In March, a prison riot, in which the island's largest penitentiary was set on fire, lasted for three days. The Barbadian government called on 120 security personnel from its Caribbean neighbors to help restore order and evacuate the aging, badly overcrowded prison.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Citizens of Barbados can change their government democratically. The 30-member House of Assembly is elected for a five-year term; the governor-general appoints the 21 members of the Senate: 12 on the advice of the prime minister, 2 on the advice of the leader of the opposition, and the remaining 7 at the discretion of the governor-general. The prime minister is the leader of the political party with a majority in the House.

Political parties are free to organize. Historically, power has alternated between two centrist parties—the DLP and the BLP. In addition to the parties holding parliamentary seats, other political organizations include the small, left-wing Worker's Party of Barbados.

Barbados was ranked 24 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is fully respected. Public opinion expressed through the news media, which are free of censorship and government control, has a powerful influence on policy. Newspapers, including the two major dailies, are privately owned. Four private and two government radio stations operate. The single television station, operated by the government-owned Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation, presents a wide range of political viewpoints. There is free access to the internet.

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion, which is widely respected for mainstream religious practices. In April, members of Barbados' small Rastafarian community complained that a new measure allowing prison authorities to cut the hair of high-risk prisoners infringed upon their religious custom of wearing long hair in dreadlocks. Prison authorities overruled this complaint, citing the need for stricter security precautions following the March prison riot. Academic freedom is fully respected.

The right to organize civic organizations and labor unions is respected. Two major labor unions, as well as various smaller ones, are active.

The judicial system is independent, and the Supreme Court includes a high court and a court of appeals. Lower-court officials are appointed on the advice of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission. The prison system is overcrowded and outdated, with more than 800 inmates housed in a building built for 350. However, separate facilities are provided for female prisoners and children, and the government allows private groups to visit prisons. Although the authorities have made significant efforts to discharge prison personnel alleged to have beaten inmates, their prosecution has not made significant progress.

In October 2002, Attorney General Mia Mottley announced that a National Com-

mission on Law and Order would be established to reduce lawlessness. The commission published a Plan on Justice, Peace, and Security in June 2004 that included 68 recommendations on constitutional support for social institutions, governance and civil society, cultural values, law enforcement, and criminal courts, among others. Mottley strongly voiced reservations about the Inter-American Convention against Corruption, claiming that it did not sufficiently regulate private sector corruption; Barbados signed the convention in April 2001, but has not yet ratified, accepted, or acceded to it.

The high crime rate, fueled by an increase in drug abuse and narcotics trafficking, has given rise to human rights concerns. The number of murders has remained constant, and a constitutional change would allow convicts to be hanged as soon as possible after their appeals are exhausted. There are occasional reports and complaints of excessive force used by the Royal Barbados Police Force to extract confessions, along with reports that police do not always seek warrants before searching homes. The Caribbean Human Rights Network has disbanded because of a lack of funds. Meanwhile, with the support of political parties, juries are getting tough on crime by sentencing violent criminals to death, although an execution has not been administered in more than two decades. In an effort to restore the death penalty against two convicts who had their sentences commuted to life imprisonment by the Barbados High Court, the government appealed the case to the newly formed regional Caribbean Court of Justice, which Barbados has ratified as its highest appellate court. Barbados is also considering judicial reform that would reduce overcrowding by keeping courts open longer to hear more cases per year.

Barbados has refused to sign a bilateral agreement granting U.S. military personnel immunity from proceedings in the International Criminal Court. The United States responded by suspending military education programs and military equipment sales. The impasse has dampened efforts to control drug trafficking in the region. In July 2005, dozens of Guyanese were denied entry to Barbados, which prompted claims of discrimination and a government inquiry.

Women make up roughly half of the workforce. A domestic violence law passed in 1992 gives police and judges greater power to protect women. Violence against and abuse of women and children continue to be serious social concerns. The 2005 UN Human Development Report gave Barbados the 30th highest ranking in the world for economic and social development, which was the best score in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Belarus

Population: 9,800,000 **Political Rights:** 7
GNI/capita: \$1,600 **Civil Liberties:** 6
Life Expectancy: 69 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Eastern Orthodox (80 percent),
 other (20 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Byelorussian (81.2 percent), Russian
 (11.4 percent), Polish, Ukrainian and other (7.4 percent)
Capital: Minsk



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF

Overview:

The dictatorial rule of Belarus's President Alyksandr Lukashenka grew increasingly hardline in 2005. After the adoption of an October 2004 constitutional referendum, which removed term limits for the presidency, the government moved to eradicate the remaining spheres of political and social autonomy that could potentially challenge Lukashenka's aspirations for unlimited and lifelong rule. The Orange Revolution in neighboring Ukraine raised concerns within the centers of power in Minsk about the spread of democratization into Belarus in the run-up to the 2006 presidential elections. As a result, the authorities stepped up pressure against opposition parties, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), independent media outlets, and educational establishments.

Belarus declared independence in 1991, ending centuries of foreign control by Poland, Russia, and, ultimately, the Soviet Union. Stanislau Shushkevich, a reform-minded leader, served as head of state from 1991 to 1994. That year, voters made Alyksandr Lukashenka, a member of parliament with close links to the country's security services, the first post-Soviet president. Lukashenka has pursued efforts at reunification with Russia and subordinated the government, legislature, and courts to his political whims while denying citizens basic rights and liberties. A controversial 1996 referendum, highly criticized by domestic monitors and the international community, adopted constitutional amendments that extended Lukashenka's term through 2001, broadened presidential powers, and created a new bicameral parliament (National Assembly).

In October 2000, Belarus held deeply flawed elections to the House of Representatives, parliament's lower house. State media coverage of the campaign was limited and biased, and approximately half of all opposition candidates were denied registration. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) reported irregularities such as ballot-box stuffing and tampering with voter registration lists. Seven opposition parties boycotted the elections when the government failed to ensure a fair campaign and give parliament more substantial duties. Although some opposition candidates participated in the election, only three were elected.

Lukashenka won a controversial reelection in September 2001 amid accusations

from former security service officials that the president was directing a government-sponsored death squad aimed at silencing his opponents. Formally, citizens had three presidential candidates from whom to choose. However, the outcome was predetermined, and Western observers judged the election to be neither free nor fair. During the campaign, the government and its supporters harassed would-be candidates and independent media outlets, and state television was used as an instrument for propaganda on behalf of Lukashenka. On election day, Lukashenka declared himself the victor with 75 percent of the vote over opposition candidate Uladzimir Hancharyk (15 percent). However, independent nongovernmental exit polls showed that Lukashenka had received 47 percent of the vote and Hancharyk 41 percent—an outcome that by law should have forced a second round. While opposition parties and civil society were active in the election process, by 2002, Lukashenka had launched a campaign of political retribution against those who had opposed him during the presidential campaign.

Legislative elections and a parallel referendum on the presidency were held in October 2004. The Central Election Commission claimed 89.73 percent of voters took part in the plebiscite, and some 86 percent of them voted in favor of the government's proposal that would allow President Lukashenka to run for a third term in 2006. According to the announced election results, not a single candidate fielded by opposition parties entered the National Assembly. A monitoring effort by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) declared on October 17, 2004, that the parliamentary elections fell "significantly short" of Belarus's OSCE commitments. Despite efforts by NGOs, the vote count at virtually all polling stations in the country was conducted in the absence of independent monitors. An exit poll conducted by The Gallup Organization/Baltic Surveys, which collected data during the weeklong voting process, found that just 48.4 percent of all eligible voters in the country said yes to the referendum as compared with the government results that showed more than 77 percent of eligible voters supporting the referendum question. Thus, according to independent poll data, the referendum actually failed to amend the Belarusian constitution or to give Lukashenka the right to run for reelection, as claimed by Belarus authorities.

Ukraine's Orange Revolution, unfolding only five weeks after the constitutional referendum in Belarus, provoked a reaction against possible "acts of banditry"—Lukashenka's own definition of electoral revolutions—in Belarus in the run-up to 2006 presidential election. Lukashenka boosted the law enforcement agencies in 2005 and purged their ranks of potential dissenters. Viktor Sheiman, Lukashenka's new chief of staff appointed in 2004, stated that his goal was to "consolidate the power systems, unify the command structure, and avoid situations such as those that had occurred south of the border." The amendments to the Law on Interior Troops introduced in February 2005 allowed for the discretionary use of firearms against protesters on orders from the president. The introduction of new police tactics to disperse demonstrations were an indication that the country's security forces had been specifically trained to stop street protests from taking place.

More opposition figures were effectively barred from politics throughout the year. Mikhail Marynich, former government minister and a potential contender for presidency, was sentenced to five years in jail in December 2004 on charges of stealing computers from his own NGO. Siarhiey Skrabets, leader of the opposition in the

previous parliament, was arrested in May on corruption charges. Mikalaj Statkievich, chairman of the Belarusian Social-Democrat Party Narodnaya Gromada (BSDP NG) and Paval Seviarynec, leader of the Young Front movement, were both sentenced to two years of forced labor for organizing antireferendum protests in October 2004.

The legal space in which opposition parties in Belarus operate continued to shrink steadily during 2005. Housing regulations provided the regime with a pretext for closing down local branches of leading opposition parties registered at residential apartments. New regulations impose severe punishments on those working for, or acting on behalf of, unregistered political parties, NGOs, coalitions, or civic initiatives.

According to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the country's private sector share of gross national income is the lowest of all the post-Communist countries. World Bank data also show that more than a quarter of the population lives below the national poverty line.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Despite a constitutional guarantee of universal, equal, and direct suffrage, citizens of Belarus cannot change their government democratically. The 2001 presidential vote, in which Lukashenka was declared to have been reelected by a wide majority, was neither free nor fair. Independent exit polls found that the results were significantly altered, and domestic supporters of opposition candidate Uladzimir Hancharyk accused the government of massively falsifying the results. An OSCE report indicated that the election was conducted in a "manner that actively sought to exclude candidates representing a diversity of interests." The October 2004 legislative elections and a parallel referendum on the presidency were marred by serious and widespread irregularities.

The National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus is composed of two houses. The 110 members of the House of Representatives are popularly elected for four years on the basis of single mandate constituencies. The Council of the Republic consists of 64 members, of whom 56 are elected by regional councils and 8 are appointed by the president. The constitution vests most power with the president, giving him control over the government, courts, and even the legislative process by stating that presidential decrees have a higher legal force than the laws. The National Assembly serves largely as a rubber-stamp body.

Due to the concentration of power in the hands of the president, parties play a negligible role in the political process. Opposition parties have been marginalized by the presidency, whereas pro-presidential parties generally exist for window-dressing. The most prominent parties include the Belarusian Popular Front, the liberal-leaning United Civil Party, and the Belarusian Party of Communists.

Belarus was ranked 107 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index due to the increasing bureaucratization of the economy and the overall lack of transparency in the government.

The Lukashenka regime systematically curtails press freedom. State media are subordinated to the president, and harassment and censorship of independent media are routine. Libel is both a civil and a criminal offense. Belarusian national television is completely under the control and influence of the state and does not provide coverage of alternative and opposition views. The State Press Committee issues

warnings to publishers for unauthorized activities such as distributing copies abroad or reporting on unregistered organizations. It also can arbitrarily shut down publications without a court order. The news bulletins and daily playlists of all FM radio stations are censored. Belarusian-language rock and folk groups that openly sympathize with the opposition have been banned from airwaves. The state-run press distribution monopoly refused in November to continue distribution of most of the country's independent newspapers.

Harassment and legal attacks against independent newspapers and broadcast media were widespread in 2005. A presidential decree banned private media from having the words "Belarusian" and "National" in their titles, which affected three prominent independent newspapers. A libel suit filed against the largest independent daily, *Narodnaja Volja*, by a proregime member of parliament resulted in a fine of more than \$50,000, paid mostly through individual donations. Journalists of the Polish-language press who reported on the government dismissal of the independent leadership of the Belarusian Union of Poles were routinely arrested and briefly imprisoned for covering and participating in peaceful protests.

Internet sites within the country are under the control of the government's State Center on Information Security, which is part of the Security Council of Belarus. The impact of independent internet sites is limited. According to the International Telecommunications Union, less than 10 percent of the population have some access to the internet, while other estimates suggest that only 2 percent of the population enjoy regular internet access. Nevertheless, the impact of the internet is gradually expanding, which prompts censorship and restriction of access to undesired sites at universities and government offices. In August, security services attacked producers of the independent site Third Way, which published political cartoons criticizing Lukashenka, confiscated their equipment and passports, and launched criminal proceedings for defaming the president.

Despite constitutional guarantees that "all religions and faiths shall be equal before the law," government decrees and registration requirements have increasingly restricted the life and work of religious groups. Amendments in 2002 to the Law on Religions provide for government censorship of religious publications and prevent foreign citizens from leading religious groups. The amendments also place strict limitations on religious groups that have been active in Belarus for fewer than 20 years. The government pressures and intimidates members of the independent Belarusian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, harasses Hindus for public meditation, and represses Baptists for singing hymns in public. Three Protestant parishes were liquidated in Belarus in August and September 2005; a pastor was fined for leading a prayer for a deregistered parish.

Academic freedom is subject to intense state ideological pressures, with institutions that use a Western-style curriculum, promote national consciousness, or are simply suspected of disloyalty being subject to harassment and liquidation. The most highly regarded secondary school, the National State Humanities Lyceum, was closed down in 2003. In 2004, the leading private institution of higher learning, the European Humanities University, was shut down; it relocated to Lithuania. State pressure to implement curriculum reform that reduced academic freedom resulted in an end to Jewish studies in state institutions. Official regulations stipulate the immediate dismissal and revocation of degrees to students and professors who join op-

position protests. Students who study abroad without permission from the Ministry of Education face expulsion from their home universities. The Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies, which administered exit polls and postelection surveys after the 2004 parliamentary elections and the referendum, was closed down by a court ruling.

Freedom of association is severely restricted. More than a hundred of the most active NGOs critical of the authorities were liquidated or forced to close down from 2003 through 2005. In November 2005, the government initiated the adoption of amendments to the Criminal Code that would penalize activities of deregistered NGOs by up to three years in prison. The government dismissed in 2005 the independent leadership of the Belarusian Union of Poles and pressed for the election of loyalists, prompting domestic and international protests. Housing rules, which make it impossible for opposition parties and NGOs to rent inexpensive office space, became a pretext for liquidating hundreds of local chapters of opposition parties in June. New regulations introduced in August ban foreign assistance to NGOs, parties, and individuals who promote "meddling into the internal affairs" of Belarus from abroad. Independent trade unions are subject to harassment, and their leaders are frequently arrested and prosecuted for peaceful protests and dismissed from employment. Leaders of the union Perspective, which organized strikes of small entrepreneurs (joined by nearly 100,000 individuals) to protest new taxes in February and March, were arrested and given short sentences.

The Lukashenka government limits freedom of assembly by groups independent of and critical of the president's regime. Protests and rallies require authorization from local authorities, who can arbitrarily withhold or revoke permission. When public demonstrations do occur, police typically break them up and arrest participants.

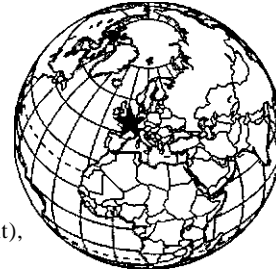
Although the country's constitution calls for judicial independence, courts are subject to significant government influence. During the year, numerous independent civic leaders, opposition political activists, independent journalists, and others who oppose government policies experienced arbitrary persecution, arrest, and imprisonment. The right to a fair trial is often not respected in cases with political overtones. Human rights groups continue to document instances of beatings, torture, and inadequate protection during detention in cases involving leaders of the democratic opposition.

An internal passport system, in which a passport is required for domestic travel and to secure permanent housing, limits freedom of movement and choice of residence. Citizens traveling abroad have to reapply for a permission stamp in their passport every five years. In September, the Constitutional Court bowed to government pressure and renounced an earlier decision to outlaw the stamp system. Wiretapping by state security agencies limits the right to privacy. The country's command economy severely limits economic freedom.

Women are not specifically targeted for discrimination, but there are significant discrepancies in income between men and women, and women are poorly represented in leading government positions. As a result of extreme poverty, many women have become victims of the international sex-trafficking trade.

Belgium

Population: 10,500,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$25,760 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 79 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (75 percent),
 other [including Protestants] (25 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Fleming (58 percent), Walloon (31 percent),
 other (11 percent)
Capital: Brussels



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In September 2005, a Belgian judge issued an international arrest warrant charging Hissene Habre, Chad's former dictator now living in Senegal, with atrocities committed during his eight years of rule. A Senegalese appeals court ruled in November that it did not have the power to decide whether Habre can be extradited to Belgium. The Belgian Chamber of Deputies voted unanimously in March to approve a law on the protection of journalists' sources in Belgium.

Modern Belgium dates from 1830, when the territory broke away from the Netherlands and formed a constitutional monarchy. Today the monarchy is largely ceremonial. Belgium was one of the founding members of the European Union (EU) and still hosts the central administration of the organization in Brussels.

Ethnic and linguistic conflicts broke out between the different communities in the country during the 1960s, prompting a number of constitutional amendments in 1970, 1971, and 1993 that devolved considerable central government power to the three regions in the federation: French-speaking Wallonia in the south, Flemish-speaking Flanders in the north, and Brussels, the capital, where French and Flemish share the same status. The small German minority in Wallonia, which consists of around 70,000 persons, has also been accorded cultural autonomy. Another 1993 amendment granted the three regional assemblies primary responsibility in a number of important policy areas, including housing, education, and the environment, while keeping foreign policy, defense, justice, and monetary policy in the hands of the central state. The Flemings, living in the more economically dynamic region, generally favor greater decentralization of state power to the country's regions.

During parliamentary elections in May 2003, the two main political party blocks—the Liberals (the Flemish Liberal Democrats and the Reform Movement [MR]) and the Socialists (the Socialist Party [PS]) and the Socialist Party Alternative [SPA])—both gained at the expense of the Greens, which dropped from 20 to 4 seats in the lower house (Chamber of Deputies) and were forced out of the ruling coalition. The Socialists led slightly with 27 percent of the vote compared with 26 percent for the Liberals. Altogether, the coalition holds 97 of the 150 seats in the lower house.

In 2005, a language dispute flared over the division of an electoral district that

includes suburban Flanders and parts of Brussels. The conflict concerns how the district should be divided between the country's Flemish- and French-speaking political parties.

In November, a Senegalese appeals court ruled that it did not have the power to decide whether Hissene Habre can be extradited to Belgium. In September, a Belgian judge issued an international arrest warrant charging Habre, Chad's former dictator, with atrocities committed during his eight years of rule, between 1982 and 1990. Belgium is seeking his extradition from Senegal, where he now lives in exile, to stand trial. The indictment was originally issued under Belgium's previous "universal jurisdiction" law, which allowed the prosecution of suspects of severe human rights abuses, no matter where the offense was committed. In 2003, the law was repealed under international pressure and amended so that those charged had to be living in Belgium. The Habre case was allowed to continue because the investigation was already under way. In June 2005, two Rwandans were found guilty, in Belgium, of war crimes and murder in the 1994 genocide that killed 800,000 people in Rwanda.

Thirteen men accused of membership of a militant Islamic group went on trial in early November. Prosecutors assert that the men—all Moroccans or Belgians of Moroccan descent—are linked to bombings in Madrid and Casablanca.

Racial tensions continued to grow in the country during the year. A factory owner received repeated death threats because he employed a Muslim woman who wore a headscarf to work. The plight of the woman, who had the support of her employer and colleagues, caught the attention of Belgium's King Albert, who invited her and her employer to the royal palace. The woman eventually quit her job in March 2005. A number of politicians critical of Islam have also received death threats. In December 2004, the country celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge, the last major confrontation between the Allies and the Nazis in the southern Belgian town of Bastogne.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Belgians can change their government democratically. In February 2004, parliament granted non-EU immigrants who have been living in the country for at least five years the right to vote in local elections. More than 91 percent of all registered voters turned out at the polls during the last elections, in 2003. Voting, however, is compulsory for those eligible.

Parliament consists of two houses: the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The 150 members of the Chamber of Deputies are elected directly by proportional representation. In the Senate there are 71 seats, 40 of which are elected directly by popular vote and 31 indirectly. In both houses, members serve four-year terms. The prime minister, who is the leader of the majority party or leading coalition, is appointed by the monarch and approved by parliament. The current prime minister is Guy Verhofstadt, who has been in office since 1999.

The party system is highly fragmented, with the leading party, the VLD, receiving only a little more than 15 percent of the vote in the 2003 election. In addition, political parties are generally organized along ethno-regional lines, with separate organizations in Flanders and Wallonia, a factor that makes for difficult coalitions. Belgium was ranked 19 out of 159 countries surveyed in the 2005 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech and the press is guaranteed by the constitution and generally respected by the government. The Belgian Chamber of Deputies voted unanimously in March 2005 to approve a law on the protection of journalists' sources in Belgium. The vote came after police raids on the home and office of a Brussels reporter in 2004, which shocked the community of international journalists. The new law protects journalists from home searches and seizures, and gives them the right to silence if called as a witness. Journalists can only be forced to reveal sources to "prevent crimes that represent a serious attack on the physical integrity of one or several third parties." Newspapers have gone through increased concentration in ownership since the 1960s, as corporations have steadily been buying up papers. As a result, today a handful of corporations run most of the country's newspapers. The government does not limit access to the internet.

Freedom of religion is protected in Belgium, where the state grants subsidies to Christian, Jewish, and Muslim institutions. About half of the population identifies itself with the Roman Catholic religion. A number of minority religions have complained of discrimination by the government, which has been criticized for its characterization of some non-Catholic religious groups as "sects." The government does not restrict academic freedom.

Freedom of association is guaranteed by law, except for membership in groups that practice discrimination "overtly and repeatedly." Freedom of assembly is also respected. About 63 percent of the Belgian workforce is unionized. A gentleman's agreement between workers and employers, reached in 2002, bolstered the right to strike. Up to that point, employers were able to use the courts to ban strikes. In October 2005, a 24-hour national strike was called by workers to protest government plans to raise the retirement age from 58 to 60. Employers found guilty of firing workers because of union activities are required to reinstate the worker or pay an indemnity. According to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the fines are probably too low to act as a deterrent, as Belgian employers prefer to pay the fines rather than reinstate dismissed employees active in union affairs.

The judiciary is independent in Belgium, and the rule of law generally prevails in civil and criminal matters. In July 2004, the UN Human Rights Committee issued a report that expressed concerns about a number of human rights abuses, including acts of abuse and racial discrimination committed by the police forces in the country. The report also expressed concerns about the treatment of rejected asylum seekers and illegal immigrants awaiting deportation who, after being released from detention centers for aliens, were often placed in unsanitary conditions in the transit zone of Brussels national airport, sometimes for several months at a time. Police are also empowered to reprimand or even imprison women found dressed in the *burqa* (full-body covering) on the streets.

Specific antiracism laws prohibit and penalize the incitement of discrimination, acts of hatred, or violence based on race, ethnicity, or nationality. Despite these protections, equality of opportunity for foreigners is undermined by a relatively high degree of racial and ethnic intolerance in society. In 2005, a Belgian factory owner received repeated death threats because he employed a Muslim woman who wore a headscarf (*hijab*) to work.

In November 2004, Belgian courts banned the xenophobic Vlaams Blok Party for violating the country's antiracism laws. The party changed its name to Vlaams Belang

(Flemish Interests) and removed some of the most overt racist elements in its platform, such as its call for the mandatory expulsion of all Muslim immigrants. However, the party maintains its anti-immigrant and anticrime policies, as well as its commitment to an independent Flanders.

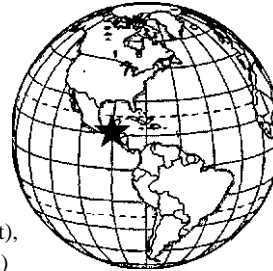
The law provides for the free movement of people within the country and to travel abroad. There was no government interference of these rights.

In 1994, the country passed a law stipulating that two-thirds of each party's candidates must be of a different sex. Women won more than 35 percent of the seats in the lower house of parliament (Chamber of Deputies) during elections in 2003, a 10 percent increase since prior elections in 1999. The government actively promotes equality for women. In 2003, the government created the Institute for the Equality of Men and Women. The institute, which was formerly the Ministry of Labor's Division of Equal Opportunity, is empowered to initiate sex-discrimination lawsuits.

Belgium is a destination and transit point for trafficked persons. However, according to the U.S. State Department, in 2005 the country made considerable efforts to prosecute traffickers, provide protection to victims, and prevent trafficking.

Belize

Population: 300,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$3,940 **Civil Liberties:** 2
Life Expectancy: 70 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (49.6 percent), Protestant (27 percent), other (23.4 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Mestizo (48.7 percent), Creole (24.9 percent), Maya (10.6 percent), Garifiina (6.1 percent), other (9.7 percent)
Capital: Belmopan



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F

Overview:

During 2005, Belize weathered what many experts said was the worst civil turmoil since the nation's independence. Unpopular taxes, a debt crisis, corruption scandals, and a series of strikes led to significant unrest, and the army was called out in the streets to quell rioting. However, despite these problems, opposition groups and the government sparred peacefully to find solutions to the problems.

Belize achieved independence from Britain in 1981 and is a member of the Commonwealth. The government has changed hands three times, alternating between the center-right United Democratic Party (UDP) and the center-left People's United Party (PUP). In 1993, the UDP and the National Alliance for Belizean Rights (NABR) formed a coalition, winning 16 of the 29 seats in the House of Representatives.

The current prime minister, Said Wilbert Musa, was first elected in 1998, when

the PUP won 26 seats in the House of Representatives. He was elected again in 2003, with the PUP taking 22 seats.

In response to various scandals, Musa reshuffled his cabinet in December 2004, keeping only the deputy prime minister and the finance minister. As one of the sources of government corruption had been the illegal sales of passports, Belize instituted a new computerized checking system for passports in 2005, after receiving a grant of \$1 million from the United States to upgrade the system. Passports from Belize had become a favorite tool of drug traffickers in the region.

Belize is also a preferred place for money laundering by drug traffickers. In 2005, Spanish police broke up one drug ring that had used Belize to launder some of its \$123 million in drug revenues. In recent years, Belize has experienced increases in the rates of violent crime, drug trafficking, and money laundering. Soldiers of the Belize Defence Force routinely participate in joint patrols with the police in an effort to reduce violent crime. The United Nations formally complimented Belize in 2005 for its antidrug efforts.

The government's problems with popular unrest began in January 2005 when it attempted to privatize the national phone company. Communication workers went on strike, urging other labor groups to follow suit. In the spring, the country's telecom system and electrical grid failed on several occasions. Musa blamed the problems on sabotage from striking workers. Patrick Faber, an opposition member of the House of Representatives, was arrested for aggravated assault when he attempted to gain entrance to a strike-related student forum at the University of Belize that was closed to all but students. Police arrested Faber after a scuffle.

In April, a series of unpopular new taxes—a result of the country's debt crisis—sparked rioting that left at least one person dead and 100 in jail. The riots were so violent that the army had to be used to restore order. Belize owes \$1.25 billion in loans, a debt that is larger than the country's gross domestic product of \$1.1 billion. The government accused student groups and labor unions of fomenting the civil unrest. After the government quelled the rioters, Musa turned to the International Monetary Fund to negotiate adjustments in debt payments. Opposition politicians said the country's frustrations with corruption had led to these violent outbursts and called for the Musa government to step aside.

As a compromise with striking workers and the opposition, the government agreed to reacquire some privatized industries such as the water service. Privatized industries that hiked the cost for services and skyrocketing fuel prices had also caused frustration with the government during the spring riots.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Belize can change their government democratically. In the bicameral National Assembly, the 29-seat House of Representatives is elected for a five-year term. Members of the Senate are appointed for five-year terms: 5 by the governor-general on the advice of the prime minister, 2 by the leader of the parliamentary opposition, and 1 by the Belize Advisory Council.

There are no restrictions on the right to organize political parties, and Mestizo, Creole, Maya, and Garifuna parties have seats in the National Assembly. The country's major parties include the center-right United Democratic Party (UDP) and the center-left People's United Party (PUP)

Government corruption scandals have included the illegal sale of passports and bad loans made by the country's social security board. Belize was ranked 62 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Belize has a free and open media system, although laws allow for some government control. The government may imprison (for up to three years) or fine (up to \$2,500) journalists or others who write in a critical way about the public financial disclosures of government officials. The Belize Broadcasting Authority also has the right to prior restraint of all broadcasts for national security reasons for reasons of national emergency. However, the government has not moved against journalists or invoked these rights for many years.

Although Belize has no daily newspapers, the country is a lively market for weeklies, with 10, including 2 supported directly by political parties, circulating nationally or regionally. Belize also has 10 radio stations, some which are networked nationally, and 2 television networks, along with a variety of cable outlets. There were no direct threats to journalists in 2005—a change from 2003, when investigative reporter Melvin Flores fled to the United States after receiving threats in response to his reports on corruption. The media scene was notable for its diversity of opinions with little or no fear of government reprisal for criticism.

There is full freedom of religion in Belize. Likewise, there is full academic freedom.

A large number of nongovernmental organizations are active in social, economic, and environmental areas. Freedom of assembly is generally respected.

Although labor unions have seen their numbers shrink, in 2005 they exerted their power with coordinated strikes by public workers and teachers. The well-organized labor unions have demonstrated that they can use their right to strike to paralyze the country if necessary to make a point. Official boards of inquiry adjudicate disputes, and businesses are penalized for failing to abide by the labor code.

The judiciary is independent and nondiscriminatory, and the rule of law is generally respected. Lengthy backlogs of trials are due, in part, to the high turnover of judges, which is the result of their low pay. Cases often continue for years while defendants are free on bail. Reports of police misconduct are investigated by the department's internal affairs office or by an ombudsman's office. Extrajudicial killing and use of excessive force are the country's primary rights concerns.

Prisons do not meet minimum standards, although the Hattieville Prison was privatized and is run by a nonprofit foundation that has made some progress in improving the physical conditions of inmates. Drug trafficking and gang conflicts have contributed to an increase in crime. Under a bilateral antinarcotics agreement signed in September 2002, the United States provides Belize with counter-narcotics and law enforcement assistance, including equipment and training for the police department's counter-narcotics unit and training for the Department of Immigration, the Customs and Excise Department, and the magistrate and supreme courts.

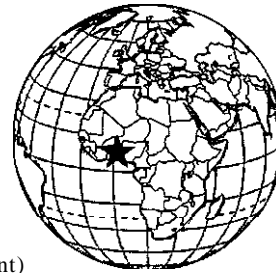
The government actively discourages racial and ethnic discrimination. Although the Maya claim to be the original inhabitants of Belize, the government has designated only 77,000 acres as Mayan preserves out of the 500,000 acres claimed. Most of the indigenous population lives in the south, the poorest part of the country. The Belize Human Rights Commission is independent and effective. Human rights concerns include the conditions of migrant workers and refugees from neighboring

countries and charges of labor abuses by employers. Most of the estimated 40,000 Spanish speakers who have immigrated to the largely English-speaking country since the 1980s do not have legal status. Undocumented Guatemalan, Honduran, and Salvadoran workers, especially in the service and agricultural sectors, continue to be exploited. Chinese and Indian nationals have been found to be working as bonded labor.

The majority of women working in brothels are from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. In 2005, the U.S. State Department criticized Belize for its weak prosecution against human trafficking. Violence against women and children is a serious problem. However, in 2005, the United Nations praised the government for a new public awareness campaign to curb such violence.

Benin

Population: 8,400,000 **Political Rights:** 2
GN/capita: \$440 **Civil Liberties:** 2
Life Expectancy: 54 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Indigenous beliefs (50 percent),
 Christian (30 percent), Muslim (20 percent)
Ethnic Groups: African [42 ethnic groups, including
 Fon, Adja, Bariba, Yoruba] (99 percent), other (1 percent)
Capital: Porto-Novo



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,3F	2,2F	3,2F	3,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F

Overview:

The presidential election scheduled for March 2006, anticipated as a test of the country's democratic processes, was still wide open toward the end of 2005. President Mathieu Kerekou has groomed no clear successor, and no front-runner has emerged from the political opposition. Meanwhile, more than 20,000 Togolese sought safety in Benin after fleeing political violence in their country in April 2005.

Benin was once the center of the ancient kingdom of Dahomey, the name by which the country was known until 1975. Six decades of French colonial rule ended in 1960, and Mathieu Kerekou took power 12 years later, ending successive coups and countercoups. He imposed a one-party state under the Benin People's Revolutionary Party and pursued Marxist-Leninist policies. However, by 1990, economic hardships and rising internal unrest had forced Kerekou to agree to a national conference that ushered in democracy. The transition culminated in his defeat by Nicephore Soglo in the 1991 presidential election, and the country's human rights record subsequently improved. Kerekou made a comeback in the 1996 presidential poll.

Presidential elections in 2001 were marred by technical and administrative problems, as well as a boycott by the second- and third-place finishers in the second

round of voting. Former president Soglo and Adrien Houngbedji claimed fraud after they won 29 percent and 14 percent, respectively, in the first round of voting, compared with incumbent president Kerekou's 47 percent. The boycott gave Kerekou a solid victory, with 84 percent of the vote in the second round of voting, in which he ended up running against an obscure fourth-place candidate. Several members of the Autonomous National Electoral Commission had stepped down in protest before the second round of voting, citing a lack of transparency and poor administration of the election.

In March 2003, Benin held National Assembly elections that gave the ruling-party coalition—the Presidential Movement—a majority in parliament for the first time since multiparty democracy was introduced more than a decade ago. The ruling party and its allies hold 65 seats, compared with 18 seats for opposition parties. Fourteen political parties participated in the elections. Voter turnout was low, and there were some logistical problems, but the polls were considered free and fair. Opposition party members had accused the ruling party of intimidation ahead of the elections, and the government banned "anti-fraud brigades" that had been organized by the opposition.

The legislative polls followed local elections, which had been among the last steps in Benin's decentralization process, and helped reinstate voter confidence following the flawed presidential elections in 2001. Pro-Kerekou parties came out ahead in the local polls.

The 2006 presidential poll is considered a true test of Benin's democracy because the two key players on Benin's political stage will have retired. Kerekou pledged during the year that he would step down at the end of his five-year term and ruled out changing the constitution to stay in power, as some African leaders have done in recent years. Former president Soglo cannot run for the presidency because he is over the age limit of 70, as is Kerekou. Among those who might run are Houngbedji, a lawyer and former Speaker of the National Assembly who leads the Democratic Renewal Party (PRD), and Bruno Amoussou of the Alliance of the Social Democratic Party (PSD), who has contested previous presidential polls. Another potential contender is Yayi Boni, chairman of the Lome-based West African Development Bank.

In July 2005, Benin lost a long-running dispute with Niger over 25 islands in the Niger and Mekrou rivers. The International Court of Justice at The Hague awarded most of the islands to Niger.

Political unrest following the April 2005 disputed presidential elections in neighboring Togo affected Benin. More than 20,000 Togolese fled across the border, and there were fears that their presence might spark tension between the two countries if political activists continued their struggle against Togo's rulers from Benin's soil.

Benin uncharacteristically made headlines in 2005 when an American company was found guilty of bribery under the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, which makes it illegal for American companies to bribe foreign officials. The Titan Corporation agreed to pay \$28.5 million after it was accused of funneling more than \$2 million into the 2001 reelection campaign of Kerekou, although there was no suggestion that the president was aware of any wrongdoing. Shortly after the 2001 election, Beninese officials reportedly agreed to substantially increase Titan's management fee.

Benin is a poor country whose economy is based largely on subsistence agriculture. The International Monetary Fund said in May 2005 that there was no short-term relief in sight for the cotton industry in Benin and neighboring countries. The industry has been suffering from low prices partly due to production subsidies in Western countries and new competition in other parts of the world.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Benin can change their government democratically. Benin held its first genuine multiparty elections in 1991 and now has dozens of political parties. The 25-member Autonomous National Electoral Commission is to oversee the conduct of the 2006 presidential poll.

The president is elected by popular vote for a five-year term and serves as both the chief of state and head of government. Delegates of the 83-member unicameral National Assembly serve four-year terms.

Historically, Benin has been divided between northern and southern ethnic groups, which are the main roots of current political parties; the South has enjoyed more advanced development. Major political parties include the Democratic Renewal Party, the Coalition of Democratic Forces, the Social Democratic Party, and the Renaissance Party of Benin. The Presidential Movement is the ruling party coalition. Northern ethnic groups enlisted during President Mathieu Kerekou's early years in power still dominate the military, although efforts have been made in recent years to rectify this situation.

Corruption, although not as bad as in some neighboring West African countries, is endemic in Benin. Kerekou has acknowledged publicly that senior cabinet members have been involved in corruption. The government has made efforts to combat the practice through an anticorruption commission. As part of an investigation into misused government funds, almost 90 judges, court clerks, and public accountants were tried in 2004 on corruption charges. Sixty-two defendants received sentences of six months to five years in prison, and 25 were acquitted. Benin was ranked 88 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Harsh libel laws have been used against journalists, but constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression are largely respected in practice. An independent and pluralistic press publishes articles highly critical of both government and opposition leaders and policies. Benin has dozens of daily newspapers, magazines, and private radio stations. It also has at least two private television stations. Internet access is unrestricted.

The government respects religious and academic freedom. However, protesters clashed with security forces in February 2005 over the government-appointed rector at the University of Abomey-Calavi. Seven protesters were detained and released several days later. The demonstrators wanted the rector replaced by someone chosen by university peers, arguing that a government decree stated that rectors of the country's two universities would be chosen by fellow academics.

Freedom of assembly is respected in Benin, and requirements for permits and registration are often ignored. Numerous nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and human rights groups operate without hindrance.

The right to organize and join unions is constitutionally guaranteed and respected

in practice. Strikes are legal, and collective bargaining is common. However, in June, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions said there were frequent violations of workers' rights in Benin. It cited discrimination of women, forced labor, child labor, human trafficking, and violation of union rights. The confederation said there were excessive restrictions on the notice period required before a strike could take place. The majority of Benin's workforce is employed in the informal economy, mainly in subsistence agriculture. Women are employed in low-wage and low-skilled jobs.

The judiciary is generally considered to be independent, but it is inefficient and susceptible to corruption. The executive retains important powers but generally respects court decisions. The Constitutional Court has demonstrated independence, but was accused of bias in favor of the president during the 2001 presidential elections. Harsh prison conditions are marked by poor diet and inadequate medical care. Relations among Benin's ethnic groups are generally good, although regionalism occasionally occurs along ethnic lines. Minority ethnic groups are well represented in government agencies, the civil service, and the armed forces

Human rights are largely respected, although concern has been raised about the operation of anticrime vigilante groups and the failure of the police to curb vigilantism. Although the presence in 2005 of more than 20,000 refugees strained Togo's resources, the refugees stayed in Benin with little hindrance from the local population.

Smuggling children into neighboring countries for domestic service and meager compensation is reportedly widespread, and many, especially young girls, suffer abuse. Authorities during the year intercepted dozens of children on their way to being smuggled to work abroad. However, efforts are under way in Benin to fight child abuse and child trafficking through media campaigns and education. In 2004, the government established a 15-member child protection committee that includes representatives of the government, political parties, and child welfare organizations. A law against human trafficking was drafted and sent to the Supreme Court in 2005, and Nigeria and Benin signed an accord against human trafficking in June.

Although the constitution provides for equality for women, they enjoy fewer educational and employment opportunities than men, particularly in rural areas. In family matters, in which traditional practices prevail, their legal rights are often ignored. A new Family Code was promulgated in 2004 that improves women's inheritance, property, and marriage rights. The code includes a prohibition on forced marriage and polygyny. The National Assembly passed a law against female genital mutilation in 2003, and NGOs have been working to raise awareness about the health dangers of the practice.

Bhutan

Population: 1,000,000 **Political Rights:** 6

GNI/capita: \$760 **Civil Liberties:** 5

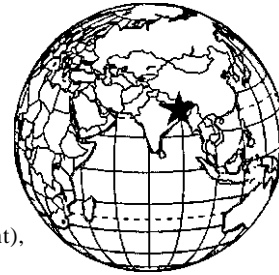
Life Expectancy: 63 **Status:** Not Free

Religious Groups: Lamaistic Buddhist (75 percent),
Hindu (25 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Drukpa (50 percent), Nepalese (35 percent),
indigenous or migrant tribes (15 percent)

Capital: Thimphu

Trend Arrow: Bhutan received an upward trend arrow for making continued progress towards the adoption of the country's first constitution and undertaking other political and administrative reforms.



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview:

The ongoing process of political reform undertaken by King Jigme Singye Wangchuk, which is expected to lead to Bhutan's emergence as a constitutional monarchy, continued in 2005, with a 34-article draft constitution being released for public comment and debate in March. However, little progress was made on resolving the thorny issue of repatriating a significant proportion of the Bhutanese refugees currently residing in camps in Nepal.

Britain began guiding this Himalayan land's affairs in 1865 and, in 1907, installed the Wangchuk monarchy. However, a 1949 treaty gave India control over Bhutan's foreign affairs. In 1972, the current monarch, King Jigme Singye Wangchuk, succeeded his father to the throne.

Reversing a long-standing policy of tolerating cultural diversity in the kingdom, the government, in the 1980s, began requiring all Bhutanese to adopt the dress of the ruling Ngalong Drukpa ethnic group. Authorities said that they feared for the survival of Drukpa culture because of the large number of Nepali speakers, also known as Southern Bhutanese, in the south. The situation worsened in 1988, when the government began using a strict 1985 citizenship law to arbitrarily strip thousands of Nepali speakers of their citizenship. The move came after a census showed Southern Bhutanese to be in the majority in five southern districts.

Led by the newly formed Bhutanese People's Party (BPP), Southern Bhutanese held demonstrations in September 1990 against the new measures. Arson and violence that accompanied the protests led authorities to crack down on the BPP. As conditions worsened, tens of thousands of Southern Bhutanese fled to Nepal in the early 1990s, many of them forcibly expelled by Bhutanese forces. Credible accounts suggest that soldiers raped and beat many Nepali-speaking villagers and detained thousands as "antinationalists."

In early 2001, a bilateral team began certifying citizenship documents and interviewing family heads of the estimated 105,000 Bhutanese refugees currently in Nepal.

After a number of delays in the process, in October 2003, the Nepalese and Bhutanese governments agreed to repatriate approximately 70 percent of the refugees from the first of the seven camps to undergo the verification procedure, although returnees were to be subject to stringent requirements once back in Bhutan. However, following an incident in December 2003, where refugees at one of the camps injured three Bhutanese inspectors, progress on solving the problem has since ground to a virtual halt.

After facing diplomatic pressure from India regarding the presence in Bhutan of a number of militant Indian separatist groups, the Bhutanese government held talks with the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) in 2001. When the ULFA did not honor its commitment to reduce its presence within the country, the National Assembly authorized the Bhutanese army to initiate operations against ULFA and two other insurgent groups. In December 2003, with support from Indian forces, the army expelled about 3,000 insurgents and destroyed many of their camps. However, the security situation in much of southern Bhutan remains poor; in September 2004, a bomb blast in the border town of Gelephu killed or injured several dozen people. Later that month, 111 Bhutanese were convicted of providing assistance to militant groups and were sentenced to long prison terms.

During the past several years, the government has made further progress on the issue of political reform. A 39-member drafting committee submitted a second draft of the constitution to the king in 2003, and, after being reviewed by legal experts, it was presented to the cabinet in November 2004 for their comments and was finally published in March 2005. The 34-article draft provides for a bicameral parliament, a two-party political system, and some fundamental rights. However, it does uphold the primacy of the monarchy, and analysts note that it may not adequately define and protect the rights of Bhutan's sizable Nepalese minority, many of whom are currently refugees in Nepal. A revised draft was circulated in September, and the process of consultation with Bhutan's citizens regarding the draft began in October. Nevertheless, many Bhutanese remain apprehensive of the political changes initiated by the king and seemingly prefer the monarchical system to one with greater political freedom.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Bhutanese cannot change their government democratically, and they enjoy few basic political rights. King Jigme Singye Wangchuk and a small group of elites make key decisions and wield absolute power, although the king has taken several steps since 1998 to increase the influence of the National Assembly. He removed himself as chairman of Bhutan's Council of Ministers; in addition, he gave the National Assembly the power to remove the king from the throne and to elect cabinet members from among candidates nominated by the king. In July 2004, the Assembly resolved that it would meet biannually in order to take a more active role in approving legislation. A new Royal Advisory Council, which is expected to play a role similar to that of an upper house of parliament, was elected in October 2004. Local government structures have been granted greater executive authority and now are headed by elected leaders.

The 150-member National Assembly has little independent power, although some analysts note that debate within the Assembly has become more lively and

critical in recent years. Every three years, village headmen choose 105 *chimis*, or National Assembly members, while the king appoints 35 seats and religious groups choose 10 seats. For the 105 district-based seats, each village nominates one candidate by consensus. Human rights activists allege that in reality, authorities suggest a candidate to the headman in each village, and the headman asks families to approve the candidate. In September, the law was amended so that *chimis* would be elected by adult franchise rather than the one vote per household system that existed previously.

Political parties are illegal in Bhutan; the opposition Druk National Congress operates in exile. Women and members of all major ethnic groups are represented in the National Assembly, although ethnic Nepalese remain underrepresented.

The Bhutanese government operates with limited transparency or accountability, although steps have been taken in recent years to improve both. In December 2004, a Public Accounts Committee was created in the National Assembly and charged with monitoring how government funds are spent. Bhutan is not ranked by Transparency International in its 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Bhutanese authorities restrict freedom of expression. Under the 1992 National Security Act, any criticism of King Wangchuk and Bhutan's political system is prohibited. Bhutan's only regular publication, *Kuensel*, generally reports news that puts the kingdom in a favorable light, although it does provide occasional coverage of criticism of government policies during Assembly meetings. In February 2005, *Kuensel* switched to a biweekly format, and the publisher plans to open another printing press in Tashingang so that it can improve its distribution network. Similarly, state-run broadcast media do not carry opposition positions and statements. Cable television services, which carry uncensored foreign programming, thrive in some areas but are hampered by a high sales tax and the absence of a broadcasting law. In March, in response to concerns voiced by authorities as well as by members of the public, the Association of Private Cable Operators resolved to limit cable access to 30 channels, with a complete ban on 12 music and other channels that provided "controversial" content such as wrestling. Internet access is growing and is unrestricted—two new internet service providers were licensed during the year—and the online edition of *Kuensel* provides a somewhat lively forum for discussion and debate.

While Bhutanese of all faiths generally can worship relatively freely, government policy favors the Drukpa Kagyupa school of Mahayana Buddhism, which is the official religion. The government helps fund the construction and maintenance of Buddhist monasteries and shrines and subsidizes some monks, according to the U.S. State Department's 2005 Report on International Religious Freedom. A 3,500-member Monastic Body is the sole arbiter on religious matters, and monks also wield political influence. Some members of the country's small Christian minority are reportedly subject to harassment by local authorities. No restrictions on academic freedom have been reported, although Bhutan's first university opened only in 2003.

Freedom of assembly and association is restricted. Citizens may participate in a peaceful protest only if the government approves of its purpose. Nongovernmental groups that work on human rights, the refugee issue, or other overtly political issues are not legally allowed to operate inside the country. In recent years, security forces have arrested Bhutanese for taking part in peaceful prodemocracy demon-

stations. They have also arrested and deported Southern Bhutanese refugees living in Nepal who entered and demonstrated inside Bhutan for the right to return home.

The government prohibits independent trade unions and strikes. In any case, some 85 percent of the workforce is engaged in subsistence agriculture. Draft labor legislation under preparation would prohibit forced labor, discrimination, sexual harassment, and child employment in the private sector.

Bhutan's judiciary is not independent of the king, and legal protections are incomplete as a result of the lack of a fully developed criminal procedure code and deficiencies in police training. However, litigants' rights have been bolstered by legislation that provides for legal counsel in court cases. In addition, in 2003, the king approved the establishment of a five-member National Judicial Commission to oversee the appointment of judges and other judicial staff. Capital punishment was abolished in March 2004, and a new penal code was enacted in August 2004.

Arbitrary arrest, detention, and torture remain areas of concern. Approximately 70 political prisoners continue to serve lengthy prison sentences. In April 2004, the BBC reported that police had detained 46 members of banned political parties. However, the government's human rights record has improved since the early 1990s, when soldiers and police committed serious human rights abuses against Nepali-speaking Bhutanese.

The government's expulsion of tens of thousands of Nepali-speaking Bhutanese in the early 1990s, and recent bilateral efforts to repatriate them, have underscored the tentative nature of citizenship in the kingdom. Prior to the expulsions, the government stripped thousands of Southern Bhutanese of their citizenship under a 1985 law that tightened citizenship requirements. The new law required both parents to be Bhutanese citizens in order for citizenship to be conferred on a child. In addition, Bhutanese seeking to verify citizenship had to prove that they or both of their parents were residing in Bhutan in 1958.

While the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) asserts that the overwhelming majority of refugees who entered camps in Nepal have documentary proof of Bhutanese nationality, the Bhutanese government continues to maintain that many of the refugees either left Bhutan voluntarily or were illegal immigrants. A deal to repatriate a first batch of 9,000 refugees was brokered in October 2003 under considerable international pressure, although it was not certain that refugees would be able to reclaim their original lands and property, and the Bhutanese government planned that many would be housed in transit camps inside Bhutan for up to two years while they proved their loyalty to the king. Following a violent incident at one of the refugee camps in December 2003, bilateral efforts to continue the repatriation process have remained stalled, and the Bhutanese government continues to deny the UNHCR access to Bhutan. In addition, at least 20,000 refugees currently reside in India.

Since 1998, the government has been resettling Bhutanese from other parts of the country on land in southern Bhutan vacated by those who fled to Nepal. A 2002 Habitat International Coalition report documented specific cases of the appropriation of houses and land and noted that this policy will considerably complicate the refugee repatriation process.

Conditions for Nepali speakers living in Bhutan have improved somewhat, but

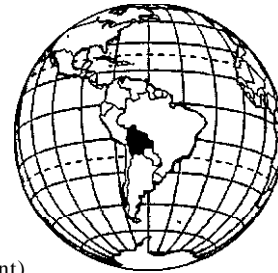
several major problems remain. According to a 2003 report by the Human Rights Council of Bhutan, a consortium of Bhutanese human rights organizations based in Nepal, ethnic Nepalese are still required to obtain official "security clearance certificates" to enter schools, receive health care, take government jobs, or travel within Bhutan or abroad. However, in a positive step, according to the U.S. State Department's 2005 religious freedom report, in early 2005, the Bhutanese government began to issue national identity cards to some ethnic Nepalese who have relatives living in the refugee camps.

Restrictions on dress and cultural practices were imposed in the late 1980s in an attempt to safeguard Bhutan's heritage. A 1989 royal decree requires all citizens, including those from minority ethnic groups, to wear the traditional dress of the ruling Drukpas in public places, including schools, government offices, and religious buildings. In September 2004, it was decreed that all women had to adhere to the custom of wearing a scarf draped over two shoulders instead of one, according to *The Economist*. In December 2004, Bhutan became the first country in the world to ban the sale and use of tobacco.

Women participate freely in social and economic life but continue to be underrepresented in government and politics despite some recent gains. The application of religious or ethnically based customary laws regarding inheritance, marriage, and divorce sometimes results in discrimination against women. There are no reports that trafficking of women or children is a problem in Bhutan.

Bolivia

Population: 8,900,000 **Political Rights:** 3
GNI/capita: \$900 **Civil Liberties:** 3
Life Expectancy: 64 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (95 percent), other (including Protestant [Evangelical Methodist]) (5 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Quechua (30 percent), Mestizo (30 percent), Aymara (25 percent), European (15 percent)
Capital: La Paz (administrative), Sucre (judicial)



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
2,3PF	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	2,3F	3,3F	3,3PF	3,3PF

Overview:

Following demonstrations for the government to nationalize the country's oil and gas industries, Bolivia's historically marginalized indigenous groups—subsistence farmers and miners living mostly in poverty—forced President Carlos Mesa from power in June 2005. Interim president Eduardo Rodriguez Veltze, a former Supreme Court chief justice, called for presidential elections to be held on December 4, saying that he would resign if the country's constitutional tribunal postponed the elections. The hard-fought campaign was conducted amid growing regional tensions

within the country and worries that, as a near-failed and poverty-stricken state, its international standing might be further eroded by the election as president of an Indian leader who pledged to launch an international campaign to legalize the coca leaf.

After achieving independence from Spain in 1825, the Republic of Bolivia endured recurrent instability and military rule. However, the armed forces, responsible for more than 180 coups in 157 years, have stayed in their barracks since 1982.

In 1993, Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada, a wealthy U.S.-educated businessman, was elected president. During his first term in office, he initiated a sweeping privatization program, and, under U.S. pressure, stepped up eradication of the country's illegal coca production. The measures provoked widespread public protests and, together with unhappiness over official corruption, caused a decline in his popularity, as well as that of his party, the center-right Nationalist Revolutionary Movement (MNR). Former-dictator-turned-democrat Hugo Banzer Suarez succeeded Sanchez de Lozada in presidential elections in 1997, but the terminally ill Banzer resigned in 2001. He was succeeded by reformist vice president Jorge Quiroga, who finished the remaining year of Banzer's term.

No candidate in the June 2002 presidential election won a majority of the popular vote; members of the National Congress were tasked with deciding the outcome of the election. They selected Sanchez de Lozada over Evo Morales, a radical Indian leader of the country's coca growers, hailed by Venezuela's Hugo Chavez as "the greatest leader in the new history of Bolivia." Concurrent congressional elections resulted in the MNR-led coalition winning 17 seats in the Senate and 71 in the Chamber of Deputies. The opposition, dominated by Morales's Movement Toward Socialism, won 10 seats in the upper house, as well as 59 deputy seats.

The world's largest exporter of coca, in 1997 Bolivia produced 270 metric tons of the leaf used to make cocaine; by 2002, U.S.-sponsored antidrug efforts had resulted in that figure dropping to 20 metric tons. However, not only did the country lose an estimated \$500 million in revenues from the sales of the leaf, more than 50,000 coca growers and their families were left without viable alternatives for their support. In 2002, Morales capitalized on the unpopularity of these policies among Bolivia's majority Indian population, who speak Spanish as a second language, use the coca leaf for traditional medicine, and have been shut out from the benefits of U.S.-backed economic reforms.

Critics claimed that an anti-coca expeditionary task force paid for by the U.S. Embassy and made up of 1,500 former Bolivian soldiers frequently accused of severe human rights abuses was itself a violation of both the Bolivian constitution and military regulations. Defenders of the force pointed out that the coca growers, who demanded respect for their own property rights, worked closely with narcotics traffickers; they claimed that the traffickers include snipers and experts in booby traps.

In 2003, Bolivian indigenous groups, workers, students, and coca growers revolted over the planned construction of a \$5 billion pipeline, once heralded as Latin America's largest infrastructure development project. They protested both the transporting of Bolivian natural gas through long-time rival Chile and the sale of the gas to the United States and Mexico. The mass protests against Sanchez de Lozada were aggravated by resentment over the failure of nearly two decades of democratic re-

form and economic restructuring to improve the lot of the Indian majority, in a country where just 3 percent of urban homes have household gas.

Sanchez de Lozada's own cabinet had become irreparably fractured over the brutal repression practiced by the security forces, whose crackdown during the protests left some 56 people dead and followed a shootout in February between soldiers and police that killed 30. In October, the violence culminated in the forced resignation of Sanchez de Lozada, who fled to Miami. Vice President Carlos Mesa, a nonpartisan former media personality and historian, assumed office and immediately appointed a cabinet that had no representative from the country's traditional parties, but included two indigenous Indian members.

On July 18, 2004, Mesa, in need of shoring up his fragile political base, prevailed overwhelmingly in a national referendum that had split the country between its Indian majority and European-descended elites. The vote, which posed five questions about the disposition of the country's oil and gas reserves—Bolivia's most important legal economic asset—permitted natural gas exports while exerting greater control over the oil and gas industries. It revived the state-owned oil and gas company, raised taxes on exports from as low as 18 percent to 50 percent, and revised previous hydrocarbons legislation.

The outcome of the referendum, which was hailed by some as a step towards greater political stability, appeared to weaken the energy sector, dampening foreign capital investment through strong state controls and higher taxes and sending Bolivia's neighbors scrambling for more stable energy sources. A dispute between Mesa and the Congress over how to implement the referendum brought opposition charges that he was exercising dictatorial powers. An Indian-led coalition vociferously pressed for full nationalization of the oil and gas sectors, as well as for full participation in rewriting the constitution, in which the country's multicultural character would be recognized. Meanwhile, the fairer-skinned people living in the energy-rich eastern lowlands pressed their own campaign for regional autonomy, including greater local control over natural gas fields concentrated in their region. Mesa's short-term victory turned into a rout, as social and political protests—some tinged with racist incidents—again spiked upward, with no relief in sight; Mesa was subsequently forced from power in June 2005.

Eduardo Rodriguez Veltze assumed the presidency after fierce negotiations with opposition groups and the likelihood of mass resistance leading to bloodshed caused those next in line for the presidency—the leaders of both houses of Congress—to decline the office in favor of the less controversial Supreme Court leader. Veltze, who called for presidential elections to be held on December 4, announced that he would resign if the country's constitutional tribunal postponed the vote. In the 2005 contest, Morales appeared to momentarily back away from demands that the energy sector be fully nationalized, only to scramble back to a maximalist position under pressure from his political allies. Meanwhile, the armed forces pledged to resist coup mongering and to "cooperate with the persistence of the democratic system."

Bolivia remains a hemisphere leader in unequal distribution of wealth, with estimates about the number of people living in poverty ranging from 70 to 80 percent. Crime in La Paz and other major cities is increasing steadily, and the national police, a decade earlier the object of an ambitious but truncated U.S. Justice Department reform effort, are considered to be both inefficient and corrupt.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Citizens of Bolivia can change their government democratically. The 2002 presidential elections were generally free and fair, although U.S. government officials say they had evidence that Colombian drug lords financed some of Evo Morales's political organization. Evidence abounds that drug money has been used to buy the favor of government officials, including that of police and military personnel. As a result of reforms that were enacted in 1993-1994 and took effect in 1997, presidential terms in office were extended from four to five years. The National Congress consists of a 130-member House of Representatives and a 27-member Senate.

In 2005, a raft of political party desertions led political figures to new political groupings in order to run for regional offices. As a consequence, the lowest number of parties for a presidential election in recent decades has entered the December 4 presidential contest. The national electoral council regulates the transmission of advertising by political candidates and parties in the mass media, placing limits on their frequency and duration. Three of the seven presidential candidates are also relative newcomers to national politics. Because there appeared to be little possibility that a clear winner would emerge in the presidential contest, and because Bolivia's electoral law does not provide for runoff elections, it seemed likely that the final choice would be made as in times past by the Congress.

Bolivians have the right to organize political parties. The principal traditional parties are the conservative Nationalist Democratic Action (ADN), the social-democratic Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), and Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada's center-right MNR. In 2002, the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) and the Pachakuti Indigenous Movement (MIP) gained significant electoral support as well.

The broad immunity from prosecution enjoyed by legislators is a serious stumbling block in the fight against official corruption. Bolivia was ranked 117 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Although the constitution guarantees freedom of expression, the media are subject to some limitations in practice. In the recent past, journalists covering corruption stories have occasionally been subjected to verbal intimidation by government officials, arbitrary detention by police, and violent attacks. However, in its 2005 country report, the Inter American Press Association noted that reporters and the media could freely report on events notwithstanding the seriousness of the conflict, and that there were no reported complaints by press associations. The press, radio, and television are mostly private, and the government does not restrict access to the internet.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitution. The government does not restrict academic freedom, and the law grants public universities autonomous status.

Bolivian law provides for the rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, although the security forces have killed several people during recent violent social protests. Government-sponsored, as well as independent, human rights organizations exist, and they frequently report on security force brutality. The congressional Human Rights Commission is active and frequently criticizes the government. However, rights activists and their families are subject to intimidation. The government requires nongovernmental organizations to register with the appropriate departmental government, although the rule is only episodically enforced. The right to organize labor unions is guaranteed by the constitution.

The judiciary, headed by the Supreme Court, remains the weakest branch of government and is corrupt, inefficient, and the object of intimidation by drug traffickers, as are Bolivia's mayoral, customs, and revenue offices. In recent years, the government has made serious efforts to improve the administration of justice, including making it more accessible. However, the selection of Supreme Court judges and members of the Judicial Council by a two-thirds vote of the National Congress—a measure adopted to prevent the majority party from filling all vacancies—has instead resulted in a political quota system that also violates the principles of independence and impartiality. In 2004, the process of judicial appointment was broadened to include allowing citizens to have access to the professional and academic backgrounds of the nominees, with the objective of strengthening the judicial branch and avoiding "party quota" distortions.

Although a new Code of Criminal Procedure recognized the conflict resolution traditions of indigenous communities, efforts to reform the judiciary have not included meaningful efforts to codify and incorporate customary law into national legislation, at least for minor crimes, as a means of reaching out to the indigenous majority. The lack of a codified system resulted in recent years in more than two dozen acts of "communal justice"—lynching—in violation of international human rights norms. Prison conditions are harsh, with some 5,500 prisoners held in facilities designed to hold half that number, and nearly three-quarters of prisoners are held without formal sentences.

In the 2001 census, approximately 62 percent of the population over 15 years of age identified themselves as indigenous, primarily from the Quechua and Aymara groups. More than 520 indigenous communities have been granted legal recognition under the 1994 Popular Participation Law, which guarantees respect for the integrity of native peoples. The languages of the indigenous population are officially recognized. However, Indian territories are often neither legally defined nor protected, and coca growers and timber thieves exploit Indian lands illegally. Some Indians are kept as virtual slaves by rural employers through the use of debt peonage, with employers charging workers more for room and board than they earn in wages. The observance of customary law by indigenous peoples is common in rural areas. In the remotest areas, the death penalty, forbidden by the constitution, is reportedly sometimes used against those who violate traditional laws or rules. In the 2002 presidential campaign, Indian advocates demanded that the constitution be amended to explicitly grant them greater participation in government and clearer land rights.

The law provides for freedom of movement within the country, and the government generally respected this right in practice. However, protesters blocked major highways at various times at different locations throughout the country, causing an estimated \$100 million in economic losses in 2005.

Violence against women is pervasive. However, no system exists to record the incidence of cases, and rape is a serious but underreported problem. Women generally do not enjoy a social status equal to that of men. Many women do not know their legal rights. Child prostitution is a problem, particularly in urban areas and in the Chapare region, as is child labor. Homosexuals are viewed as undesirables that are outside society's normal moral code. The Bolivian penal code is silent on the issue of homosexuality, but homosexuals are not free from illicit actions, including beatings and extortion, by police officers operating largely outside of the law.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

Population: 3,800,000 **Political Rights:** 4
GNI/capita: \$1,530 **Civil Liberties:** 3
Life Expectancy: 74 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Muslim (40 percent), Orthodox (31 percent), Roman Catholic (15 percent), other (14 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Serb (37.1 percent), Bosniak (48 percent), Croat (14.3 percent), other (0.6 percent)

Capital: Sarajevo

Trend Arrow: Bosnia-Herzegovina received an upward trend arrow due to growing independence of the judiciary, an agreement to reorganize the police along non-ethnic lines, and the adoption of a law on public broadcasting.



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,3PF	4,3PF

Overview:

In 2005, Bosnia-Herzegovina passed several reforms crucial to the country's integration into the European Union (EU), including a long-awaited reorganization of the police along non-ethnic lines, an agreement to establish a unified military, and a new law regulating the country's public broadcasting system. Consequently, the European Commission recommended the opening of negotiations with Bosnia on the Stabilization and Association Agreement, a contractual relationship with the EU. Despite this progress, Bosnia continued to be marred by high-profile corruption scandals. The Croatian member of the Bosnian presidency, Dragan Covic, and the Constitutional Court president, Mate Tadic, were indicted during the year for allegedly accepting bribes from businesspeople linked to organized crime.

Formerly a constituent republic within socialist Yugoslavia, Bosnia-Herzegovina is among the most ethnically diverse countries in the region. The population is comprised of three ethnic groups: Bosniacs, who are mainly Muslim; Serbs, who are largely Eastern Orthodox; and Croats, who strongly identify with the Catholic Church. As Yugoslavia began to disintegrate in the early 1990s, Bosnia-Herzegovina was recognized as an independent state in April 1992. A 43-month-long civil war immediately ensued, resulting in the deaths of tens of thousands of individuals and the forced resettlement of approximately half of Bosnia-Herzegovina's population. In November 1995, the Dayton Peace Accords brought an end to the civil war by creating a loosely knit state composed of the Bosniac-Croat "Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina" and the largely Serbian "Republika Srpska."

The Dayton accords gave the international community a decisive role in running post-Dayton Bosnia-Herzegovina, manifested in the significant powers and authorities (known as the "Bonn powers") granted to international civilian agencies such as the Office of the High Representative (OHR). Despite considerable efforts by the international community to aid Bosnia's integration, most aspects

of political, social, and economic life in the country remain divided along ethnic lines.

In the country's October 2002 presidential and legislative elections, Bosnians across the ethnic divide voted mostly for nationalist parties—contrary to the hopes of many members of the international community. The most important ethnically-based parties—the (Bosniac) Party of Democratic Action (SDA), the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS), and the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ)—took control of the joint state presidency, the joint state parliament (Parliamentary Assembly), and both entities' governments.

Widespread and high-profile corruption, which greatly reduces the public's trust in government institutions, remains one of the most significant problems facing Bosnia's democratic development. In March 2005, Dragan Covic, the Croatian member of the joint Bosnian presidency, was indicted by the Supreme Court on charges of abuse of power, corruption, and organized criminal activity dating back to the period between 2000 and 2003 when he served as finance minister of the Bosniac-Croat Federation. The court also confirmed corruption charges against Constitutional Court president Mate Tadic. Many analysts viewed these two high-profile indictments as evidence of the growing independence of the country's judiciary, which has been undergoing significant reforms under the sponsorship of the international donor community.

With the urging of the international community, Bosnia-Herzegovina's central government made some progress in 2005 in passing legislation critical to the country's integration into the European community. In September, the Bosnian leadership agreed to establish a unified military consisting of a single Defense Ministry funded by the central government. The new army will be a volunteer force of 10,000 members and is expected to begin functioning in July 2007. A long-awaited police reform, which will reorganize police along non-ethnic lines and without regard for entity boundaries, was adopted by the Republika Srpska National Assembly in October. The U.S. State Department characterized this move as the "most significant step towards Euro-Atlantic integration taken by [Bosnia-Herzegovina] since the signing of the Dayton peace accords 10 years ago."

In October, after months of deadlock, the Parliamentary Assembly passed a law regulating the public broadcasting system (PBS). The new PBS system will retain its tripartite nature: Republika Srpska and the Bosniak-Croat Federation will have their own public television stations with head offices in Sarajevo, Banja Luka, and Mostar. The three services will now belong to a single corporation. The main obstacle to the adoption of the reforms came from Herzegovinian Croats, who demanded a separate channel in the Croatian language; this request was rejected by both the Constitutional Court and by parliament. Many linguists outside of the country view Serbo-Croatian as a single language with regional, rather than ethnic, variances, which encompasses Croatian, Bosnian, and Serbian dialects.

As a result of these reforms, the European Commission recommended the opening of negotiations with Bosnia-Herzegovina on a Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA), the first major step in the European integration process.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: In general, voters in Bosnia-Herzegovina can freely elect their representatives, although the High Representative has

the authority to remove publicly elected officials from office if they are deemed to be obstructing the peace process. Ethnic divisions in Bosnia are institutionalized on several levels of government. The country does not have a single president, but a three-member rotating presidency comprised of one Bosniac, one Serb, and one Croat. The National Assembly is a bicameral body: the House of Peoples consists of 58 delegates, including 17 Bosniacs, 17 Serbs, 17 Croats, and 7 delegates belonging to other ethnic groups—all elected by the Bosnian/Croat legislature and Republika Srpska Assembly; the House of Representatives has 98 members popularly elected by secret ballot. The most important ethnically based parties include the (Bosniac) Party of Democratic Action (SDA), the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS), and the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ).

Corruption, which remains a serious problem in the country, penetrates the top levels of Bosnian leadership. In 2005, a member of the Bosnian presidency and the president of the Constitutional Court were indicted on corruption charges. There is a widespread belief of direct links between organized crime groups and extremist political forces. Bosnia-Herzegovina was ranked 88 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

A large number of independent electronic and print media organizations operate in Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, broadcast outlets and the press continue to be plagued by a relatively low standard of professional ethics, a reliance on foreign funding for survival, and the fact that most media outlets appeal only to narrow ethnic constituencies. Government-owned companies sometimes withhold advertising from media outlets that print or broadcast information critical of the regime. Journalists who criticize the government or publish politically sensitive material at times face public denunciations and threatening phone calls from government officials. In September, deputies of the SDS in Gacko announced that a reporter was unwelcome in the town after she published an article about corruption of local SDS officials. As of the end of November 2005, some 50 complaints were registered through a help-line for journalists for reporting instances of pressure by public officials. Internet access in Bosnia is open and unrestricted; however, only 5 percent of the population subscribes to an internet service.

Citizens enjoy full freedom of religious belief and practice, but only in areas where they represent a majority. A 2004 Law on Religious Freedom grants churches and religious communities legal status akin to those enjoyed by nongovernmental organizations. Some acts of vandalism against holy sites associated with all three major religions—Islam, Orthodoxy, and Roman Catholicism—occurred in 2005. In May, unknown perpetrators desecrated a Muslim cemetery in Prijedor, Republika Srpska. In October, unknown persons broke into a mosque in Bosanski Samac and arranged stones in the shape of a cross.

While the various governments in Bosnia-Herzegovina do not restrict academic freedom at institutions of higher education, ethnic favoritism in appointments to academic positions, the politicization of such appointments, and widespread corruption remain problems. According to local media sources, students can purchase a PhD diploma for approximately \$30,000 and a passing grade for around \$1,500. The curriculums of primary and secondary schools are subject to intensive political influences. In parts of Herzegovina, students of different ethnicities have been divided into different classrooms, have separate school entrances, learn from conflict-

ing textbooks, and attend classes in different time shifts. This policy of "two schools under one roof" was established under pressure from local politicians to prevent cultural assimilation. The main sensitive subjects include history, geography, and language; depending on their ethnic background, children learn from textbooks printed in Zagreb, Belgrade, or Sarajevo. The Bosnian branch of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights warns that the current situation resembles a "practice of open segregation and apartheid."

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly and association, and the various entity and cantonal governments generally respect these rights in practice. However, ethnic or religious minorities in a particular area often find it more difficult to exercise these rights than the local majority population. Although there are no legal restrictions on the right of workers to form and join labor unions, there are growing allegations of discrimination against union members.

Corruption in the judiciary, police forces, and civil service forms a considerable obstacle to the establishment of the rule of law in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The judiciary remains unduly influenced by nationalist political parties and executive branches of the government. Judges who demonstrate some independence are reported to have come under various forms of intimidation. One of the most significant developments in 2005 was the inauguration of the War Crimes Chamber of the Court of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the first court in the former Yugoslavia to try individuals for war crimes committed during the conflict that followed the disintegration of that country. While the establishment of this court is viewed as evidence of the maturing of Bosnian judicial institutions, the most sought-after indicted war criminals—former Bosnian Serb political leader Radovan Karadzic and former Bosnian Serb military leader Ratko Mladic—remain at large.

Ethnic nationalism in Bosnian society is widespread and presents a major obstacle to the country's integration. Individuals are discriminated against in terms of employment, housing, and social services in regions not dominated by their own ethnic group.

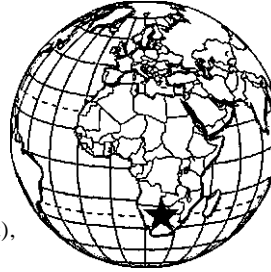
In 2004, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees announced that 1,000,000 Bosnian refugees and displaced persons had returned since the end of the war, roughly half the total number driven from their homes during the fighting. The vast majority of property restitution cases left over from the war have now been resolved. Despite these relative successes, however, many people are returning to their prewar homes only to sell their property and move back to areas in which they are members of the local ethnic majority. Consequently, Bosnia-Herzegovina is now divided into three relatively ethnically homogenous Bosniac, Croat, and Serb areas.

Women are legally entitled to full equality with men. However, they are significantly underrepresented in politics and government and face frequent discrimination in the workplace in favor of demobilized soldiers. To compensate for the absence of women in public life, political parties are legally required to include three women among the top 10 names on their lists of candidates. Domestic violence remains a problem, and the police are still largely unresponsive to violent domestic disputes. A significant problem in postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina is its emergence as a destination country for trafficked women for the purposes of prostitution, and UN reports claim that the large international civil and military presence in the country

provides considerable demand for such services. A new Bosnian criminal code that went into effect in March 2003 criminalizes trafficking in human beings and increases penalties for such offenses.

Botswana

Population: 1,600,000 **Political Rights:** 2
GNI/capita: \$3,530 **Civil Liberties:** 2
Life Expectancy: 35 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Christian (71.6 percent),
Badimo (6 percent), other (22.4 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Tswana (79 percent), Kalanga (11 percent),
Basarwa (3 percent), other (7 percent)
Capital: Gaborone



Trend Arrow: Botswana received a downward trend arrow due to the expulsion of the academic Kenneth Good for criticizing the government.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F

Overview:

While Africa's longest-lasting multiparty democracy continued to demonstrate stability, Botswana saw a slight deterioration in civil liberties in 2005. In June, Australian-born professor and frequent government critic Kenneth Good was deported from the country after President Festus Mogae declared Good a prohibited immigrant earlier in the year. The following month, two Zimbabwean journalists were expelled without adequate explanation. A court case against the government brought by 243 San (Bushmen) forced off ancestral lands by a government mandate continued during the year. Meanwhile, the government continued to vigorously combat the spread of HIV/AIDS in Botswana and announced a series of relief measures to counter drought-related food and water shortages.

Elected governments—all led by the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP)—have ruled the country since it gained independence from Britain in 1966. A referendum on whether the president should be directly elected, rather than chosen by the elected National Assembly, was withdrawn shortly before a scheduled vote in late 1997. Festus Mogae, a former central bank chief, succeeded Ketumile Masire as president in 1998 and was confirmed as the country's leader in 1999. The ruling BDP won by a wide majority in legislative elections in October 1999. Polling was deemed free and fair, although the BDP enjoyed preferential access to state-run media.

Legislative elections held in October 2004 saw the BDP firmly defeat a fractured opposition, sweeping 44 of the 57 contested seats in the National Assembly and securing Mogae a second term in office. The main opposition party, the Botswana National Front, won 12 seats, while the Botswana Congress Party won a single seat. International observers declared polling free and fair, but recommended

measures to strengthen the democratic process, including giving the opposition equal access to state-run media and setting the date for elections well in advance.

In January 2005, an application brought by 243 San to overturn a government decision to evict them from traditional lands in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve and resettle them in nearby settlements resumed hearing at the high court in Lobatse. The San, an indigenous group that traditionally lives by hunting and gathering, claim the government acted unlawfully by cutting off water, food, and health services in the reserve in 2002, forcing them to leave what they consider their ancestral lands. The government has argued that maintaining the services was prohibitively expensive and has asserted its right to clear the area for wildlife and tourism. However, the San and some rights groups contend that the government intends to exploit diamond resources in the reserve, and in June, the Botswana high court agreed to launch an investigation to discover whether diamond mining was already occurring. In August, the rights group Survival International accused the government of launching a "massive crackdown" on the San and blocking their access—along with legal representatives and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—to the game reserve. The government denied these allegations.

Economic progress in Botswana has been built on sound fiscal management and low rates of corruption, and privatization is progressing slowly. Efforts are under way to diversify an economy where diamonds account for 75 percent of export earnings and 33 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). However, unemployment is an estimated 40 percent. After drought conditions led to significant cereal and water shortages in 2005, Mogae declared the government would implement a relief package consisting of public works, price subsidies, and food aid.

AIDS has taken a toll on the economy; almost 40 percent of the population is infected with HIV. The government has taken a pioneering regional role in combating the pandemic, including offering free antiretroviral drugs.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Botswana can change their government democratically. The National Assembly, elected for five years, chooses the president to serve a concurrent five-year term; despite being elected indirectly, the executive enjoys significant power. The courts confirm the Assembly's choice when the winning party receives more than half the seats in parliament. The BDP has enjoyed a majority in the National Assembly and has held the presidency since independence. The Independent Election Commission, created in 1996, has helped consolidate Botswana's reputation for fairness in voting. President Festus Mogae has said that he will not serve a full five-year term and plans to hand over the presidency in 2008—a year before the next elections—to his appointed vice president, Seretse Ian Khama.

The House of Chiefs, which primarily serves an advisory role to parliament and the government, represents the country's eight major Setswana-speaking tribes and some smaller ones. Groups outside the eight majority tribes tend to be marginalized from the political process; under the tribal Territories Act, land in ethnic territory is distributed under the jurisdiction of majority groups. In 2004, a constitutional amendment bill providing for the election of 20 representatives from eight minority groups was introduced into parliament. A lack of representation in the House has imposed

Tswana patriarchal customary law upon minority groups, which often have different rules for inheritance, marriage, and succession.

The government passed a bill in 1994 that set up an anticorruption body with special powers for investigation, arrest, and search and seizure; the conviction rate has been more than 80 percent. Transparency International has rated Botswana the least corrupt country in Africa for more than five years. Botswana was ranked 32 out of 159 countries surveyed in the organization's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

A free and vigorous press thrives in cities and towns, and political debate is open and lively. Several independent newspapers and magazines are published in the capital. However, the government dominates the broadcast media—by far the most broadly used medium in the country—and provides inadequate access to the opposition and government critics. In addition, the government sometimes censors or otherwise restricts news sources or stories that it finds undesirable.

In August, Zimbabwean journalists Rodrick Mukumbira and Charles Chirinda were deported from Botswana after the authorities canceled their work permits; no specific reasons were given, though the Media Institute of Southern Africa expressed concern that Mukumbira's expulsion was related to his work covering the San people of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve. The private Gaborone Broadcasting Corporation television system and two private radio stations have limited reach, although Botswana easily receives broadcasts from neighboring South Africa. The government does not restrict internet access, though it is almost absent outside the cities. Botswana does not have a freedom of information law, and critics accuse the government of excessive secrecy.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed, although all religious organizations must register with the government.

Academic freedom is generally respected. However, in February, President Mogae employed the National Security Act of 1986 to declare Australian-born academic Kenneth Good a "prohibited immigrant" and deport him from Botswana. Good had criticized the government as being run by a small elite and as manipulative of state-run media; he particularly criticized the process of selecting the successor to the president and declared the appointed vice president, Seretse Ian Khama, to have "decidedly authoritarian tendencies." Upon losing his appeal to the Botswana high court in June, Good was deported.

The government generally respects rights to freedom of assembly and association, which are guaranteed by the constitution. NGOs, including human rights groups, operate openly without government harassment. However, in September, police used rubber bullets to prevent a demonstration of San from entering the Central Kalahari Game Reserve; at least 21 people were arrested, including San leader Roy Sesana. The government contended that police resorted to force after being attacked by the demonstrators. While independent unions are permitted, workers' rights to strike and bargain collectively for wages are restricted. In May, members of Botswana's private and public sector unions marched in Gaborone to protest the firing of 461 mine workers by Debswana, a company owned jointly by the government and the diamond giant DeBeers. The marchers called on the government to enact labor reforms that protect union workers from unfair dismissals and HTV/AIDS-related job discrimination.

The courts are generally considered to be fair and free of direct political interference, although the legal system is affected by staffing shortages and a large backlog of cases. Trials are usually public, and those accused of the most serious violent crimes are provided with public defenders. Civil cases, however, are sometimes tried in customary courts, where defendants have no legal counsel. Trials held under the National Security Act may be held in secret.

Authorities have been reported to occasionally use beatings and abuse to obtain evidence and elicit confessions. Botswana has been criticized by rights groups for continuing to impose corporal and capital punishment. Prisons are overcrowded and suffer from poor sanitary conditions, but the government has been making moves to address the problem by building new facilities and providing prisoners with access to HIV/AIDS testing.

Discrimination against ethnic minorities is a problem. Since 1985, authorities have relocated about 5,000 San to settlements outside the Central Kalahari Game Reserve. Almost all of those remaining—530 people—left in 2002 when the government cut off water, food, health, and social services. In October 2005, Survival International claimed the government forced another 35 San out of the reserve at gunpoint; the government argued that the 35 San wanted to leave, and guns were not used. In general, officials deny that the government forced the San to move; they insist the San were adequately compensated in money and cattle and are provided decent education and health facilities in the settlements. Government officials also have rejected assertions by critics that the government wanted to protect diamond reserves in the region from potential claims by the San, who had lived there for 30,000 years. The San tend to be marginalized educationally and do not enjoy the same employment opportunities as more privileged groups.

Illegal immigrants from Zimbabwe and Zambia are the targets of increasing xenophobia and are accused—sometimes legitimately—of criminal activity. These immigrants are subject to exploitation in the labor market. Botswana is building an electric fence along its border with Zimbabwe, ostensibly to control foot-and-mouth disease but popularly supported as a means of restricting illegal immigration. In January, the government deported two Namibian asylum seekers back to the disputed Caprivi province of that country, claiming they had forfeited their refugee status. In November, the government announced it would not renew the work permits of foreign teachers and drivers, part of a larger policy pursued by the government in recent years of restricting the employment of foreigners.

The government has restricted the entry of San-rights organizations, including the First People of the Kalahari group, from entering the Central Kalahari Game Reserve.

Women enjoy the same rights as men under the constitution, but customary laws limit their property rights. Women married under traditional laws are deemed legal minors. Progress in improving women's rights has been slow. However, in December 2004, the government enacted the Abolition of Marital Powers Act, establishing equal control of marriage estates and equal custody of children, removing restrictive domicile rules, and setting the marriage age at 18. Domestic violence is rampant, and law enforcement officers rarely intervene in domestic affairs, especially in rural areas. Trafficking in women and children for purposes of prostitution and labor is a problem. The law prohibits homosexuality.

Brazil

Population: 184,200,000 **Political Rights:** 2
GNI/capita: \$2,720 **Civil Liberties:** 2*
Life Expectancy: 71 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (73.6 percent),
 Protestant (15.4 percent), other (11 percent)
Ethnic Groups: White (53.7 percent), mixed (38.5 percent),
 black (6.2 percent), other (1.6 percent)
Capital: Brasilia



Ratings Change: Brazil's civil liberties rating improved from 3 to 2 due to continued governmental steps to enhance racial equality.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
2,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,2F

Overview:

President Luiz Inacio "Lula" da Silva's Worker's Party (PT) and its coalition partners were wracked by a series of highly explosive scandals mixing money and politics in 2005. Questions about da Silva's knowledge of the illegal acts, along with a sluggish economy, led to a decline in his popularity ratings. As levels of violence spiraled upward in many of the country's urban and rural districts, the failure of a nationwide referendum to ban the sale of guns—aimed at stemming one of the world's highest firearms murder rates—revealed citizens' growing reluctance to leave their own security in the hands of the state. Meanwhile, the government continued to take measures to close the significant racial gap in employment, education, and living standards.

After gaining independence from Portugal in 1822, Brazil retained a monarchical system until a republic was established in 1889. Democratic governance has been interrupted by long periods of authoritarian rule, most recently under the military regime that was in control from 1964 to 1985, when elected civilian rule was reestablished. However, civilian rule has been marked by frequent corruption scandals. The scandal with the greatest political impact eventually led the Congress to impeach President Fernando Collor de Mello, who was elected in 1989 and removed from office in 1992.

In early 1994, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, a market-oriented, centrist finance minister in the interim government that followed Collor de Mello's resignation, forged a three-party, center-right coalition around Cardoso's Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB). In October 1994, Cardoso won the presidency with 54 percent of the vote, against 27 percent for Luiz Inacio "Lula" da Silva, the leader of the leftist Worker's Party (PT) and an early front-runner. However, Cardoso's coalition did not have a majority in either house of the Congress.

Cardoso embarked on an ambitious plan of free-market reforms, including deep cuts in the public sector and massive privatizations of state enterprises. He also ushered in a new era of dialogue with international human rights and good-govern-

ment groups. His popular tenure in office allowed Cardoso to secure a constitutional amendment permitting presidential reelection.

In 1998, Cardoso's first-ballot reelection victory (nearly 52 percent of the votes cast) over former labor leader and political prisoner da Silva, his nearest rival, was tempered somewhat by a less convincing win at the congressional and gubernatorial levels and by published accounts of corruption among senior government officials. The PSDB's legacy of reform was further tarnished by a 2001 energy crisis, which drove a wedge between it and its fractious coalition partners.

Brazilians increasingly saw political corruption that severely limited the government's ability to address difficult problems as part of a national picture that included rampant street crime, urban sprawl, rural lawlessness, and the devastation of the Amazon basin. Violence in several major Brazilian cities, most notably Rio de Janeiro, involving rival drug gangs and the sometimes outgunned police, was fueled by the volume of cocaine and its cheaper derivatives consumed locally. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, Brazil had become the world's second-largest consumer of the illegal drug, after the United States.

During the 2002 presidential campaign, da Silva campaigned by attacking both the government's economic record—which included \$260 billion in foreign debt and soaring unemployment—and the effects of globalization, while abandoning his party's previous anti-free-market stance and its willingness to default on Brazil's debt obligations. After far outdistancing his rivals in a first-round ballot on October 6, da Silva received 52.5 million votes—more votes than any presidential candidate in Brazilian history—in the runoff election held three weeks later, besting Jose Serra, a center-left former PSDB health minister, 61 to 39 percent. However, the PT won fewer than 20 percent of the seats in both houses of Congress, while other parties won all-important governorships in the five largest of Brazil's 26 states.

On January 1, 2003, da Silva was inaugurated as president. Amid high expectations, he focused throughout the year on tackling the country's economic crisis, including the huge foreign debt, corruption, and racial inequality. With a mandate for change conditioned by his coalition's lack of a congressional majority, da Silva defied expectations by controlling inflation through fiscal discipline and tight monetary policies, which in turn boosted investor confidence and resulted in a \$30 billion credit line from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). He also instituted anti-corruption measures, maintained cordial relations with the United States despite his independent foreign policy, and quickly established himself as one of the world's foremost voices for developing nations. Brazil's progress, however, was marred by frequent police abuses, including torture and murder, and marked increases in the use of narcotics and their illegal sale by heavily armed gangs.

In 2004, the top two executives of the Brazilian Central Bank were accused of tax evasion and fraud, a claim that forced the number-two official to resign. The air of scandal grew to include da Silva's health minister and his vice president, the latter of whom was accused by a federal prosecutor of stock manipulation.

In October, the PT expanded its sphere of influence and consolidated its power in nationwide municipal elections, winning in nearly 400 cities, double the number it had won four years earlier, including in rural areas where the party has been weakest. However, the victories were overshadowed by the losses in the party strongholds of Sao Paulo, which with 10 million people is South America's largest city, and

Porto Alegre, where it had ruled for 16 years. The victor in the Sao Paulo mayoral contest was former presidential candidate Serra, whose centrist PSDB also won a total of five state capitals.

The losses of the major Sao Paulo and Porto Alegre mayoralties ultimately denied da Silva the boost in political capital that would have helped push through his legislative agenda in a fragmented Congress—led by one of the president's most outspoken opponents—and better position him for a run for reelection in 2006. Observers said he needed to stimulate greater economic growth, as well as to overhaul antiquated labor laws and excessively high taxes that form part of the "Brazilian cost"—those expenses to business that make the country less attractive to foreign investors. In addition, festering corruption scandals and high levels of violence in many of the country's urban and rural districts further dampened the president's popularity.

In March 2005, in a move that signaled Brazil's economic recovery, including record trade and budget surpluses, the government announced it did not need to renew a standby credit agreement with the IMF. However, da Silva's prospects for reelection—as well as his standing as an international leader—were weakened after high-ranking members of his own party were snarled in accusations that they offered legislators millions of dollars in bribes, had paid for party campaigns across the country with illegally obtained funds, and were engaged in kickback schemes involving public works. Although da Silva promised a full investigation and a package of anticorruption reforms, a still sluggish economy together with the resignation of top PT leaders, including the president's chief of staff, seriously tainted his own image and fractured the PT. By August, da Silva was assuring supporters that he would neither resign nor commit suicide.

As the country confronted a nearly 40,000 annual firearms death rate—25 percent higher than the firearms death rate in the United States, even though Brazil has 100,000,000 fewer citizens—nearly two-thirds of Brazilians voting in an October referendum on gun sales rejected the commercial ban on sales called for in the vote. Violent crime, corruption, and incompetence, together with a state of impunity built upon laggardly judicial processes, highly centralized federal legal codes, and mistrust of the police, have left citizens feeling impotent to assure their own security and scrambling to retreat behind fortress-like private security. The same month as the gun ban vote failed, Amnesty International issued a report saying that the use of death squads and torture was common police practice.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Brazil can change their government democratically. The October 2004 municipal elections were free and fair. A new constitution, which went into effect in 1985 and was heavily amended in 1988, provides for a president to be elected for four years and a bicameral National Congress consisting of an 81-member Federal Senate elected for eight years and a 513-member Chamber of Deputies elected for four years. A constitutional amendment adopted in 1997 permits presidential reelection, a measure that was touted as enhancing presidential accountability.

Based on the size of congressional delegations elected in 2002, the largest Brazilian political parties, in descending order, are the Workers' Party (PT); the Liberal Front Party (PFL); the Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement (PMDB); the

Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB); the Brazilian Progressive Party (PPB); the Liberal Party (PL); the Brazilian Labor Party (PTB); the Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB), and the Democratic Labor Party (PDT).

Each of these won at least 20 seats; 10 other parties are also represented in Congress.

Despite a constitutional right of access to public information, Brazil does not have specific laws to regulate and guarantee the principle of transparency provided for in the constitution. Corruption remains a serious problem in Brazil, which was ranked 62 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution guarantees freedom of expression. The press is privately owned, but foreigners can acquire only a 30 percent share of a media company and are restricted in their ability to influence editorial decisions or management selection. There are dozens of daily newspapers and numerous other publications throughout the country. The print media have played a central role in exposing official corruption. At the same time, reporters are frequently the target of threats, assaults, and occasionally even killings, especially those who focus on organized crime, corruption, or impunity issues. On July 1, 2005, police reporter and anticorruption radio journalist Jose Candido de Amorim Filho was murdered two months after being wounded in another attack. On September 8, the offices of a newspaper and two radio stations were set ablaze by unknown assailants acting in coordination with one another. On a positive note, in 2005, a court convicted the murderers of Tim Lopes, killed in June of 2002 when the *TV Globo* reporter was searching for information about parties sponsored by drug dealers in a Rio de Janeiro slum. The government does not impose restrictions on the use of the internet, although federal and state police have begun to monitor the internet to detect online recruitment by sex traffickers and to check on the activities of hate groups.

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion, and the government generally respects this right in practice. Evangelical Christian communities have grown significantly in recent years, from 9 percent of the population in 1991 to 15 percent in 2000. The government does not restrict academic freedom.

The rights of freedom of association and assembly are generally respected, as is the right to strike. Industrial labor unions are well organized; although they are politically connected, unions tend to be more autonomous of political party control than is true in most other Latin American countries. There are special labor courts.

Few Brazilians have not been affected by violent crime in their country, and in 2005, the country's criminal justice system appeared on the verge of collapse, even as the police conducted military-style raids against drug traffickers in the hills of Rio de Janeiro. The climate of lawlessness is reinforced by a largely independent but weak judiciary, which is overtaxed, plagued by chronic corruption, and virtually powerless in the face of organized crime. Because the judiciary uses its independence above all to resist reforms and stop outside investigations of judicial corruption, judicial reform has progressed less than in any other large country of the region. In addition, judges regularly employ legal formalisms to overturn government modernization efforts, including those aimed at privatizing state-owned industries and reforming the ineffective but expensive system of public welfare. Public distrust of the judiciary and ineffective policing in the neighborhoods have resulted in poor citizens taking the law into their own hands, with hundreds of reported lynchings.

Brazil has the highest rate of homicide caused by firearms of any country not at war—more than 70 percent—and the yearly number of gun deaths has more than doubled since 1992. Police say that most violent crime in the country, perhaps as much as 70 to 80 percent, is directly or indirectly related to the illegal drug trade, including most of the 37,000 annual murders. An estimated 200,000 Brazilians are employed in the narcotics business, with at least 5,000 heavily armed gang members working for various drug-trafficking groups in Rio de Janeiro alone. Since 1994, the federal government has deployed the army to quell police strikes and bring order to Rio de Janeiro's 400 slums, most of which are ruled by gangs in league or in competition with corrupt police and local politicians.

Brazil's police are among the world's most violent and corrupt. Torture is used systematically to extract confessions from prisoners, and extrajudicial killings are portrayed as shootouts with dangerous criminals. Death squads operating in at least 15 of Brazil's 26 states, often composed of off-duty state police, terrorize shantytown dwellers and intimidate human rights activists attempting to investigate abuses. In the rare instances when police officers are indicted for such abuses, convictions are not obtained; typically such indictments are dismissed for "lack of evidence." The prison system in Brazil is anarchic, overcrowded, and largely unfit for human habitation, and human rights groups charge that torture and other inhumane treatment common to most of the country's detention centers turn petty thieves into hardened criminals. Some 200,000 people are incarcerated in Brazil, nearly half of them in Sao Paulo.

Racial discrimination, long officially denied as a problem in Brazil, began to receive both recognition and remediation from the government of President Luiz Inacio "Lula" da Silva. Afro-Brazilians earn less than 50 percent of the average earnings of other citizens, and on average, Afro-Brazilian university graduates earn less than others with only high school diplomas. In a precedent-setting series of actions, upon taking office da Silva named four Afro-Brazilians to his cabinet, appointed the country's first Afro-Brazilian Supreme Court justice, and pressed for the adoption of a Racial Equality Statute to redeem his pledge that Afro-Brazilians would make up at least one-third of the federal government within five years. In July, a court ruled in favor of an Afro-Brazilian man who claimed racial discrimination in his dismissal by a hotel in Rio de Janeiro in 2003.

Large landowners control nearly 60 percent of the country's arable land, while the poorest 30 percent of the population share less than 2 percent. In rural areas, land invasions are organized by the Landless Workers' Movement (MST), which claims that the lands invaded are unused or illegally held, but many of the properties invaded are legally owned by others. The courts have increasingly supported the eviction of such land invaders, and some owners have resisted such grassroots efforts by force. The MST is a grassroots movement. It is not formally affiliated with the PT but has enjoyed some PT support.

Although Brazil abolished slavery in 1888, in 2004, the government acknowledged that at least 25,000 Brazilians work under "conditions analogous to slavery," with other estimates putting that figure as high as 50,000. Landowners who enslave workers face two to eight years in prison, in addition to fines. However, fines are minimal, and few, if any, of the modern-day slavers ever spend a day in jail.

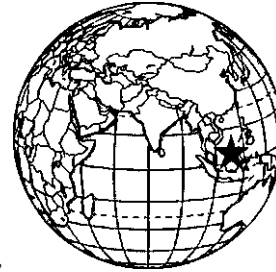
Violence against Brazil's 250,000 Indians mirrors generalized rural lawlessness.

A decree issued by former president Fernando Henrique Cardoso opened Indian land to greater pressure from predatory miners and loggers. In some remote areas, Colombian drug traffickers have been using Indians to transport narcotics. In September 2003, the new head of Brazil's Indian agency promised that the government was serious about demarcating wide swaths of ancestral lands as the first step in converting the land into indigenous reserves. Suicide is common among Indian youths.

In August 2001, Congress approved a legal code that for the first time in the country's history makes women equal to men under the law. In January 2003, a new civil code took effect, formally replacing a 1916 text that contained myriad discriminatory provisions concerning social behavior in government, in business, and at home; the new code gave women the same rights in marriage as men. Nevertheless, violence against women and children is a common problem, and protective laws are rarely enforced. Forced prostitution of children is widespread. Child labor is prevalent, and laws against it are rarely enforced. Brazil is a source country for victims of both domestic and international trafficking of human beings, the majority of whom are women and girls. An estimated 600,000 Brazilians have HIV/AIDS. In June 2001, a decree granted same-sex partners the same rights as married couples with respect to pensions, social security benefits, and taxation.

Brunei

Population: 400,000 **Political Rights:** 6
GN/capita: \$13,724 **Civil Liberties:** 5
Life Expectancy: 74 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Muslim (67 percent), Buddhist (13 percent), Christian (10 percent), other [including indigenous beliefs] (10 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Malay (67 percent), Chinese (15 percent), other (18 percent)



Capital: Bandar Seri Begawan

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,5NF	7,5NF	7,5NF	7,5NF	7,5NF	7,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview:

Following Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah's landmark 2004 announcement to revitalize Brunei's parliament (Legislative Council), which passed a constitutional amendment expanding that body via the addition of elected seats, the sultan dissolved the Council in September 2005. Meanwhile, an ongoing dispute with Malaysia over an energy-rich disputed territory continued during the year.

Consisting of two tiny enclaves on the northern coast of Borneo, Brunei is an oil-rich, hereditary sultanate that has been under the absolute rule of Sultan Hassanal

Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah for nearly four decades. The 1959 constitution vested full executive powers in the sultan while providing for five advisory councils, including the Legislative Council. In 1962, Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin annulled legislative election results after the leftist Brunei People's Party (BPP), which sought to end the sultanate, won all 10 elected seats in the 21-member council. The BPP then mounted an insurgency that was crushed by British troops, but whose legacy is still felt today. Sultan Omar invoked constitutionally granted emergency powers, which remain in force, and began ruling by decree. That practice was continued by his son, Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, who became the twenty-ninth ruler in a family dynasty that has spanned six centuries, when his father abdicated the throne in 1967. The British granted Brunei full independence in 1984.

In 2004, the sultan reconvened Brunei's Legislative Council as part of a set of measures designed to "engage the citizens." Composed of relatives and those with proven loyalty to the sultan, the Council passed a constitutional amendment to expand itself to 45 seats, by adding elected posts to the appointed positions. The Council also passed a law allowing its members to express their opinions freely, though with the significant caveat that these should not be subversive in nature or in opposition to the sultan.

In September 2005, the sultan dissolved the Council and convened a new group with 27 appointed members, all either relatives or loyalists. As of November 30, there had been no discussion of implementing the provision to hold elections. Meanwhile, the Internal Security Act, which gives the sultan virtually untrammelled powers, remained firmly in effect.

Oil and natural gas exports to Japan and other countries have given Brunei a per capita income rivaling that of many Western societies. Food, fuel, housing, schooling, and medical care are either free or subsidized, and there is virtually no poverty except for small pockets in tiny, remote villages. As energy reserves diminish, the government has attempted to diversify its economy. The oil and gas sector's contribution to gross domestic product in 2005 was 44 percent, a significant increase over recent years.

The ongoing dispute with Malaysia over the contested oil- and gas-rich Baram Delta waters off the northern Borneo coast took on a new urgency with the discovery in March 2004 of deepwater oil at Gumusut, near the disputed territory. Negotiations with Malaysia may be more successful under that country's new prime minister, Abdullah Badawi, although significant areas of dispute remain. In view of the deadlock, both sides began to consider international legal adjudication of the matter, although there had been no real movement in this direction as of November 2005.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Brunei cannot change their government democratically. The sultan wields broad powers under a state of emergency that has been in effect since 1962, and no legislative elections have been held since then. Lacking a more open political system, citizens often convey concerns to their leaders through a traditional system under which government-vetted, elected village chiefs meet periodically with top government officials. Lavish social spending and high incomes appear to compensate for these political restrictions, and there is little effort to defy prohibitions on political activity. The sultan promotes a combination of Islamic values, local Malay culture,

and allegiance to the hereditary monarchy through a national ideology called "Malay Muslim Monarchy." Critics charge that the ideology is used to legitimize an undemocratic system and has alienated Chinese residents.

Now 59 years old and one of the world's wealthiest men, Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah has made only the most superficial and cosmetic efforts in the direction of reform. The language of engaging citizens—the most common terms used to describe political reform—seems designed mainly to encourage broader international involvement in Brunei's economy and has done little to change the political system. In its second year, the 27-member unicameral Legislative Council continues to be entirely appointed and has no political standing independent of the sultan.

Two pre-2005 legal political parties, the Brunei People's Awareness Party (PAKAR) and the Brunei National Solidarity Party (BNSP) are largely inactive save for broad statements supporting the sultan. The BNSP is an offshoot of one of two parties banned in 1988. In 2005, the government permitted the registration of the National Development Party (NDP), headed by former political prisoner, exile, and insurgent leader Awang Muhammad Yasin Affendy bin Abdul Rahman. The NDP pledged to work as a partner with the government, and its leader swore an oath of loyalty to the sultan. Party activities in Brunei generally focus more on social than political issues because of the broad restrictions placed on political life.

Although hard data indicating high levels of corruption are scarce, the sultanate's vast wealth lends itself easily to profligacy among officials. The settlement of a major corruption scandal, involving the misappropriation of state funds by the sultan's brother, made headlines across the world in 2000. According to the 2005 U.S. State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices, Brunei's claims of a zero tolerance policy on corruption have yielded disappointing results. In 2005, several low-level officials were convicted of corruption, though the trial of a higher profile official—a former minister of development—was not resolved by year's end. On the other hand, there is credible evidence of government efforts to conceal corruption. Brunei was not ranked by Transparency International in its 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Journalists in Brunei face considerable restrictions. Legislation introduced in 2001 allows officials to shut down newspapers without demonstrating cause and to fine and jail journalists who write or publish articles deemed "false and malicious." Amendments to the national sedition law in 2005 strengthened prohibitions on criticizing the sultan or the national ideology. The largest daily, the *Borneo Bulletin*, practices self-censorship, though it does publish letters to the editor criticizing government policies. *Media Permata* is a smaller, Malay-language newspaper, and several Chinese-language newspapers are also published. The *News Express* was closed in 2002 after being sued by a private law firm for defamation. Brunei's only television station is state run, although Bruneians can also receive Malaysian television and satellite channels, which deliver international news channels. The government detained several Bruneians for publishing or distributing antigovernment materials on the internet in 2005.

The Shafeite sect of Islam, Brunei's official religion, permeates all levels of society in this predominantly Muslim country. While promoting Islam, Brunei's secular government has voiced concern over religious fundamentalism, and one Islamist

group, Al-Arqam, is banned. The government restricts religious freedom for non-Muslims. It prohibits proselytizing, bans the importation of religious teaching materials and scriptures such as the Bible, and ignores requests to build, expand, or repair temples, churches, and shrines. Christian images or stories with Christian themes are the most common target of censorship in Brunei.

The study of Islam and Malay Muslim Monarchy are mandatory in schools, and the teaching of other religions is prohibited. In July, the sultan replaced Education Minister Abdul Aziz—who sought to establish a conservative Islamic curriculum in the schools—in favor of a minister who pledged to emphasize more general academic subjects that the government generally respects.

Freedom of assembly is restricted under emergency powers that have been in effect since 1962. Most nongovernmental organizations are locally based professional or business groups and must receive permission to operate under the Companies Act. All trade unions must be registered with the government. Brunei's three trade unions are all in the oil sector, but they represent less than 5 percent of that industry's workforce. Strikes are illegal, and collective bargaining is not recognized. There was no union activity of any sort in the country in 2005.

Courts in Brunei generally "appeared to act independently," according to the U.S. State Department Human Right Country Report, despite the fact that the constitution does not specifically provide for an independent judiciary. The legal system is based on British common law, although Sharia (Islamic law) takes precedence in areas including divorce, inheritance, and some sex crimes. Sharia does not apply to non-Muslims, although a commission of lawyers has met throughout the year to integrate Sharia and non-Sharia law and to provide a single legal framework in the country.

While the government has faced few overt threats since the 1960s, authorities occasionally detain suspected antigovernment activists under Brunei's Internal Security Act. The act permits detention without trial for renewable two-year periods. In 2005, several people were detained for making subversive, antigovernment comments in an internet chat room, while others were arrested, also on charges of subversion, for involvement in a counterfeit ring.

Freedom of movement of persons other than former political persons is not restricted. Most citizens enjoy reasonable personal autonomy, but many "stateless" people—mostly ethnic Chinese—are not accorded full citizenship status and thus lack rights, including the right to own land and to have access to subsidized medical care. Foreign workers, especially female domestic servants, are most likely to be subjected to economic exploitation.

Women remain unequal to men in areas such as divorce and inheritance, in accordance with Islamic law. Nevertheless, the number of women entering the workforce has increased substantially over the past several years. Women in government-run institutions must wear the *tudong* (a traditional head covering); many educational institutions also pressure non-Muslim students to wear it as part of a uniform. Although violence against women has been a problem, the government has made some attempts in the past year to address this issue. Starting in 2002, an amendment in the National Registration and Immigration Act allowed female Bruneian citizens to pass citizenship on to their children.

Bulgaria

Population: 7,700,000 **Political Rights:** 1

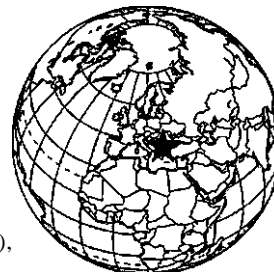
GNI/capita: \$2,130 **Civil Liberties:** 2

Life Expectancy: 72 **Status:** Free

Religious Groups: Bulgarian Orthodox (82.6 percent), Muslim (12.2 percent), other (5.2 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Bulgarian (83.9 percent), Turk (9.4 percent), Roma (4.7 percent), other (2 percent)

Capital: Sofia



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	1,3F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F

Overview:

Parliamentary elections held in June 2005 resulted in no party gaining a majority, and nearly two months passed before consensus was reached and a government was formed. The delay was considered a setback for Bulgaria's aspiration to join the European Union (EU) in January 2007.

Bulgaria became independent from the Ottoman Empire in 1878. After originally siding with Germany in World War I, Communist Todor Zhivkov ultimately persuaded a none-too-reluctant army to side with the Russians. A Communist government was established in Bulgaria after the Soviet Red Army swept through the country toward the end of 1944. From 1954 to 1989, Zhivkov ruled the country. His 35-year reign ended when a massive prodemocracy rally in Sofia was inspired by the broader political changes sweeping across Eastern Europe at the end of the 1980s.

In the immediate post-Communist period, the main political actors in the country were the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) and the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP). The BSP dominated the legislature from 1989 to 1997, and the UDF was in power from 1997 to 2001. The UDF was credited with significant success in privatizing and restructuring most of the state economy as well as winning an invitation for European Union (EU) membership talks.

In 2001, Bulgaria's former child king, Simeon II, returned from exile and formed the National Movement for Simeon II (NDSV). Promising quicker integration into Europe, Simeon attracted a large segment of the electorate. In the 2001 elections to Bulgaria's National Assembly, the NDSV won 120 of the 240 seats; the UDF, 51; and the Coalition for Bulgaria (which includes the BSP), 48. The NDSV formed a coalition with the small Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF). By 2003, however, there were signs that Simeon's popularity was beginning to wane.

The government lost its majority in 2004 when 13 members of the Assembly formed their own faction. Their new New Time Party joined the ruling coalition in February, but lack of transparency in the government's handling of privatization of the state-owned tobacco company magnified divisions between the parties.

By 2005, the government of Prime Minister Simeon Saxe-Coburg (Simeon II) had lost popular support owing to economic difficulties and widespread corruption. A

controversial government plan to boost turnout in the elections involved a lottery in which voters could win prizes ranging from cell phones to a new car. Nevertheless, as a result of voter fatigue, turnout was the lowest in Bulgaria's post-Communist history.

In the June 2005 legislative elections, the BSP captured the most votes but failed to gain a majority. The NDSV came in second, and the MRF third. The new radical nationalist group Attack ran for the first time; it won 8 percent of the vote, generally believed to have come from both the right and the left, but no major party would agree to formally cooperate with it. Drawn-out negotiations between the BSP, the NDSV, and the MRF finally resulted in the formation, in August, of a fragile coalition—fragile given political differences, especially between the NDSV and the others—that controls 169 assembly seats. Sergei Stanishev of the BSP was chosen as prime minister.

Bulgaria signed its accession treaty with the EU in April. It is scheduled to join in January 2007, but the EU could delay for one year if Bulgaria fails to meet its standards. The long time required to form a government after the 2005 elections was widely considered to have slowed Bulgaria on its EU course, given that many reforms still need to be passed.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Bulgarians can change their government democratically. The unicameral National Assembly, composed of 240 members, is elected every four years. Georgi Parvanov of the BSP was elected in November 2001 to a five-year term as president. The president serves as head of state and fills other executive duties. The Assembly chooses the prime minister.

The constitution forbids political groups that act against national integrity, call for ethnic or religious hostility, or create secret military structures. The June 2005 elections included 22 parties (as opposed to 51 in 2001), but were dominated by the center-right NDSV, the left-wing BSP (which has moved away from its Communist past), and the centrist Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF). Muslims in Bulgaria, mostly of Turkish origin, are almost exclusively represented by the MRF. Several parties in the 2005 elections represented the Roma (Gypsy) minority.

Corruption is a serious concern in Bulgaria. Although overall levels have decreased, investigation and prosecution of cases remain weak. Organized crime dominates several sectors of the economy. A February legal amendment provides for measures to combat high-level corruption, but implementation has not followed through. Bulgaria does have laws in place to promote government transparency, although implementation is incomplete. A new law on financing of political parties was passed in March. Bulgaria was ranked 55 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Bulgarian media have evolved considerably since the end of communism, but political interference and economic pressures leading to self-censorship are problematic. Although the media market is competitive, flawed regulations in some cases and inadequate enforcement in others impede media independence. For example, a Romanian journalist arrested in Bulgaria in November 2004 for filming with a concealed camera was fined 1,000 leva (US\$682.60) in December. Although a Bulgarian law does make such action illegal, it had never previously been used against a jour-

nalist. In contrast, libel cases are generally decided in favor of media freedom. Internet access is not restricted.

Freedom of religion is generally respected in Bulgaria. The government has in recent years made it difficult for "nontraditional" religious groups—those outside the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Islamic, and Jewish communities—to obtain registration permits allowing them to be active. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church has been divided for 12 years between those who support Bishop Maxim, appointed by the Bulgarian Communist Party 30 years ago, and those who support Bishop Inokentii, who was canonically elected. The Bulgarian government favors the former, and it further institutionalized this preference through the 2002 Confessions Act—essentially a law on religion that makes Bishop Maxim the only representative of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and thereby withdraws the right of Bishop Inokentii's priests to preach. The Council of Europe and others have criticized the act for restricting freedom of religion.

The government does not restrict academic freedom.

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly and association, and the government generally respects these rights. The government prohibits the formation of groups that propagate ethnic, religious, or racial hatred, or that advocate achieving their goals through the use of violence. There have been reports that the government has denied ethnic Macedonians and other groups less favorable to the government the right to hold public gatherings. Trade union rights are in place, although laws are insufficient to prevent employers from discriminating against members.

Bulgaria's complicated judicial system is enshrined in the constitution, thus inhibiting reform. Bulgaria is in its fourth year of a judicial reform strategy that has produced some results, but further reforms are needed. Corruption in the judiciary is a major problem. In addition, prosecutors have used their position for political purposes, such as intimidation of whistle-blowers. A new Penal Code adopted in October is designed to improve the timeliness, objectivity, and transparency of the pre-trial process.

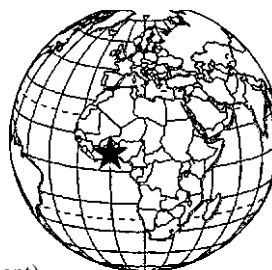
The number of complaints of torture and ill-treatment continues to decline, although the practice has not ended altogether. Mistreatment by police is less common as a result of human rights training. Still, international watchdogs continue to report problems, including the government's failure to investigate those allegations of ill-treatment of detainees that do arise. Authorities do not consistently respect procedural rights in detention, and use of excessive force by law enforcement has led to injury and even death. Prison conditions are often inadequate.

The situation for minorities has improved in recent years, but Roma in particular continue to face discrimination in employment, health care, education, and housing. Roma are also disproportionately affected by police ill-treatment. A 2003 antidiscrimination law has resulted in a number of landmark judgments in cases of discrimination against Roma, but overall the situation has not improved.

A national plan for equal opportunities for men and women was adopted in December 2004, but funding is insufficient. About 20 percent of National Assembly members are female. Domestic violence is an ongoing concern. Bulgaria is a source country for victims of human trafficking, and internal trafficking is increasing. Roma children are disproportionately affected.

Burkina Faso

Population: 13,900,000 **Political Rights:** 5
GNI/capita: \$300 **Civil Liberties:** 3*
Life Expectancy: 44 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Indigenous beliefs (40 percent),
 Muslim (50 percent), Christian (10 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Mossi (over 40 percent), other [including
 Gurunsi, Senoufo, Lobi, Bobo, Mande and Fulani] (60 percent)
Capital: Ouagadougou



Ratings Change: Burkina Faso's civil liberties rating improved from 4 to 3 due to continued governmental steps to combat trafficking in persons and the practice of female genital mutilation.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	5,4PF	5,3PF

Overview:

Amid controversy over his eligibility to run for a third term, President Blaise Compaore was reelected to a five-year term in November 2005 with over 80 percent of the vote.

Election observers described the results as generally credible but noted the widespread and unfair use of government resources on behalf of Compaore's campaign. In July, Burkina Faso signed a multilateral cooperation agreement to combat child trafficking. Meanwhile, the government continued to take significant steps to combat trafficking in persons, including children, and the widespread practice of female genital mutilation (FGM).

After gaining independence from France in 1960, Burkina Faso suffered a succession of army coups. In 1987, Blaise Compaore took over the presidency in a coup against members of a junta that had seized power four years earlier. The populist, charismatic President Thomas Sankara and 13 of his closest associates were murdered, and many more Sankara supporters were executed two years later.

The promulgation of a new constitution in 1991 paved the way for a multiparty system, but widespread violence and an opposition boycott discredited the December 1991 presidential election, which Compaore won by default. He was returned to office for a second seven-year term in November 1998 with nearly 88 percent of the vote. Opposition parties boycotted the legislative elections of both 1991 and 1997.

The assassination in December 1998 of internationally recognized journalist Norbert Zongo, who had been investigating the death of an employee of President Compaore's brother, ignited a wider political crisis. Zongo's murder provided an opportunity for opposition parties, human rights organizations, civic groups, and media representatives to draw domestic and international attention to the government's weak commitment to accountable and transparent democracy. While the murderers have neither been identified nor brought to justice despite the appointment of a special prosecutor to the case, Zongo's death led to important political reforms—in particular, the creation of the Independent Electoral Commission and revisions to

the electoral code that included the establishment of a single-ballot voting system, public financing for parties presenting candidates, and the creation of a third vice president position within the National Assembly, to be held by the designated opposition leader.

These reforms contributed to the success of the 2002 National Assembly elections, the first to be conducted in the absence of a major opposition boycott. The ruling Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP) won 57 of the 111 National Assembly seats, compared with 101 during the 1997 polls. Opposition parties fared better than they had any time previously, capturing the remainder of the seats.

Despite raised popular expectations for improved political competition, however, the ruling party continues to dominate government institutions. A 2001 constitutional amendment stipulates that the presidential term of office is five years, renewable once. Compaore has served two consecutive, elected, seven-year terms, but his supporters claim that these term limits cannot be enforced retroactively. His decision to accept the CDP's nomination for the November 2005 presidential election increased public skepticism over the government's commitment to a fair electoral process, while proposed revisions to the electoral code thought to favor the ruling party exacerbated political tensions between the CDP and many opposition parties. The inability of opposition leaders to agree on a coordinated election strategy against Compaore heightened tensions among opposition parties. A total of 12 candidates contested the November elections, which Compaore won with over 80 percent of the vote. Voter turnout was less than 60 percent. While election observers concluded that the results were generally credible, they also noted the widespread and unfair use of government resources on behalf of the incumbent's campaign.

Burkina Faso's relations with neighboring Cote d'Ivoire, where thousands of Burkinabe and other West African migrant workers have been entangled in an ethno-religious conflict over land and resources, have been strained since the conflict began in 2002, though Burkina Faso consistently denies allegations of support for Ivorian rebels.

Burkina Faso has in the past been cited in reports by the New York-based Human Rights Watch, the U.S. State Department, the United Nations, and others as a transshipment point for the region's illicit trade in small arms and diamonds. However, this trade appears to have declined since the removal from power of former Liberian President Charles Taylor in 2003.

Burkina Faso ranked 175 of 177 on the UN Development Program's 2005 human development index. More than 80 percent of the population relies on subsistence agriculture, and the economy is highly vulnerable to climatic conditions and international commodity prices. War in neighboring Cote d'Ivoire has meant increased costs for routing trade via the ports of Ghana, Togo, and Benin. The influx of more than 350,000 ethnic Burkinabe from Cote d'Ivoire has strained the country's weak infrastructure.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Burkina Faso cannot change their government democratically. Opposition parties boycotted elections in the 1990s, and the 1998 and 2005 presidential elections were marked by the ruling party's heavy use of state resources and media. A 2001 constitutional amendment stipulates that the presidential term of office is five years, re-

newable once. The unicameral National Assembly has 111 members, elected for five-year terms. The legislature is independent, but susceptible to influence from the executive branch. Despite gains in the 2002 elections, opposition parties have failed to coalesce around issues of shared concern. The National Assembly's minority leader declared his support for Compaore's candidacy.

Changes to Burkina Faso's electoral code in 2004 designate the country's 45 provinces, instead of its 13 regions, as electoral units. Opposition members insist that this gives an unfair advantage to larger parties, in particular the CDP, because of the numerical and logistical constraints of fielding candidates and polling observers in all 45 electoral units.

Recent electoral reforms have led to a surge in growth of new political parties, which currently number more than 100. Coalition building is difficult, as politicians have tended to address differences by creating new parties that often reflect little more than the personal rivalries of their leaders. The opposition is fragmented, and many parties are characterized by ambiguous political ideologies and platforms of limited substance. Various ethnic groups are represented in Burkina Faso's government, including 17 minority members in the cabinet and 61 minority representatives in the National Assembly.

Two anticorruption bodies were created in 2001, and there is increased public debate on the subject. REN-LAC, a nationwide anticorruption network of more than 30 civic organizations, is particularly active in raising awareness and pressing for reform. Corruption continues to be a serious problem within the police and customs services. Burkina Faso was ranked 70 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Burkina Faso has a relatively free press, though many media outlets practice self-censorship. Freedom of speech is protected by the constitution and generally respected in practice. At least 50 private radio stations, a private television station, and numerous independent newspapers and magazines function with little governmental interference. Both the state-owned and private media play an important role in public debate, and even state-owned outlets are sometimes critical of government policies and decisions. There is liberal internet access.

Burkina Faso is a secular state, and religious freedom is respected. The government does not restrict academic freedom.

Freedom of assembly is constitutionally protected and generally respected, though demonstrations are sometimes suppressed or banned. Many nongovernmental organizations, including human rights groups that have reported detailed accounts of abuses by security forces, operate openly and freely. Labor union rights are provided for in the constitution. Unions are a strong force in society and routinely stage strikes over wages, human rights abuses, and the impunity of security forces.

The judiciary is subject to executive interference in political cases. The rule of law generally prevails in civil and criminal cases, though proceedings are hampered and often delayed because of limited resources or citizens' lack of understanding of their rights. Police often ignore prescribed limits on detention, search, and seizure, and on occasion used excessive force that resulted in death. Harsh prison conditions are characterized by overcrowding, poor diet, and minimal medical attention.

Incidents of discrimination against the country's various ethnic groups do not appear to be widespread.

There are no restrictions on travel, residency or employment, though security forces routinely perform identity checks on travelers and often levy informal road taxes.

Membership in the ruling party is advantageous for businessmen and traders bidding on public contracts. Burkina Faso's weak judicial system and the recourse to traditional courts in rural areas limit the protection of property rights.

Discrimination against women is commonplace, especially in rural areas. Constitutional and legal protections for women's rights are poorly understood or enforced. The practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) is still widespread, though the government reports that the incidence of FGM has decreased by 40 percent since 1996, when legislation made it a crime. More than 600 persons have been sentenced since 1996 for perpetrating FGM. Abortion is prohibited, with exceptions to preserve the life of the mother or in cases involving rape, incest, or fetal impairment. Burkina Faso is a transit point for the trafficking of women and children for forced labor and prostitution. As part of a broader regional effort, the government has increased efforts to stop these activities, and in 2005 it signed with its neighbors a multilateral cooperation agreement to combat child trafficking across West Africa.

Burma (Myanmar)

Population: 50,500,000 **Political Rights:** 7

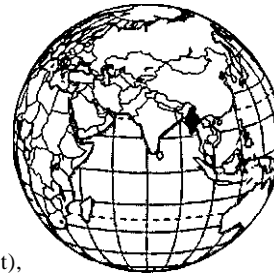
GNI/capita: \$105 **Civil Liberties:** 7

Life Expectancy: 60 **Status:** Not Free

Religious Groups: Buddhist (89 percent),
Christian (4 percent), other (7 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Burman (68 percent), Shan (9 percent),
Karen (7 percent), Rakhine (4 percent), Chinese (3 percent),
Mon (2 percent), Indian (2 percent), other (5 percent)

Capital: Rangoon



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF

Overview:

Following a leadership purge in late 2004, Burma remained under the firm grip of hard-liners within the military junta during 2005, and prospects for political reform seemed dimmer than ever. Although the National Convention, tasked with drafting a new constitution, was reconvened again by the regime in February, it was boycotted by the main opposition parties and thus failed to provide a veneer of legitimacy for the junta's strategy of positioning it as a first step on a planned "road map to democracy." Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) party, spent her 60th birthday under house arrest, and the activities of the NLD were severely curtailed. Meanwhile, a wide range of human rights violations against political activists, as well as journalists, civil society actors, and members of ethnic and religious minority groups continued unabated throughout the year.

After being occupied by the Japanese during World War II, Burma achieved independence from Great Britain in 1948. The military has ruled since 1962, when the army overthrew an elected government buffeted by an economic crisis and a raft of ethnic-based insurgencies. During the next 26 years, General Ne Win's military rule helped impoverish what had been one of Southeast Asia's wealthiest countries.

The present junta, currently led by General Than Shwe, dramatically asserted its power in 1988, when the army opened fire on peaceful, student-led, prodemocracy protesters, killing an estimated 3,000 people. In the aftermath, a younger generation of army commanders created the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) to rule the country. However, the SLORC refused to cede power after it was defeated in a landslide election by the National League for Democracy (NLD) in 1990. The junta jailed dozens of members of the NLD, which won 392 of the 485 parliamentary seats in Burma's first free elections in three decades.

Than Shwe and several other generals who headed the junta refashioned the SLORC as the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) in 1997. The generals appeared to be trying to improve the junta's international image, attract foreign investment, and encourage an end to U.S.-led sanctions linked to the regime's grim human rights record. In late 2000, encouraged by the efforts of UN special envoy Razali Ismail, the regime began holding talks with NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi, which led to an easing of restrictions on the NLD by mid-2002. Suu Kyi was released from house arrest and was allowed to make several political trips outside the capital, and the NLD was permitted to reopen a number of its branch offices.

Suu Kyi's growing popularity and her revitalization of the NLD during the first half of 2003 apparently rattled hard-liners within the regime. On May 30, a deadly ambush on an NLD convoy by SPDC supporters, in which an unknown number of people were killed or injured, illustrated the lengths to which hard-liners within the SPDC would go to limit an NLD challenge. Suu Kyi and dozens of other NLD officials and supporters were detained following the attack, NLD offices were once again shut down, and universities and schools were temporarily closed in a bid to suppress wider unrest. Since then, authorities have maintained their focus on containing the popularity of the NLD party. Suu Kyi was released from prison in September 2003 but remains under house arrest, as have other senior NLD leaders. Periodic arrests and detentions of political activists and other perceived threats to the regime, including journalists and students, remain the norm.

In August 2003, the junta announced that the National Convention (NC), which has the responsibility for drafting principles for a new constitution but which had not met since 1996, would be reconvened in May 2004 as part of its new "road map to democracy." However, it was boycotted by the main political parties, including the NLD and the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD), who did not want to take part under conditions of extreme political repression. The proceedings themselves were heavily restricted in terms of format and operations—authorities hand-picked most of the delegates and limited the scope of permissible debate from the outset—which did nothing to enhance the junta's legitimacy. The NC was adjourned in July 2004; although it was reconvened in February 2005, this six-week session was again boycotted by the NLD and SNLD. In a similarly restricted atmosphere, delegates agreed to draft principles that enshrine the military's role in government through the reservation of 25 percent of seats for the military in any future parliament.

Meanwhile, relations between the SPDC and numerous ethnically based rebel groups have remained tense and in several cases worsened during the year. The SPDC had verbally agreed to an informal ceasefire with the Karen National Union (KNU) in late 2003, but skirmishes between the two sides have continued, as have human rights violations in the Karen and other ethnic-minority states, and talks between both sides were put on hold during 2005. After a crackdown on Shan groups in February, the ceasefire agreement with the Shan State National Army (SSNA) unraveled, and an upsurge in fighting was reported from the Shan border areas.

This deterioration in relations may be the result of an October 2004 purge in which Khin Nyunt, the prime minister and head of military intelligence (MI), was removed from office and placed under house arrest. A relative moderate, Khin Nyunt had advocated limited dialogue with both the NLD and Burma's armed ethnic factions and had spearheaded several recently negotiated ceasefire agreements. His dismissal was followed by a widespread purge of his key allies, the dismantlement of the MI ministry itself, and takeovers of Khin Nyunt's extensive business interests. Khin Nyunt was reportedly given a 44-year suspended sentence for corruption in July and remains under house arrest, while at least 38 other relatives and associates have been sentenced to long prison terms of at least 20 years each. His replacement by hard-liner Lieutenant-General Soe Win—who has been accused of masterminding the May 2003 attack on Suu Kyi's motorcade—is a signal that the junta will continue to resist all pressure to reform.

Since the purge, there have been persistent rumors of tension within the junta's top hierarchy, and 2005 saw several reshuffles of both administrative and military personnel. Authorities are also moving ahead with plans to shift the country's capital 600km inland, to Pinyinmana. Several bombings took place during the year, the most serious of which was a series of blasts in Rangoon that killed several dozen people and injured 162 in early May. Following the attacks, authorities banned three more opposition groups, citing their alleged involvement in the blasts. In September, the NLD called on the SPDC to reopen a limited dialogue with opposition parties, but thus far the junta has continued to take a hard line with both their political opponents and with the ethnic armed groups, and prospects for meaningful positive change remain dim.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Burma cannot change their government democratically. Burma continues to be ruled by one of the world's most repressive regimes. The SPDC rules by decree; controls all executive, legislative, and judicial powers; suppresses nearly all basic rights; and commits human rights abuses with impunity. Military officers hold most cabinet positions, and active or retired officers hold most top posts in all ministries, as well as key positions in both the administration and the private sector.

Since rejecting the results of the 1990 elections and preventing the elected parliament from convening, the junta has all but paralyzed the victorious NLD Party. Authorities have jailed many NLD leaders, pressured thousands of party members and officials to resign, closed party offices, harassed members' families, and periodically detained hundreds of NLD supporters at a time to block planned party meetings. After being allowed somewhat greater freedom during 2002, the NLD was subjected to another crackdown in 2003 that has largely continued. Although the party's main

office was allowed to reopen in April 2004, its branch offices remain closed and several key party leaders, including Aung San Suu Kyi, remain under house arrest. In the run-up to the National Convention session held in February 2005, opposition party leaders and members faced heightened surveillance, intimidation, and arrest as they attempted to engage in peaceful political activities, according to Amnesty International.

Besides the NLD, there are more than 20 ethnic political parties that remain suppressed by the junta. A 2003 International Crisis Group report noted that ethnic-minority groups feel that they are denied a role in national political life and do not have a chance to influence policy decisions that affect them. Of the 28 ethnic parties that participated in the 2004 session of the National Convention, 13 raised issues concerning greater local autonomy, according to Amnesty International. In February 2005, at least 10 ethnic Shan politicians were arrested, including the senior leaders of the SNLD party, and in November, 9 were sentenced to lengthy prison terms and transferred to undisclosed locations.

In a system that lacks both transparency and accountability, official corruption is rampant at both the national and local levels. Burma was ranked 155 out of 159 countries surveyed in the Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The junta sharply restricts press freedom, owning or tightly controlling all daily newspapers and broadcast media. It subjects private periodicals to prepublication censorship, and also restricts the importation of foreign news periodicals. After the October 2004 purge, the new hard-line leadership took control of the censorship bureau and suspended 17 publications, most of them indefinitely. Under new censorship rules that came into effect in July, media are ostensibly allowed to offer criticism of government projects as long as it is deemed "constructive" and are allowed to report on natural disasters and poverty as long as it does not affect the national interest. Ironically, however, the junta forbade the *Myanmar Times* from publishing a Burmese translation of the new regulations, according to the Southeast Asian Press Alliance. In May, authorities imposed a blackout on news related to the Rangoon bombings. Although several journalists and writers were released from jail throughout the year, others were arrested, and a number continue to serve lengthy sentences as a result of expressing dissident views. While some people have access to international shortwave radio or satellite television, the Committee to Protect Journalists notes that those caught accessing foreign broadcasts can face jail time. The internet, which operates in a limited fashion in the cities, is tightly regulated and censored.

Ordinary Burmese generally can worship relatively freely. However, the junta shows preference for Theravada Buddhism, discriminating against non-Buddhists in the upper levels of the public sector and coercively promoting Buddhism in some ethnic-minority areas. The regime has also tried to control the Buddhist clergy by placing monastic orders under a state-run committee, monitoring monasteries, and subjecting clergy to special restrictions on speech and association. A number of monks remain imprisoned for their prodemocracy and human rights work. Burma was once again designated a "country of particular concern" by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, whose 2005 report noted severe and systematic official discrimination against members of minority religious groups. Violence and discrimination against the Muslim minority continues to be a problem, the most serious of which was a deadly flare-up that occurred in Arakan state in January 2005. According

to a 2004 report by the Chin Human Rights Organization, the regime has targeted the predominantly Christian Chin ethnic minority, destroying churches, intimidating and assaulting members of the clergy, and supporting coerced conversions to Buddhism.

Academic freedom is severely limited. Teachers are subject to restrictions on freedom of expression and publication and are held accountable for the political activities of their students. Since the 1988 student prodemocracy demonstrations, the junta has sporadically closed universities, limiting higher education opportunities for a generation of young Burmese. Most campuses were relocated to relatively isolated areas as a measure to disperse the student population. According to Amnesty International, teachers have recently been imprisoned for talking about or possessing books on historical political figures, and the licenses of private tutors have been withdrawn on political grounds.

Authorities continued to infringe on citizens' privacy rights by arbitrarily searching homes, intercepting mail, and monitoring telephone conversations. Laws criminalize the possession and use of unregistered electronic devices, including telephones, fax machines, computers, modems, and software.

Freedom of association and assembly is restricted. An ordinance prohibits unauthorized outdoor gatherings of more than five people, and authorities regularly use force to break up peaceful demonstrations and prevent pro-democracy activists from organizing events or meetings. Since the May 2003 crackdown, an increasing number of people have been detained for attempting to exercise their rights to freedom of association and expression. However, some public sector employees, as well as other ordinary citizens, are induced to join the pro-junta mass mobilization organization, the Union Solidarity and Development Association. Domestic human rights organizations are unable to function independently, and the regime generally dismisses critical scrutiny of its human rights record from international nongovernmental organizations. Although Amnesty International was given permission to make two trips to Burma in 2003, it has not been allowed back into the country. Both UN special envoys assigned to monitor the situation in Burma have not been allowed into the country since March 2004, and one resigned in 2005 due to his inability to investigate the situation inside Burma.

Independent trade unions, collective bargaining, and strikes are illegal, and several labor activists are serving long prison terms for their political and labor activities. The regime continues to use forced labor despite formally banning the practice in October 2000. The International Labor Organization (ILO) and other sources report that soldiers routinely force civilians, including women and children, to work without pay under harsh conditions; in 2005, the ILO stated that Burma was the world's most "extreme case" of forced labor. Laborers are commandeered to construct roads, clear minefields, porter for the army, or work on military-backed commercial ventures. The practice appears to be most widespread in states dominated by ethnic minorities. Although the ILO monitors the situation on the ground, its personnel and suspected informants remain subject to harassment from the authorities, and in October, the junta threatened to withdraw from the ILO altogether.

The judiciary is not independent. Justices are appointed or approved by the junta and adjudicate cases according to the junta's decrees. Administrative detention laws allow people to be held without charge, trial, or access to legal counsel for up to five years if the SPDC feels that they have threatened the state's security or sovereignty.

Some basic due process rights are reportedly observed in ordinary criminal cases, but not in political cases, according to the U.S. State Department's 2005 human rights report. Pervasive corruption, the misuse of overly broad laws, and the manipulation of the courts for political ends continue to deprive citizens of their legal rights.

Detailed reports issued by Amnesty International have raised a number of concerns regarding the administration of justice, including laws and practices regarding detention, torture, trial, and conditions of imprisonment. Political prisoners are frequently held incommunicado in pretrial detention, which facilitates the use of torture and other forms of ill-treatment, and are denied access to family members, legal counsel, and medical care. In addition, political trials are conducted summarily and do not meet international standards of fairness. Prisons and labor camps are overcrowded, although conditions in some facilities have reportedly improved gradually since the regime began allowing the International Committee of the Red Cross access to prisons in 1999.

The junta has periodically released some of those people arrested in the aftermath of the May 2003 violence. Following Khin Nyunt's removal, thousands of prisoners were released in November 2004, of which several dozen were being held on politicized charges. However, more than 1,350 political prisoners remain incarcerated, according to Amnesty International, and at least 33 prison sentences were handed down for political reasons during 2004. Most prisoners are held under broadly drawn laws that criminalize a range of peaceful activities, such as distributing pro-democracy pamphlets or reporting on human rights violations. The frequently used Decree 5/96 of 1996 authorizes jail terms of up to 20 years for aiding activities "which adversely affect the national interest." After the October 2004 purge, jails were also filled with suspected allies of General Khin Nyunt; several thousand were arrested, and beginning in November 2004, a number were sentenced to lengthy prison terms.

The UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva condemns the regime each year for committing grave human rights abuses. Annual resolutions commonly highlight a systematic pattern of extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions; arrests, incommunicado detention, and "disappearances"; rape, torture, inhuman treatment, and forced labor, including the use of children; and forced relocation and the denial of freedom of assembly, association, expression, religion, and movement. Police and security forces that commit such abuses operate in a climate of impunity, as such incidents are not commonly investigated and prosecutions are rare.

Some of the worst human rights abuses take place in the seven states dominated by ethnic minorities, who comprise approximately 35 percent of Burma's population. In these border states, the *tatmadaw*, or Burmese armed forces, kill, beat, rape, and arbitrarily detain civilians. For example, a April 2004 report issued by the Karen Women's Organization documents numerous cases of rape committed against Karen women by members of the army as part of a strategy to intimidate, control, and shame ethnic-minority populations. As enumerated in an Amnesty International report released in September, soldiers also routinely destroy property and seize livestock, cash, property, food, and other goods from villagers.

Tens of thousands of ethnic minorities in Shan, Karenni, Karen, and Mon states remain in squalid and ill-equipped relocation centers set up by the army. The army has forcibly moved the villagers to the sites since the mid-1990s as part of its counterinsurgency operations. The army continues to forcibly uproot villagers; press

reports indicate that at least one million people have been internally displaced by these and other tactics. A June report issued by Human Rights Watch detailed the causes and consequences of displacement in Karen State, which include civilians' lack of access to adequate food, housing, income, education, and health care.

In addition, according to Refugees International, an estimated several million Burmese have fled to neighboring countries, including Thailand, India, and Bangladesh. Thailand continues to host at least 145,000 Karen, Mon, and Karenni in refugee camps near the Burmese border, as well as hundreds of thousands more who have not been granted refugee status. In March, a renewed offensive by the regime (aided by the United Wa State Army) that targeted the Shan State Army led to intensified abuses against and the displacement of thousands of civilians in Shan state.

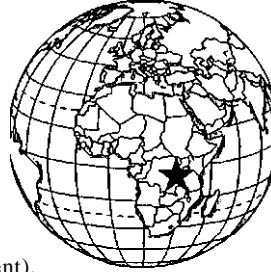
A number of other ethnic-minority groups complain of systematic discrimination at the hands of the regime, including a lack of representation in the government and military, economic marginalization, and the suppression of their cultural and religious rights. The junta has committed particularly serious abuses against the Muslim Rohingya minority in northern Rakhine state. A 2004 report published by Amnesty International noted that the vast majority of Rohingyas are denied citizenship and face severe restrictions on their freedom of movement, their right to own land, and their ability to marry. In addition, they are regularly subjected to arbitrary taxation and other forms of extortion, as well as forced eviction and land confiscation, at the hands of Burmese security forces. More than 250,000 Rohingyas remain in neighboring Bangladesh, where they fled in the 1990s to escape extrajudicial execution, rape, forced labor, and other abuses.

The junta continues to face low-grade insurgencies waged by the KNU and at least five other ethnic-based rebel armies. The junta agreed to an informal ceasefire with the KNU in December 2003, but hostilities reportedly continue. Seventeen rebel groups, however, have reached ceasefire deals with the junta since 1989, under which they have been granted effective administrative authority of the areas under their control and are able to retain their own militias. While army abuses are the most widespread, some rebel groups forcibly conscript civilians, commit extrajudicial killing and rape, and use women and children as porters, according to the U.S. State Department's annual human rights report. A 2002 Human Rights Watch (HRW) report documented the widespread use of children as soldiers by 19 different armed opposition groups, as well as by the Burmese army, where at least 70,000, or 20 percent, of active-duty soldiers are estimated to be under the age of 18. Although authorities announced the formation of a committee to prevent the recruitment of child soldiers in late 2003, the practice has continued unabated, although a small number of recruited child soldiers have been released, largely as a result of pressure from international groups, according to HRW.

Burmese women have traditionally enjoyed high social and economic status, but domestic violence is a growing concern, and they remain underrepresented in the government and civil service. A September 2004 report by the Women's League of Burma detailed an ongoing nationwide pattern of sexual violence against women by SPDC military personnel and other authorities, including rape, sexual slavery, and forced marriage. Criminal gangs have in recent years trafficked thousands of women and girls, many from ethnic-minority groups, to Thailand and other destinations for prostitution, according to reports by HRW and other groups.

Burundi

Population: 7,800,000 **Political Rights:** 3*
GNI/capita: \$90 **Civil Liberties:** 5
Life Expectancy: 49 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Christian (67 percent), indigenous beliefs (23 percent), Muslim (10 percent), Protestant (5 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Hutu [Bantu] (85 percent), Tutsi (14 percent), Twa [Pygmy] (1 percent)
Capital: Bujumbura



Ratings Change: Burundi's political rights rating improved from 5 to 3 due to the holding of legitimate national and local elections.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1997	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,5NF	5,5PF	5,5PF	3,5PF

Overview:

In 2005, Burundi achieved a milestone toward bridging its deep ethnic, social, and political divides by holding the first local and national elections since 1993. These resulted in a fundamental political realignment, as the largely Hutu former guerrilla movement, National Council for the Defense of Democracy-Front for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD), emerged as the country's largest political force, eclipsing the more traditionally dominant political parties. The legislature subsequently elected CNDD-FDD leader Pierre Nkurunziza as president.

Until this year, with few exceptions the minority Tutsi ethnic group had mostly governed this small African country since independence from Belgium in 1962. The military, judiciary, educational system, business sector, and news media have also traditionally been dominated by the Tutsi. Violence between the country's two main ethnic groups—the Tutsi and the majority Hutu—has occurred repeatedly since independence. The assassination of the newly elected Hutu president of the Front for Democracy in Burundi (FRODEBU), Melchoir Ndadaye, in 1993 resulted in sustained and widespread carnage.

Ndadaye's murder fatally weakened FRODEBU's hold on power. Negotiations on power sharing took place over the succeeding months, as ethnically backed violence continued to wrack the country. Ndadaye's successor was killed, along with Rwandan president Juvenal Habyarimana, in 1994 when their plane was apparently shot down while approaching Kigali airport in Rwanda. This event triggered the Rwandan genocide and intensified killings in Burundi.

Under a 1994 power-sharing arrangement between FRODEBU and the mainly Tutsi-led Unity for National Progress (UPRONA), Hutu politician Sylvestre Ntibantunganya served as Burundi's new president until his ouster in a 1996 military coup led by Pierre Buyoya, who had formerly been president. Peace and political stability within the country continued to be elusive, as armed insurgents sporadically staged attacks and the government security forces pursued an often ruthless cam-

paing of intimidation. The search for peace eventually led to an agreement to allow a measure of political space for the parliament, which had a FRODEBU majority, and the beginning of negotiations in Arusha, Tanzania, in 1998.

In 2000, the negotiations, mediated by former South African president Nelson Mandela, resulted in agreement in principle by most parties on a future democratic political solution to the conflict. Nineteen organized groups from across the political spectrum agreed to recommendations from committees on the nature of the conflict, reforms in the nation's governing institutions, security issues, and economic restructuring and development.

The specific form of the political institutions through which power would be shared and the reform of the military proved to be especially sensitive and difficult issues. In October 2001, the National Assembly adopted a transitional constitution, and a transition government was installed the next month, with President Buyoya temporarily remaining chief of state and FRODEBU's Domitien Ndayizeye as vice president. The failure of key elements of the FDD and the National Liberation Front (FNL) to participate in the transition resulted in both continued negotiations and violence.

By the end of 2002, most of the factions had agreed to stop the violence and participate in transitional arrangements leading to national elections to be held in late 2004. In April 2003, Buyoya stepped down and was replaced as president by Ndayizeye. In October of that year, the FDD reached an agreement with the government. Burundi continued its very slow progress in 2004 toward peace. In August, agreement was reached on the shape of new democratic institutions that would balance the interests of the majority Hutu and minority Tutsi populations and on the holding of elections. Demobilization of former combatants continued, and some refugees returned, especially from Tanzania. Sporadic fighting continued, however, near the capital of Bujumbura.

In January 2005, President Ndayizeye signed a law establishing a new national army, which integrated the existing government forces with all major former guerrilla groups except the FNL. In March, voters approved a new power-sharing constitution, which was followed by local elections in June. In July, the new parliament was elected, in which the CNDD-FDD won 59 out of 100 seats. FRODEBU took 24 seats, and UPRONA gained 10 seats. Parliament subsequently chose Pierre Nkurunziza, who gained 151 of the 162 votes cast, as president in August. Domestic and international observers generally regarded the local and national legislative elections as legitimate and as reflecting the will of the people. This was a considerable achievement, as the country had not held elections since 1993. Prior to elections, preparations required an electoral census, voter registration, adoption of post-transition constitutional legislation, disarming of combatants, and political party campaigning under peaceful conditions.

Burundi continues to struggle to recover from a war that killed more than 200,000 people, mostly civilians. The country also continues to face massive challenges resulting from its shattered economy and significant instability in the Great Lakes region. One rebel group, the FNL, has refused to end its armed resistance.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Citizens of Burundi can change their government democratically. Restrictions on political parties have been lifted, and

parties and civic organizations function with considerable freedom. Burundi currently has representative institutions at the local, municipal, and national levels in the legislative and executive branches of government.

Carefully crafted constitutional arrangements require the National Assembly to be 60 percent Hutu and 40 percent Tutsi, with three additional deputies from the Twa ethnic minority and a minimum of 30 percent of the deputies being women. Governments must include all parties that have won at least 5 percent of the votes cast in parliamentary elections. The president must appoint two vice presidents from different ethnic groups, and they must be approved separately by the lower and upper houses of parliament by a two-thirds majority.

While the lower house of the parliament—the National Assembly—was directly elected, locally elected officials chose the Senate. Each of Burundi's 17 provinces chose two senators—one Tutsi and one member of the Hutu majority. Both houses then elected Nkurunziza as president. Six political parties are represented in the new government. Seven of the ministers are women. CNDD-FDD members currently hold 12 ministries out of 20 cabinet positions. Eleven of the ministers are Hutus while nine are Tutsis.

There are more than two dozen active political parties, ranging from those that champion radical Tutsi positions to those that hold extremist Hutu positions. Most are small in terms of membership. Many Tutsis have now joined formerly Hutu-dominated parties.

Some government revenues and expenditures have not been regularly listed on the budget, which has contributed to corruption problems. Burundi was ranked 130 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The extent of press freedom has traditionally been related to the broader political context: when progress has been made on negotiations to resolve the crisis, the authorities have tended to accord greater respect to press freedoms. The media have been subject to self-censorship and periodic government censorship. However, a wide range of political perspectives are heard and seen, and the opposition press does function, though sporadically. The press group Reporters Without Borders placed Burundi 92nd out of 116 countries in its most recent press freedom rankings.

Radio is the main source of information for many Burundians. The government runs the sole television station and the only radio station with national coverage, as well as the only newspaper that publishes regularly. The BBC World Service, Radio France Internationale, and the Voice of America are available on FM in the capital of Bujumbura. Several private radio stations exist, although generally with limited broadcast range. One private radio station, accused of broadcasting "defamatory" and "abusive" remarks about the government during the legislative campaign, was briefly closed by the authorities. Print runs of most newspapers are small, and readership is limited by low literacy levels.

Freedom of religion is generally observed. The ongoing civil strife and the predominant role of the Tutsis have traditionally impeded academic freedom by limiting educational opportunities for Hutus.

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly and association. However, past transitional governments occasionally restricted this right in practice. There is a modest but important civil society with a key area of focus on the protection of

human rights. Constitutional protections for unionization are in place, and the right to strike is protected by the labor code. The Organization of Free Unions of Burundi has been independent since the rise of the multiparty system in 1992. Most union members are civil servants and have bargained collectively with the government. In 2005, nurses and teachers both staged one-month-long strikes that were then resolved. The Burundi Trade Union Confederation (COSYBU) represented civil servants in a strike action.

The judicial system is seriously burdened by a lack of resources and training, and by corruption. Given Burundi's recent history, there are far more existing and potential cases than can easily be handled by the current judiciary, and many of them are highly sensitive politically. Many crimes go unreported. Conditions in prisons continued to be poor and at times life-threatening. As of the end of 2004, some 4,700 people remained in detention without trial. Trials of individuals accused of participating in the violence that followed the 1993 assassination of former president Melchior Ndadaye continued. In late 2004, the Senate adopted legislation reforming the Supreme Court and allowing it to review earlier court verdicts. The criteria for review included rulings by a national or international jurisdiction on errors in the original trial. The president had not approved the law by the end of 2004.

As part of the peace agreement, the composition of the national security forces must also be equally balanced ethnically. In addition, Burundi has approved a UN plan for a truth and reconciliation commission to investigate more than four decades of ethnic conflict. A two-part mechanism is planned to clarify the historical truth regarding the conflict, investigate the crimes committed, and bring those responsible to justice. The commission would have the authority to prosecute those bearing the greatest responsibility for genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. It is slated to have five members, two of whom will be Burundians.

At least 95,000 people remained internally displaced at the end of 2004, some since 1993, although about 160,000 returned to their home areas during 2004. Burundians continue to be subjected to arbitrary violence, whether from the government or from guerrilla groups. A total of 129 people were victims of "summary and extrajudicial executions" in Burundi carried out by the army or rebels between April and June, according to a UN report. The report on the human rights situation in the country also alleged 127 cases of rape, arbitrary and illegal arrests, abductions, torture, or lynching. Most of the abuses happened in the province of Bujumbura Rural and Bubanza, the main areas of activity of the FNL.

Burundi's annual per capita gross domestic product (GDP) of \$600 ranks it 164th in the world. About 93 percent of the workforce is engaged in agricultural production, and 68 percent of the population lives below the poverty line as determined by the CIA's 2005 *World Factbook*. According to statistics published by the Central Bank in Bujumbura, most economic indicators sharply declined with the advent of widespread insecurity in 1993. Access to basic social and health services has been severely diminished.

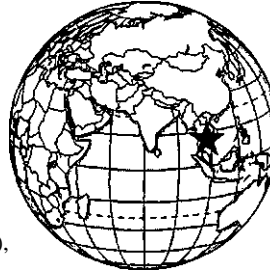
Women have limited opportunities for advancement in the economic and political spheres, especially in rural areas. As part of the negotiated political agreement, parties agreed that parliament would be composed of 30 percent women. Only 5 percent of females are enrolled in secondary school. Widespread sexual violence, including rape, against women occurs, according to Amnesty International.

Cambodia

Population: 13,300,000 **Political Rights:** 6
GNI/capita: \$300 **Civil Liberties:** 5
Life Expectancy: 56 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Theravada Buddhist (95 percent),
 other (5 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Khmer (90 percent), Vietnamese (5 percent),
 Chinese (1 percent), other (4 percent)

Capital: Phnom Penh



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
6,6NF	7,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview:

The government of Cambodia continued its policy in 2005 of silencing its critics, including arresting or threatening to arrest opposition members of parliament. In February, opposition leader Sam Rainsy, who faced criminal defamation charges, fled overseas after parliament stripped him of immunity from prosecution. Meanwhile, a lack of funds prevented the launch of a special tribunal to try surviving leaders of the Khmer Rouge.

Cambodia won independence from France in 1953. King Norodom Sihanouk ruled until he was ousted by the U.S.-backed Lon Nol regime in the early 1970s. The Chinese-supported Khmer Rouge seized power in 1975, and at least 25 percent of Cambodia's 7 million people died of disease, overwork, starvation, or execution. In 1979, Vietnam toppled the Khmer Rouge and installed a Communist regime. Fighting continued in the 1980s between the Hanoi-backed government and the allied armies of Sihanouk, the Khmer Rouge, and other political contenders. The 1991 Paris peace accords brought an end to warfare, although the Khmer Rouge continued to wage a low-grade insurgency until its disintegration in the late 1990s.

Although the royalist party, known as Funcinpec after its French acronym, won the largest number of seats in the first free parliamentary elections in 1993, Hun Sen, head of the Hanoi-backed regime, used his control over the security forces to coerce Funcinpec to share power with the Cambodian People's Party (CPP). Hun Sen later ousted the leader of Funcinpec in a bloody coup in 1997.

Cambodia's 2003 parliamentary elections were marred by government restrictions on opposition access to the media and reports of widespread vote buying, violence, and voter intimidation by the CPP. Funcinpec and the Sam Rainsy Party (SRP) were also reported to have violated election laws, though much less seriously. The CPP failed to obtain the required two-thirds majority to form its own government. Another coalition government with Funcinpec that was negotiated in November 2003 quickly broke down. A new CCP-Funcinpec coalition that was agreed upon in September 2004 ended the political stalemate.

Opposition leader Sam Rainsy's attack on government corruption and abuses brought him into sharp confrontation with the authorities. In February, the National

Assembly stripped Rainsy and fellow SRP legislators Chea Poch and Cheam Channy of their parliamentary immunity. Channy, who was arrested on February 3, was convicted by a military tribunal in August on charges of organized crime and fraud and sentenced to seven years in prison. Rainsy, who was charged with defaming Funcinpec leader Prince Norodom Ranariddh and Prime Minister Hun Sen, and Poch fled the country rather than face possible arrest. In August, Poch returned to Cambodia to face defamation charges. Meanwhile, SRP legislative members boycotted parliament, denying the government the quorum necessary to conduct business. As of November 30, Rainsy remained in self-imposed exile.

In October 2004, parliament approved a plan with the United Nations to establish a special tribunal in Phnom Penh to bring surviving leaders of the Khmer Rouge to justice. A mixed panel of Cambodian and international justices will try as many as 10 surviving Khmer Rouge leaders, including Ieng Sary, who had received a royal pardon for genocide but not for other crimes. A lack of funds hindered the launch of the tribunal—which will require \$57 million to run for three years—in April 2005. While UN members pledged \$38 million, Cambodia pledged \$13 million, but could only provide \$1.5 million. (Japan gave \$21.6 million of the \$37 million required to setup the tribunal. The United States announced that it would not make a donation because it has already provided \$7 million to document and research the crimes.) Under a 2001 Cambodian law, no Khmer Rouge leader is exempt from prosecution.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Cambodia cannot change their government democratically. Cambodia is a constitutional monarchy with a bicameral legislature consisting of a National Assembly and a Senate. The constitution was adopted on September 21, 1993, and promulgated on September 24, 1993, by King Norodom Sihanouk, who served as the head of state. The king, who has no power under the constitution, is highly revered and exercises considerable influence as a symbol of unity for the nation. Citing ill health, King Sihanouk abdicated in 2004. A nine-member royal throne council chose Prince Sihamoni, Sihanouk's son and favored choice as successor, to succeed his father on October 30, 2003; Sihamoni had never been involved in politics and had lived abroad for much of his life.

The government, consisting of the prime minister and a council of ministers, must be approved by a two-thirds vote of confidence by the National Assembly, which has 123 seats. Members are elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms. The Senate has 61 members, 2 of whom are appointed by the king, 2 elected by the National Assembly, and 57 chosen by functional constituencies. Senate members serve five-year terms.

Policy debates are becoming more common in the National Assembly, but actual powers to scrutinize government actions are limited. Prime Minister Hun Sen and the CPP dominate national and local politics with their control of the security forces, officials at all levels of government, and the state-owned media.

Corruption is a very serious problem in Cambodia. A World Bank report released in August cited that "unofficial payments" are "frequent, mostly, or always required" for business transactions. About 600 of the 800 companies surveyed across Cambodia for this study reported that bribes represent on average about 5.2 percent of their total sales revenue. The International Monetary Fund noted that economic

growth has been slowed significantly by corruption and bureaucratic red tape: 50 percent of the country's budget comes from international aid, a third of the population live on less than a dollar a day, and the vast majority have no access to electricity or clean potable water. Cambodia was ranked 130 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The government exercises tight control of the media. While Cambodia's print journalists are comparatively freer than their broadcast counterparts and routinely criticize governmental policies and senior officials, the print media reach 10 percent of the population. In October, the government arrested Mam Sonando, owner and manager of Radio Beehive, the only independent radio station in Cambodia, on charges of criminal defamation. The charges stemmed from an interview Sonando had conducted about planned territorial concessions by Hun Sen's government to Vietnam for securing a border demarcation treaty. As of the end of November, Mam, who had been denied bail, remained in jail. Internet access is slowly increasing, but the high cost and lack of connectivity largely limits its use to the capital and a few other major cities.

The majority of the population are Theravada Buddhists who can generally practice their faith freely. However, discrimination against the ethnic Cham Muslims is widespread. The government generally respects academic freedom.

Many civil society groups operate in Cambodia and work on a broad spectrum of issues; many are funded by donors overseas. Nongovernmental human rights groups investigate and publicize abuses and carry out training and other activities. Public gatherings, protests, and marches do occur and are rarely violent. However, progovernment thugs, if not uniformed police, are still occasionally used by the government to intimidate participants.

There are a few independent unions. Factory workers frequently stage strikes in Phnom Penh to protest low wages, forced overtime, and poor and dangerous working conditions. However, with limited resources and experience, unions have limited influence in negotiations with management. Union leaders are reported to face various forms of harassment and physical threats. In January 2004, Chea Vichea, head of the Free Trade Union of the Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia, was killed on a downtown thoroughfare. His funeral brought out the largest crowd in the capital since antigovernment protests following the 1998 general election; while police put the number of mourners at 10,000, organizers and journalists estimated at least 30,000 people. Although two men were sentenced in August 2005 to twenty years in prison for the union leader's murder, their conviction was based on a confession obtained after police tortured one of the defendants.

Cambodia's judiciary is not independent and is marred by inefficiency and corruption. There is a severe shortage of lawyers, and judges are poorly trained and underpaid. Abuse by law enforcement officers, including illegal detentions and the torture of suspects, is common. Delays in the judicial process and corruption allow many suspects to escape prosecution, leading to impunity for some government officials and members of their families who commit crimes. Jails are dangerously overcrowded and inmates often lack sufficient food, water, and health care. Police, soldiers, and government officials are widely believed to tolerate, or be involved in, gunrunning, drug trafficking, prostitution rings, and money laundering.

Discrimination against the ethnic Cham Muslims is widespread. The Chams have

come under new suspicion from the Khmer majority in the wake of Islamic terrorist attacks in Southeast Asia, the United States, and elsewhere. Rumors that the Chams are plotting to secede and reestablish the Cham kingdom of Champa have further aggravated relations with the Khmer majority. Extreme poverty and the lack of government assistance have compelled many within the Cham community to seek help from overseas donors, many of whom are advocates of orthodox forms of Islam. In addition, persons of Vietnamese heritage in Cambodia face various forms of discrimination and harassment by the government and society.

The constitution guarantees and the government generally respects the right to freedom of travel and movement. However, there have been reports of the government restricting travel for opposition politicians, particularly during political campaigns before elections.

With the courts largely unable to enforce property rights and the land registration system in shambles, the wealthy and powerful elite have forced tens of thousands off their land for their own profit. In several instances, residents were evicted by force and their homes demolished by government order without due process to determine ownership or compensation. In July, the police barred 500 indigenous Phnong people from protesting against a Chinese-owned tree-planting company for allegedly taking over their ancestral land and for spraying herbicides in the area. Some indigenous peoples are beginning to organize to defend their rights.

Women suffer widespread economic and social discrimination. Rape and domestic violence are common, and women and girls are trafficked inside and outside of Cambodia for prostitution. In December 2004, an armed gang raided a safe house run by a women's rights group for sex workers and abducted 80 women. The sex trade has fueled the spread of HIV/AIDS; an estimated 170,000 Cambodians are now infected with the virus.

Cameroon

Population: 16,400,000 **Political Rights:** 6

GNI/capita: \$630 **Civil Liberties:** 6

Life Expectancy: 48 **Status:** Not Free

Religious Groups: Indigenous beliefs (40 percent), Christian (40 percent), Muslim (20 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Cameroon Highlander (31 percent), Equatorial Bantu (19 percent), Kirdi (11 percent), Fulani (10 percent), Northwestern Bantu (8 percent), Eastern Nigritic (7 percent), other (14 percent)

Capital: Yaounde



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,5NF	7,5NF	7,5NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF

Overview:

President Paul Biya, who is serving his fifth consecutive term in office after winning a seven-year term in 2004,

appeared to have made only limited progress on his pledge to combat widespread corruption in Cameroon. Meanwhile, the long-running dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria over the oil-rich Bakassi Peninsula remained unresolved.

Previously a German colony, Cameroon was seized during World War I and divided between Britain and France. Distinct Anglophone and Francophone areas were reunited at independence in 1961. During the three decades that followed, Cameroon was ruled under a repressive one-party system.

Prime Minister Paul Biya succeeded Ahmadou Ahidjo as president in 1982. In 1996, the constitution extended the presidential term to seven years and allowed Biya to run for a fourth term in 1997. He won with 93 percent of the vote, though numerous irregularities and a boycott by the three major opposition parties compromised the credibility of the election.

The ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) dominated legislative and municipal elections in 2002 that lacked transparency, despite the creation of the National Observatory of Elections. In the June 2002 parliamentary elections, the ruling CPDM increased the number of its seats in the 180-member National Assembly from 116 to 149. The main opposition party, the Social Democratic Front, won 22 seats, down from the 43 it had held previously. The Supreme Court ordered a rerun of municipal elections in six constituencies where massive fraud was proven in 2002. Observers claimed that subsequent voting in June 2004 was equally flawed, with the ruling CPDM winning the same 5 seats.

Biya won the presidential elections in October 2004 with 75 percent of the vote. International observers reported that the polls lacked credibility but reflected the will of the voting population. The two opposition candidates charged fraud and appealed unsuccessfully to the Supreme Court for the election to be annulled. Although turnout approached 80 percent, only 4.6 million of the estimated 8 million Cameroonians eligible to vote were registered. Many others attempted to cast ballots but were turned away because their names did not appear on the voter rolls. Cameroon does not have an independent electoral commission.

The struggle between Nigeria and Cameroon over the oil-rich Bakassi Peninsula continued in 2005 despite a 2002 ruling by the International Court of Justice in favor of Cameroon. In June 2005, President Biya accused Nigeria of launching attacks on the peninsula after talks between the Cameroonian president and Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo failed to reach agreement on a timetable for a Nigerian troop withdrawal or on the demarcation of the maritime border. Most Bakassi residents consider themselves Nigerian and have staged public protests over the court ruling. A lawsuit filed in Nigeria by Bakassi natives to declare the handover unconstitutional could further delay any resolution.

Privatization and economic growth in Cameroon have progressed slowly, while corruption continues to be a significant obstacle to economic growth. Biya appears to have made limited progress on his 2004 campaign vow to crack down on official graft. Prime Minister Ephraim Inoni launched an anticorruption drive upon taking office in December 2004, and in March 2005, his office announced the discovery of widespread corruption in the Ministry of Finance, where approximately 500 officials were accused of either awarding themselves extra money or claiming salaries for "ghost" workers.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Citizens of Cameroon cannot change their government democratically. Rampant intimidation, manipulation, and fraud have marked both presidential and legislative elections. Cameroon's centralized government is dominated by a strong presidency. The president is not required to consult the National Assembly, and the judiciary is subordinate to the Ministry of Justice. The Supreme Court may review the constitutionality of a law only at the president's request. President Paul Biya's current seven-year term will end in 2011.

The unicameral National Assembly has 180 seats, 149 of which are held by the ruling CPDM. Members are elected by direct popular vote to serve five-year terms, though the president has the authority to either lengthen or shorten the term of the legislature. Legislative elections are scheduled for 2007. Cameroon's constitution calls for an upper chamber for the legislature, to be called a Senate, but it has yet to be established. A mandated Constitutional Court exists in name only.

There are more than 180 recognized political parties in Cameroon. However, political and civic organizations have little effect on public policy or government decision-making processes.

Approximately one-fourth of Cameroonians are Anglophone. The government is dominated by Francophone Cameroonians, while the government's main opposition is from Anglophone Cameroonians. The linguistic distinction constitutes the country's most potent political division. At least one Anglophone group, the Southern Cameroons National Council, advocates secession from the country.

Cameroon was ranked 137 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index. A survey by the group found that more than 50 percent of Cameroonians admitted to paying a bribe in 2003, the highest figure in the world.

The constitution provides for freedom of the press. Several private newspapers publish regularly, and there are a growing number of private radio stations around the country. However, repression of the media remains a serious problem, and criminal libel laws have often been used to silence regime critics. The government shut down 12 independent radio and television stations in December 2003 on the grounds that they were operating without licenses. In July 2004, two BBC journalists were detained and placed under house arrest by security forces in Bakassi, where they had traveled to report on the handover by Nigeria; they were accused of spying, but released without charge five days later. In April 2005, a court fined and sentenced the editor of *L'oeil du Sahel* and a journalist colleague to five months in jail after they published a story about abuses and extortion perpetrated by the security forces. There are at least six national internet service providers, some of which are privately owned. The government has not tried to restrict or monitor internet communication.

Freedom of religion is generally respected. Although there are no legal restrictions on academic freedom, state security informants reportedly operate on university campuses, and many professors fear that participation in opposition political parties could harm their careers.

Government security forces regularly restrict freedom of assembly and limit freedom of association by members of nongovernmental organizations and political parties, often violently. Trade union formation is permitted, but is subject to numerous restrictions. Workers have the right to strike but only after arbitration, the final

decisions of which the government can overturn. In April 2004, the government arrested six trade unionists, including the president of the Confederation of Cameroon Workers, on charges of sabotage.

The courts remain highly subject to political influence and corruption. The executive branch controls the judiciary and appoints provincial and local administrators. Military tribunals may exercise jurisdiction over civilians in cases involving civil unrest or organized armed violence. Various intelligence agencies operate with impunity, and opposition activists are often held without charge or disappear while in custody. Indefinite pretrial detention under extremely harsh conditions is permitted either after a warrant is issued or in order to "combat banditry." Torture and ill-treatment of prisoners and detainees are routine, and inmates routinely die in prison. Amnesty International called for an investigation into reports that dozens of extrajudicial executions were carried out in 2002 as part of an anticrime campaign. Despite repeated requests, the Cameroonian government has refused to grant entry to Amnesty International representatives. In the north, traditional chiefs known as *lamibee* control their own private militias, courts, and prisons, which are used against the regime's political opponents. Cameroonian political and civil society groups have taken steps in Belgium, under its universal jurisdiction law, to institute legal proceedings against Biya for crimes against humanity.

Cameroon's population consists of nearly 200 ethnic groups. The Beti and Bula ethnic groups dominate the civil service and state-run businesses. Slavery reportedly persists in parts of the north, and discrimination exists against indigenous groups and ethnic minorities, particularly the Baka. Anglophone groups claim systemic discrimination, though some Francophone groups complain of similar treatment.

Security forces routinely impede domestic travel, extracting bribes at checkpoints and roadblocks.

Violence and discrimination against women is widespread. Women are often denied inheritance and landownership rights, even when these are codified, and many other laws contain unequal, gender-based provisions and penalties. Cameroon is a transit center and market for child labor and traffickers. Abortion is prohibited, except in cases of rape.

Canada

Population: 32,200,000 **Political Rights:** 1

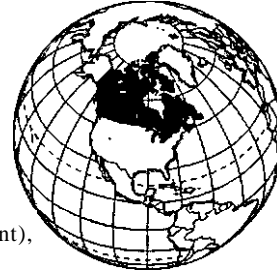
GNI/capita: \$24,470 **Civil Liberties:** 1

Life Expectancy: 80 **Status:** Free

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (42.6 percent), Protestant (23.3 percent, including United Church [9.5 percent]), Anglican (6.8 percent), Baptist (2.4 percent), Lutheran (2 percent), other Christian (4.4 percent), Muslim (1.9 percent), other and unspecified (11.8 percent), none (16 percent)

Ethnic Groups: British Isles origin (28 percent), French (23 percent), other European (15 percent), Amerindian (2 percent), other (32 percent)

Capital: Ottawa



Ten-Year Ratings (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In a year marked by controversy over a scandal that involves prominent members of the governing Liberal Party, Canada faced the prospect of critical federal elections in early 2006.

In another important development, legislation legalizing same-sex marriage throughout the country was passed by Parliament in 2005.

Colonized by French and British settlers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Canada came under the control of the British Crown under the terms of the Treaty of Paris in 1763. After granting home rule in 1867, Britain retained a theoretical right to overrule the Canadian Parliament until 1982, when Canadians established complete control over their own constitution.

The war against terrorism has been a leading item on the government's agenda since the attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001. Shortly after those attacks, Canada implemented a series of measures to combat international terrorism, including stopping the transfer of funds to foreign terrorist groups. Canada also reached a comprehensive bilateral agreement with the United States on improving cross-border security.

Of the measures the government has adopted in the name of curbing terrorist organizations, several have drawn criticism on civil liberties grounds, with two measures in an omnibus antiterrorism bill evoking particular concern. One allows police to make preventive arrests of those suspected of planning a terrorist act, and another requires suspects to testify before a judge, even if they have not been formally accused of a crime. As part of the antiterrorism bill, the government adopted the Security of Information Act, a revised version of the Official Secrets Act, in 2004. The federal police used the Security of Information Act to raid the house of a newspaper reporter who allegedly had leaked classified information relating to Maher Arar. Arar, a dual citizen of Canada and Syria, was detained by U.S. authorities in 2002 while transiting the United States and was deported to Syria, where he claims to have been tortured. Freedom of expression organizations pressed to amend the law to exclude journalists from its purview.

Legislative elections in June 2004 dealt a setback to the long-dominant Liberal Party. The Liberals failed to retain a majority, and they were compelled to depend on support from smaller parties, in particular the New Democratic Party (NDP), a social democrat-oriented party with ties to organized labor. A major factor in the Liberals' electoral setback was a scandal, the origins of which date to the mid-1990s, involving kickbacks to Liberal Party officials by advertising firms in the province of Quebec in exchange for contracts to do work for a national unity campaign.

New elections were called after the minority government of Prime Minister Paul Martin fell to a no-confidence vote in November 2005. Martin, a Liberal, was seriously weakened by the release of a report that blamed high-ranking members of the Liberal Party, including former prime minister Jean Chretien, for the scandal that had cost the Liberals their parliamentary majority the previous year. Although Chretien was not accused of direct involvement in the kickbacks, he was faulted for lax supervision of the national unity project. At the time of Parliament's dissolution, the Liberals held 133 seats in the House of Commons, followed by the Conservatives with 98, the Bloc Quebecois, a separatist-oriented party with 53, and the NDP with 18.

In 2005, the government delayed a plan that would bind many public servants to lifetime secrecy on aspects of their work. The measure would have required some public servants to take an oath of secrecy that would apply not only to the time of their public service, but for the rest of their lives.

A foreign policy controversy with political implications emerged over U.S. pressure on Canada to join its planned missile defense system. The plan drew the opposition of the NDP and provoked a series of protest demonstrations. In February, Martin announced that Canada would not take part in the scheme.

After a two-year struggle, Canada enacted legislation legalizing same-sex marriage throughout the country. After both houses of Parliament adopted the measure by comfortable margins, Canada became the fourth country to sanction homosexual marriage. Previously, same-sex marriage had been made legal in seven provinces.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Canadians can change their government democratically. The country is governed by a prime minister, a cabinet, and Parliament, which consists of an elected 301-member House of Commons and an appointed 104-member Senate. The British monarch remains nominal head of state, represented by a ceremonial governor-general appointed by the prime minister. As a result of government canvassing, Canada has nearly 100 percent effective voter registration. Prisoners have the right to vote in federal elections, as do citizens who have lived abroad for fewer than five years.

Civil liberties have been protected since 1982 by the federal Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but have been limited by the constitutional "notwithstanding" clause, which permits provincial governments to exempt themselves by applying individual provisions within their jurisdictions. Quebec has used the clause to retain its provincial language law, which restricts the use of languages other than French on signs. The provincial governments exercise significant autonomy.

In 2004, the Supreme Court issued a decision validating legislation that places a limit on the amount lobbying groups can spend on advertisements that support or oppose political candidates. The kickback scandal aside, Canada is regarded as a

society with a low level of official corruption and was ranked 14 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.-

The media are generally free, although they exercise self-censorship in areas such as violence on television. Limitations on freedom of expression range from unevenly enforced "hate laws" and restrictions on pornography to rules on reporting. Some civil libertarians have expressed concern over an amendment to the criminal code that gives judges wide latitude in determining what constitutes hate speech in material that appears online. In 2005, a former indigenous leader was convicted of hate speech for comments he made in 2002 to a reporter that described Jews as a "disease" and denied that the Holocaust had occurred.

Religious expression is free and diverse. Academic freedom is respected.

Freedom of assembly is respected, and many political and quasi-political organizations function freely. Trade unions and business associations enjoy high levels of membership and are free and well organized.

The judiciary is independent. Recently, there have been complaints that the judiciary has become overly activist and has issued decisions that effectively usurp the powers of the legislature. Canada's criminal law is based on British common law and is uniform throughout the country. Civil law is also based on the British system, except in Quebec, where it is based on the French civil code.

Canada maintains relatively liberal immigration policies. However, concern has mounted over the possible entry into Canada of immigrants who were involved in terrorist missions. The 2002 Immigration and Refugee Protection Act seeks to continue the tradition of liberal immigration by providing additional protection for refugees while making it more difficult for potential terrorists, people involved in organized crime, and war criminals to enter the country. Recently, human rights organizations have charged that Canada has deported immigrants to countries that practice torture. The Canadian government contends that in such cases, assurances have been made by the receiving country that the deported individual will not be subjected to torture.

Canada has taken important steps to protect the rights of native groups, although some native groups contend that indigenous peoples remain subject to discrimination. Indigenous groups continue to lag badly on practically every social indicator, including those for education, health, and unemployment. During 2005, the Martin government convened what was described as a summit meeting with leaders of Indian organizations, during which the government pledged a substantial increase in aid for housing, health care, and economic development. The government also pledged additional money as reparations for the abuse suffered by indigenous children during a period in the twentieth century when many were forced to attend schools operated by Christian denominations.

Canada boasts a generous welfare system that supplements the largely open, competitive economy.

Women's rights are protected in law and in practice. Women have made major gains in the economy and have strong representation in such professions as medicine and law. However, women's rights advocates report high rates of violence against women in aboriginal communities.

Cape Verde

Population: 500,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$1,290 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 69 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic, Protestant
Ethnic Groups: Creole [mulatto] (71 percent),
 African (28 percent), European (1 percent)
Capital: Praia



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In 2005, Cape Verde was preparing for presidential and legislative elections scheduled to be held in January 2006.

The country enjoyed a boost in its international status during the year with the arrival of missions from NATO and further talk of the possibility of joining the European Union (EU). Hundreds of protesting West Africans clashed with security forces in the capital city of Praia in March following the killing of a fellow immigrant.

After achieving independence from Portugal in 1975, Cape Verde was governed for 16 years under Marxist, one-party rule by the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde, now the PAICV. In 1991, in the country's first democratic elections after becoming the first former Portuguese colony in Africa to abandon Marxist political and economic systems, the Movement for Democracy (MPD) won a landslide victory. In 1995, the MPD was returned to power with 59 percent of the vote. Antonio Mascarenhas Monteiro's mandate ended in 2001, after he had served two terms as president.

Cape Verde had a spectacularly close presidential election in 2001. In the second round of voting, opposition candidate Pedro Verona Rodrigues Pires defeated ruling party contender Carlos Alberto Wannon de Carvalho Veiga by 12 votes in an election that overturned a decade of rule by the MPD; both presidential candidates had served as prime ministers. Despite the closeness of the election, trust remained in the country's institutions and the results were accepted. In the 2001 legislative polls, the PAICV captured 40 seats compared with 30 for the MPD and 2 for the Democratic Alliance for Change. Disagreements within the MPD in 2000 resulted in a split and the formation of a new party, the Democratic Renovation Party.

In local elections held in March 2004, the PAICV faced a serious challenge from the opposition MPD, which defeated the ruling party in several of its traditional strongholds. The MPD's president, Agostinho Lopes, claimed that there had been irregularities in the voters' rolls of some polling stations, though international observers concluded that the elections had been free and fair.

Observers are unsure of how the presidential election might play out in 2006. Although Pires won by only a slim margin in 2001, his approval rating is strong and his government has obtained considerable financial aid during his tenure. However,

belt-tightening measures implemented as part of economic reforms have been unpopular.

In 2005, NATO missions arrived in Cape Verde in advance of month-long military maneuvers scheduled for mid-2006 as a final test of a new 20,000-strong rapid-reaction force that NATO hopes to send to trouble spots on short notice. The country has expressed interest in membership in the EU—an idea that has the backing of some leading politicians in Portugal. Officials have said that Cape Verde—which is located about 310 miles off Africa's west coast, lies near major north-south shipping routes, and is an important sea- and air-refueling site—could serve as a bridge between the United States, Europe, and Latin America.

Cape Verde is one of Africa's smallest and poorest lands. Foreign aid and remittances by Cape Verdean expatriates provide a large portion of national income. Only 10 percent of the archipelago's land is arable. However, in 2005, the International Monetary Fund reported that economic growth levels were increasing as a result of higher foreign investment in infrastructure development and tourism, backed by greater external support. According to the World Bank, poverty has been reduced and the average income has increased slightly.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Citizens of Cape Verde can change their government democratically. The president and members of the 72-seat National Assembly are elected by universal suffrage for five-year terms. International observers considered the 2001 presidential and legislative elections to be free and fair, and those who were later found guilty of "election crimes" had apparently acted on a local level. Delegates of both candidates were found guilty of violations such as stuffing ballot boxes and were given light prison sentences.

Cape Verde has been making efforts to fight corruption and has acknowledged corruption in the customs department. The country has adopted laws and regulations to combat corruption, which is a criminally punishable offense. Cape Verde was not ranked by Transparency International in its 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression and of the press is guaranteed and generally respected in practice. No authorization is needed to publish newspapers and other publications. There is a growing independent press, with six independent radio broadcasters and one state-run radio broadcaster, in addition to one state-run television station and two foreign-owned stations. Criticism of the government by state-run media is limited by self-censorship resulting from citizens' fear of demotion or dismissal. The Cape Verdean Association of Journalists said in May 2005 that press freedom was improving in the country and noted the proliferation of private radio stations. However, the organization said journalists needed better training. Citizens enjoy liberal access to the internet.

The constitution requires the separation of church and state, and religious freedom is respected in practice. However, the vast majority of Cape Verdeans belong to the Roman Catholic Church, whose followers enjoy privileged status. Academic freedom is respected.

Freedom of assembly and association is guaranteed and respected in practice. Human rights groups, including the National Commission on the Rights of Man and the Ze Moniz Association for Solidarity and Development, operate freely. The con-

stitution also protects the right to unionize, and workers may form and join unions without restriction. Although collective bargaining is permitted, it occurs rarely. The government sometimes limits the right to strike. Officials in 2004 made efforts to amend legislation to provide for an independent body to resolve disputes over minimum services to be provided during strikes.

The judiciary is independent, although it is understaffed and inefficient, and cases are frequently delayed. In recent years, attacks on members of the judiciary, including the attorney general, have been reported, and some magistrates have requested personal protection. Drug traffickers were suspected of being behind some of the attacks, in which prominent businessmen have also been targeted. There were some reports that police beat persons in custody or detention. Although the government investigated the allegations, no legal action was taken against the alleged perpetrators. Prison conditions are poor and are characterized by overcrowding.

Ethnic divisions are not a problem in Cape Verde, although tensions occasionally flare between the authorities and West African immigrants. Hundreds of protesting West Africans clashed with security forces in the capital city of Praia in March 2005 following the killing of a fellow immigrant. Demonstrators complained that authorities failed to pursue perpetrators of crimes against members of their community. Several people were arrested, and officials said that some demonstrators could face expulsion.

Discrimination against women persists despite legal prohibitions against gender discrimination, as well as provisions for social and economic equality. Many women, especially in rural areas, do not know their rights or do not possess the means to seek redress. Although women do not receive equal pay for equal work, they have made modest gains in various professions, especially in the private sector. At the encouragement of the government and civil society, more women are reporting criminal offenses such as spousal abuse or rape. The Women Jurists Association sought legislation in 2004 to establish a special family court to address crimes of domestic violence and abuse. The government amended the penal code in 2004 to include sex crimes and verbal and mental abuse against women and children as punishable acts. Violence against women has been the subject of an extensive public service media campaign.

Central African Republic

Population: 4,200,000 **Political Rights:** 5*

GNI/capita: \$260 **Civil Liberties:** 4*

Life Expectancy: 44 **Status:** Partly Free

Religious Groups: Indigenous beliefs (35 percent), Protestant (25 percent), Roman Catholic (25 percent), Muslim (15 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Baya (33 percent), Banda (27 percent), Mandjia (13 percent), Sara (10 percent), Mboum (7 percent), other (10 percent)

Capital: Bangui

Ratings Change: Central African Republic's political rights rating improved from 6 to 5, its civil liberties rating from 5 to 4, and its status from Not Free to Partly Free due to the holding of presidential and parliamentary elections judged credible by international and domestic observers, and improvements in the rights of freedom of assembly and association.



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
3,5PF	3,5PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	7,5NF	6,5NF	5,4PF

Overview:

The Central African Republic (CAR) held presidential and parliamentary elections in 2005 that brought two years of military rule to an end and were judged credible by international and domestic election observers. In early December 2004, citizens overwhelmingly approved a new constitution by referendum. Despite marked political progress during the year, the CAR remains overwhelmingly impoverished, with an economy in a state of collapse after years of civil unrest and corruption. In August, massive flooding in and around the capital of Bangui displaced 25,000 people.

The Central African Republic (CAR) gained independence from France in 1960 after a period of brutal colonial exploitation. Colonel Jean-Bedel Bokassa seized power from President David Dacko in a 1966 coup. Bokassa abolished the constitution, dissolved the National Assembly, and issued a decree that placed all legislative and executive powers in the hands of the president. On December 4, 1976, the republic became a monarchy with the proclamation of the president as Emperor Bokassa I. His increasingly bizarre personal dictatorship was marked by numerous human rights atrocities. With the backing of French forces, former president Dacko led a coup against Bokassa in 1979. Dacko was in turn deposed by General Andre Kolingba in 1981, who assumed the presidency in a bloodless coup.

Mounting political pressure led Kolingba in 1991 to introduce a multiparty system through the creation of a national commission tasked with rewriting the constitution. Presidential elections were conducted in 1992 but were cancelled because of serious logistical and other irregularities. Ange-Felix Patasse, leader of the Movement for the Liberation of the Central African People (MLPC), won a second-round victory in rescheduled elections in October 1993. Salary arrears, labor unrest, and unequal treatment of military officers from different ethnic groups led to three muti-

nies against the Patasse government in 1996 and 1997. French forces quelled the disturbances, and an African peacekeeping force occupied the capital, Bangui, until 1998, when it was relieved by a UN peacekeeping mission.

The 1998 National Assembly elections produced a nearly even split between supporters of Patasse and those of his opponents, and Patasse was reelected to a six-year term in September 1999. Although international observers judged the 1999 vote to be free, there were reports of irregularities such as ballot shortages in some areas with a strong opposition following, and Kolingba and other candidates claimed fraud.

UN peacekeepers withdrew in February 2000 and were replaced by a peace-building office. In May 2001, Kolingba led a failed coup attempt that resulted in the death of at least 250 people in Bangui and forced 50,000 others to flee their homes.

In the country's fourth coup since independence, General Francois Bozize deposed Patasse in March 2003 after six months of fighting between government troops and renegade soldiers loyal to Bozize. Patasse fled into exile in Togo, where Bozize's regime sought his arrest on corruption charges. Following the coup, Bozize created a National Transitional Council with delegates from the country's 16 provinces, as well as from all political, social, religious, and professional associations in the country. Bozize issued a general amnesty for the participants in the 2001 failed coup and lifted a 2002 death sentence imposed in absentia upon Kolingba, who had sought refuge in Uganda.

An independent electoral commission was created to oversee elections in 2005. A new constitution was drafted with the participation of a broad cross-section of the population. Voter turnout for a December 2004 constitutional referendum reached 77 percent, with 90 percent approving the new constitution.

Although marked by delays and disputes over eligibility requirements, the first round of presidential and parliamentary elections was held on March 18, 2005. Ultimately, only former president Patasse was barred from running for office. Despite earlier claims that he would not run for president, Bozize ran as an independent candidate with the backing of the National Convergence Kwa Na Kwa, a grouping of smaller parties, military officials, and political leaders. Former coup leader Kolingba also ran, while former Prime Minister Martin Ziguele took up the banner of Patasse's MLPC. Eight other candidates contested the presidential poll, while 909 contestants ran for 105 parliamentary seats. Approximately 300 international and domestic election monitors observed and reported favorably on the voting-day process. In a runoff against Ziguele held on May 8, Bozize won with 65 percent of the vote. Kwa Na Kwa obtained 42 seats in the National Assembly, while the MLPC won 11. Several of the smaller parties and independent candidates who won seats subsequently joined Kwa Na Kwa to assert majority control over the legislature.

CAR citizens remain vulnerable to attack by armed groups with access to weapons left over from decades of conflict, and an estimated 40,000 refugees are in neighboring Chad. In October, troops from the Economic Community of Central African States (CEMAC) deployed to the northeast part of the country to combat spreading banditry. There are increasing conflicts between pastoral nomads and farmers competing for scarce land resources. Flooding in and around the capital of Bangui left approximately 25,000 displaced in August 2005.

Despite natural resources that include diamonds, gold, uranium, and timber, the

CAR is one of the least developed countries in the world, and approximately 80 percent of the population is engaged in subsistence agriculture. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund are urging new Prime Minister Elie Dote, a former expert with the African Development Bank, to implement economic reforms to jumpstart the economy and address widespread poverty and corruption.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of the CAR can change their government democratically. In March 2005, voters exercised their right to vote in presidential and parliamentary polls generally seen as credible by international observers and domestic election monitors. An independent electoral commission composed of 10 representatives of political parties, 10 from civil society, and 10 from the transitional government oversaw the election. Newly elected President Francois Bozize won a six-year term, while representatives from seven parties and 34 independent candidates won five-year terms in the unicameral National Assembly. The executive branch of government predominates over the legislative and judicial branches, and the president appoints the prime minister. The president is limited to two elected terms in office.

Though Kwa Na Kwa has emerged as the country's dominant political force, other political parties operate freely, including former President Patasse's MLPC and the party of General Kolingba, the Central African Democratic Assembly.

Corruption remains a serious problem in the CAR, and is deeply rooted in the long-standing mismanagement of the country's natural resources for private gain. The CAR is the world's fifth-largest producer of diamonds, but its actual diamond exports are nearly double the official number reported. Some steps have been taken toward reform, and in September 2005, the government began cooperating with Transparency International to gather information on the scope of corruption in the country. In October, an investigation into the number of ghost workers on the civil service payroll was followed by the suspension of three government ministers over allegations of misappropriation of public funds.

The CAR's constitution provides for the right to free speech, and legislation adopted in late 2004 eliminated prison sentences in slander or libel cases. However, the government used verbal and physical threats in 2005, particularly during the political campaign period, to limit negative press coverage by independent news outlets. One editor was arrested and held without charge for 48 hours in February. The law still provides for terms of imprisonment for journalists charged with inciting persons to hatred or violence, and many journalists practice self-censorship. Broadcast media are dominated by the state, and the only licensed private radio stations are music- or religion-oriented, although some carry programming on human rights and peace-building issues. There are no restrictions on internet access.

Religious freedom is generally respected, but the government occasionally infringes on this right. Many university faculty members and students are politically active, and they are able to express their views without fear of reprisal.

The government afforded more respect to freedom of assembly in 2005. In contrast to the previous year, there were no reports that police beat or detained protestors or used force to disperse demonstrations. Several hundred human rights and other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate unhindered. The CAR's largest single employer is the government, and government employee trade unions are ac-

tive. In October, civil servants launched a series of strikes over pay arrears. The cash-strapped government negotiated with the union, but was not able to fully address the arrears.

Corruption, political interference, and lack of training hinder the efficiency and impartiality of judicial institutions. Judges are appointed by the president, and judicial proceedings are prone to executive influence. Limitations on searches and detention are often ignored. The Penal Code prohibits torture and specifies sanctions for those found guilty of physical abuse, but police brutality is a serious problem. Though limited, there were allegations of harassment, threats, intimidation, and abuse of authority by law enforcement agencies during the electoral period. Conditions for prisoners, including many long-term pretrial detainees, are sometimes life-threatening and aggravated by dilapidated facilities. Juveniles are not separated from adults. Serious human rights violations continued in 2005 beyond the capital, where armed gangs, some with ties to the military, rob and terrorize the population at will.

Members of northern ethnic groups, especially President Bozize's Baya ethnic group, predominate within the military and at increasing levels of government. Discrimination against indigenous Pygmies continues to exist.

Twelve women were elected to the National Assembly in 2005, though in general, discrimination relegates women to second-class citizenship. Constitutional guarantees for women's rights are not enforced, especially in rural areas. Hundreds of women and girls continue to suffer the consequences of the widespread, systemic rapes perpetrated by Congolese rebels in the CAR from 2002 to 2003. An NGO has filed a complaint against former president Ange-Felix Patasse and Congolese Liberation Movement leader Jean-Pierre Bemba at the International Criminal Court. Female genital mutilation is still practiced, but has been illegal since 1996 and is reportedly diminishing. Abortion is prohibited. The law does not prohibit trafficking in persons, and there were reports that orphaned children were trafficked for the purposes of domestic servitude or for work in commercial enterprises.

Chad

Population: 9,700,000 **Political Rights:** 6
GNI/capita: \$240 **Civil Liberties:** 5
Life Expectancy: 47 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Muslim (51 percent), Christian (35 percent), animist (7 percent), other (7 percent)
Ethnic Groups: 200 distinct groups, including Arabs, Gorane, Sara, and Moundang
Capital: N'Djamena



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
6,5NF	6,5NF	6,4NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview:

Chad held a national referendum in June 2005 that approved a constitutional amendment abolishing term limits

for the presidency, paving the way for President Idriss Deby to seek a third term in office. In September, a Belgian court issued an international warrant for the arrest of former Chadian leader Hissene Habre for atrocities committed during his 1982-1990 rule. Meanwhile, the humanitarian crisis in Darfur continued to affect Chad, with more than 200,000 Sudanese refugees sheltering along the eastern border.

Civil war and rebellions have been commonplace in Chad since independence from France in 1960. In 1989, Idriss Deby, a leading military commander, launched an insurgency from Sudan against Hissene Habre, whose one-party regime had been in power since 1981. Habre's dictatorship was marked by widespread atrocities against individuals and ethnic groups perceived as threats to the regime. With support from Libya and no opposition from French troops stationed in Chad, Deby overthrew Habre in 1990.

Deby's Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS) installed him as president in 1991. Elections were held in 1996, despite threats posed by ongoing rebel insurgencies. Deby won in the second round, and his MPS party won 63 of 125 seats in the following year's legislative elections. International observers noted numerous serious irregularities in both elections.

In May 2001, Deby was reelected president with more than 67 percent of the vote. Alleging widespread fraud, the six opposition candidates called for the results to be annulled and were briefly arrested. The government subsequently banned gatherings of more than 20 people, although political protests continued.

During parliamentary elections in May 2002, the MPS won 110 of 155 seats. An allied party won 12 seats, with smaller parties and independent candidates taking the remainder. Several opposition parties boycotted the polls.

In 2004, Deby's government proposed a constitutional amendment that eliminated presidential term limits. The subsequent June 2005 referendum, during which voters also approved an amendment to replace the Senate with an Economic, Social, and Cultural Council appointed by the president and a clause making constitutional revisions a presidential prerogative, passed with approximately 71 percent of the vote. There were reports of widespread irregularities in the voter registration process, and the government muzzled independent media outlets during the campaign period. Opposition groups, human rights activists, and representatives of the international community criticized the referendum as an attempt by the government to consolidate power in advance of scheduled 2006 elections. Meanwhile, Deby dismissed his 5,000 man presidential guard in October following a string of desertions.

Approximately 200,000 Sudanese refugees escaping the humanitarian crisis in Darfur in the Sudan are in Chad. Deby has sought in the past to broker ceasefire agreements between the Sudanese government and rebels from his native Zaghawa clan, but relations between Chad and Sudan soured during the year. In April, Deby accused Sudan of recruiting Chadian Arabs into the Sudanese Janjaweed militia to destabilize Chad and of broader support to deserters from the Chadian military.

In response to a July 2005 report from Human Rights Watch identifying 41 accomplices of the former dictator Habre still serving in government, the Chadian government declared its intent to remove those accused of murder and torture from their posts to stand trial in the future. The government also agreed to expedite a draft law

to compensate victims of Habre's brutality. Habre currently lives in exile in Senegal, where he was indicted in 2000 on charges of torture and crimes against humanity, though a Senegalese court later ruled that he could not be tried there. Human rights groups pursued a similar case in Belgium that led to the issuance of an international warrant for Habre's arrest in September 2005. Arrested and released several times by the Senegalese authorities, the Senegalese government referred the extradition request to the African Union for resolution in November.

France maintains a 1,000-member garrison in the country and serves as Deby's main political and commercial supporter. Chad is part of the Pan Sahel Initiative (PSI), a U.S. government military-to-military assistance program designed to counter terrorist operations, border incursions, and the trafficking of people, as well as illicit materials and other goods.

Millions of dollars in oil revenues began flowing into government coffers in 2004. In return for World Bank financing, Chad promised to spend 80 percent of oil revenues on schools, clinics, roads, and other basic needs, and to set aside 10 percent of oil revenues for future generations. However, the revenue management and oversight mechanisms in place to ensure compliance lack the capacity, funding, and information necessary from the government and its oil company partners to fulfill their responsibilities. In October 2005, the government announced its intent to revise legislation in order to gain more discretion over the use of oil revenues. Amnesty International has claimed that recently signed contracts with Exxon-Mobil include disincentives for the Chadian government to protect human rights.

Eighty percent of the Chadian population lives at or below the poverty level, with most dependent on subsistence agriculture. The country ranked 173 out of 177 on the UN's 2005 Human Development Index.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Citizens of Chad cannot change their government democratically. Chad has never experienced a free and fair transfer of power through elections. Democratic rights were further eroded in 2005 with the passage by referendum of a constitutional amendment that abolished term limits for the president. Chad's electoral commission is dominated by representatives from the government and parties of the ruling coalition. The 155 members of the unicameral National Assembly are elected for four-year terms. The president is elected for a five-year term. Presidential and legislative elections are scheduled for 2006.

Approximately 60 political parties exist legally. With the exception of the ruling MPS, however, their influence is limited. Despite infighting among members of Deby's northeastern Zaghawa ethnic group, Zaghawa control over Chad's political and economic levers is a source of ongoing resentment among the more than 200 other ethnic groups in the country.

Human rights groups have expressed concern that weaknesses in revenue management and oversight mechanisms are leading to the diversion of the country's oil revenues from national development. Despite limited steps toward reducing corruption and improving transparency, Chad ranked at the bottom of the 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

President Idriss Deby's government continued in 2005 to deal harshly with independent journalists critical of government actions and policies. During the year,

four journalists were arrested and convicted of charges ranging from libel to inciting hate, though three of the cases were overturned on appeal and all four journalists were released from prison. The print media have limited impact on the overwhelmingly illiterate population, and radio reaches a much broader audience. The High Council of Communications, Chad's media regulatory body, exerts control over the content of most radio broadcasts, and limits private outlets through high licensing fees. Radio Brakos, a small independent station, was banned from broadcasting from June to August 2005 after airing reports of corruption by a local official in southern Chad. Radio Brakos' station manager was arrested in September on charges of threatening state security and held in detention until Chad's Supreme Court ordered him released in November. Internet access is not restricted.

Though Chad's constitution provides for a secular state, religion is a source of division in society, and the government does on occasion limit religious freedom. A disproportionately large number of senior government officials are Muslims, and some policies favor Islam in practice. The government does not restrict academic freedom.

Despite harassment and occasional physical intimidation, Chadian human rights groups operate openly and publish findings critical of the government. The right to organize and to strike is generally respected, but the formal economy is small, and union membership is low.

The rule of law and the judicial system remain weak, with courts heavily influenced by the executive. Civilian authorities do not maintain effective control of the security forces, which routinely ignore constitutional protections regarding search, seizure, and detention. Human rights groups credibly charge Chadian security forces and rebel groups with killing and torturing with impunity, though such incidents appear to have declined. Overcrowding, disease, and malnutrition make prison conditions life-threatening, and many inmates spend years in prison without being charged.

Interethnic clashes are common between the Nilotic and Bantu Christian farmers, who inhabit the country's south, and the Arab Saharan peoples who occupy the arid deserts of northern Chad. Turmoil resulting from ethnic and religious differences is exacerbated by clan rivalries and external interference along the insecure borders. Discrimination against Chadians who are not members of the Zaghawa ethnic group or its allies is common.

In recent years, tens of thousands of Chadians have fled their country to escape politically inspired violence and general insecurity caused by banditry. Chad's borders are porous, and trade in weapons among nomadic Sahelian peoples flourishes.

Widespread discrimination against women exists. Despite legal protections, violence against women is common. Female genital mutilation is illegal but routinely practiced by a number of ethnic groups. Abortion is prohibited, with exceptions to preserve the physical health of the mother or in case of fetal impairment. Prostitution, also illegal, is a growing problem in the southern oil-producing region.

Chile

Population: 16,100,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$4,360 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 76 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (89 percent),
 Protestant (11 percent)
Ethnic Groups: White and mestizo (95 percent),
 Amerindian (3 percent), other (2 percent)
Capital: Santiago



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
2,2F	2,2F	3,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

Former defense and health minister Michelle Bachelet Jeria was favored to win Chile's December 2005 presidential election and become Chile's first woman president.

Meanwhile, former dictator Captain General Augusto Pinochet, the leader of a 1973 military coup, was stripped of his legal protections in a case involving more than \$13 million in funds he and his family allegedly laundered out of the country.

The Republic of Chile was founded after independence from Spain in 1818. Democratic rule predominated in the twentieth century until the 1973 overthrow of President Salvador Allende by the military led by Captain General Augusto Pinochet. An estimated 3,000 people were killed or "disappeared" during his regime. The 1980 constitution provided for a plebiscite in which voters could reject another presidential term for Pinochet. In the 1988 vote, 55 percent of voters said no to eight more years of military rule, and competitive presidential and legislative elections were scheduled for the following year.

In 1989, Christian Democrat Patricio Aylwin, the candidate of the center-left Concertacion (Coalition for Parties of Democracy), was elected president and the Concertacion won a majority in the Chamber of Deputies. However, with eight senators appointed by the outgoing military government, the coalition fell short of a Senate majority. Aylwin's government was unsuccessful in its efforts to reform the constitution and was stymied by a right-wing Senate bloc in its efforts to prevent Pinochet and other military chiefs from remaining at their posts until 1997.

Eduardo Frei, a businessman and the son of a former president, carried his Concertacion candidacy to an easy victory in the December 1993 elections. Frei promised to establish full civilian control over the military, but he found he lacked the votes in Congress, as the 48-seat Senate included a senator-for-life position for Pinochet and 9 designated senators mandated by the 1980 constitution. Frei was also forced to retreat on his call for full accountability for rights violations that had occurred under military rule.

The October 1998 detention of Pinochet in London as the result of an extradition order from Spain, where he was wanted for alleged rights crimes against Spanish

citizens living in Chile, was viewed as a reaffirmation of the rule of law, even though it was the result of foreign intervention.

In the December 1999 presidential election, Ricardo Lagos, a moderate socialist, faced right-wing Alliance for Chile candidate Joaquin Lavin, the mayor of a Santiago suburb and a former advisor to Pinochet, winning 47.96 percent to Lavin's 47.52 percent; Lagos won the January 16, 2000, runoff vote. Although Lago's Concertacion coalition had 70 seats to the opposition's 50 in the lower house, it held just 20 seats in the Senate to 18 held by the opposition. A bloc of 11 others were either senators-for-life or had been designated under Pinochet's rules. Lagos's strong early performance appeared, by late 2000, to be threatened by soaring unemployment, price increases, and charges of government corruption.

In December 2000, a judge indicted Pinochet on homicide and kidnapping charges, in a year that saw the judiciary rule that allegations of crimes against humanity, including torture, kidnapping, and genocide, fell within its purview and were not subject to amnesty decrees. In July 2001, an appeals court in Santiago dropped the charges against Pinochet after it found that he suffered from dementia. In the December 2001 legislative elections, Pinochet supporters made big gains, although they failed to win control of Congress from the governing center-left coalition.

Political corruption scandals dominated the headlines in 2003 in Chile, a country viewed as a regional leader in clean government and transparency. Incidents of influence peddling, insider trading, and kickbacks resulted in the head of the central bank and two cabinet members—one a presidential confidant—leaving their jobs. Dozens of lower-ranking officials and several members of Congress from the ruling coalition were indicted. In response to the corruption scandals, Lagos forged a working alliance with the opposition's strongest party, the Independent Democratic Union (UDI), to push for reforms to eliminate what he said were the causes of the high-profile cases.

In July 2003, the Supreme Court ruled that Pinochet was unfit to undergo trial in the infamous "Caravan of Death" case involving the murder of 57 political prisoners following the 1973 coup. A week later, Pinochet resigned his honorary lifetime seat in the Senate.

In the October 31, 2004, municipal elections, the Concertacion coalition secured 45 percent of the vote, compared with the Alliance for Chile coalition, which captured 39 percent. More than a referendum on Lagos's government, the results of the elections were seen by many observers as an indication of the chances of the country's right wing to return to power in the December 2005 presidential contest after 15 years in the opposition. Although Concertacion has won a majority of votes in every municipal, congressional, and presidential election since the 1988 plebiscite, Alliance has gained increasing support, especially after divorcing itself from Pinochet and his regime's legacy of massive rights abuses. Lagos's continued popularity in 2004 was due largely to his deft handling of Chile's civil-military divide and the fact that the country continued to enjoy the longest period of economic growth in its history, the result in part of the state's involvement in the free-market economy.

The 89-year-old Pinochet found he had to fight a judicial rearguard action following the July 2004 revelations by a U.S. congressional committee that the former dictator had up to \$8 million in personal funds stashed in secret accounts in the Riggs Bank of Washington, D.C. The very fact of the accounts' existence appeared

to finally cause Chilean conservatives—and even the head of the Chilean army—to distance themselves from Pinochet. His legal situation also worsened in August, when the Supreme Court ruled that Pinochet was not immune from prosecution for his role in mass murders carried out by Operation Condor, a secret framework for mutual cooperation against dissidents between six South American military dictatorships in the 1970s.

In June 2005, a court stripped Pinochet of his legal protections in a case involving more than \$13 million in funds he and his family allegedly laundered out of the country. While Pinochet assumed "all responsibility" for the secret accounts, which by mid-2005 were revealed to total some \$31 million, retired military figures called on Pinochet to take responsibility for human rights crimes for which dozens of his subordinates are currently imprisoned or facing prosecution.

The December 11, 2005, presidential campaign offered the ruling coalition an opportunity to showcase its economic stewardship, symbolized by massive public works projects sprouting up around the country. The government's claims were buttressed in September, when the World Economic Forum ranked Chile 23rd among world nations in economic competitiveness, far ahead of its nearest Latin American rival, Uruguay, at 54. The electoral standard-bearer of the moderate Socialist Party coalition headed by President Lagos, his former health and defense minister Michelle Bachelet Jeria, appeared to benefit from her association with a government that has presided over one of Latin America's most impressive economic booms, including several mammoth public works projects.

Although poised to be the first woman to be elected president of a major Latin American country, Bachelet—the daughter of a Chilean general who died in prison as a result of the torture he received for his opposition to a 1973 military coup—has never served in elected office. Both of her top challengers, Lavin and Sebastian Pinera, a businessman and former senator, are political veterans. All three main candidates appeared to hug the middle of the road, promising economic stability, more jobs, better education, and greater equality of opportunity, together with pension reform. By late November, Bachelet's narrowing poll numbers suggested that she might be forced into a runoff.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Chile can change their government democratically. The 1999, 2000, and 2001 elections were considered free and fair, although low registration rates among young voters are a cause for concern. In 2004, a report from the Chilean Youth Institute said that the registry of young Chileans in the country's electoral rolls dropped by 50 percent between 1997 and 2003. A presidential candidate is required by law to win a majority of 50 percent plus one to avoid a runoff contest.

In 2005, the Senate finally passed reforms that repealed the last vestiges of Pinochet's legacy, moving to abolish authoritarian curbs on the legislative branch and agreeing to restore the president's right to remove the commanders-in-chief of the country's armed services. The reform package included the abolition of the Senate's nine appointed seats, which included four representatives of the armed forces as well as lifetime positions for former presidents. It also reduced the presidential term of office from six years to four. The bicameral National Congress consists of the Senate whose members serve eight-year terms (one-half elected every

four years), and the 120-seat Chamber of Deputies, whose members serve four-year terms.

One reform proposed by the Senate in 2005 was left unapproved—that which gives the political party placing second in the balloting disproportionately large representation at the expense of smaller parties. Major parties and political groupings in Chile include the Alliance for Chile (APC; including National Renewal and Independent Democratic Union or UDI); Coalition of Parties for Democracy (CPD; including Christian Democratic Party, the Socialist Party, the Party for Democracy or PPD, and the Radical Social Democratic Party); and the Communist Party.

In response to public outcry over the political corruption scandals, Congress passed laws in 2003 to prevent political patronage in high-level civil service jobs, increase government workers' salaries to reduce their susceptibility to bribes, create public funding for political campaigns, and require the names of private campaign contributors to be listed publicly. In Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index, Chile was listed as Latin America's most transparent country, ranking 21 out of a total of 159 countries worldwide.

The Chilean media generally operate without constraint. A political consensus exists in Chile to amend some current statutes, striking down such crimes contained in the Criminal Code as insulting public officials. These remain on the books as the result of a protracted legislative process. Chile has no law guaranteeing access to public information. There were no government restrictions on the internet.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the government generally respects this right in practice. The government does not restrict academic freedom.

The right to assemble peacefully is largely respected, although police occasionally use force against demonstrators. The constitution guarantees the right of association, which the government has also generally respected. Workers may form unions without prior authorization as well as join existing unions. Approximately 12 percent of Chile's 5.7 million workers belong to unions. In October, a violent government crackdown on dock workers—in which navy troops attacked picketing union members—led to the temporary closure of nine Chilean ports.

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respects this provision in practice. Most sitting judges come from the career judiciary, and all judges are appointed for life. The constitution provides for the right to legal counsel, but indigent defendants, who account for the majority of the cases in the Santiago region, have not always received effective legal representation.

Chile has two national police forces: a uniformed force, the Carabineros, one of Latin America's best law enforcement institutions with a history of popular support and respect; and a smaller, plainclothes investigations force. However, in recent years, the Carabineros have been the subject of complaints about the inadequate number of uniformed police patrolling the streets and allegations of increasing narcotics-related corruption. Continued problems exist, notably the use of excessive force against demonstrators, police brutality, and the lack of due process rights for detainees. Prisons are overcrowded and antiquated, with facilities nationally running at about 163 percent of capacity.

In 1990, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was formed to investigate rights violations committed under military rule. Its report implicated the military and secret police leadership in the death or forcible disappearance of 2,279 people be-

tween September 1973 and March 1990. Chilean courts have recently convicted several former military officers of heinous crimes, ruling that a 1978 amnesty decree set down by the Pinochet government was inapplicable to cases of enforced disappearance, which, they have held, is an ongoing crime.

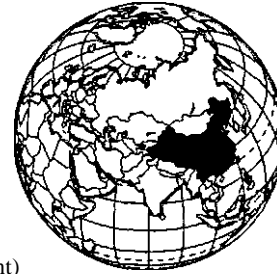
The army, the military branch most implicated in rights crimes, has extended limited cooperation to judicial investigations. In mid-2003, President Ricardo Lagos announced a series of measures relating to the criminal prosecution of former members of the military—including transfer of human rights cases currently under review in military tribunals to the jurisdiction of the civilian court system—and to reparations for victims of past rights crimes and their relatives. In 2005, some 300 military men were on trial for torture, kidnapping, and the forced disappearance of leftists and other dissidents, with several dozen already serving prison sentences for abuses committed during the military regime. In 2005, Lagos announced the construction of a new penitentiary to house convicted retired generals.

Native American groups in the country's southern region are increasingly vocal about their rights to ancestral lands that the government and private industry seek to develop. The 2002 census recorded approximately 692,000 people who identified themselves as of indigenous origin, or 4.6 percent of Chile's total population. The Mapuches, from the south, accounted for approximately 85 percent of this number. There were also small populations of Aymara, Atacamen, Rapa Nui, and Kawaskhar in other parts of the country. Upon taking office, Lagos began to make good on a campaign promise that the "Indian question" would receive priority attention. In October 2003, Lagos proposed constitutional recognition for the country's indigenous peoples. In September 2005, an independent Mapuche candidate Aucan Huilcaman, leader of the indigenous organization, All Lands Council, registered his candidacy for the presidency, but it was quickly rejected by the Electoral Commission due to his failure to obtain the minimum number of signatures required by law for independent candidates.

Violence and discrimination against women and violence against children remain problems. In 2004, Congress passed a law that legalized divorce; Chile had been one of only a handful of countries in the world, and the only one in the Americas, to prohibit divorce. In 2000, Lagos appointed 5 women to his 16-person cabinet. One, Defense Minister Michelle Bachelet Jeria, resigned in 2004 to prepare for her presidential bid.

China

Population: 1,303,700,000 **Political Rights:** 7
GNI/capita: \$1,100 **Civil Liberties:** 6
Life Expectancy: 72 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Daoist (Taoist), Buddhist, Muslim (1-2 percent), Christian (3-4 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Han Chinese (92 percent), other, [including Tibetan, Mongol, Korean, Manchu, and Uighur] (8 percent)
Capital: Beijing



Trend Arrow: China received a downward trend arrow due to increasing government restrictions over the country's media, including access to the internet.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF

Overview:

The Chinese leadership, guided by President Hu Jintao and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, continued in 2005 to reshape China's rapidly growing economy from a command economy to a market-oriented one. At the same time, the year was marked by ongoing governmental control and repression of political dissent. Of particular note was the regime's gradual tightening of control of the media and imprisonment of journalists who did not comply with the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) political priorities for news content.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) took power in mainland China in 1949 under Mao Zedong after its defeat of the Kuomintang (or Nationalists) in the Chinese Civil War. Aiming to strengthen his position of leadership and hasten China's socialist transformation, Mao led devastating mass-mobilization campaigns, such as the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), that resulted in millions of deaths and politicized nearly every aspect of daily life. Following Mao's death in 1976, Deng Xiaoping emerged as China's paramount leader. Over the next two decades, Deng maintained the CCP's absolute rule in the political sphere, while guiding China's transition from a largely agrarian economy to a rapidly urbanizing, export-driven market economy.

Deng and other party leaders signaled their intent to maintain political stability at all costs with the 1989 massacre of student protesters in Beijing's Tiananmen Square. Following the crackdown, the party tapped Jiang Zemin, Shanghai's party secretary, to replace the relatively moderate Zhao Ziyang as party secretary-general. Jiang became state president in 1993 and was widely recognized as China's top leader following Deng's death in 1997.

Jiang continued the Dengist policies of privatizing state firms, encouraging private enterprise, and scaling back China's social welfare system. China's leaders saw economic growth as essential to boosting living standards and improving regime legitimacy. However, concerned that too much market liberalization would create social inequalities and overheat the economy, in the 1990s the party leadership cen-

tralized control over the state tax system, the People's Bank of China, and stock markets to strengthen macroeconomic steering capacity.

At the CCP's sixteenth party congress in November 2002, Hu Jintao was named to replace Jiang as party general secretary. He was widely recognized as China's supreme leader after Jiang stood down as army chief in September 2004. Wen Jiabao took over Prime Minister Zhu Rongji's day-to-day management of the economy in March 2003. The new government pledged to improve conditions for rural Chinese—who have been left behind by rapid economic growth in urban areas—to carry out reform of the welfare system, and to reduce corruption.

The growing economic inequality between the coastal regions and the interior, rife unemployment among former state employees, and land disputes related to industrial development in rural China have led to political instability. Private firms have replaced government-owned enterprises as the dominant force in the economy. A massive migrant class of as many as 160 million workers has emerged; rural residents have left their homes in search of employment in populous cities. Although recent reforms have aided these migrants in taking advantage of China's economic rise, their shaky legal status exposes them to exploitation by employers and places them at a disadvantage in receiving health care and social services. Measures are under consideration to abolish the legal distinction between urban and rural residents in some areas.

The Chinese government continued to restrict political rights and repress critics of the regime in 2005. Restrictions on communication became more severe as the government strengthened regulations governing internet content in September and cracked down on the efforts of Chinese and foreign journalists to report on mass protests. The utility of village elections for reducing local corruption has been compromised by allegations of violence initiated by local party leaders, including attacks on foreign journalists attempting to cover news stories, such as that of the recall of a village head in Taishi, Guangdong Province, in October.

China has actively attempted to expand its influence among neighboring states. In November 2004, China signed a landmark agreement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); the agreement is intended to provide the basis for a free-trade zone for 25 percent of the world's population. In August 2005, joint military exercises were held with Russia. In September, China proved instrumental in securing an agreement from North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons program and rejoin the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. China's relationship with Japan deteriorated considerably as anti-Japanese protests broke out in Chinese cities in April 2005, sparked by the publication of a Japanese middle school textbook seen as glossing over Japan's World War II atrocities.

In a concession to pressure from the World Trade Organization and the United States, China devalued the *renminbi* by 2 percent in July 2005 and announced the *renminbi* would float against a basket of currencies rather than remain pegged to the U.S. dollar.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of China cannot change their government democratically. The People's Republic of China is a post-totalitarian regime. Although economic activity is increasingly independent of state control, Chinese citizens cannot democratically change top leaders or publicly express opposition to governmental policy. As stipulated in the

Chinese constitution, the CCP possesses a monopoly on political power. Party members hold almost all top national and local governmental, internal security, and military posts. A 3,000-member National People's Congress is, in principle, the Chinese parliament empowered to elect government officials. In practice, it does little more than approve decisions made by the CCP Politburo and its nine-person standing committee. Opposition groups, such as the China Democracy Party, are actively suppressed. The only competitive elections are village elections and elections for urban residency councils. However, these elections are largely dominated by the CCP.

The Chinese state closely monitors political activity and uses vaguely worded, national security regulations to justify detainment or imprisonment of those who are politically active without party approval. Groups considered to pose a threat to the regime, such as the Falungong, are suppressed and persecuted.

Political corruption is a severe problem in China in spite of a much publicized crackdown on official malfeasance. Embezzlement and bribery are rampant, and personal connections between party members and state institutions allow some officials to be virtually above the law. China was ranked 78 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is severely limited in China. All media are owned by state or party institutions and barred from criticizing senior CCP leaders, government policy, and state ideology. Sensitive topics, such as ethnic separatism, Taiwanese independence, democratic reform, and the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown, are banned. Journalists who do not adhere to party dictates on news content are harassed, detained, or jailed. In March 2005, the new Regulations on the Administration of Book Quality came into effect, requiring publishers to refrain from reprinting books of questionable political correctness and authorizing the government to confiscate banned books that had already been sold. In August, the Central Propaganda Department issued a new order restricting popular access to foreign films and television programs. The government encouraged the media to engage in self-censorship, as stipulated in the Self-Discipline Agreement for Chinese Radio and Television Announcers and Hosts issued in September.

The popularity of the internet has also led to increased government crackdowns and close monitoring of personal communication. China regularly blocks websites it deems politically threatening. Foreign internet companies have largely cooperated with the Chinese government on censorship enforcement. A prominent example of this was the role played by Yahoo! in providing information leading to the conviction of Hunan journalist Shi Tao, for leaking "state secrets." In the spring of 2004, Shi Tao e-mailed a one-page document outlining instructions for the suppression of news reports about the fifteenth anniversary of the Tiananmen crackdown to the New York-based website Democracy Forum. Chinese court documents suggest that Yahoo! provided information that allowed the procuratorate to identify Shi Tao as the sender of the e-mail, which resulted in his conviction to a 10-year prison sentence. In July 2005, government agencies shut down over a quarter of China's 573,755 websites after their operators failed to register at the Ministry of Information Industry (Mil). In September, new regulations were issued that increased the ability of the Chinese government to restrict internet news sites, web logs, and cellular phone text messaging, which is also subject to monitoring by the government.

Though constitutionally recognized, religious freedom is accorded little respect in China. Atheism is taught in schools, and all religious groups and organizations are required to register with the government. Members of unauthorized religious groups, such as Falungong, are harassed, detained, and arrested. In areas that have seen ethnic unrest, such as in predominately Muslim Xinjiang Autonomous Region, religious repression is linked to efforts to curb ethnic separatism. In Xinjiang, minors have been forbidden to attend religious services, and pilgrimages and other religious journeys are closely monitored. The government has taken advantage of the global focus on terrorism to crack down on Islamic groups, labeling them religious extremists. New Regulations on Religious Affairs, which took effect in March 2005, may lead to increased restrictions of religious freedom.

Academic freedom is restricted on sensitive political issues. Universities and research institutions must support official CCP ideology, and many scholars practice self-censorship in the interest of personal safety. Academics risk losing their positions if they publicly criticize the party or state policy. Peking University professor of journalism Jiao Guobiao was removed from his post after an essay he wrote criticizing the party's Propaganda Department, which controls all media content, was posted on the internet.

Freedom of assembly is severely restricted in China. Large anti-Japanese protests took place in major urban areas with the tacit approval of the Chinese government, because the government was hesitant to stand against popular nationalist sentiment. In Shanghai, where anti-Japanese protests turned violent, a number of protestors were subsequently arrested to discourage further demonstrations. Non-governmental organizations are required to register with the government and follow strict regulatory guidelines, with the constitution specifically prohibiting activities that undermine "party leadership" or go against the "interests of the state."

Chinese workers are not allowed to form independent labor unions. The only union permitted is the government-controlled All China Federation of Trade Unions. Independent labor leaders are harassed, detained, and jailed for their efforts. Collective bargaining is legal in all industries but seldom occurs in practice. Despite the fact that workers lack the legal right to strike, there has been a growing wave of strikes over layoffs, dangerous working conditions, unpaid wages, benefits, and unemployment stipends. The reaction of local officials has been mixed, with strike leaders often arrested, while other strikers are given partial concessions.

Although labor laws exist, they are poorly enforced, and employers frequently ignore minimum wage requirements and fail to implement required health and safety measures. Highly publicized mining accidents in Shaanxi Province during November 2004 and Liaoning Province in February 2005 prompted the government to publicize its concerns with improving worker safety.

The party controls the judiciary. The CCP directs verdicts and sentences, particularly in politically sensitive cases. Despite some recent criminal procedure reforms, trials—which are often mere sentence hearings—are frequently closed; few criminal defendants have access to counsel. Officials often subject suspects to "severe psychological pressure" to confess, and coerced confessions are frequently admitted as evidence. Police frequently conduct searches without warrants and at times monitor telephone conversations and other personal communications to use as evidence against suspected dissidents. Many political prisoners and ordinary

alleged criminals lack trials altogether, detained instead by bureaucratic fiat in "re-education through labor" camps. Endemic corruption further exacerbates the lack of due process in the judicial system. Judicial conditions are worst in capital punishment cases; 65 crimes carry the death penalty, and perpetrators may be executed within days of their arrest.

Though in most cases security forces are under direct civilian control, misuse of authority remains frequent, and human rights violations are widespread. There have been cases of extrajudicial and politically motivated murders, torture, beatings, coercion, arbitrary arrest, and detention. Political prisoners may be subjected to prolonged detention without formal prosecution; *New York Times* researcher Zhao Yan remains in custody by order of the Ministry of State Security since his detention in September 2004 on suspicion of leaking state secrets. Though by law people suspected of committing a crime have the right to seek an attorney, police often prevent or obstruct suspects from doing so. According to the *Beijing Youth Daily*, only 14.5 percent of criminal suspects in Beijing meet with a lawyer during the first 48 hours of detention, a statistic that is believed to be much lower in rural areas. Lawyers who are overly vocal in expressing the rights of their clients are frequently harassed or arrested.

Although antidiscrimination laws exist, religious groups, minorities, and people with HIV/AIDS face severe discrimination in mainstream society. The majority Han Chinese population has reaped an outsized share of benefits from government programs and economic growth, despite government initiatives to improve living standards for ethnic minorities.

The government's focus on economic reform and rapid modernization has caused the evictions of urban residents, particularly in large coastal cities, with local authorities forcibly removing hundreds of thousands of residents without adequate compensation in the interest of urban development projects. The Public Security Ministry counted 87,000 "public order disturbances" in 2005, a 15 percent increase from the number of disturbances in 2004. Protesters of forced evictions have been met with severe police repression. Ye Guozhu, a housing advocate, was arrested in December 2004 for "disturbing social order" after applying for a permit to hold a demonstration in Beijing.

Though the Ministry of Labor and Social Services issued new regulations in 2005 to make it easier for rural migrants to seek jobs in urban areas, mobility is strictly controlled by the government through a highly regulated residency (*hukou*) system, tied to educational and health benefits. Citizens require permission from the government and from their employer prior to moving from city to city; people in rural areas who wish to move to urban areas face inconvenient bureaucratic application procedures—a de facto restriction on mobility.

Serious human rights violations against women and girls continue, mostly as a result of the enforcement of the one-child policy and a cultural preference for males over females. The shortage of women and girls in rural areas has created a market for the trafficking of women and girls, who are sold as "wives" or pressed into the sex industry.

China's population-control policy remains in place and is an indication of continued governmental control over personal life. Chinese couples may have no more than one child, with the exception of couples born from "one-child" families. The

one-child policy is less stringently enforced in rural areas. The Population and Family Planning Law requires couples who have unapproved children to pay extra fees, while at the same time giving preferential treatment to couples who abide by birth limits. The use of compulsory abortion or sterilization by local officials enforcing family planning regulations occurs in isolated cases, though less frequently than in the past.

Colombia

Population: 46,000,000 **Political Rights:** 3*
GNI/capita: \$1,810 **Civil Liberties:** 3*
Life Expectancy: 72 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (90 percent),
 other (10 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Mestizo (58 percent), white (20 percent),
 mulatto (14 percent), black (4 percent), other [including
 Amerindian] (4 percent)

Capital: Bogota

Ratings Change: Colombia's political rights and civil liberties ratings improved from 4 to 3 due to improvements in citizen security and perceptions of official corruption and to decreases in physical violence against journalists.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
4,4PF	4,4PF	3,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	3,3PF



Overview:

President Alvaro Uribe Velez, who was preparing to launch his campaign for reelection in May 2006, retained his popularity in 2005 as the result of improvements in citizen security and the economy and newly implemented judicial reforms. The year saw incidents of violence against journalists decrease, although Colombia remained a dangerous country for journalists, particularly for those reporting on issues such as drug trafficking and corruption. Meanwhile, debate continued throughout the year over the demobilization of the country's far-right paramilitaries.

Following independence from Spain in 1819, the former "Gran Colombia" broke up into the present-day states of Venezuela, Ecuador, and the Republic of Colombia. The 1904 secession of Panama, engineered by the United States, left Colombia with its present boundaries. From 1948 to 1953, a civil war between Liberals and Conservatives known as "La Violencia," resulted in some 200,000 deaths. From 1958 to 1970, the two parties alternated the presidency under the terms of a pact (the "National Front") into which they entered in 1957 to end the civil war. Colombia subsequently has been marked by the corrupt politics of the Liberal and Conservative parties, as well as by left-wing guerrilla insurgencies, right-wing paramilitary violence, the emergence of vicious drug cartels, and human rights violations committed by all sides.

In the June 21, 1998, election, Conservative candidate Andres Pastrana won the presidency and, in an effort to consolidate the peace process, arranged for the leftist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrillas to regroup and peacefully occupy a so-called demilitarized zone consisting of five southern districts, from which the military was withdrawn. The move, which had been strongly resisted by the military, gave the guerrillas de facto control over a territory the size of Switzerland.

Although Pastrana did achieve some success in severing ties between the armed forces and right-wing death squads known as the United Self-Defenses of Colombia (AUC), the peace bid ultimately failed. In 2001, it became clear that the FARC's "demilitarized zone" was actually used by the guerrillas as a sanctuary for coordinating military operations, as a rest area for battle-weary insurgents, and as a base for criminal activities such as drug trafficking and the hiding of hostages.

In the March 2002 congressional elections, the Liberal Party secured the largest number of seats in both the Senate and the House of Representatives, followed by the Conservative Party. In May presidential elections, war-weary Colombians gave Uribe, a hard-line former provincial governor who ran independently of the country's two dominant parties, an unprecedented first-round victory. The target of more than a dozen assassination attempts by leftist guerrillas, including one just a month before the election, Uribe had run on a platform of no concessions to the insurgents and the implacable use of the military to eliminate them.

Inaugurated in August amid guerrilla attacks that left 19 people dead, Uribe decreed a state of emergency, stepped up antiguerrilla efforts in urban areas, and created "special combat zones" in 27 municipalities in which the U.S.-backed military was allowed to restrict civilian movement and conduct searches without a warrant. He also established a "war tax" to finance thousands of additional troops and tightened restrictions on the foreign press. In his first 10 months in office, Uribe allowed the extradition of 64 accused drug traffickers to the United States, more than his predecessor had allowed during his entire four-year term.

In 2003, the country continued to be wracked by massacres—the work of both guerrillas and right-wing paramilitary death squads—drug trafficking, and by the highest rate of kidnapping in the Western Hemisphere. Uribe won high marks for his hands-on, take-charge style, tireless work ethic, communications skills, and personal courage in traveling to the country's most violent regions. Critics, however, faulted him for having an "authoritarian" bent and little apparent concern for human rights issues. In addition, Uribe created a firestorm of protest when he proposed granting paramilitaries an amnesty that would entail reduced prison sentences, or the payment of reparations in lieu of jail time, for leaders found guilty of atrocities. Meanwhile, Colombia's highest tribunal dealt Uribe a surprise political setback, stripping him of emergency powers he had assumed in 2002 to fight leftist rebels. The decision by the Constitutional Court, which signaled its willingness to intervene if Uribe tried to overstep his powers, annulled the special militarized zones Uribe had created and took away his ability to issue special decrees,

In October, Colombians voted down key referendum proposals supported by Uribe to freeze government spending in order to provide more funds to wage war against the guerrillas, fight corruption, and streamline a top-heavy political structure. In November, more than 850 members of a right-wing paramilitary group, part of

an illegal army responsible for some of the country's bloodiest massacres, laid down their arms and were allowed to return to civilian life. Many had past careers as common criminals, and human rights groups said the move made a mockery of justice. That same month, Colombian troops defeated an unprecedented effort by 14 FARC combat units to encircle Bogota and cut off major roads leading to the capital.

In 2004, Uribe announced the \$7 billion Colombia Phase II plan to combat terrorism and international crime, strengthen public institutions, and promote social and economic reactivation. He also retreated from his earlier promises to maintain a hard-line approach with right-wing paramilitaries, as their demobilization began haltingly and new revelations of paramilitary infiltration of state institutions, including the office of the attorney general, surfaced. Uribe's attempt to bring the AUC into the political arena and to bargain with them generated protests from human rights groups and the United States, which receives 90 percent of its cocaine from Colombia. Washington noted that more than a dozen chiefs of the AUC, blacklisted as a terrorist organization, were also wanted in the United States for narcotics-related crimes. However, by the end of 2004, nearly 3,000 combatants from five separate AUC paramilitary blocs were demobilized.

At the same time, the once seemingly unstoppable leftist guerrillas appeared to be on the run in several areas of the country, even as the largest leftist group, itself rent by internal divisions and increasingly involved in narcotics and common crime, appeared determined to hold out on the battlefield. Meanwhile, although better equipped and trained than previously and increasingly possessing more useful intelligence, the country's military continued to rely on mostly peasant conscripts and lacked the manpower and equipment needed to carry out its mission. By 2005, however, the military's improved human rights performance resulted in its receiving the highest public approval rating in the country.

Throughout 2005, the debate over the demobilization of the paramilitaries continued. Human rights groups claimed that the Justice and Peace Law adopted in June would not lead to genuine demobilization or lasting peace. They maintained that the law's provisions neither sufficiently mandated the permanent dismantling of the paramilitary organizations, nor allowed for a sufficient time frame—60 days was the maximum allowed—for their many crimes to be investigated by Colombia's overtaxed judiciary. In addition, fighters were under no obligation to make a full confession about their past or to collaborate with government forces. Defenders of the law countered that the law does not encourage impunity—combatants are required to spend between five and eight years in prison—nor does it apply to drug-related offenses. By mid-2005, nearly 8,000 paramilitaries had turned in their weapons and been removed from the conflict. However, in October, AUC leaders warned that the demobilization process would come to an end if the government did not uphold its promises concerning extradition and other issues. Colombia, with a displaced population of nearly 3 million, including 800,000 children, and a death toll of at least 35,000 since the start of the 1990s, was ranked the world's six-worst "forgotten" emergency in a March 2005 poll of humanitarian experts conducted by AlertNet, a humanitarian news network created by the Reuters Foundation.

In the run-up to the May 2006 presidential election, Uribe's reelection prospects were bolstered by a growing economy, falling unemployment, the greater presence of more professional security forces around the country, decreasing drug crop cul-

tivation, and newly implemented reforms of the justice system. However, Amnesty International has warned that the demobilization process for the paramilitaries "opens the way for their recycling ... as security guards, civilian police and informants." In July 2005, a group of 22 U.S. senators asked that aid to Colombia be withheld because of lack of progress on leading human rights prosecutions of military and intelligence officials. Meanwhile, attempts to engage the FARC in negotiations similar to those carried on with the AUC have proved fruitless.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Colombia can change their government democratically. However, in 2002, electoral participation was inhibited by threats of death squads operating with impunity as well as by guerrilla violence, particularly in rural areas, where the latter engaged in an explicit campaign of intimidation. More than 200,000 soldiers, police, and security agents were deployed during the voting in a largely successful attempt to keep the peace. The October 2003 municipal elections were generally free of violence on election day.

The Congress is composed of a Senate and a Chamber of Deputies, with members chosen in a simultaneous election for all seats in both houses. Both Senators and Deputies serve four-year terms. The Senate consists of 83 members, 2 chosen by indigenous communities and 81 by the rest of the nation at large, by a system of proportional representation with a 2 percent threshold; of these 81 seats, 3 are reserved for "political minorities." The Chamber of Deputies consists of 161 members, elected by proportional representation by district. Each of the 32 Departments, plus the Capital District (Bogota), is a district; the number of seats assigned to each district depends on population.

The dominant parties remain the Liberal Party (54 deputies in the current Congress) and the Conservative Party (21 deputies). Over 20 other parties, many with just one or two deputies, are also represented in the lower house of Congress. President Uribe was elected in 2002 as a member of the small Colombia First Party.

In October 2005, members of the Constitutional Court publicly accused one another of taking money to approve legislation allowing presidents to serve more than one four-year term. The Court gave its final approval to the law in November.

Corruption affects virtually all aspects of public life. In recent years, anticorruption activists have claimed that the annual cost of systemic problems exceeds \$2.2 billion and that corruption may be a greater threat to the country's institutional survival than the internal war is. Colombia was ranked 55 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index. Transparency International noted that perceptions of corruption in Colombia improved slightly during the year.

The constitution guarantees freedom of expression. However, media ownership is concentrated in the hands of wealthy families, large national conglomerates, or groups associated with the two dominant political parties. Media dependency on government advertising may account for a recent reduction in criticism of official actions and policies. More than 120 journalists have been murdered since the mid-1990s, many for reporting on drug trafficking and corruption; most of the cases remain unsolved. However, in October 2005, the Inter-American Press Association (LAPA) reported "a notable drop in killings and violence against journalists" in the

previous 18 months. At the same time, IAPA reported a "new threat" to freedom of the press—lawsuits against journalists were increasingly being used as a form of intimidation. It reported that more than 100 public interest, criminal, and civil actions had been brought against 12 media outlets, 9 reporters, and 2 columnists by retired military officers, government ministers, public servants, and private parties. The government does not limit or block access to the internet or censor websites.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the government generally respects this right in practice. It also does not restrict academic freedom, although threats and harassment have caused many professors and students to adopt lower profiles and avoid discussing controversial topics, with some academics opting for voluntary exile. Paramilitary groups and guerrillas maintain a presence on many university campuses in order to generate political support and to undermine their adversaries through both violent and nonviolent means.

Constitutional rights regarding freedom of association are restricted in practice by politically motivated and drug-related violence and by the government's inability to guarantee the security of its citizens. Human rights workers in Colombia are frequently murdered by the military and by rightist paramilitary forces. Uribe has called rights workers "terrorist sympathizers" and cowards and claimed that many Colombian nonofficial human rights organizations are "spokespeople for terrorism."

The murder of trade union activists has made Colombia the most dangerous country in the world for organized labor; only about 6 percent of the country's workforce is unionized, one of the lowest percentages in Latin America. More than 2,500 trade union activists and leaders have been killed in little more than a decade, although the number of killings reported declined by 25 percent in 2004 and decreased again in 2005. Labor leaders are frequently targeted for attack by paramilitary groups, guerrillas, narcotics traffickers, and union rivals.

The justice system remains compromised by corruption and extortion. On a positive note, a new criminal code enacted in 2003 took effect in Bogota and cities in the coffee-growing region on January 1, 2005, and is scheduled to be implemented throughout the country by 2008. The reforms include the abandonment of the traditional modalities of the Continental (and Latin American) civil law system—investigation by judges, written testimony given *in camara*, judicially rendered verdicts. These will be replaced by certain procedures traditionally associated with the Anglo-American adversarial common law system—with investigation and charging assigned to a prosecutorial corps independent of the judiciary, oral testimony in open court, and verdicts rendered by lay juries. As a result of the reforms, cases in Bogota that normally took up to four years to come to trial were processed in less than two months. Colombia's prisons are crowded, and they are the frequent sites of murders and riots; in 2005, however, the completion of 15 new penal institutions increased the system's ability to handle 25,000 more prisoners.

The civilian-led Ministry of Defense is responsible for internal security and oversees both the armed forces and the national police. Since Uribe took office, defense expenditures have increased 46 percent. Civilian management of the armed forces, however, is limited; cadres of army "informants" and "collaborators" have been organized, and a separate army of peasant soldiers, led by professional soldiers, was recruited and trained, all without civilian oversight.

Colombia remains one of the most violent countries in the world, although in

2004 and 2005 the number of people kidnapped was more than halved, down from a previous rate of more than 3,000 people annually. The vast majority of violent crimes are unsolved.

Left-wing guerrillas, some of whom protect narcotics-production facilities and drug traffickers, systematically violate human rights. The FARC guerrillas also regularly extort payments from hundreds of businessmen and use hostages as "human shields" as they seek to escape from pursuit by the security forces. Another problem concerns "social cleansing," or the elimination of drug addicts, street children, and other marginal citizens by vigilante groups often linked to the police.

There are approximately 80 distinct ethnic groups among Colombia's more than 800,000 indigenous inhabitants; these people live on more than 50 million acres granted to them by the government, often located in resource-rich, strategic regions fought over by the warring armed groups. Despite their seeking to remain neutral in the armed conflict, these Native Americans are frequently the targets of forced recruitment by the guerrillas and selective assassination by the paramilitary forces. In 2004, there were four indigenous senators—two of whom occupied seats reserved for indigenous people—and two Afro-Colombian members of the upper house; one Native American and three Afro-Colombians were members of the House of Representatives. Neither group, however, was represented in Uribe's cabinet nor on any of the nation's high courts. In November 2005, Indians who seized control of 18 large farms vowed to stage countrywide protests after land reform talks with Uribe ended without an agreement.

According to the United Nations, some 948,000 children under the age of 14 work in "unacceptable" conditions. An estimated 60 percent of FARC fighters are believed to be under the age of 15, and female child-soldiers were reported to be subjected to sexual abuse. Child-soldiers attempting to leave without permission are executed by firing squad.

Sexual harassment, violence against women, and the trafficking of women for sexual exploitation remain serious problems. In 2004, Amnesty International reported that soldiers, leftist rebels, and rightist paramilitaries treat women as "trophy of war," and that the crimes committed by the paramilitaries—the main offenders—include rape, mutilation, and murder. Police estimate that as many as 50,000 Colombians, including many underage boys and girls, have been forced into prostitution, mainly in Holland, Japan, and Spain. The 1980 Penal Code makes abortion illegal except if necessary to save the mother's life. However, Colombia has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the International Covenant on Political and Civil Rights, both of which list access to abortion as a right. There is an active abortion rights movement that has challenged the restrictive content of national law on the basis of these treaties.

Comoros

Population: 700,000 **Political Rights:** 4
GNI/capita: \$390 **Civil Liberties:** 4
Life Expectancy: 60 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim (98 percent),
 Roman Catholic (2 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Antalote, Cafre, Makoa, Oimatsaha,
 Sakalava
Capital: Moroni



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
4,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	6,4PF	6,4PF	6,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF

Overview:

Internal strains and rivalries between the leaders of Comoros's three constituent islands and the federation president resulted in rising political tensions in 2005. President Assoumani Azali, who is constitutionally obliged to leave office in April 2006, attempted but failed in 2005 to change the constitution to allow him to seek an additional term in office.

The Union of the Comoros comprises three islands: Grande Comore, Anjouan, and Moheli. Mayotte Island, the fourth island of the Comorian archipelago, voted to remain a French overseas territory in a 1974 referendum and today enjoys a far higher, French-subsidized standard of living than do the other islands. Comorans are among the world's poorest people. The country relies heavily on foreign aid and earns a small amount through exports of vanilla, ylang-ylang, and cloves.

Two mercenary invasions and at least 18 other coups and attempted coups have shaken the Comoros since its independence from France in 1975. In 1990, in the country's first contested elections, Supreme Court justice Said Mohamed Djohar won a six-year term as president. French soldiers reversed a 1995 attempted coup by elements of the Comoros security forces, who were aided by foreign mercenaries. Mohamed Taki Abdoukarim was elected president in 1996 in internationally monitored elections that were considered free and fair; he secured more than 60 percent of the vote in a runoff election. Tadjidine Ben Said Massonde became the interim ruler when Taki died suddenly in November 1998.

Anjouan voted for self-determination in a 1997 referendum, repulsed an attempted military takeover by the central government, and then experienced widespread violence as rival separatist groups took up arms against one another. Separatists on Moheli also declared independence. The federal government is located in Grande Comore, but even there tensions exist between the federal and regional governments.

Efforts to end the separatist crisis began with the 1999 Antananarivo agreement. Anjouan's refusal to sign the agreement led to unrest on Grande Comore and a subsequent coup by Assoumani Azali, then a colonel in the armed forces. A reconciliation agreement, known as the Fomboni Declaration, was signed in 2000 between

the Azali government and Anjouan separatists. A national referendum was approved in December 2001 for a new constitution that gave greater autonomy to the three islands of Comoros within the framework of a confederation and provided for a rotating executive presidency among the islands every four years.

In 2002, while elections for the president of each of the three islands that make up the new federation appeared to have been largely free and fair, the poll for the executive leader of the federation was not. Azali, who won the executive presidency, was the only candidate, as his two opponents had claimed fraud and dropped out of the race. Lengthy negotiations occurred over minimum conditions for holding postponed legislative elections. In September 2002, an agreement was reached that would result in legislative polls, which were subsequently postponed until 2004. Key terms of the accord had the central government maintaining control over the country's army, while the police were to be administered by the local presidents. Another key compromise was the decision to set up a provisional customs council to facilitate the fair distribution of revenue among the three islands.

Despite concerns that the government would attempt to rig the April 2004 legislative elections, Comoran and international observers assessed them as legitimate, and Azali's government suffered a serious setback. Candidates supporting the three autonomous islands, which have traditionally sought greater autonomy from central rule, emerged victorious after obtaining 41 out of the 55 contested seats, while backers of Azali won only 12. Following the elections, the various opposition and government authorities have sought to manage their differences, and relative calm has prevailed.

In 2005, deputies from the parliamentary opposition forced the withdrawal of a draft law that would have allowed President Azali to avoid the constitutional provision requiring the federal presidency to rotate between the islands and enabled him to run for a second four-year term in elections next year. Azali is expected to leave office for a presidential candidate from Anjouan in general elections set for April 2006.

The poor condition of the Comoran economy continued, with unresolved conflicts between the central and island governments resulting in sporadic strikes and civil unrest during the year.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Comoros can change their government democratically. Comorans voted freely for the first time in the 1996 parliamentary and presidential elections. The 2004 legislative and 2002 presidential elections for the presidency of each of the country's three main islands were considered to be largely fair. However, after the country's electoral commission concluded that the vote for the executive presidency was not fair, the central government dissolved the commission, and a body of five magistrates ruled that the election would stand. Under the archipelago's new national constitution, adopted in 2001, the federal presidency rotates every four years among the elected presidents of the three islands in the Union. Of the 33 deputies in the unicameral federal Assembly of the Union, 15 are selected by the individual islands' local assemblies and 18 by universal suffrage; deputies serve for five years. The Assembly is currently dominated by opposition parties, which hold 26 seats.

A 2004 Comoros government budget audit conducted by an external account-

ing firm revealed numerous irregularities by the government of the Comoros Union and the autonomous islands of Anjouan and Moheli and the Central Bank. The audit noted a failure of these governments to divide up receipts according to a previously agreed-upon formula. The audit also noted a serious underreporting of customs duties. In previous years, there were complaints of corruption among the security forces and of unpaid salaries for teachers and other government workers. Comoros was not ranked in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is generally, though not fully, respected. Several private newspapers at times critical of the government are published in the capital, but they appear only sporadically because of limited resources. All are believed to exercise extensive self-censorship. Two state-run radio stations broadcast, and about 20 regional radio stations and five local private television stations operate without overt government interference. In 2005, the government briefly banned Radio Dzialandze Mutsamudu (RDM), a popular, privately owned station based in Mutsamudu, capital of Anjouan. According to local sources, the order stemmed from an interview with a doctor who defended a strike by the island's medical personnel. Internet access is extremely limited.

Islam is the official state religion. Non-Muslims are legally permitted to practice, but there were reports of restrictions, detentions, and harassment. Detainees are sometimes subjected to attempts to convert them to Islam. Christians are not allowed to proselytize. Academic freedom is generally respected.

The government generally respects the rights of freedom of assembly and association. The former is explicitly recognized in the constitution, while the latter is not. However, at times security forces respond to demonstrations with disproportionate force. In September 2005, police violently dispersed demonstrators during protests over rising fuel prices; one person was reported killed and 16 wounded. There is a small sector of human rights and other nongovernmental organizations. Unions have the right to bargain collectively and strike, but collective bargaining is rare in the country's small formal business sector.

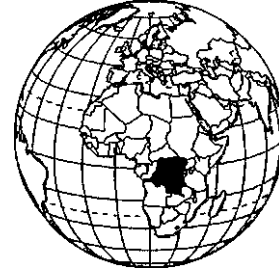
The Comorian legal system is based both on Sharia (Islamic law) and on parts of the French legal code and is subject to influence by the executive and other elites. Most minor disputes are settled by village elders or a civilian court of first instance. After considerable delays, and under domestic pressure, in 2005 Azali approved laws reforming the organization of the judiciary. These laws transfer some courts to the jurisdiction of the autonomous islands, leaving only the Supreme Court under the authority of the central government. The president has also stated, however, his intention to uphold the power and authority of the central government against perceived threats. A complex and overlapping system of official security forces exists. Harsh prison conditions are marked by severe overcrowding and the lack of adequate sanitation facilities, medical attention, and proper diet.

Due to the islands' poor economic condition, many Comorans, especially from Anjouan, illegally emigrate to Mayotte. The Anjouan-based Observatory for clandestine Emigration (OCI) has estimated that in the past five years, around 500 people have drowned trying to make the 100-mile crossing to Mayotte.

Women possess constitutional protections. In practice, however, they enjoy little political or economic power and have far fewer opportunities for education or

salaried employment than men do, especially in more rural areas. Women are generally not discriminated against regarding inheritance and property rights. Economic hardship has forced growing numbers of young girls into domestic servitude; they receive room and board, but little or no pay.

Congo, Democratic Republic of (Kinshasa)



Population: 60,800,000 **Political Rights:** 6
GNI/capita: \$100 **Civil Liberties:** 6
Life Expectancy: 50 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (50 percent),
 Protestant (20 percent), Kimbanguist (10 percent),
 Muslim (10 percent), other (10 percent)
Ethnic Groups: More than 200 tribes, mostly Bantu
Capital: Kinshasa

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF

Overview:

For the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the first 24 months of the country's transition to an elected government under the 2002 Sun City Peace Agreement ended on June 30, with scattered protests and incidents of violence marking the postponement of elections until 2006. Despite delays to the transition timetable and continuing instability in the eastern DRC, the Transitional National Assembly passed key pieces of legislation called for in the 2002 peace agreement, including a draft constitution. Voter registration began in June 2005, and a constitutional referendum originally scheduled for November 2005 was delayed until December 18. Despite the presence of the world's largest peacekeeping contingent, the UN Organization Mission in the DRC (MONUC), serious human rights violations continued to occur, particularly in the eastern part of the country. The International Court of Justice began deliberations in 2005 on allegations of human rights abuses and crimes against humanity in the DRC.

As the Congo Free State and then the Belgian Congo, the vast area of Central Africa that is now the DRC was exploited with a brutality that was extreme even by colonial standards. The country became a center for Cold War rivalries upon independence in 1960 and remained so after Colonel Joseph Mobutu seized power with CIA backing in 1965. Mobutu changed the name of Congo to Zaire in 1971, changed his name to Mobutu Sese Seko, and assumed dictatorial powers. Western governments largely ignored Mobutu's excesses, which included corruption on a scale that made Mobutu one of the world's richest men and his countrymen among the world's poorest people.

Domestic agitation and international pressure for democratization following the end of the Cold War forced Mobutu to open up the political process in 1990. A Sovereign National Conference in 1992 elected Archbishop Laurent Monsengwo as its chairman and Etienne Tshisekedi, leader of the Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS), as prime minister. In response, Mobutu created a rival government with its own prime minister, which led to political stalemate. In a compromise that marginalized Tshisekedi, the two governments merged in 1994, with Mobutu as head of state and Kengo Wa Dondo as prime minister. Presidential and legislative elections were scheduled repeatedly over the next two years, but never took place.

The 1994 Tutsi genocide in neighboring Rwanda provided the impetus for Mobutu's fall from power. Rwanda and Uganda tapped into popular hatred for Mobutu and turned their pursuit of members of the ethnic Hutu Interahamwe—the Rwandan civilian militia responsible for much of the killing of Tutsis who had fled Rwanda and were based in eastern Zaire—into an advance on Kinshasa. Rwandan troops entered the country in October 1996, accompanied by representatives of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL), a coalition led by former rebel leader Laurent-Desire Kabila. With the goal of forcibly ousting Mobutu, the Rwandan and AFDL forces continued their military campaign and reached Kinshasa in May 1997; Mobutu fled to Morocco and died soon thereafter. Kabila quickly consolidated power, declaring himself president and renaming the country the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Relations between Kabila and his backers in Rwanda and Uganda deteriorated quickly. After Kabila ordered all foreign troops to leave the DRC in 1998, fighting erupted as Rwandan-supported Congolese military factions took up arms. Rwandan troops flew to Bas-Congo with the intent of marching on Kinshasa to replace Kabila's regime with the newly formed Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD), and were stopped only by the intervention of Angolan, Namibian, and Zimbabwean troops on behalf of the DRC government. Uganda later backed the formation of a rival rebel group, the Movement for the Liberation of the Congo (MLC). Together, Uganda and the MLC established control over the northern third of the DRC, while the RCD established control over much of the Kivu region. The war eventually drew forces from Angola, Chad, Namibia, Sudan, and Zimbabwe on the side of Kabila, and Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda on the side of the rebels.

Battlefield stalemate and international pressure led to the signing of the Lusaka Peace Agreement in 1999. The accord called for a ceasefire, the deployment of UN peacekeepers, the withdrawal of foreign troops, and the launching of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue to form a transitional government. Kabila drew increasing international criticism for hindering progress toward its implementation, including blocking the deployment of UN troops and suppressing internal political activity. He was assassinated in January 2001, and his son Joseph took power.

Joseph Kabila revived the peace process, and lengthy negotiations led to the signing of the Sun City Peace Agreement in December 2002. Despite the creation of a broad-based transitional government and a timetable for democratic elections, however, slow progress led to an extension of the transitional calendar. Groups not represented in transitional institutions, notably the UDPS, criticized the delay as being politically motivated rather than driven by technical delays. UDPS calls for mass demonstrations, however, did not result in a major escalation of tensions.

Despite isolated incidents of violence and a UDPS call for a boycott, the massive voter registration drive—conducted at more than 9,000 voter registration centers for an estimated 28 million eligible voters—has been largely successful. By the end of November 2005, approximately 23.6 million voters had registered, including many from the UDPS who ignored a boycott order.

The presence of armed groups in the eastern part of the country is a continuing source of instability, despite the ongoing disarmament of the main rebel groups and the integration of combatants into the newly restructured Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC). The Ituri region, where various groups have attempted to consolidate remnant forces with external support from elements in Uganda and Rwanda, remains especially volatile. In November 2005, a FARDC campaign to disarm the Mai-mai militia in Katanga Province led to widespread fighting and the displacement of an estimated 60,000 people. According to Amnesty International, large quantities of arms from companies in the United Kingdom, Israel, South Africa, the United States, the Balkans, and Eastern Europe continue to flow to various militias in the eastern DRC, as well as to groups operating in Rwanda and Uganda. In July 2005, the UN Security Council condemned continuing weapons transfers and extended its official arms embargo for another year.

An international warrant was issued in 2005 for the arrest of dissident FARDC general Laurent Kunda, who led a June 2004 rebellion in South Kivu of Tutsi fighters claiming discrimination in the FARDC integration process. Kunda continues to attract a following of disgruntled military personnel to his rebel base inside the DRC.

In April 2005, the Rwandan Hutu-led Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) announced that it was prepared to abandon hostilities against the Rwandan government and repatriate its 10,000 combatants and their families to Rwanda in return for guarantees of political freedom. Little progress was made on either side, however, and in May 2005, reports circulated that FDLR splinter factions were responsible for summary executions, rapes, beatings, and hostage-takings in the South Kivu region.

A UN panel investigating the plunder of natural resources confirmed that competition to control the DRC's vast diamond and other mineral wealth persists through proxy militias controlled by neighboring countries and government officials. The International Court of Justice concluded public hearings and began deliberations in 2005 on separate cases brought by the DRC government against Rwanda and Uganda for alleged human rights violations and other breaches of international law during the DRC conflict.

An estimated 3.8 million citizens have died since the DRC conflict began. Humanitarian groups estimate that 1,000 people continue to die each day from hunger, disease, and other causes related to instability. The majority of Congolese are subsistence farmers. Salaries continue to go unpaid, and critical social services are nonexistent. The DRC ranks 167 out of 177 on the UN's 2005 Human Development Index.

Kabila has been lauded by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank for undertaking a number of macroeconomic and structural reforms that have improved the overall economy, and the IMF announced an additional \$41 million in aid in September 2005. However, corruption continues to be a serious problem and has undermined the credibility of transitional institutions. Frustration with the political class rose in 2005 after the delivery of costly sport utility vehicles for members

of the transitional assembly just as teachers were being informed of reductions to their already limited salaries.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of the DRC cannot change their government democratically, though significant efforts have been made by the transitional government, with support from the international community, to prepare for the country's first multiparty elections. Originally scheduled for June 2005, the elections have been delayed to 2006. A referendum on the draft constitution is scheduled for December 2005.

A massive voter registration process, intended to reach as many as 28 million eligible voters, began in June 2005. As part of a civic education campaign launched in June, the Independent Electoral Commission began disseminating throughout the country most of the major legal texts relating to the elections, including the nationality and registration laws and the draft constitution.

President Joseph Kabila presides over an unwieldy and contentious transitional government of national unity that consists of 4 vice presidents, 36 ministers, and 24 vice ministers shared among former rebel groups, political parties, and other factions. None of these representatives were elected, and all other government officials around the country are appointed. Extensive executive, legislative, and military powers are vested in the president and vice presidents. Key ministries are shared among the government and the two main former rebel groups—the RCD and the MLC.

The bicameral Transitional National Assembly consists of a lower chamber of 500 appointed members from groups, including civil society organizations, that participated in the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, and a 120-member Senate representing the signatories to the peace agreement. In accordance with its mandate but after lengthy delays, in 2005 the National Assembly and the Senate passed legislation required by the peace agreement and approved the country's draft constitution. Civil society representatives head five other constitutionally mandated bodies on human rights, the media, truth and reconciliation, elections, and anticorruption.

There are approximately 220 registered political parties in the DRC, including those representing former rebel groups. Most of these parties operated freely throughout 2005, though the UDPS and its allies came into conflict with security authorities during demonstrations to protest the extension of the transition period, with a number of deaths reported. In June, 186 registered political parties signed a code of conduct outlining principles for participating in the electoral process. Neither the UDPS nor Kabila's People's Party for Reconstruction and Development (PPRD) signed the code, however.

Corruption is rampant throughout the country, though Kabila has taken steps to limit graft at the highest levels of government. The DRC was ranked 144 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is limited, though both the transitional and draft constitutions guarantee free expression. At least 30 independent newspapers are published regularly in Kinshasa but are not widely circulated beyond the city. The UN broadcaster, Radio Okapi, has expanded its coverage of the country to include several local languages. The Roman Catholic Church operates the Elikya radio network throughout most of the country. Although the government does not restrict access

to the internet, very few people can afford the connection costs or have computers and reliable electricity.

Despite some statutory protections, independent journalists are frequently threatened, arrested, or attacked. Throughout the year, the government used criminalized libel laws to suppress criticism and limit press freedom. In January 2005, an independent journalist was sentenced in absentia to four months in prison for libel after publishing an article on corruption in the oil industry. Employees of an independent media watchdog, *Journaliste en Danger*, received death threats in April. Several privately owned media outlets in Kinshasa and Kikwit were suspended, and a number of journalists were physically harassed and assaulted after covering the UDPS demonstrations in June. A Radio Okapi journalist was allegedly shot at by soldiers in Lubumbashi. A political reporter for a daily newspaper that had been critical of the government was killed with his wife in November 2005; several police officers suspected of the killings were later apprehended.

The DRC's draft and transitional constitutions provide for freedom of religion, and this right is generally respected in practice, although religious groups must register with the government to be recognized. Academic freedom is restricted in practice; fears of government harassment often lead university professors to engage in self-censorship.

Rights to freedom of assembly and association allowed by law are limited in practice. More than 400 protestors, including many high-level UDPS officials, were temporarily detained in Kinshasa and outlying areas during demonstrations in late June and early July, though most were released within 24 hours. Human rights workers were threatened by security forces, attacked, and arbitrarily detained during the year. In July 2005, the executive secretary of *Heritiers de la Justice*, a well-known and respected human rights organization, was murdered by three armed men in his home in Bukavu.

More than 100 new independent unions were registered after the end of one-party rule in 1990, but these are limited to urban areas and are relatively inactive as a result of the collapse of the country's formal economy. Some unions are affiliated with political parties, and labor leaders and activists have faced harassment.

Despite guarantees of independence, in practice the judiciary remains subject to corruption and manipulation by both official and nonstate actors. Civilian and military justice personnel were deployed to provincial centers—including Gbadolite, Goma, Kisangani, Lodja and Lubumbashi—with MONUC assistance in 2005, but the judicial system lacks both trained personnel and resources. Prison conditions are often abysmal, with long periods of pretrial detention common.

Civilian authorities do not maintain effective control of the security forces. The integration of former rebels into the nascent FARDC has resulted in competing chains of command and conflicts between nominally integrated factions, many of whom answer to former commanders and political leaders. Members of the security forces are poorly trained and paid, are undisciplined, and continue to commit serious human rights abuses. The recruitment of child soldiers remains a serious problem. International human rights groups say that 30,000 children are serving in government and rebel groups, accounting for about 10 percent of the total combatants in the DRC.

Even with more than 16,000 troops, MONUC is stretched thin and beset by internal problems, including allegations in 2005 of sexual abuse and rape of Congolese girls. The adoption of tougher tactics against rebel groups following the killing in

February 2005 of nine UN soldiers led to retaliatory actions by militia groups, including the burning to death in July 2005 of 39 villagers in South Kivu, reportedly for cooperating with UN troops.

Ethnic societal discrimination is practiced widely among the country's 200 ethnic groups, and particularly against the various indigenous Pygmy tribes and the Congolese Banyamulenge Tutsis.

Although the law provides for freedom of movement, roadblocks manned by aggressive security forces regularly restrict travel in many parts of the country. Security personnel routinely demand bribes, and in some parts of the country, demand from citizens travel authorization orders from employers or government officials. When traveling internally, foreigners must regularly submit to immigration controls. Movement is severely restricted in parts of the country where armed groups are active.

Members of armed groups and security forces seized private property and destroyed homes in the DRC's conflict zones.

Despite constitutional guarantees, women face discrimination in nearly every aspect of their lives, especially in rural areas, where there is in any case little government presence. The law requires married women to obtain their husband's permission before engaging in routine legal transactions, such as selling or renting real estate, opening a bank account, accepting employment, or applying for a passport. Violence against women, including rape and forced sexual slavery, has soared since the onset of armed conflict in 1996. Abortion is prohibited. The Save the Children Fund has ranked the DRC among the world's five worst conflict zones in which to be a woman or child.

Congo, Republic of (Brazzaville)

Population: 4,000,000 **Political Rights:** 5
GNI/capita: \$650 **Civil Liberties:** 5*
Life Expectancy: 52 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Christian (50 percent), animist (48 percent), Muslim (2 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Kongo (48 percent), Sangha (20 percent), Teke (17 percent), M'Bochi (12 percent), other (3 percent)
Capital: Brazzaville



Ratings Change: The Republic of Congo (Brazzaville)'s civil liberties rating declined from 4 to 5 due to a steady erosion of the rule of law, including the failure of the courts to sanction high-ranking military officials for a massacre of refugees.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
4,4PF	7,5NF	7,5NF	6,5NF	6,4PF	5,4PF	6,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,5PF

Overview:

A fragile peace agreement with rebels in the southern Pool region was threatened by sporadic violence, and legislative elections for the region's eight seats—vacant since

the 2002 polls— were indefinitely postponed. President Denis Sassou-Nguesso's government took limited steps to improve transparency in the oil and diamond sectors. The government presented draft legislation on political parties to the National Assembly in late 2005 in response to opposition calls for reform in advance of the 2007 legislative elections. In August 2005, a Brazzaville court cleared 15 top military officers accused of killing 353 Congolese refugees in 1999.

A decade after Congo's independence from France, a 1970 coup established a Marxist state in the country. In 1979, General Sassou-Nguesso seized power and maintained one-party rule as head of the Congolese Labor Party (PCT). Domestic and international pressure led to the convening of a national conference and multi-party elections in 1992. Former prime minister Pascal Lissouba won a clear victory over Bernard Kolelas in a second-round presidential runoff. Sassou-Nguesso ran third in the first round.

Disputes over the 1993 legislative polls led to armed conflict between rival militia groups that continued sporadically for several years until Sassou-Nguesso, with military support from Angola and political backing from France, overthrew Lissouba in October 1997. Peace agreements signed in late 1999 included an amnesty for combatants who voluntarily disarmed. Lissouba, who fled into exile in 1997, was convicted in absentia on treason and corruption charges in 2001, and sentenced to 30 years' hard labor. Kolelas—who served as mayor of Brazzaville from 1993 to 1996 and founded the Ninja militia from members of his political party, the Congolese Movement for Democracy and Integral Development—also went into exile in 1997 and was sentenced to death in absentia by a Congolese criminal court in May 2000 for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

As part of the peace process, a new constitution adopted by national referendum in January 2002 provided for the return to a multiparty system. The March 2002 presidential poll was marred by irregularities, though international observers hailed their peaceful conduct. Sassou-Nguesso won with 89.4 percent of the vote when his main challenger, former president of the National Assembly Andre Milongo, claimed that the poll was rigged and dropped out of the race. The country's two leading opposition figures, Lissouba and Kolelas, were barred from running for office and remained in exile. Fifteen political parties won seats in the 2002 legislative elections, though an alliance of seven parties known as the Democratic and Patriotic Forces (FDP) led by Sassou-Nguesso's PCT controls approximately 90 percent of them. Balloting for eight seats in the Pool region was postponed in 2002—and again in 2005—because of continuing instability.

Since the signing of a ceasefire agreement in 2003 with the Ninja rebels, peace has gradually returned to the Pool region. The government is working with international donors to disarm remaining combatants and rebuild the region's shattered infrastructure. However, rebel mistrust of the government continues and the security situation remains fragile. Sporadic attacks by Ninja members on the vital Brazzaville-Pointe Noire rail line continue to occur, most recently in April 2005. Kolelas returned to the Congo in October 2005 for the burial of his wife, an event that coincided with armed clashes between Ninja rebels and government troops in Brazzaville.

In July 2004, Congo was suspended from the diamond industry's Kimberly Pro-

cess after identified discrepancies between production and exports raised concerns that Congo was a transshipment point for illicit diamonds from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and other neighboring countries. In response, Congo announced that it had halted all diamond exports, and in 2005 invited scientists from France's Office of Research Studies on Geological Resources to assess diamond output and trade controls. Human rights groups claim, however, that Congo has continued to serve as a conduit for illicit diamond smuggling.

Domestic pressure led to increased transparency in the oil sector, which accounts for more than 60 percent of Congo's gross domestic product and approximately 95 percent of export earnings. In 2003, the government began publishing audited information about oil revenues on the Ministry of Finance's website. The government joined the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative in 2004, and in 2005, Congolese civic groups organized the country's first round table event on the issue with stakeholders from the government and the oil industry. However, reports of widespread corruption in oil industry persist.

In August 2005, a Brazzaville court cleared 15 top army officers accused of killing 353 Congolese refugees on their return from exile in the DRC in 1999. The court acknowledged that 85 people had disappeared and ordered the relatives of those identified to be paid compensation by the government. A French lawsuit, filed by human rights groups and survivors against Sassou-Nguesso and high-ranking Congolese officials for crimes against humanity, led to the 2004 arrest in France of Congo's chief of police. He was released quickly, however, when a French court ruled that he had diplomatic immunity. The Congolese government has a case before the International Court of Justice to suspend court proceedings in France, claiming that France does not have jurisdiction.

Despite the Congo's natural wealth, 70 percent of its citizens live in poverty. The country ranked 142 of 177 on the UN's 2005 Human Development Index.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Congo (Brazzaville) cannot change their government democratically. Competitive multiparty elections were held for the first time in 1992 and 1993. Presidential and legislative elections held in 2002 were not deemed fair, in part because of irregularities and the absence of an independent electoral commission. An amended constitution was promulgated in 2002 that limits the elected president to two seven-year terms. The next presidential election will be held in 2009. The bicameral Parliament comprises a 66-seat Senate and 137-seat National Assembly; members of both houses are elected by popular vote for five-year terms. The next legislative election will be held in 2007.

The lifting of the ban on political parties in 1992 saw the creation of personality-driven and ethnically based parties that currently number more than 200. The political opposition is weak and fragmented, and the National Assembly is dominated by the FDP coalition. Opposition demands for legal reform led the government to overhaul the 1901 colonial-era law on contracts of association that governs parties by drafting legislation in 2005 on the creation, financing, and legal status of political parties.

Congo was ranked 130 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index. There were media reports of government bribery and corruption, particularly regarding oil revenues.

The government's respect for press freedom is limited, despite the abolition of censorship and introduction of sharply reduced penalties for defamation in 2000. Nevertheless, about 10 private newspapers appear weekly in Brazzaville, and they often publish articles and editorials that are critical of the government. The government continues to monopolize the broadcast media, which reach a much larger audience. In November 2004, government officials warned freelance international journalists, including those working for the BBC and Reuters, that their accreditation would be revoked if they published stories reflecting adversely on Congo's image. Also in November, the government detained and interrogated a Radio France International correspondent and asked the BBC to remove the local BBC correspondent from the country. In September 2005, a community radio station in northern Congo was shut down for alleged lack of impartiality, though the radio's managers claimed the move was in response to the station's failure to cover a meeting of the ruling party. There are no restrictions on internet access. Religious and academic freedom is guaranteed and respected.

Freedom of assembly and association is constitutionally guaranteed, and this right is generally respected in practice, although public demonstrations are rare. Nongovernmental organizations generally operate freely. Workers' rights to join trade unions and to strike are legally protected, and collective bargaining is practiced freely. Public school teachers mounted a successful six-week strike from October-November 2005 to press for reforms, including the unfreezing of funds for education in the country's 2006 budget. Most workers in the formal business sector, including the oil sector, are union members, and unions have made efforts to organize informal sectors, such as those of agriculture and retail trade.

Congo's weak judiciary has a backlog of cases and is subject to corruption and political influence, though the court system was generally considered to be politically independent until the civil war. An estimated 40 percent of the prison population were pretrial detainees. In rural areas, traditional courts retain broad jurisdiction, especially in civil matters. Prison conditions are life-threatening, with reports of beatings, overcrowding, and other ill-treatment. Women and men, as well as juveniles and adults, are incarcerated together.

The government does not fully control all members or units of the country's overlapping security forces, and some members have committed human rights abuses. However, violations against the civilian population declined following the 2003 ceasefire between the government and Ninja militias.

Ethnic discrimination persists. Members of President Denis Sassou-Nguesso's northern ethnic group and related clans hold many key posts in government. Pygmy groups suffer discrimination, and many are effectively held in lifetime servitude through customary ties to ethnic Bantu "patrons." According to local human rights groups, rape of Pygmy women by Bantu men is widespread.

Harassment by military personnel and militia groups inhibits travel, though such practices have declined. Members of virtually all ethnic groups discriminate in hiring practices against members of other groups, and urban neighborhoods tend to be segregated.

The Congo's overburdened and underresourced judicial system offers limited protection for business and property rights.

Eight women serve in the 66-seat Senate, and 12 women are members of the National Assembly. Despite the presence of women in government and constitu-

tional safeguards, however, legal and societal discrimination is extensive. Access to education and employment, especially in the countryside, is limited, and civil codes regarding family and marriage formalize women's inferior status. Violence against women is reportedly widespread. Abortion is prohibited.

Costa Rica

Population: 4,300,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$4,300 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 79 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (76.3 percent),
 Evangelical (13.7 percent), other (10 percent),
 none (3 percent)

Ethnic Groups: White and mestizo (94 percent),
 black (3 percent), Amerindian (1 percent), Chinese (1 percent), other (1 percent)

Capital: San José



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

President Abel Pacheco and his administration were beset by new corruption scandals in 2005, including allegations of illegal campaign contributions, conflicts of interest, and unpaid airplane flights. Meanwhile, corruption allegations against three former presidents continued to fester. The government took steps to deal with the burgeoning problem of underage sex tourism in Costa Rica.

Costa Rica achieved independence from Spain in 1821 and became a republic in 1848. Many trace a deepening of democratic rights to the 40-day civil war fought in 1948, during which Jose "Pepe" Figueres led a fight to restore to power the rightful winner of the 1948 presidential elections; Figueres also successfully pushed to disband Costa Rica's military. He later served as president for two separate terms under the banner of the National Liberation Party (PLN). Since 1948, power has passed back and forth multiple times between the PLN and Costa Rica's other main party, the Social Christian Unity Party (PUSC). The PUSC's Abel Pacheco was the winning candidate in the 2002 elections; he was preceded by Miguel Angel Rodriguez, also of the PUSC. The PLN last held the presidency from 1994 to 1998 under Jose Maria Figueres, the son of Costa Rica's civil war hero.

In 2004, Jose Maria Figueres was one of three former presidents accused of corruption. Figueres was accused of accepting a kickback valued at \$906,000 from the French telecom firm Alcatel, which had signed a \$149 million contract with the Costa Rican government while Figueres was in office. Figueres claimed the payment was for legitimate consulting services after he had left office, but he refused to return from Switzerland to answer questions from a special committee established by the Legislative Assembly to look into corruption.

Other former presidents were jailed and then eventually put on house arrest while facing accusations of high-level corruption. Rodriguez was accused of taking illegal financing from Taiwan's government during his election campaign, and of accepting a bribe of \$1.4 million from Alcatel. Likewise, former president Rafael Angel Calderon (1990-1994), also of the PUSC, was accused of taking an \$800,000 kickback from the Finnish firm Instrumentarium, which had sold the Costa Rican social security system a variety of medical equipment. However, Costa Rican chief prosecutor Francisco Dall'Anese failed to bring these former presidents to trial, and both were freed from house arrest by the end of 2005. Costa Rican prosecutors may yet go to trial with the corruption charges, which could keep these scandals resonating throughout the political system for some time.

In 2005, Pacheco faced charges that he accepted illegal contributions—\$100,000 from Alcatel and \$500,000 from a Taiwanese businessman—during his 2002 presidential campaign. A special committee of the Legislative Assembly initially backed away from investigating the charges, despite the fact that campaign contributions from foreign sources are illegal in Costa Rica. Significantly, however, the law does not spell out the penalty for such contributions. (The law caps campaign contributions from Costa Rican citizens at \$28,000 per person.) A legislative committee did officially censure the president for his failure to oversee his election treasury in a firmer manner. During 2005, the Legislative Assembly also discussed new campaign finance laws, which would provide prison sentences for both foreigners and members of Costa Rican campaign staffs involved in the illegal donation of funds. The Organization of American States issued a formal report in the spring of 2005 criticizing the campaign finance laws in Costa Rica. The report said that campaign donations in Costa Rica were easily manipulated by powerful interests seeking political favors and that drug traffickers often used donations to their advantage.

The campaign finance scandal was not the only brush with corruption for the Pacheco administration. During 2005, the president's ties to Spanish businessman Bernardo Martin Moreno came under scrutiny. Pacheco traveled to Spain to name Martin an honorary consul for Costa Rica in Spain. In addition to being the publisher of one of Pacheco's books of poetry, Martin is a partner in a firm that owns a Costa Rican resort; that firm gained permission from the Pacheco government to fully develop its holdings. In May, Pacheco was also forced to admit he had accepted free flights from Taca Regional Airlines for personal travel. Pacheco's political opponents asked him to renounce his presidential immunity so prosecutors could further pursue these allegations, but Pacheco declined. In a separate incident, Costa Rican prosecutors began investigating how \$1.6 million was siphoned from the government-run National Insurance Institute for personal travel by members of the government.

In addition to the corruption scandals, economic conditions caused Pacheco's government to be increasingly unpopular. Rising fuel and food prices, an inflation rate of 13 percent, and the highest poverty rate in a decade—about 22 percent of the population now live in poverty—combined to undercut Pacheco's appeal.

Poor economic conditions have caused Costa Ricans to reconsider their immigration policies. At least 500,000 Nicaraguan immigrants live in the country without

proper documentation and in violation of Costa Rican immigration laws, a situation that has proven controversial in a country with a population of just over four million. The Legislative Assembly has debated new immigration policies that might require the expulsion of as many as 170,000 illegal Nicaraguan immigrants. However, the Pacheco government did extend deadlines for Nicaraguan and other illegal immigrants seeking amnesty and proper documentation to work legally in the country.

Violence linked to drug gangs and narcotics traffickers continues to be of concern in Costa Rica. However, the country is not as dangerous as many of its neighbors.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Costa Rica can change their government democratically. The president and the 57-member, unicameral Legislative Assembly are elected for four-year terms and were banned from seeking a second term until the Supreme Court overturned this law in 2003.

Five parties hold seats in the Legislative Assembly: the PUSC holds 19 seats, the PLN holds 17, the Citizens Action Party holds 14, the Libertarian Movement Party holds 6, and the Costa Rican Renovation Party holds 1.

Corruption is a major problem in Costa Rica: all four of the country's most recent presidents are under investigation for corrupt practices while in office. Costa Rica was ranked 51 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The oldest democracy in Latin America, Costa Rica also has a press freedom law that is the oldest in Central America, dating from 1835. The press, radio, and television are generally free. Ninety percent of the population is literate, and there are six privately owned dailies. Television and radio stations are both public and commercial, with at least four private television stations and more than 100 private radio stations. The government is reviewing its libel and defamation laws after the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, based in Costa Rica, struck down a defamation conviction against Costa Rica's leading daily, *La Nación*. The media have freely reported on the various corruption scandals that have buffeted the Costa Rican political scene. Internet access is unrestricted.

Freedom of religion is recognized, and there is complete academic freedom.

The constitution provides for the right to organize civic organizations. Numerous nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are active in all parts of society and throughout the country. Labor can organize freely. Frequent labor actions, ranging from local to nationwide protests, take place with a minimum of governmental restraint. Nevertheless, minimum wage and social security laws are often ignored, and the consequent fines are insignificant.

The judicial branch is independent, with members elected by the legislature. The legal system includes a Supreme Court, courts of appeals, and district courts. The Supreme Court can rule on the constitutionality of laws and chooses an independent national election commission. Long delays in the justice system are partly the result of budget cuts. Prisons are notoriously overcrowded, but generally meet international standards.

Several entities, including the Border Guard, the Rural Guard, and the Civil Guard,

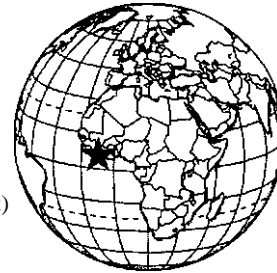
were merged into a single "public force." The 1949 constitution bans the formation of a national army.

Indigenous rights are not a priority, but in general, conditions for native peoples are better than those in neighboring countries.

Violence against women and children is a problem, although the government has shown support for programs aimed at stopping the problem. The government is making efforts to combat human trafficking; Costa Rica is a transit and destination country for trafficked persons. A law criminalizing sex with minors was passed in 1999 in an attempt to crack down on the country's growing sex-tourism industry. However, NGOs such as EPCAT (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes) have criticized Costa Rica during 2005 as one of the top world destinations for those seeking underage sex partners. Significantly, the Costa Rican government combined with the FBI in the United States to set up a sting operation at a travel agency. The result in 2005 was the conviction of 11 U.S. citizens who had sought underage sex partners in Costa Rica.

Cote d'Ivoire

Population: 18,200,000 **Political Rights:** 6
GNI/capita: \$660 **Civil Liberties:** 6
Life Expectancy: 47 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Christian (20-30 percent),
 Muslim (35-40 percent), indigenous beliefs (25-40 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Akan (42.1 percent), Voltaiques,
 or Gur (17.6 percent), Northern Mandes (16.5 percent),
 Krous (11 percent), Southern Mandes (10 percent), other (2.8 percent)
Capital: Yamoussoukro (official); Abidjan (de facto)



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
6,5NF	6,4NF	6,4NF	6,4PF	6,5PF	5,4PF	6,6NF	6,5NF	6,6NF	6,6NF

Overview:

Deadlines for disarmament passed in 2005, and presidential and legislative elections scheduled for the end of the year were postponed for at least a year. Cote d'Ivoire remained split between a government-controlled south and rebel-controlled north. Ethnic tension remained rife, especially in the country's volatile west, although press freedom improved slightly.

Cote d'Ivoire gained independence from France in 1960, and President Felix Houphouet-Boigny ruled until his death in 1993. Henri Konan Bedie assumed power and won fraudulent elections in 1995 with 95 percent of the vote. Alassane Ouattara, the opposition's most formidable candidate, was barred from the contest, demonstrations were banned, and the media were intimidated.

General Robert Guei seized power in December 1999 and stood for election in October 2000. When initial results showed he was losing to Laurent Gbagbo, Guei

sacked the electoral commission, detained its officers, and declared himself the winner. Tens of thousands of people took to the streets in a popular uprising that toppled Guei from power. Clashes followed between supporters of Gbagbo's Ivorian Popular Front (FPI), who claimed electoral victory, and Ouattara's Rally of Republicans (RDR), who called for new elections. Supported by security forces, Gbagbo refused to call for new polls. The political violence, in which hundreds of civilians died, led to a deepening division between the largely Muslim north and mainly Christian south, although the conflict was not strictly rooted in a north-south, Muslim-Christian divide. Gbagbo was eventually declared the winner of the election, with 59 percent, compared with 33 percent for Guei.

The FPI won 96 seats in the December 2000 legislative elections, while 4 went to the Democratic Party of Cote d'Ivoire and 5 to the RDR. Twenty-four seats went to smaller parties and independents, and 2 seats in Ouattara's district went unfilled.

Civil war erupted in September 2002 when the government attempted to demobilize and retire some 700 soldiers. In what appeared to be either a coup attempt or a mutiny, Guei was killed. An insurgent group—the Patriotic Movement of Cote d'Ivoire, now part of the rebel New Forces—emerged in the north, calling for Gbagbo to step down and for new elections. The insurgents quickly seized control of more than half of the country. Fighting erupted in the west, and African immigrants were targeted.

Gbagbo's government and the New Forces signed a ceasefire brokered by France in January 2003 that provided for a broad-based coalition government that would rule until elections were held. However, that accord broke down. Following the death of nine French peacekeepers in a government bombing campaign to crush the New Forces movement in November 2004, France destroyed the Ivorian air force, and—with the backing of the African Union (AU)—persuaded the UN Security Council to impose an arms embargo on the country. In February 2005, the Security Council tightened the embargo.

Some 4,000 French peacekeepers are monitoring the ceasefire line across the middle of the country, with some 6,000 more UN troops deployed as well. South African president Thabo Mbeki brokered a revised peace accord in April 2005, and presidential elections were set for October and legislative polls for December. However, disarmament failed to be implemented, no electoral commission was formed, and electoral registers were not updated. As a consequence, the AU extended Gbagbo's term in office by up to one year and called for a new prime minister. Elections for the National Assembly were postponed as well.

Some positive steps were made in 2005 toward loosening the political deadlock in Cote d'Ivoire. Gbagbo signed an executive order that would allow his main opponent, Ouattara, to run for president. The nationality law formerly said that presidential candidates had to have two Ivorian-born parents. In the past, Ivorian officials had barred Ouattara from standing as a candidate on the grounds that either one or both of his parents were born in Burkina Faso.

Cote d'Ivoire is the world's leading producer of cocoa, and the country was once a beacon of stability and economic progress in West Africa. However, the civil war has ravaged the economy. The country retains strong political, economic, and military backing from France, which has maintained a military garrison near Abidjan for years, mainly to protect French nationals who live in Cote d'Ivoire. Many French, however, fled after the war erupted.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Cote d'Ivoire cannot change their government democratically. The 1995 presidential election was neither free nor fair and was boycotted by all the major opposition parties. Voting in the October 2000 presidential election appeared to be carried out fairly, but only 5 of 19 potential candidates were allowed to contest the vote. The FPI of President Laurent Gbagbo won an overwhelming number of seats in the December 2000 legislative election.

The president is elected by popular vote for a five-year term. The president appoints the prime minister. The 225 members of a unicameral National Assembly are elected in single- and multi-district elections by direct popular vote to serve five-year terms. Major political parties include the ruling Ivorian Popular Front, the Democratic Party of Cote d'Ivoire-African Democratic Rally, and the Rally of Republicans.

Corruption is a serious problem in Cote d'Ivoire. Profits from cocoa, cotton, and weapons, as well as informal taxes, have made resolving the Ivorian conflict a less attractive option for many in power—including members of the military and rebel forces. Cote d'Ivoire was ranked 152 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Press freedom is generally not respected in practice, although the state of press freedom improved somewhat in 2005 compared with 2004. State-owned newspapers and a state-run broadcasting system are usually unreservedly progovernment. Several private radio stations and a cable television service operate, but only the state broadcasting system reaches a national audience. In the north, the circulation of newspapers printed in Abidjan is heavily restricted, and local radio and television stations remain under the tight control of the rebel authorities. Several independent newspapers are published, many of which are linked to political parties. Despite the reconciliation process, most Ivorian media remain partisan and provocative. Some human rights groups have characterized some of the commentary as "incitement to violence."

Journalists in 2005 continued to face harassment and threats. In July, members of the progovernment Young Patriots militia disrupted distribution of several private newspapers and destroyed hundreds of copies. Reporters Without Borders has included the Young Patriots on its list of "press freedom predators." Armed, uniformed men in July 2005 stormed the Abidjan offices of state-run television and warned directors against broadcasting footage of opposition members. In December 2004, the National Assembly passed a new law removing criminal penalties for press offenses, such as defamation and publishing false information, and replacing them with stiff fines. The legislation also gives courts the option to suspend publications temporarily. There is liberal access to the internet.

Religious freedom is guaranteed but is not respected in practice. The government openly favors Christianity, and Muslims have been targeted as a result of the civil war. Many people who live in the rebel-occupied north adhere to Islam. Attacks on Muslims, however, have decreased in the past two years. Efforts by religious and civil society groups have helped ease tensions between Christians and Muslims.

The government, which owns most of the educational facilities in the country, inhibits academic freedom by requiring authorization for all political meetings held

on college campuses. Security forces reportedly use students as informants at the University of Abidjan. The United Nations in July 2005 condemned the escalation of violence on university campuses in Cote d'Ivoire and cited "serious human rights violations." The United Nations said a pro-government student union, the Students Federation of Cote d'Ivoire, allegedly uses rape and torture to intimidate perceived government opponents and to maintain control on campus. The organization, which is linked to the ruling party, also controls who does business on campus and who lives in campus accommodation.

Human rights groups generally operate freely in Cote d'Ivoire, although rights defenders sometimes receive death threats and are otherwise harassed. Union formation and membership are legally protected, although only a small percentage of the workforce is organized. Workers have the right to bargain collectively.

Cote d'Ivoire does not have an independent judiciary. Judges are political appointees without tenure and are highly susceptible to external interference. In many rural areas, traditional courts still prevail, especially in the handling of minor matters and family law. Security forces generally operate with impunity, and prison conditions are harsh. The United Nations has drawn up a list of suspected human rights violators in Cote d'Ivoire who could eventually face trial.

The New York-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) has reported that progovernment militias kill, torture, and harass civilians with impunity. Most of the militia members are from Gbagbo's Bete tribe in south-central Cote d'Ivoire. HRW said in a May 2005 report that government forces in the first three months of the year were training and equipping militia forces, including Liberian mercenaries, to renew the war against the New Forces. The report said the government was making increased use of the militia by targeting northerners, Muslims, and West African immigrants.

HRW has said that both the government and rebels were responsible for summary executions and for sexual violence against women and girls that were rooted in ethnic discrimination occurring in a climate of impunity. A UN report on human rights in 2005 cited a long list of extrajudicial killings and disappearances and instances of torture, beatings, and extortion by gunmen supporting both sides in the war.

Freedom of movement is curtailed throughout the country.

Human rights groups have accused officials of deliberately encouraging a culture of violent xenophobia in Cote d'Ivoire, whose economy has long attracted workers from neighboring countries. More than one-quarter of the country's population is estimated to be African expatriates. For decades, immigrants from Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Guinea have provided cheap labor for local landowners, which helped turn Cote d'Ivoire into the world's leading cocoa producer. However, competition over land rights, economic decline, and the civil war have inflamed ethnic tensions, particularly in the western region. Clashes between indigenous groups and farm workers from other West African countries left at least 89 people dead within the first six months of 2005, according to HRW. There are major divisions within the military based on ethnic and political loyalties.

Child labor and child trafficking are problems, although Cote d'Ivoire has made efforts to stem both practices. Tens of thousands of West African children are believed to be working on Ivorian plantations in hazardous conditions. The government plans to set up dozens of field committees to stop farmers from using child laborers.

Women suffer widespread discrimination, despite official encouragement for respect for constitutional rights. Equal pay for equal work is offered in the small formal business sector, but women have few chances to obtain, or advance in, wage employment. In rural areas that rely on subsistence agriculture, education and job opportunities for women are even scarcer. Female genital mutilation is still practiced, although it has been a crime since 1998, and violence against women is reportedly common.

Croatia

Population: 4,400,000 **Political Rights:** 2

GNI/capita: \$5,370 **Civil Liberties:** 2

Life Expectancy: 75 **Status:** Free

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (87.8 percent), Orthodox (4.4 percent), Muslim (1.3 percent), Protestant (0.3 percent), other and unknown (6.2 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Croat (89.6 percent), Serb (4.5 percent), Bosniak (0.5 percent), Hungarian (0.4 percent), Slovene (0.3 percent), Czech (0.2 percent), Roma (0.2 percent), Albanian (0.1 percent), Montenegrin (0.1 percent), other (4.1 percent)

Capital: Zagreb



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	2,3F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F

Overview:

In October 2005, the European Union (EU) opened preliminary membership talks with Croatia after an eight-month delay due to the country's failure to capture top Croatian war crimes suspect, General Ante Gotovina. The incumbent president, Stjepan Mesić of the Croatian People's Party (HNS), was reelected in the January 2005 elections, defeating the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) candidate, Jadranka Kosor.

As part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Croatia held its first multiparty elections in 1990, electing Franjo Tudjman, a former Communist general turned nationalist politician, as president in May 1990. Tudjman's Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) ruled Croatia from 1990 to 1999. As rival nationalisms competed with each other in Croatia during 1990 and 1991, Croatia's Serb population in the region known as Krajina declared independence from Croatia, even as Croatia itself was declaring its independence from the former Yugoslavia. The result was a de facto partition of the country between 1991 and 1995. In May and August 1995, a majority of the Serb population of Croatia either fled or was forcibly expelled from Krajina during Croatian military offensives to establish control over the contested territory.

Tudjman died on December 11, 1999, and in the subsequent extraordinary presi-

dential elections in January 2000, Mesic was elected president. In legislative elections that also took place in January 2000, a center-left coalition wrested control of parliament from the HDZ. The leader of the SDP (the former League of Communists of Croatia—now the Social Democratic Party of Croatia), Ivica Racan, was named prime minister.

On November 23, 2003—in the latest parliamentary elections—the HDZ, together with its new leader, Dr. Ivo Sanader, gained 66 seats. The HDZ became the strongest party in the new 152-member parliament, ending three years of a relatively weak SDP-led coalition government. Because of international objections to the formation of a coalition majority government with extreme right-wing nationalist parties, Sanader decided to lead a minority government with the support of the Independent Democratic Serb Party (SDSS), the Croatian Pensioner Party (HSU), the Croatian Peasant Party (HSS), and representatives of Croatia's Italian minority.

The HDZ's return to power was viewed with caution because of the party's history of engaging in nationalist demagoguery, its meddling in neighboring Bosnia-Herzegovina, and its poor record in dealing with Croatia's ethnic minorities. However, under Sanader's leadership, the party appears to have evolved into a standard European Christian-democratic party purged of extremists, although some of its more controversial figures from the past remain in influential positions. The Sanader-led government has been working actively to facilitate the return of refugees to their homes, repair war-damaged houses, and improve minority rights in order to meet the basic conditions for the EU accession.

Croatia held presidential elections over two rounds in January 2005. Mesic, the incumbent, won with 66 percent of the vote against Kosor, the HDZ candidate and deputy prime minister. Local elections for municipal and city councils and county assemblies were held on May 14. According to the local nongovernmental organization GONG, the elections were generally conducted "in accordance with the election legislation," although a few serious violations occurred in out-of-country voting. A report from the European Commission concluded that these irregularities rose mainly from limitations in the voting procedure and management of the voters' lists, such as the lack of cross-checking between the diaspora voters' lists and the voters' lists inside the country.

In October 2005, the EU opened the first stage of membership talks with Croatia; the talks had been postponed in response to the failure of Croatian authorities to arrest Gotovina. Although Gotovina was still at large, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) noted positive efforts by the Croatian authorities to apprehend him, and provided a positive assessment of the country's cooperation with the tribunal. The EU, however, made it clear that anything less than full cooperation with the ICTY would halt the progress of the negotiations. In efforts to harmonize its laws with those of the EU, Croatia has passed several important governance reforms including modified elections code and anticorruption measures.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Croatia can change their government democratically. Since 2000, there have been two peaceful transfers of power in the country. The parliamentary elections of November 2003 were contested by a record 34 candidates competing for each of the 152 seats in the unicameral Assembly. Although the elections were generally free and

fair, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe expressed concern over the short time frame available for election administration, the lack of accessibility for out-of-country voters (particularly for refugees in Serbia and Montenegro and in Bosnia-Herzegovina), and the lack of transparency in campaign financing.

The president of Croatia is the head of state and is elected by popular vote for a five-year term, with a maximum of two terms. The prime minister is appointed by the president, but must be approved by the parliament. Both the January 2005 presidential elections and the local elections in May were assessed as generally free and fair, although problems were recorded with diaspora voting in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

As in other parts of the Balkans, a nexus of official security institutions, networks supporting fugitive war criminals, and "legitimate" businesspeople is often at the center of many corruption cases. In 2005, several important pieces of legislation were passed to combat corruption. In March, the government strengthened the authority of the Office for the Prevention of Corruption and Organized Crime, and in July, the amended law against conflict of interest for public officials entered into force. Croatia was ranked 70 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Croatia's constitution guarantees freedom of expression and the press. On the whole, freedom of the media is respected in Croatia, but more reform of government media regulations is needed. The most important media outlet, HRT (Croatian Radio and Television), is still under substantial political control, despite long-running efforts to transform it into a European-style public service broadcaster. Criminal libel remains a problem, and five journalists have received suspended prison sentences for libel since November 2004. The issue of war crimes remains a sensitive topic, and journalists face pressure and intimidation if their reporting challenges the virtue of the Croatian role in the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. The ICTY's 2005 indictment of journalists who had revealed the names of protected witnesses provoked a debate on journalistic ethics and the balance between media freedom and the respect for the rule of law. Access to the internet is unrestricted.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitution; however, various ethnic minorities report continued incidents of intimidation and vandalism. In 2005, several Serbian Orthodox churches were vandalized. In April, for example, unknown persons sprayed fascist symbols on the Orthodox Church in Knin. In September, a group of young men broke into the Orthodox Eparchy in Sibenik, broke windows and furniture, and shouted ethnic slurs. There were no reports of restrictions on academic freedom.

The constitution provides for freedom of association and assembly. A wide variety of both international and domestic nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate in Croatia, and there were no reported instances of governmental harassment of NGOs during the year. The constitution allows workers to form and join trade unions, and they do so freely. Approximately 64 percent of the workforce is unionized.

Croatia's judicial system suffers from numerous problems, including inefficiency. A large number of judicial vacancies and a shortage of experienced judges have led to a huge backlog of cases (estimated at 1.6 million in 2005). Excessive trial length and a lack of enforcement of judicial decisions, especially in cases relating to the repossession of property owned by Serbs, also plague the system. Further, impar-

tiality of the local courts remains a problem: a high number of Serb returnees were arrested and pronounced guilty of war crimes, only to be later acquitted by the Supreme Court because of lack of evidence. In the period between January and July of 2005, 60 percent of local court verdicts in war crimes cases were overturned by the higher courts. Prison conditions generally meet acceptable international standards, and the police are considered to act professionally. There are reports that police treat ethnic minorities more harshly than they do ethnic Croatsians.

Respect for minority rights has improved in Croatia in the post-Tudjman period, but various forms of harassment and discrimination still persist. A 2005 European Commission report notes that there is a gross underrepresentation of Serbs in local and regional governments, state administration, and judicial bodies. The authorities sometimes refuse to hire qualified Serbs even when no Croats apply for a position. Further, Serbs who attempt to return to their prewar property are frequently harassed by the local population. In May 2005, a Serb man was murdered near Zadar because of his ethnicity, and a bomb was detonated in the offices of a local Serb organization in Vukovar. In July 2005, unidentified persons severely beat two elderly Serb men and threw stones at the house of another recently returned refugee.

The Roma population in Croatia faces significant social and economic obstacles, and widespread discrimination. In March 2005, the government adopted a special action plan aimed to improve the conditions for Roma in employment, health, housing, and education. As an outcome of this plan, in May 2005 the government assigned a team of lawyers to provide free legal representation for Roma, and also created mobile health clinics as a way of providing basic health services to this population.

The constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender. Domestic violence against women is believed to be widespread and underreported. In July 2003, the Assembly passed a Law on Gender Equality intended to further empower women in the workplace and public life. Women currently make up 33 of the 152 members of parliament, and there are 4 women in the 15-member cabinet. Trafficking in women for the purposes of prostitution continues to be a problem. Croatia is considered to be primarily a transit country for most trafficked women sent to Western Europe.

Cuba

Population: 11,300,000 **Political Rights:** 7
GNI/capita: \$2,900 **Civil Liberties:** 7
Life Expectancy: 77 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic, Protestant,
 Afro-Cuban spiritualism
Ethnic Groups: Mulatto (51 percent), white (37 percent),
 black (11 percent), Chinese (1 percent)
Capital: Havana



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF

Overview:

Cuba's leader Fidel Castro marked his forty-sixth year in power in 2005, appearing to have recuperated from a public fall the previous year that had prompted serious questions about the 79-year-old leader's health. The Communist government continued to reassert its control over the economy, scaling back many of the market reform measures undertaken by the regime during the severe economic crisis that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. Tensions between Cuba and the United States remained at their highest level in several years, while the European Union (EU) moved to reopen dialogue with the Castro government that was broken off after the 2003 crackdown on opposition groups.

Cuba achieved independence from Spain in 1898 as a result of the Spanish-American War. The Republic of Cuba was established in 1902, but remained under U.S. tutelage as a result of the Platt Amendment until 1934. In 1959, the U.S.-supported dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, who had ruled Cuba for 18 of the previous 25 years, was ousted by Castro's July 26th Movement. Castro declared his affiliation with communism shortly thereafter, and the island has been a one-party state ever since. Following the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of some \$5 billion in annual Soviet subsidies, Castro opened some sectors of the island's economy to foreign direct investment. The legalization of the U.S. dollar in Cuba in 1993 created a new source of inequality, as access to dollars from remittances or through the tourist industry engendered a new moneyed class while the majority continued to live on peso wages averaging less than \$10 a month.

The Castro government remains highly repressive of political dissent. Although Cuba's cycle of repression has ebbed and flowed over the past decade, the desire to neutralize organized political dissent remains a regime priority. In February 1999, the government introduced tough legislation against sedition, with a maximum prison sentence of 20 years. It stipulated penalties for unauthorized contacts with the United States and the import or supply of "subversive" materials, including texts on democracy and documents from news agencies and journalists. The Cuban government has recently undertaken a series of campaigns to undermine the reputations of leading opposition figures by portraying them as agents of the United States.

In 2002, the Varela Project, a referendum initiative seeking broad changes in the four-decades-old socialist system, won significant international recognition. Former U.S. president Jimmy Carter praised the project on Cuban television during his visit to the island, and its leader, Oswaldo Paya of the Christian Liberation Movement, later received the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought. In May, project organizers submitted more than 11,000 signatures to the National Assembly demanding that a referendum be held in which Cubans could vote for fundamental reforms such as freedom of expression, the right to own private businesses, and electoral reform. However, the proposal was rejected by the constitutional committee of the National Assembly, and the Cuban government instead held a counter-referendum in which 8.2 million people supposedly declared the socialist system to be "untouchable."

In March 2003, the government initiated a crackdown against the prodemocracy opposition. Seventy-five people, including 27 independent journalists, 10 independent librarians, and at least a dozen signature collectors for the Varela Project, were sentenced to an average of 20 years in prison following one-day trials held in April. (At the end of 2004, 61 of the activists who were arrested remained in prison; 14 won conditional release for health-related reasons, and two subsequently left Cuba.) In 2005, Cuba's "Ladies in White," a group of wives who have demonstrated for the release of their husbands imprisoned in 2003, won the Sakharov Prize, following in the footsteps of Paya.

In May 2004, U.S. president George W. Bush announced that the United States would intensify pressure on the Cuban regime by increasing broadcasts designed to break through the island's information blockade, by aiding dissidents, and by limiting the amount of money Cuban Americans could take with them on family visits or send through remittances. In 2005, the U.S. State Department appointed a "transition coordinator" to oversee efforts to destabilize the Castro government and usher in democratic change.

By early 2005, total U.S. agricultural sales to Cuba, under new legislation passed in 2000, had exceeded \$1 billion, transforming Cuba into the twenty-fifth largest market for U.S. food exports. The Cuban government estimated 5 percent growth in 2004 and projected even better economic performance in 2005; the estimates prompted Castro to proclaim that the Cuban economy was "rising like a phoenix." Cuba projected that 2.5 million tourists would visit in 2005, the highest number on record. The Cuban government recentralized control over state-owned enterprises, reduced the number of licenses available for small-scale entrepreneurs, and scaled back foreign investment partnerships with European and Canadian companies. In 2004, Cuba's three largest trading partners were Venezuela, Spain, and China, which planned major investments in Cuba's nickel industry. Oil and gas companies from Spain, Norway, and India continued to explore for offshore energy deposits along the island's northern coast.

During the summer, energy shortages and frequent blackouts plagued the island and fueled citizen complaints about government incompetence. Embarrassed, Cuban authorities struggled to address the problem with energy-saving lightbulbs, but failed to address the underlying problem of dilapidated electrical infrastructure. A Cuban agency issued a critical assessment of the island's housing crisis, reporting a deficit of 500,000 houses and describing 43 percent of existing dwellings as in

mediocre or poor condition. By September, the U.S. Coast Guard had intercepted more than 2,000 Cuban migrants at sea, the highest number since 1994.

Independent opposition groups remained active. In May, more than 100 government opponents attended the Assembly to Promote Civil Society in Cuba, organized by opposition leader Marta Beatriz Roque. Paya boycotted the gathering due to a history of bad feelings between the two opposition leaders. Cuban authorities allowed the meeting to occur undisturbed with a number of foreign observers in attendance, but several visiting members of parliament from European countries were ejected from the island. Meanwhile, European embassies decided to cease the practice of inviting Cuban dissidents to official receptions, thus ending what had been known as the "cocktail party war."

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Cuba cannot change their government democratically. President Fidel Castro dominates the political system, having transformed the country into a one-party state with the Cuban Communist Party (PCC) controlling all governmental entities from the national to the local level. Communist structures were institutionalized by the 1976 constitution installed at the first congress of the PCC. The constitution provides for the National Assembly, which designates the Council of State. It is that body which in turn appoints the Council of Ministers in consultation with its president, who serves as head of state and chief of government. However, Castro is responsible for every appointment and controls every lever of power in Cuba in his various roles as president of the Council of Ministers, chairman of the Council of State, commander in chief of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR), and first secretary of the PCC. The most recent PCC congress took place in 1997, and no date has been set for the next meeting.

In October 2002, some eight million Cubans voted in tightly controlled municipal elections. On January 19, 2003, an election was held for the Cuban National Assembly, with just 609 candidates—all supported by the regime—vying for 609 seats. All political organizing outside the PCC is illegal. Political dissent, spoken or written, is a punishable offense, and those so punished frequently receive years of imprisonment for seemingly minor infractions. Continuing a trend from 2003, in 2005 the Cuban government harassed dissidents, including using arbitrary sweeps and temporary detentions of suspected dissidents. The regime also called on its neighborhood groups, known as "Committees in Defense of the Revolution," to strengthen vigilance against "anti-social behavior," a government euphemism for opposition activity.

Official corruption remains a serious problem, with a "culture of illegality" shrouding the mixture of private and state-controlled economic activities allowed on the island. In late 2003, Juan Jose Vega, the president of Cubanacan, a state-run enterprise controlling more than \$600 million in foreign investment in Cuba's tourism industry, was dismissed on charges of corruption. Cuba was ranked 59 out of 159 countries surveyed in the 2005 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index.

The press in Cuba is the object of a targeted campaign of intimidation by the government, which uses Ministry of Interior agents to infiltrate and report on the independent media. Independent journalists, particularly those associated with five

small news agencies established outside state control, have been subjected to continued repression, including jail terms of hard labor and assaults by state security agents while in prison. Foreign news agencies may only hire local reporters through government offices, limiting employment opportunities for independent journalists. In 2004, 22 independent journalists arrested in March 2003 remained imprisoned in degrading conditions, which included physical and psychological abuse; acts of harassment and intimidation were also directed against their families. In April, two journalists held without trial since March 2002 were finally tried by a court in Ciego de Avila on charges of insulting Castro and the police and creating public disorder; one received a three-year prison sentence, and the other a sentence of three and a half years. Access to the internet remained tightly controlled.

In 1991, Roman Catholics and other believers were granted permission to join the Communist Party, and the constitutional reference to official atheism was dropped the following year. In 1998, Pope John Paul II visited Cuba and called for greater religious freedom, which was followed by a gradual lessening of restrictions on religious worship. However, according to the U.S. State Department's 2005 International Religious Freedom Report, Cuba remains one of four countries that continues to employ authoritarian actions to control religious belief and expression. Security agents frequently spy on worshippers, the government continues to block construction of new churches, the number of new foreign priests is limited, and most new denominations are refused recognition. An estimated 70 percent of all Cubans on the island practice some form of Afro-Cuban religion.

The government restricts academic freedom. Teaching materials for courses such as mathematics or literature must have an ideological content. Affiliation with official Communist Party structures is generally needed to gain access to educational institutions, and students' report cards carry information regarding their parents' involvement with the Communist Party. In 2003, state security forces raided 22 independent libraries and sent 10 librarians to jail with terms of up to 26 years. Many of the targeted individuals were charged with working with the United States to subvert the Cuban government, thereby committing national security violations and aiding a foreign power.

Limited rights of assembly and association are permitted under the constitution; however, these are subject to the stipulation that they may not be "exercised against the existence and objectives of the Socialist State." The unauthorized assembly of more than three persons, including those for private religious services in private homes, is punishable by law by up to three months in prison and a fine. This prohibition is selectively enforced and is sometimes used as a legal pretext to imprison human rights advocates.

Workers do not have the right to bargain collectively or to strike. Members of independent labor unions, which the government considers illegal, are often harassed or dismissed from their jobs and subsequently barred from future employment. The Cuban government has also been reducing opportunities for private economic activity; by June 2005, an estimated 2,000 self-employment licenses had been revoked, purportedly because their owners had failed to comply with state regulations. Privately run farmers' markets also came under increased scrutiny, a further intensification of the trend toward increased state control over the economy.

The executive branch controls the judiciary. In practice, the Council of State, of

which Castro is chairman, serves as a de facto judiciary and controls both the courts and the judicial process as a whole.

According to a domestic monitoring group, the Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation, there are 306 prisoners of conscience in Cuba, most held in cells with common criminals and many convicted on vague charges such as "disseminating enemy propaganda" or "dangerousness." Members of groups that exist apart from the state are labeled "counterrevolutionary criminals" and are subject to systematic repression, including arrest, beatings while in custody, and intimidation by uniformed or plainclothes state security agents. In mid-July, more than 20 people were arrested in Havana at a demonstration commemorating 42 Cubans who died trying to escape the island when their boat collided with a Cuban border control vessel and sank. Later that month, a comparable number of dissidents were detained for congregating in front of the French Embassy to protest their exclusion from Bastille Day festivities that were attended by Cuban officials.

Since 1991, the United Nations has voted annually to assign a special investigator on human rights to Cuba, but the Cuban government has refused to cooperate. Cuba also does not allow the International Red Cross or other humanitarian organizations access to its prisons. Cuba's prison population is disproportionately black.

Freedom of movement and the right to choose one's residence and place of employment are severely restricted. Attempting to leave the island without permission is a punishable offense. In the post-Soviet era, the rights of Cubans to own private property and to participate in joint ventures with foreigners have been recognized by law, and non-Cuban businesses have also been allowed. However, PCC membership is still required to obtain good jobs, serviceable housing, and real access to social services, including medical care and educational opportunities. In 2004, a Ministry of Labor decree halted the issuance of all new licenses for 40 categories of self-employment that were legalized in 1993. Roughly 150,000 Cubans are self-employed, approximately 2 percent of the workforce. The government systematically violates international salary standards, terms of contract, and other labor codes for workers employed on the island by foreign-owned firms.

Many Afro-Cubans have only limited access to the dollar-earning sectors of the economy, such as tourism and employment by joint ventures. About 40 percent of all women work, and they are well represented in most professions. However, violence against women is a problem, as is child prostitution. According to the 2005 U.S. State Department Trafficking in Persons Report, Cuba is a country of internal trafficking for sexual exploitation and a destination for sex tourists, including foreigners searching for underage prostitutes.

Cyprus

Population: 1,000,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$19,600 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 77 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Greek Orthodox (78 percent),
 Muslim (18 percent), other (4 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Greek (77 percent), Turkish (18 percent),
 other (5 percent)
Capital: Nicosia



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In the aftermath of the failed 2004 referendum on reunification between the Greek and Turkish communities of Cyprus, no further short-term prospects for a new initiative were evident in 2005. According to observers, Cyprus's membership in the European Union (EU) means that outside pressure on the Republic of Cyprus for compromise with the north is less likely to bring results.

Annexed by Britain in 1914, Cyprus gained independence in 1960 after a 10-year guerrilla campaign by partisans demanding union with Greece. In July 1974, Greek Cypriot National Guard members, backed by the military junta in power in Greece, staged an unsuccessful coup aimed at such unification. Five days later, Turkey invaded northern Cyprus, seized control of 37 percent of the island, and expelled 200,000 Greeks from the north. Today, the Greek and Turkish communities are almost completely separated in the south and north, respectively.

A buffer zone, called the "Green Line," has divided Cyprus since 1974. The capital, Nicosia, is similarly divided. Tensions between the two populations have plagued the island since independence. UN resolutions stipulate that Cyprus is a single country in which the northern third is illegally occupied. In 1983, Turkish-controlled Cyprus declared its independence, a move recognized only by Turkey.

The government elected in Turkey in November 2002 was much less indulgent of then-Turkish Cypriot president Rauf Denktaş's opposition to reunification because Turkey's own chances of EU membership have been linked to a resolution of the island's division. Significant pressure from the EU and the United States, as well as UN intervention, also helped move the two sides closer to a settlement.

The latest and most promising round of reunification negotiations began after a new pronunification government was elected in northern Cyprus in December 2003. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan led a series of negotiations that first included the leaders of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities, and then those of Greece and Turkey. When no consensus was reached, Annan himself proposed a plan that was put to a vote in simultaneous, separate referendums in northern and southern Cyprus in April 2004. Greek Cypriots, who previously had been more enthusiastic with re-

spect to reunification, had reservations about the plan, especially concerning security and international guarantees that the Turkish side would comply. Ultimately, 76 percent of Greek Cypriots voted against the plan, while 65 percent of Turkish Cypriots voted in favor. With the island still divided, only Greek Cyprus joined the EU as planned in May 2004. Membership had been a bargaining tool for the EU with Cyprus, and without it, a new reunification plan is likely to be more difficult to achieve.

At first, the overwhelming approval of the Turkish Cypriots for reunification sparked international efforts to reward them by ending their isolation. However, the Greek Cypriots opposed the most far-reaching proposals, such as direct trade between the north and the rest of the world. Their veto in EU decisions has made EU openings to the north less likely. Meanwhile, trade has increased between the two sides, new checkpoints continue to open, and travel between the two sides is much freer.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Greek Cypriots can change their government democratically. Suffrage is universal, and elections are free and fair. The 1960 constitution established an ethnically representative system designed to protect the interests of both Greek and Turkish Cypriots; the Greek Cypriots maintain that the constitution still applies to the entire island today. There is a clear separation of powers between the executive and legislature through a presidential system.

The unicameral House of Representatives has 80 seats filled through proportional representation, 24 of which are reserved for the Turkish Cypriot community; however, the Turkish Cypriot representatives withdrew in 1964 and have not been replaced to date. Instead, the Turkish Cypriots maintain their own parliament in the northern part of the island. President Tassos Papadopoulos of the Democratic Party (DDCO) was elected in 2003 for a five-year term as head of state.

The two major parties are the Progressive Party of the Working People (AKEL) and the Democratic Rally (DISY), but six other parties are also represented in the house. Voting is compulsory, although there is no penalty for those who do not vote.

A new law allows Turkish Cypriots living in the south to vote and run for office in Greek Cypriot elections. The bill was in response to a 2004 European Court of Human Rights ruling in favor of a Turkish Cypriot applicant. Turkish Cypriots cannot run for president, as the constitution states that a Greek Cypriot should hold that post and a Turkish Cypriot should be vice president. No minorities are represented in the current House, although the Maronite, Armenian, and "Latin" communities have special nonvoting representatives.

Corruption is not a significant problem in Cyprus. A 2004 anticorruption law instituted compulsory asset declarations by state officials, although compliance with the law was problematic as many politicians and civil servants did not take the February 2005 deadline seriously. Cyprus was ranked 37 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech is generally respected, and a vibrant independent press frequently criticizes authorities. Several private television and radio stations in the Greek Cypriot community compete effectively with government-controlled stations. Although Turkish Cypriot journalists can enter the south, Turkish journalists based in

the north are often denied entry across the border. Reports of irregularities in freedom of expression leading up to the 2004 referendum continued to emerge in 2005. Violent exchanges took place between journalists and police during a truckers' strike in July; the Cyprus Media Complaints Commission accused the police of using excessive force in the arrest of a cameraman connected to the incident. Access to the internet is unrestricted, although rural residents have complained that they are required to pay exorbitant fees for access.

Freedom of religion is provided for by the constitution and is protected in practice. Nearly all the inhabitants of Greek-controlled Cyprus are Greek Orthodox Christians. State schools use textbooks containing negative language against Turkish Cypriots and Turkey.

Nongovernmental organizations, including human rights groups, operate without government interference. Workers have the right to strike and to form trade unions without employer authorization.

The independent judiciary operates according to the British tradition, upholding the presumption of innocence and the right to due process. Standard procedure calls for trial before a judge, but requests for trial by jury are regularly granted. Prison overcrowding and unacceptable living conditions in detention centers are increasing concerns, highlighted by domestic and international human rights groups; police have disputed such claims. Brutality directed at suspects in detention has also been alleged.

A 1975 agreement between the Greek and Turkish sides of the island governs treatment of minorities. In practice, Turkish Cypriots in the south have reported difficulty obtaining identity cards and other documents. The government's ombudsperson reported in 2004 poor living conditions and less access to education among the Roma (Gypsy) population, citing governmental discrimination as a cause.

Since Cypriot accession to the EU in 2004, all citizens can move freely throughout the island. Those attempting to enter the Greek part of the island illegally are now fined and turned back instead of imprisoned, as previously. A new border crossing opened in September 2005.

The status of property abandoned by those moving to either side of the Green Line beginning in 1974 has increasingly been seen as the major point of contention in reunification negotiations. New legislation passed in March 2005 increased the penalties for people holding "illegal" property. The increase means that the EU-wide European arrest warrant can be applied. It is unclear whether the arrest warrant will now be used against those who own formerly Greek Cypriot properties in the north, some of whom are vacationers from mainland Europe. A 1991 law states that property left by "Turkish Cypriots" belongs to the state.

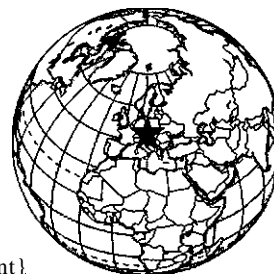
Men comprise a greater share of all professions except the administrative and secretarial. Women who wear headscarves have complained of racism and prejudice. After both the Council of Europe and the U.S. State Department called attention to trafficking in women for the purposes of prostitution in Cyprus in 2004, the Cypriot police set up a new Human Trafficking Prevention Bureau to address the problem. The number of cases investigated and arrests made has greatly increased since then. In 2005, the United States praised Cyprus's progress and removed the country from its "watch list."

Czech Republic

Population: 10,200,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$7,150 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 75 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Atheist (59 percent), Roman Catholic (26.8 percent), Protestant (2.1 percent), other (12.1 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Czech (90.4 percent), Moravian (3.7 percent), Slovak (1.9 percent), other (4 percent)

Capital: Prague



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In April 2005, the unpopular prime minister, Stanislav Gross, was unseated after a minor personal scandal. However, the governing coalition held together, and Jiri Paroubek replaced Gross. Paroubek subsequently revived some of his party's popularity and the governing coalition's viability.

Czechoslovakia was created in 1918 following the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Soviet troops helped establish the Communist People's Party of Czechoslovakia in 1948, renamed the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in 1960. In 1968, Soviet tanks crushed the so-called Prague Spring led by reformist leader Alexander Dubcek.

In December 1989, an anti-Communist opposition led by dissident Vaclav Havel and the Civic Forum brought down the Czechoslovak government. The country's first post-Communist elections were held the following year. In 1992, a new constitution and Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms were adopted, and the country began an ambitious program of political and economic reform under Finance Minister Vaclav Klaus. A leading figure in the ruling center-right Civic Democratic Party (ODS), Klaus became prime minister the same year. In 1993, the state dissolved peacefully into the Czech and Slovak Republics, and Havel became president of the new Czech Republic. In 1997, Klaus resigned amid allegations of corruption in the ODS.

Close parliamentary elections in 1998 brought about Czech Social Democratic Party (CSSD) control of the government, although the ODS managed to negotiate control of key government positions. This "opposition agreement" between the CSSD and the ODS drained meaningful political competition and brought about several years of political gridlock. The last parliamentary election to the Chamber of Deputies (lower house) was held in June 2002, and a by-election to the Senate (upper house) took place in November 2002. The CSSD secured the most votes, and Vladimir Spidla, the party's chairman, became the new prime minister.

In the February 2003 presidential poll, Klaus was elected on the third round of voting following two inconclusive ballots. Klaus obtained 142 votes, a single vote

more than the 141 needed from the 281-member joint parliamentary session. Though the presidency is mainly symbolic, Klaus has made use of the position to push his own policy preferences.

In May 2004, the Czech Republic joined the European Union (EU), fulfilling one of the government's most important goals. Accession to the EU had required years of work to reach tough EU standards, such as the creation of a stable market economy, a consolidated democracy, a cleaner environment, and laws protecting minority rights. Most Czechs took pride in "returning" to Europe's mainstream after the Communist era. The Czech Republic was one of the richest countries from Central Europe to join the EU in 2004.

In the country's first elections for the European Parliament, in June 2004, the government was soundly beaten: the CSSD took just 9 percent of the vote. The unreformed Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia surged to 20 percent. Prime Minister Spidla, humiliated, stepped down in favor of Stanislav Gross, who formed a new government including the same parties from the previous one. Despite then-strong results, the Communists were shut out of government again.

The CSSD performed poorly again in regional and Senate elections in November 2004, and the party's popularity continued to weaken. This situation was exacerbated in 2005 when it was revealed that Gross had purchased a more expensive apartment than it seemed he would be able to afford on his government salary, and then inadequately explained how he had secured the loan. Allegations of corruption and complaints from the opposition buckled the three-party governing coalition in April. However, after Jiri Paroubek was chosen prime minister, the CSSD once again formed a coalition government with its partners: the Christian and Democratic Union-Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU-CSL) and the free-market liberal party, Freedom Union-Democratic Union (US-DEU). The coalition holds a bare majority, 101 seats of 200, in the lower house of Parliament. Paroubek nonetheless surprised expectations of his being a weak caretaker by proposing economic reforms, including lowering taxes for lower- and middle-income workers. The CSSD's popularity has revived somewhat. Lower-house elections are due by June 2006.

Although progress has been made toward establishing the mechanisms and institutions of a full market economy—and EU membership will help further with this—the economic sector requires further reform. A substantial part of state-owned property was privatized during the early to mid-1990s on the basis of a "voucher" program, under which Czech citizens were permitted to buy vouchers entitling them to bid for shares in selected companies. Power stations, oil and gas networks, banks, and the social and pension insurance sectors were among the strategic holdings exempt from the privatization program. Greater strides were made after 1999, when the government initiated an effort to revitalize Czech industry that sought to prepare public enterprises for privatization through internal reform and debt restructuring. The economy grew by 4.4 percent in 2004 and is expected to do similarly well in 2005. The Czech Republic is required by its EU membership to adopt the euro as its currency, and to do so it must reduce its budget deficit to the EU-mandated limit of 3 percent of gross domestic product, a feat that it will be difficult for the government to achieve.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Czech citizens can change their government democratically. Since shedding the Soviet yoke more than a decade ago,

the Czech Republic has had a sound record of free and fair elections. Voters elect members of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, which constitute the Parliament. The Chamber of Deputies (lower house) has 200 members who are elected for four-year terms by proportional representation, and the Senate (upper house) has 81 members, elected for six-year terms, with one-third of the senators being replaced every two years. The president, elected by the National Assembly for a five-year term (with a maximum of two subsequent terms), appoints judges, the prime minister, and other cabinet members, but has few other formal powers. The prime minister relies on support from a majority of members of the Chamber of Deputies to govern.

The three biggest political parties are the center-left Czech Social Democratic Party (CSSD), the center-right, free-market Civic Democratic Party (ODS), and the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSCM). Two smaller center-right parties joined in a coalition for the 2002 election: the Christian and Democratic Union-Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU-CSL) and the Freedom Union-Democratic Union (US-DEU).

The Czech Republic continues to confront some difficult remnants of the Soviet legacy, including significant corruption that affects many sectors of Czech society. The Czech Republic was ranked 47 out of 159 countries surveyed Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is honored in the Czech Republic, although the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms prohibits threats against individual rights, state and public security, public health, and morality. The country's print and electronic media are largely in private hands. In 2000, the Law on Free Access to Information took effect and the Parliament amended broadcasting laws to meet EU standards. In 2001, the legislature passed an important bill designed to limit political influence over Czech Television (CT), the state broadcaster. Passage of the legislation helped end a standoff at CT between journalists and management. Under this law, nongovernmental groups, rather than politicians, nominate candidates for the CT's governing council, the body that controls the selection of CT's director. In January 2004, an editor for *Respekt*, a weekly newspaper known for its investigative work, was attacked, beaten, and sprayed with tear gas. Police closed the case without finding the perpetrators of the attack, which may have been connected to *Respekt*'s investigations into criminal gangs in northern Bohemia. Internet access is unrestricted.

The government generally respects freedom of religion. A 2002 law that provides for the registration and regulation of churches, including pay for clergy, has been criticized by the Roman Catholic Church as unduly restrictive of its activities. In 2003, the Church won a judgment against a government decision to deny registration to a Church-run medical center. Academic freedom is widely respected in the Czech Republic.

Czech citizens may assemble peacefully, form associations, and petition the government. Civic organizations are, however, not as well developed as in other parts of Central Europe. Trade unions and professional associations function freely. Judges, prosecutors, and members of the armed forces and police may not strike. In 2003, the government's proposed fiscal-reform measures generated considerable opposition from the country's trade unions, including a major one-day strike in September by the teacher's union, in which more than 70,000 teachers reportedly took part.

The Czech Republic's independent judiciary consists of a Supreme Court, a Supreme Administrative Court, and high, regional, and district courts. There is also a Constitutional Court. In December 2001, President Vaclav Havel signed a bill on judicial reform but suggested he might challenge aspects of the law, hoping his challenge would "more widely and consistently separate judicial and executive power."

The Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms gives minorities the right to help resolve matters pertaining to their group. A 1999 law restored citizenship to many residents, including Roma (Gypsies), who continue to experience discrimination. In 2001, the Parliament approved legislation for the protection of ethnic minority rights. The law's provisions include the creation of a governmental minority council. A number of anti-Semitic attacks were committed in 2003. Promoting denial of the Holocaust and inciting religious hatred are illegal. In 2005, the government proposed symbolic compensation for some of the Germans who were expelled from Czechoslovakia at the end of World War II, though this proposal is somewhat controversial.

Property ownership, choice of residence, and fair wages are legally protected, and citizens generally enjoy all of these rights.

Gender discrimination is legally prohibited. Nevertheless, sexual harassment in the workplace appears to be fairly common. The government has taken steps in recent years to strengthen reporting of and punishment for domestic violence. Women are underrepresented in the highest levels of government and business.

Denmark

Population: 5,400,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$33,570 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 77 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Evangelical Lutheran (95 percent),
 Muslim (2 percent), other (3 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Scandinavian, Inuit, Faroese, German,
 Turkish, Iranian, Somali
Capital: Copenhagen



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In elections in February 2005, the center-right coalition, led by Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen of the Liberal Party, won a second term. A furor emerged over the publication of 12 cartoons depicting the prophet Mohammad in the Copenhagen daily *Jyllands-Posten* in September. In July, a visit by Bill Graham, the Canadian defense minister, to Hans Island raised the hackles of officials in Denmark.

Denmark has been a monarchy since the fourteenth century. Since the country's first democratic constitution was written in 1849, the monarchy has been largely

ceremonial. During World War II, the country was occupied by Germany, which met little resistance in its invasion. However, the determined Danish resistance movement ended the country's policy of collaboration and forced Germany to take full control of Danish affairs until Germany's surrender in 1945. In 1949, Denmark abandoned its traditional neutrality and joined NATO, and in 1973, it joined the European Economic Community (EEC), the forerunner to the European Union (EU). Prior to a May 5, 2005, anniversary of the country's liberation by the Allies, the prime minister officially apologized for the extradition of innocent people from Denmark to Germany during World War II.

Post-World War II Danish politics has been dominated by the Social Democratic Party. However, in the November 2001 elections, a right-wing coalition led by Rasmussen's Liberal Party won control of the government on a platform that focused on reducing immigration and lowering taxes. The coalition, which also included the Conservative People's Party, was supported by the anti-immigrant and euroskeptic Danish People's Party.

Denmark has had a conflicted relationship with the EU. When the Maastricht Treaty was written in 1992, extending the EU's competence into justice, foreign, and monetary policy, Denmark's population rejected the treaty in a referendum. Since then, Denmark has opted out of participation in these areas. In 2003, the EU constructed a constitutional treaty, and polls indicate the Danish population is slowly moving in favor of participation in EU defense and judicial cooperation, although support for the euro is less clear. In June 2005, Denmark postponed plans for a national referendum on the EU constitution because of the uncertainty raised by the French and Dutch rejections over the summer.

Denmark has an active foreign policy that includes 530 troops stationed in Iraq. However, *The Economist* reports that there is growing dissatisfaction in the country with the situation in Iraq. The opposition Social Democratic Party wants to pull Danish troops out of Iraq, and the Danish People's Party, which supports the government, has aired concerns about the financial resources that are being allocated to the war. A visit by U.S. president George Bush in July sparked protests in Copenhagen; many protestors voiced their opposition to the Iraq War.

In parliamentary elections in February 2005, the Liberal Party won 29 percent of the vote and 52 seats, gaining a second term in office. The Liberals continued their coalition with the Conservative People's Party, which won 10 percent of the vote and 18 seats. The coalition is supported externally by the Danish People's Party, which won 24 seats, two more than previous elections in 2001. The opposition Social Democratic Party gained almost 26 percent of the vote and 47 seats.

A July 2005 visit by Bill Graham, the Canadian defense minister, to Hans Island provoked officials in Denmark. The tiny island, which sits between Canada's Ellesmere Island and Greenland (a semiautonomous Danish region), has been a disputed territory between the two countries for more than 30 years.

In September 2005, 12 cartoons depicting the prophet Mohammad published in the conservative Copenhagen daily *Jyllands-Posten* sparked a furor in Denmark's Muslim community; physical depictions of Mohammed are considered blasphemous by most Muslims, and one of the cartoons depicted Mohammed wearing a turban in the form of a bomb. In October, up to 5,000 people staged a protest outside the offices of *Jyllands-Posten*. Despite the criticism, the newspaper refused to apologize

for the cartoons, and Prime Minister Rasmussen—citing Denmark's robust tradition of press freedom—declined to either intervene in the matter or grant a meeting requested by ambassadors from 10 Muslim-majority states. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan condemned the drawings during a visit to Denmark in November.

Particularly since the July 2005 terrorist bombings in London, extremist Islamist groups have threatened to attack Denmark if the country did not withdraw its troops from Iraq. The Danish justice ministry was looking into legal ways to ban the international Islamist organization, Hizb ut-Tahrir, an action that Sweden and Germany have already taken.

Further signs of increasing ethno-religious tensions within Danish society emerged in 2005. In August, a radio station in Copenhagen had its broadcasting license taken away for three months after a radio presenter Kaj Wilhelmsen called for the extermination of Muslim extremists; Wilhelmsen was also charged with breaking the country's antiracism laws. The BBC reported that Queen Margrethe spoke out against radical Islam in a new authorized biography, disapproving of "these people for whom religion is their entire life."

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Denmark can change their government democratically. The current Danish constitution, which established a single-chamber parliament, was adopted in 1953. Denmark is a constitutional monarchy, in which the monarch has mostly ceremonial duties. The 179 representatives are elected to the parliament (the Folketing) at least once every four years by a system of modified proportional representation. The leader of the majority party or coalition is usually chosen to be prime minister by the monarch.

Danish governments are most often minority administrations, governing with the aid of one or more supporting parties. Since 1909, no single party has held a majority of seats, a history that has helped create a tradition of interparty compromise. In elections in February 2005, the center-right coalition led by Prime Minister Rasmussen won a second term. Rasmussen's coalition—the Liberal Party and Conservative People's Party—continues its alliance with the Danish People's Party, which increased its share of support from 12 to 13.3 percent of the vote. The opposition party—the Social Democrats—won 47 seats.

The semiautonomous territories of Greenland and the Faeroe Islands each have two representatives in the Folketing. They also have their own elected home rule governments, which have power over almost all areas of governance.

Levels of corruption in Denmark are very low. Denmark was ranked 4 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution guarantees freedom of expression, and the media reflect a wide variety of political opinions and are frequently critical of the government. The state finances radio and television broadcasting, but state-owned television companies have independent editorial boards. Independent radio stations are permitted, but tightly regulated. In August, a radio station in Copenhagen had its broadcasting license taken away for three months after it called for the extermination of Muslim extremists. Kaj Wilhelmsen, the radio presenter who made the statements, was also charged with breaking the country's antiracism laws. In October, Prime Minister Rasmussen declined to intervene in the Mohammed cartoon controversy, saying

that he has "no tool whatsoever to take actions against the media" and, furthermore, does not "want that kind of tool." The government did not restrict internet access.

Freedom of worship is guaranteed to all. However, the Evangelical Lutheran Church is subsidized by the government as the official state religion. The faith is taught in public schools, although students may withdraw from religious classes with parental consent. At present, about half of all schoolchildren in Denmark are exempted from the catechism, taught in public schools. However, in February, the education minister stated that all schoolchildren in the country should be required to read the Bible, regardless of their religion. The law has not yet been put into effect. In February 2004, the government introduced plans to monitor Muslim imams' Friday sermons to prevent the preaching of anti-Western propaganda and to institute strict Danish language requirements for imams who wish to perform marriages. Academic freedom is guaranteed for all. However, in 2004 the Council of Europe expressed concerns about the segregation of bilingual immigrant students in different classes and schools.

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly and association. Civil society is vibrant. Workers are free to organize. The labor market is mainly regulated by agreements between employers' and employees' organizations, and approximately 80 percent of workers are members of trade unions. In April 2004, a Council of Europe expert subcommittee ruled that union exclusivity agreements are a violation of the right to free organization. Government efforts to ban exclusivity agreements have been opposed by the Danish People's Party and the Social Democrats.

The judiciary is independent, and citizens enjoy full due process rights. The court system consists of 100 local courts, 2 high courts, and the 15-member Supreme Court, with judges appointed by the queen on government recommendation. Prisons generally met international standards. Police brutality was not an issue during the year.

Discrimination is prohibited under the law. However, Denmark introduced what it has described as one of Europe's strictest immigration laws in May 2002. The law was influenced by the anti-immigrant Danish People's Party; since elections in November 2001, the Liberal-Conservative government has relied on the support of that party for a parliamentary majority. The immigration law restricts the ability of a Dane to bring a foreign spouse into the country, as it requires both partners to be aged 24 or older. The law also requires the Dane to pass a solvency test to prove that he or she has not drawn social security for at least a year, and to post a bond of almost \$10,000. A reunified family's husband and wife must both prove "close ties to Denmark." Many Copenhagen-based Danes with foreign spouses have chosen to live in the nearby southern Swedish city of Malmoe and commute back to Copenhagen for work. The law primarily affects Denmark's Muslim immigrant community, which has increasingly complained of social and economic discrimination and burgeoning anti-immigrant sentiment in the country. In April 2005, the Danish Supreme Court ruled that the family reunification rules of the country's 2002 immigration law do not violate human rights.

The tightening of immigration laws has led to a considerable drop in asylum seekers entering the country. The Associated Press reported that the number of people seeking shelter in Denmark dropped from around 12,500 in 2001 to only about 3,200 in 2004. The country has also closed 47 asylum centers since the introduction

of the new immigration law. In May 2005, the government introduced a new plan to secure more jobs for immigrants, while simultaneously reducing their access to welfare and unemployment benefits.

There are no quotas for the representation of women in parliament. During the national elections over the year, about 37 percent of the seats were filled by women. Denmark is a destination and transit point for women and children trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. In 2002, the government introduced legislation that defines and criminalizes trafficking. In 2004, the government began working regularly with nongovernmental organizations in their trafficking-prevention campaigns. In its 2005 report on trafficking in persons, the U.S. State Department reports that during the year a Danish research center under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Gender Equality created a pamphlet that gives trafficking victims legal information in several languages.

Djibouti

Population: 800,000 **Political Rights:** 5
GNI/capita: \$900 **Civil Liberties:** 5
Life Expectancy: 52 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Muslim (94 percent), Christian (6 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Somali (60 percent), Afar (35 percent),
 other (5 percent)



Capital: Djibouti

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
5,6NF	5,6NF	5,6NF	4,6PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF

Overview:

President Ismail Omar Guelleh won uncontested reelection to a second six-year term in April 2005. Government claims that voter turnout totaled 78 percent were contested by opposition and independent analysts. Djibouti continued to benefit from its strategic geographic location and strong rhetorical support for the U.S.-led war on terrorism. A continuing drought in eastern Africa has seriously affected Djibouti's pastoral population, with many seeking refuge in the capital city.

Djibouti was known as the French Territory of the Afars and Issas before gaining independence from France in 1977. Djibouti's people are deeply divided along ethnic and clan lines, with the majority Issa (Somali) and minority Afar peoples constituting a traditionally significant political cleavage. Of the two main groups, the Issa make up about 60 percent of the population and the Afar, about 35 percent. Ethnic-based civil conflict broke out in 1991, with Afar rebels of the Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD) launching a three-year guerrilla war against Issa domination. In 1994, the largest FRUD faction agreed to end its insurgency in exchange for inclusion in the government and electoral reforms. However, sporadic attacks by a radical wing of the group continued.

President Hassan Gouled Aptidon controlled a one-party system until 1992, when a new constitution adopted by referendum authorized four political parties. In 1993, Gouled was declared the winner of a fourth six-year term in Djibouti's first contested presidential elections. Both the opposition and international observers considered the poll fraudulent. In the 1997 legislative elections, which were also considered unfair, the People's Progress Assembly (RPP), in coalition with the legalized arm of the FRUD at the time, won all 65 legislative seats.

Gouled stepped down in 1999 after 22 years in power, opening the way for the country's first change in presidential leadership. The RPP's Guelleh won the presidential poll that year with 74 percent of the vote, while Moussa Ahmed Idriss, of the Unified Djiboutian Opposition (ODU), received 26 percent. Guelleh, who is Gouled's nephew and a former head of state security, had long been considered the de facto head of government and the president's probable successor. For the first time since elections began in 1992, no group boycotted the vote, which was regarded as generally fair.

In 2001, the government followed up a peace agreement it had signed with the radical wing of the FRUD in 2000 with a more extensive accord. Like the previous agreement, this one was aimed at putting an end to the ethnic Afar insurgency that began a decade earlier.

In the 2003 parliamentary elections, a pro-government bloc of four parties under the umbrella Union for the Presidential Majority (UMP) ran against the opposition Union for a Democratic Alternative (UAD) bloc of four parties. The ruling UMP captured all 65 seats despite the UAD's receiving 37 percent of the vote; voter turnout was a low 48 percent.

In April 2005, Guelleh won reelection to a second six-year term. The only challenger withdrew, citing an inability to campaign effectively as a result of government control of the media and repression of the opposition's activities. The country's human rights league called the official turnout of 79 percent "highly unlikely." According to *The Indian Ocean Newsletter*, a number of supporters of the opposition were arrested. Meanwhile, the government maintained its effective control over the country's media.

As president, Guelleh has used Djibouti's strategic importance to generate both international support and development assistance. Djibouti has allowed foreign armed forces, particularly those of the United States, access to its port and airport facilities. In 2004, some 2,000 U.S. Army and Special Forces troops were stationed in Djibouti in support of U.S. foreign policy objectives. In addition, approximately 2,700 French troops are among 8,000 French residents. Guelleh has also taken an active position among Arab League members in support of actions taken by the United States and other countries to combat terrorism.

Although its strategic position has long proved to be an important asset, Djibouti has virtually no industry and few natural resources. Services provide most of the national income. Two-thirds of the inhabitants live in the capital city, the remainder being mostly nomadic herders. Scanty rainfall limits crop production to fruits and vegetables, and most food must be imported. As the result of a drought following three failed rainy seasons, the food situation in rural areas was precarious in 2005, according to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

The nation is heavily dependent on foreign assistance to help support its balance of payments and to finance development projects. An unemployment rate of 40 to 50 percent continues to be a major problem, and more than 40 percent of Djiboutians live in extreme poverty. Per capita consumption dropped an estimated 35 percent over the last seven years because of recession, civil war, and a high population growth rate (including immigrants and refugees). Also, renewed fighting between Ethiopia and Eritrea has disturbed normal external channels of commerce.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Djibouti cannot change their government democratically. The trappings of representative government and formal administration have little relevance to the real distribution and exercise of power. The ruling party has traditionally enjoyed the advantage of state resources to conduct its electoral campaigns.

The unicameral parliament, the National Assembly, has 65 members directly elected for a five-year term. In the 2003 legislative election, opposition parties were significantly disadvantaged by electoral rules and by the government's use of the power of its incumbency, including its dominance over the government administrative apparatus. In addition, although the coalition won just 62 percent of the vote, the election law stipulates that the majority victor in each of the country's five electoral constituencies (in this election, the ruling UMP) be awarded all seats in that district. While the opposition UAD alleged widespread voter fraud, its case was rejected by the Constitutional Council. The country's political opposition has suffered from significant divisions and had previously been unable to achieve any successes in elections that were controlled by the government.

Political parties are required to register with the government. The UAD coalition is composed of the Union of Justice and Democracy (UJD), the Republican Alliance for Democracy (ARD), and the Djibouti Development Party (PDD). Some opposition leaders engage in self-censorship and refrain from organizing popular demonstrations, rather than provoke a government crackdown. This reluctance explains, in part, the lack of competition in the 2005 presidential election.

Efforts to curb the country's rampant corruption have met with little success. According to the Heritage Foundation 2005 Index of Economic Freedom, the government remains reluctant to reduce the bloated civil service, increase transparency, and reduce corruption. Djibouti was not ranked in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Despite constitutionally mandated protections, freedom of speech is not guaranteed. The government owns the principal newspaper, *La Nation*, as well as Radiodiffusion-Television de Djibouti (RTD), which operates the national radio and television. Journalists generally avoid covering sensitive issues, including human rights, the army, the FRUD, relations with Ethiopia, and French financial aid. In 2004, a journalist from *Le Renouveau* newspaper was arrested after police ordered him to stop his vehicle during a motorcade escorting the president's wife. Press watchdog groups, such as the International Federation of Journalists, condemned his detention. The editor in chief of *Le Renouveau* has frequently been jailed by the authorities. Djibouti has been identified by Reporters Without Borders as a country in which freedom of speech is significantly limited. FM relays of the BBC and Radio France

Internationale are on the air in Djibouti. A local FM relay carries Voice of America broadcasts. There is only limited internet access.

Islam is the official state religion, and most of the population is Muslim. Freedom of worship is respected, although the government discourages proselytizing. While academic freedom is generally respected, education choices are limited and Djibouti has no university.

Freedom of assembly and association are nominally protected under the constitution, but the government has demonstrated little tolerance for political protest. The Ministry of the Interior requires permits for peaceful assembly and monitors opposition activities. There are complaints of harassment of political opponents and union leaders. Local human rights groups do not operate freely. However, women's groups and some other nongovernmental organizations operate relatively freely.

Workers may join unions and strike, but the government routinely obstructs the free operation of unions and has in the past reorganized labor unions. Collective bargaining did not occur in 2005. Relations between employers and workers were informal and paternalistic. In late 2004, the International Monetary Fund noted a delay in the promulgation of a new labor code.

The judiciary, which includes a lower court, an appeals courts, and a Supreme Court, is based on the French Napoleonic code, although Sharia (Islamic law) prevails in family matters. The courts cannot be considered independent of the government. The Supreme Court may overrule decisions of the lower courts, and magistrates are appointed for life terms. The rulings of a Constitutional Council do not always protect civil and human rights. Security forces arrest Djiboutians without proper authority, despite constitutional requirements that arrests may not occur without a decree presented by a judicial magistrate.

The government continued to harass people, detain persons arbitrarily, and intimidate members of groups that were viewed as opposed to the government. Security forces at times beat and physically abuse prisoners and detainees. Prison conditions remained harsh, and overcrowding was a serious problem with reports of beatings, torture, and the rape of female inmates. No action was taken against security forces that used excessive force to disperse demonstrations in previous years. Conditions at Nagad detention center, where foreigners were held prior to deportation, were also extremely harsh.

The majority Somali Issas have controlled the military, civil and security services, and the ruling party. The Afari people, Yemeni Arabs, and non-Issa Somali suffer from social and economic discrimination.

Although women in Djibouti enjoy a higher public status than in many other Islamic countries, women's rights and family planning face difficult challenges, many stemming from poverty. Few women hold senior government positions; a record number of seven women were elected to parliament in January 2003. Education of girls still lags behind that of boys, and because of the high unemployment rate, employment opportunities are better for male applicants. Despite equality under civil law, women suffer serious discrimination under customary practices in inheritance and other property matters, in divorce, and regarding the right to travel. Female genital mutilation is widespread, and legislation forbidding mutilation of young girls is not enforced; women's groups are engaged in efforts to curb the practice.

Dominica

Population: 100,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$3,360 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 74 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (77 percent),
 Protestant (15 percent), other (8 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Mostly black and mulatto, Carib Amerindian
Capital: Roseau



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	19967	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In May 2005 elections, Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit's Dominica Labour Party (DLP) won 12 of 21 seats, and at age 32, Skerrit became the country's youngest elected prime minister. The country is struggling to complete a series of IMF-mandated economic adjustments that threaten to increase social tensions.

Dominica has been internally self-governing since 1967 and an independent republic within the Commonwealth since 1978, when it achieved independence from Britain. The centrist Dominica Labour Party (DLP) swept to victory for the first time in 20 years in the January 2000 parliamentary elections, winning 10 of 21 seats and forming a coalition with the right-wing Dominica Freedom Party (DFP). DLP leader Roosevelt "Rosie" Douglas was named prime minister, but died of a heart attack in October 2000. Douglas was replaced by Pierre Charles, who was Douglas's communications and works minister. On January 6, 2004, Charles, 49, collapsed and died of heart failure. He was succeeded by Roosevelt Skerrit, also of the DLP, who had been serving as education and youth affairs minister.

Skerrit's government inherited tremendous financial troubles, compounded by a loss of his party's popular support as a result of the implementation of austerity measures; increased global competition confronted the agriculturally based economy especially hard and the imposition of a stabilization and adjustment program proved highly unpopular. The IMF program obliged the government to cut its workforce of more than 4,000, while remaining employees faced a 5 percent cut in the government's total wage bill this year. In addition, the population as a whole was affected by an increase in the sales tax, from 3.0 percent to 7.5 percent. Despite these difficulties, in April 2004, the DLP won a by-election by a landslide, ratifying Skerrit's popularity. In addition, on April 10, China promised \$122 million in return for Dominica's revocation of its recognition of Taiwan.

Prime Minister Skerrit and the DLP handily triumphed in the 2005 elections, winning 12 seats in the 21-seat parliament; the results assured the DLP of a legislative majority even without the support of the DFP. Former Prime Minister Edison James, leader of the opposition United Workers Party (UWP), initially accepted his second successive electoral defeat, but later claimed that five of the DLP seats were obtained through fraud. The UWP has also accused the government of using illicit

funds to finance the airfares of hundreds of voters living abroad. While the overall electoral process was peaceful, there were sporadic reports of violence between the competing political groups.

Dominica's economy is primarily agricultural, despite recent efforts to build the infrastructure required to promote tourism and high-technology investment. Because of the island's volcanic geology, rugged terrain, and few beaches, most tourist activity is limited to cruise ship visits. Destruction caused by hurricanes, at times devastating, has further strained the banana industry, which has also been affected by changing market forces, especially increasing competition. Unemployment hovers at 20 percent. A major escape valve is the continuing emigration of residents of Dominica to the United States and the francophone Caribbean. Dominica is often used as a transit point for illegal immigration to Guadeloupe, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Netherlands Antilles, although U.S., French, and Dutch authorities have pressured the government to clamp down on this practice.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Dominica can change their government democratically. Dominica is headed by a prime minister and the unicameral House of Assembly, with 21 members elected to five-year terms. Nine senators are appointed—five by the prime minister and four by the opposition leader. The president is elected by the House of Assembly for a five-year term; the prime minister is appointed by the president. Currently, President Nicholas Liverpool serves as chief of state, while Prime Minister Skerrit manages the daily affairs of the government.

The three major political parties are the DLP, which is currently in power; the UWP; and the once-robust Dominica Freedom Party, which no longer has a seat in parliament.

According to the 2005 U.S. State Department Human Rights Report, corruption is a moderate problem in Dominica. Dominica was not ranked by Transparency International in its 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The press is free, and there is no censorship or government intrusion. Four private newspapers and an equal number of political party journals publish without interference. Although the main radio station is state owned, there is also an independent station. Citizens have unimpeded access to cable television and regional radio broadcasts, as well as to the internet.

Freedom of religion is recognized. While a majority of the population is Roman Catholic, some Protestant churches have been established. In the past, members of the small Rastafarian community charged that their religious rights were violated by a policy of cutting off the dreadlocks of prisoners and that Rastafarian women are singled out for drug searches. Academic freedom is respected.

Advocacy groups are free to operate and include the Association of Disabled People, the Dominican National Council of Women, and a women and children's self-help organization. Workers have the right to organize, strike, and bargain collectively. Though unions are independent of the government and laws prohibit antiunion discrimination by employers, less than 10 percent of the workforce is unionized.

The judiciary is independent, and the rule of law is enhanced by the court's subordination to the interisland Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court. However, the judicial system is understaffed, which has led to a large backlog of cases. The only

prison on Dominica is overcrowded and has sanitation problems. In addition, minors are housed with adults. Prison visits by independent human rights monitors are permitted. In September 2005, the government announced plans to build a youth detention center to separate juvenile inmates from the adult prison population, with expanded treatment for drug addiction and mental illness among juvenile offenders.

The Commonwealth of Dominica Police Force (CDPF) became responsible for security after the Dominica Defense Force (DDF) was disbanded in 1981. The DDF had been implicated in an attempted coup staged by supporters of former prime minister Patrick John, who was convicted in 1986 for his role and given a 12-year prison sentence. He was released by executive order in 1990, became active in the trade union movement, and lost as a DLP candidate in the 1995 election.

Occasional instances of excessive use of force by police are among the few human rights complaints heard. In 1997, the commissioner and deputy commissioner of police were forced to retire as a result of recommendations by a commission of inquiry that investigated allegations of mismanagement, corruption, and police brutality. Under new leadership, the police created the Internal Affairs Department late that year to investigate public complaints against the police and to provide officers with counseling. There were continuing allegations of corruption relating to document falsification. Narcotics traffickers use the country as a transshipment point. In August 2005, Dominica moved to restrict immigration from Haiti and the Dominican Republic by imposing visa requirements and requiring a \$400 security bond.

There is little open discrimination against women, but domestic violence cases remained routine. The Protection against Domestic Violence Act allows abused persons, usually women, to appear before a judge and request a protective order without seeking legal counsel. There are no laws mandating equal pay for equal work for men and women in private sector jobs. Inheritance laws do not fully recognize women's rights. When a husband dies without a will, the wife cannot inherit their property, though she may continue to inhabit their home.

Dominican Republic

Population: 8,900,000 **Political Rights:** 2
GNI/capita: \$2,130 **Civil Liberties:** 2
Life Expectancy: 68 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (95 percent),
 other (5 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Mixed (73 percent), white (16 percent),
 black (11 percent)
Capital: Santo Domingo



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
3,3PF	3,3PF	2,3F	2,3F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	3,2F	2,2F	2,2F

Overview:

In 2005, the Dominican economy began to recover from the severe economic crisis that had paralyzed the previ-

ous government and had laid the foundation for former president Leonel Fernandez Reyna to handily oust his predecessor in 2004. Public support for Fernandez has slipped as a result of the government's apparent inability to effectively address concerns about corruption. The Dominican government was criticized by human rights groups for implementing mass deportations of Haitian migrants in response to a swelling influx of illegal immigration.

After achieving independence from Spain in 1821 and from Haiti in 1844, the Dominican Republic endured recurrent domestic conflict. The assassination of General Rafael Trujillo in 1961 ended 30 years of dictatorship, but a 1963 military coup led to civil war and U.S. intervention. In 1966, under a new constitution, civilian rule was restored with the election of the conservative Joaquin Balaguer.

In the May 2000, presidential elections, Rafael Hipolito Mejia Dominguez, a former agriculture minister and a Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD) outsider, struck a chord among citizens who felt left out of the country's economic prosperity; 20 percent of the population was then living below the poverty level. Mejia won 49.9 percent of the vote, compared with 24.9 percent for ruling party candidate Danilo Medina and 24.6 percent for Joaquin Balaguer, who was running for his eighth term in office. In the May 2002 legislative elections, the PRD captured the largest number of seats in both houses of the National Congress.

In May 2003, the largest bank scandal in the history of the Dominican Republic exploded onto the political landscape when the powerful Banco Intercontinental collapsed amid accusations of a \$2.2 billion fraud. The scandal was estimated to cost the Dominican Republic the equivalent of 60 to 80 percent of the national budget. The government bailout of the bank—which primarily benefited the 1 percent of the bank's customers holding nearly 80 percent of its deposits—was widely perceived by Dominicans as an extension of the bank's corrupt practices; Intercontinental officials had paid million of dollars to generals, government officials, and political figures.

According to the Central Bank, the country's gross domestic product fell from \$21.7 billion in 2002 to \$16.8 billion in 2003. Following the collapse of Banco Intercontinental, the government entered into urgent talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for help with the crisis. Opposition to the proposed deal with the IMF and to increased prices for fuel and other basic necessities, as well as continued energy blackouts, led to months of protests in which at least 13 people were killed, frequently as the result of alleged use of excessive force by the police. The scandal also undercut Mejia's lobbying campaign to get the Dominican Republic included in the free-trade pact that the United States negotiated with five Central American countries. Although he eventually succeeded, the signing of the final trade pact was presided over by Fernandez. In July 2005, the U.S. Congress ratified DR-CAFTA, a free-trade agreement that included Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, and the United States.

Fernandez, of the Dominican Liberation Party (PLD), whose previous term in office, from 1996 to 2000, was accompanied by the biggest period of economic growth in the country's recent history, returned to the presidency during the country's worst economic crisis in decades. He retook the office from incumbent Mejia in a generally free and fair election held in May 2004. Fernandez won 57.1 percent of the vote to

Mejia's 33.7 percent. Because Fernandez won more than 50 percent of the vote, a second round was unnecessary.

In an effort to diffuse tensions in the run-up to the poll, the Central Election Board opened the electoral registry to inspection by all political parties and to observers from the Organization of American States (OAS) before sending copies on to the voting districts. Some 6,000 citizen volunteers and hundreds of OAS observers helped to keep the election free and fair. The contest also marked the first time that Dominicans living abroad—mainly in the United States and Spain—were able to vote by absentee ballot, although bureaucratic problems resulted in low registration levels among expatriates.

Inaugurated in August 2004, Fernandez faced the huge task of combating a ballooning \$6 billion foreign debt, a 16 percent unemployment rate, yearly inflation of some 32 percent, and a decrepit and indebted energy sector that left much of the country without electricity for as much as 20 hours a day. Annual inflation has since been brought into the single digits, and macroeconomic stability has improved. In return for IMF financing, the government was prompted to cut subsidies on gas and electricity, while reducing the bloated government payroll. Fernandez has also focused on reducing the frequent blackouts and power outages that have emerged as a strong source of citizen discontent.

In 2004, the UN Development Program concluded that at least one million Dominicans had slipped below the poverty line in three years—putting the total number of people living in poverty at nearly five million, or almost 60 percent of the population. The increasingly desperate situation of the island nation's poor was reflected in the fact that the thousands of Dominicans intercepted by U.S. authorities while trying to reach Puerto Rico by boat temporarily outstripped the numbers of Haitians and Cubans intercepted by the U.S. Coast Guard at sea.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of the Dominican Republic can change their government democratically, and the 2004 presidential election was free and fair. The constitution provides for a president and a congress, both elected for four-year terms. The bicameral National Congress consists of the 32-member Senate and a 150-member Chamber of Deputies; a 1998 census led to the expansion of the Chamber of Deputies from 120 to 150 members.

At the end of 2001, the Dominican legislature approved constitutional changes allowing presidents to serve consecutive terms, as part of a package of electoral changes that also included reducing from 50 to 45 percent the minimum vote required to win presidential elections in the first round. The reforms also established direct election of the president, eliminating an electoral college system in which representative sectors chose the president on the basis of popular votes.

The Dominican Republic has three major political parties: the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD), which controls both chambers of Congress; the Dominican Liberation Party, which won the presidency in 2004; and the Revolutionary Social Christian Party (PRSC), which holds a minority of seats in congress.

Official corruption remains a serious problem. Fernandez, whose first term in office was marred by a scandal involving the disappearance of \$100 million in government funds, nonetheless made fighting corruption a central theme of his election campaign. In his inaugural address, he pledged austerity for his government and

promised large cuts in the borrowing, government hiring, and heavy spending that had characterized Mejia's administration. While Fernandez made progress toward fulfilling these promises in the first year of his term, polls conducted in 2005 showed that a large majority of Dominicans are unsatisfied with Fernandez's tackling of corruption. According to one poll, 84 percent of the country believed that corruption among politicians was widespread. The Dominican Republic was ranked 85 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The law provides for freedom of speech and of the press, and the government generally respects these rights. There are five national daily newspapers, and a large number of local publications. The state-owned Radio Television Dominicana operates radio and television services. Private owners operate over 300 AM and FM radio stations, and more than 40 television stations, most of them small, regional broadcasters. In March, President Leonel Fernandez signed a ruling providing the mechanisms to implement a freedom of information law passed in 2004. Despite an advanced telecommunications infrastructure, the Dominican Republic lacks widespread access to the internet outside of large urban areas, although internet access is unrestricted.

Constitutional guarantees regarding religious and academic freedom are generally respected. The government generally respects the right to organize civic groups and political parties. Civil society organizations in the Dominican Republic are some of the best organized and effective in Latin America. Labor unions are well organized. Although legally permitted to strike, they are often subjected to government crackdowns. In 2003, at least seven people were killed and over 500 arrested during a violent general strike over the government's economic policies in the midst of the country's economic crisis. Another general strike in January 2004 resulted in the deaths of three demonstrators at the hands of security forces; protestors employed violent means as well. Peasant unions are occasionally targeted by armed groups working for large landowners.

The judiciary, headed by the Supreme Court, is politicized and riddled with corruption, although less so in recent years. The courts offer little recourse to those without money or influence; however, reforms implemented of late, including those aimed at promoting greater efficiency and due process, show some promise of increasing citizen access to the courts. In the fall of 2004, a new Criminal Procedures Code that gives suspects additional protections took effect. The following month, a new Code for Minors was inaugurated; it provides for more protection and stiffer penalties in cases of sexual or commercial exploitation.

Extrajudicial killings by police remain a problem, although the government has begun to refer cases of military and police abuse to civilian courts, instead of to nontransparent police or military tribunals. Police salaries are low, and there is a high level of corruption throughout the country's law enforcement institutions. Prisons, in which 9 out of 10 inmates have not been convicted of a crime, suffer from severe overcrowding, poor health and sanitary conditions, and routine violence that results in a significant number of deaths. The new Criminal Procedures Code implemented in 2004 limited detention without charges to 48 hours, but it has not been applied retroactively and two-thirds of Dominican inmates are sentenced preventatively and indefinitely. In March 2005, a riot resulted in a prison fire that killed at least 134 inmates at a badly overcrowded detention center in Higüey.

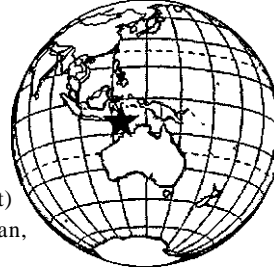
A major transit country for South American drugs to the United States, the Dominican Republic serves local, Puerto Rican, and Colombian drug smugglers as both a command-and-control center and a transshipment point, mostly for cocaine. The government estimates that some 20 percent of the drugs entering the country remain there as "payment in kind." This phenomenon has contributed to increasing drug abuse and street crime.

The migration of Haitians—some legally but the vast majority without legal documents—to the Dominican Republic in search of economic opportunity has long been a source of tension between the two countries. Some of the illegal migration was assisted by the authorities, who profit from it. Human rights groups report that children born of Haitian parents in the Dominican Republic, generally denied registration as citizens, were frequently among the thousands of people deported each year as illegal aliens. In 2005, the Dominican government stepped up forced repatriations of Haitian migrants, including 4,000 people in May and another 1,000 people in August.

Violence and discrimination against women is a serious problem, as are trafficking in women and girls, child prostitution, and child abuse. The Dominican Republic is primarily a source country for trafficked women between the ages of 18 and 25, and girls as young as 15. An estimated 100,000 Dominican women work overseas as prostitutes, many in other Caribbean islands or the United States. Women's reproductive rights do not extend to abortion, which remains illegal although widely practiced.

East Timor

Population: 900,000 **Political Rights:** 3
GNI/capita: \$550 **Civil Liberties:** 3
Life Expectancy: 55 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (90 percent),
 Muslim (4 percent), Protestant (3 percent), other (3 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Austronesian (Malayo-Polynesian), Papuan,
 small Chinese minority
Capital: Dili



Trend Arrow: East Timor received an upward arrow due to the holding of free and fair local elections.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
--	--	6,4PF	6,3PF	5,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3F	3,3PF	3,3PF

Overview:

In late 2004 into 2005, local elections, postponed in 2004, took place in what the UN Security Council called a "peaceful and orderly fashion." The United Nations moved to allay fears concerning the May 2005 withdrawal of the UN Mission in Support of East Timor (UNMISET) by establishing a one-year UN Office in Timor-Leste (UNOTIL), tasked specifically with helping to develop police, border patrols, and other critical institutions. On August 4, 2005, a truth commission sponsored

jointly by the Indonesian and East Timor governments met for the first time to investigate postreferendum violence. Critics of the commission say it is designed merely to deflect international pressure for a tribunal.

The Portuguese colonized East Timor in the sixteenth century but did little to develop the territory. After Portugal abruptly abandoned East Timor in 1975, the leftist Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (Fretilin) and the right-wing Democratic Union of Timor (UDT) fought for control of the territory. This conflict prompted the staunchly anti-Communist regime of Indonesia's General Suharto to covertly support right-wing groups in East Timor, and then to invade East Timor when Fretilin issued a declaration of independence in November 1975. East Timor was formally incorporated as Indonesia's twenty-sixth province in 1976.

Over the next two decades, Fretilin's armed wing, Falintil, waged a low-grade insurgency against the Indonesian army (TNI), which ruled East Timor. As Indonesian forces consolidated control over East Timor, they committed widespread human rights abuses. Civil conflict and famine may have killed up to 180,000 Timorese during Indonesian rule.

After the Dili massacre in 1991, in which TNI soldiers killed more than 200 participants in a funeral march and which was captured on film by foreign journalists, international pressure on Indonesia steadily rose. Two leading East Timorese—exiled activist Jose Ramos-Horta and the Catholic bishop of Dili, Carlos Belo—won the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize,

B. J. Habibie, Suharto's successor, approved a referendum on East Timor's status. After 78.5 percent of the electorate in East Timor voted for independence in August 1999, elements of the TNI and their pro-integrationist East Timor allies embarked on a scorched-earth policy. By the time an Australian-led multinational force arrived to restore order, up to 1,000 civilians had been killed, more than 250,000 others had been driven into Indonesian West Timor, and approximately 80 percent of East Timor's buildings and infrastructure had been destroyed.

In October 1999, The UN Security Council authorized the UN Transitional Authority for East Timor (UNTAET), to provide security, oversee reconstruction, and prepare for independence. In August 2001, East Timor elected an 88-member Constituent Assembly to draft a constitution. In an election contested by 16 political parties, Fretilin won 57 percent of the vote, a rather low share that many attribute to statements by the charismatic former resistance leader Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao (formerly, Jose Alexandre Gusmao), that a Fretilin landslide would not be good for democracy. Gusmao vacated his position as Fretilin chair in 1988 to build a broad resistance coalition that rejected violence. Gusmao won the presidency with 87 percent of a direct popular vote in May 2002.

Upon independence, UNTAET was replaced by the newly authorized UN Mission in Support of East Timor (UNMISSET), with responsibility for security and programs in economic recovery, reconstruction, and capacity building. In May 2004, UNMISSET officially handed over responsibility for external defense and internal security to East Timor, but its mandate was extended until May 2005, with sharply reduced personnel levels. While UNMISSET did withdraw in May 2005, it was replaced by the UN Office in Timor-Leste (UNOTIL).

East Timor has made extensive progress in implementing the national develop-

ment plan launched in 2002, particularly in reconstructing schools and health centers destroyed in post-referendum violence, and in building the Civil Service. According to the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, more than 700 of the 900 schools burnt during the post-referendum violence have been rebuilt, health centers have spread across the country, and 80 percent of a budgeted 13,100 civil service positions have been filled. More than 250,000 children attend elementary and secondary schools in East Timor, and more than 13,000 study in national and foreign universities. The country currently has 54 East Timorese doctors, up from only 20 last year. Nevertheless, poverty remains desperate: the country is among Asia's poorest, with 41 percent of the population living below the national poverty line of 55 cents a day, according to Oxfam. Gross Domestic Product per capita contracted in the last year.

Income from oil and gas is an economic lifeline, and rising petroleum prices in 2005 delivered a windfall to the government. More importantly, however, a long dispute between Australia and East Timor over maritime borders (and valuable oil and gas deposits) seems now on the brink of resolution. Under the terms of the probable settlement, East Timor will receive some \$13 billion in energy revenues, up from an earlier figure of \$8 billion. Encouragingly, East Timor seems to have explicitly taken account of hard lessons learned by other developing countries with rich oil reserves. It has created an externally audited petroleum fund, the expenditures of which will prioritize health education and social projects, under strict budgetary supervision. Much of the oil income will be invested in U.S. government bonds.

An estimated 16,000 of the 250,000 East Timorese who fled or were pushed across the border to Indonesian West Timor remain there.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of East Timor can change their government democratically. East Timor's directly elected president plays a largely symbolic role, with his formal powers limited to the right to veto legislation and make appointments. The last presidential election was in 2002. Governing power resides with the prime minister, Fretilin leader Mari Bin Amude Alkatiri, and the unicameral National Parliament, both holdovers from the directly elected Constituent Assembly. Elections for a new president and parliament are scheduled to occur in late 2006. Alkatiti reorganized his cabinet to better address issues of poverty in July 2005.

The Democratic Party (PD) and the Social Democratic Party (SDT) each won slightly more than 8 percent of the vote in the August 2001 elections to the Constituent Assembly (which later became the National Parliament), and they form the nucleus of a parliamentary opposition that numbers around 25 of the 88 members. In contrast to Fretilin, which derives its legitimacy from its role in the independence struggle, PD is run by a younger generation of university graduates and intellectuals.

From December 2004 to September 2005, local elections, postponed in 2004, took place in all 13 districts, with turnout rates ranging from 80 to 90 percent; the polls were widely considered to be free and fair. Anomalies that did occur, as when polling stations failed to open on time, were acknowledged to be the results of inexperience, and elections that took place later in the year seem to have gone more smoothly than those that occurred in January.

In its 2005 country assistance strategy document, the World Bank stated that corruption was an issue of growing concern; however, this charge has been hotly

refuted by national officials. The bank's concerns seems to center around the state control of oil revenues, although East Timor's moves to establish a petroleum fund should alleviate some of these concerns. East Timor was not ranked by Transparency International in its 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

East Timor's press legislation is one of the most liberal in Asia, according to Reporters Without Borders. However, recent moves raise concern about freedom of the press. Following a story by East Timor's largest newspaper, *Suara Timor Larosea*, concerning the existence of widespread famine in outlying areas, Alakatiri banned *Larosea* reporters from his press conferences and ordered all government offices to sever ties with reporters from the newspaper. On the other hand, both the president and members of the National Parliament have rallied to the paper's defense. According to a 2004 U.S. State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices, the government has also periodically ordered television stations to cease broadcasting images that it finds damaging—as when police assaulted demonstrators after a July 2004 demonstration. This partially confirms broader anecdotal accounts of government vindictiveness in the wake of press criticism. East Timor has three newspapers (two dailies and one weekly), three radio stations, one television station, and one commercial internet service provider.

East Timor is a secular state, but the Roman Catholic Church plays a central role in the life of the country. Church rules prohibit persons living under religious vows from holding political office; some politically active priests and nuns have been barred from government office. No significant threats to religious freedom exist, and the prime minister, a member of the country's small Arab minority, is a practicing Muslim. Academic freedom is generally respected.

The government generally respects freedom of assembly and association. The largest mass demonstration since independence occurred in a 20-day period during April-May 2005. Sponsored by the Catholic Church to address areas of concern in government policy, the protests ended peacefully in compromise. Still, at one point, the government had threatened to use force to disperse more than 7,000 demonstrators. While the eventual peaceful resolution of the confrontation is a good indication of the government's commitment to freedom of assembly, the Church's institutional power surely helped encourage the amicable resolution.

East Timor has a labor code based on the International Labor Organization's standards. The law permits workers to form and join worker organizations without prior authorization. However, attempts to organize workers generally have been slowed by inexperience and a lack of organizational skills.

The country's legal system is fragile. With only two functioning courthouses in the country, communities are frequently left with the responsibility of adjudicating their own disputes. The rights to due process and an expeditious, fair trial are often restricted or denied, largely because of shortages of resources and lack of trained personnel. The establishment of the National Judicial Training Center by the UN Development Program in September 2004 to provide standardized, postgraduate legal training for judges, prosecutors, and public defenders is a significant step toward alleviating the human capacity problems and lack of standardization currently plaguing the legal system.

Neither the police (PNTL) nor the military (FDLT) are perceived to have the trust of the population or the capacity to provide adequate security and order. Insuffi-

cient clarity in the division of labor between the two security forces, as well as PNTL resentment that FDLT has garnered the lion's share of foreign training resources, exacerbate relations. The fact that the FDLT falls under President Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao's control, while the PNTL reports to Alkatiri, has further deepened social mistrust of the political independence and neutrality of these bodies. According to the U.S. State Department report, the PNTL in particular is under-equipped and poorly trained. Concern about allegations that the PNTL has used excessive force has also been expressed by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, and PNTL training will be a particular mandate of the UNOTIL.

Like other postconflict societies, East Timor faces the vexing question of how to balance the desire for justice for past abuses with the need for reconciliation. In 2001, UNTAET created an independent Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation (CAVR) with the mandate to investigate human rights violations committed between April 1974 and October 1999, and to facilitate community reconciliation. The CAVR final report was issued in late 2005, and will be made publicly available in early 2006. Among the report's findings are evidence of U.S. complicity in the original Indonesian take over of East Timor, and reports of systematic human rights violations under the Indonesian occupation government, contributing to the deaths of 100,000 to 180,000 East Timorese. Other UN-mandated efforts to prosecute human rights violations, such as the Human Rights Court on East Timor (the so-called Ad Hoc court) and the Serious Crimes Unit, failed to prosecute senior Indonesian officials. The Serious Crimes Unit, which produced 76 convictions regarding 20 defendants, was not able to bring high Indonesian officials to justice; it ceased functioning, as mandated, in November 2004. The Ad Hoc court has been widely judged a failure.

In December 2004, therefore, UN officials began to advocate for the formation of a committee of international experts and an international war crimes tribunal. While no such tribunal had been convened at year's end, discussion of an international investigation has prompted Indonesia and East Timorese officials to enter into an agreement to form the Commission on Truth and Friendship (CTF). This CTF, which would not have prosecutorial powers, met for the first time in August 2005. International pressure for an international tribunal remains strong, as does criticism of the truth and reconciliation commission currently meeting.

Many Timorese claim that their country's brutal history has led to a "culture of violence" that includes widespread domestic violence. With the assistance of the UN Population Fund, East Timor has helped draft new domestic violence legislation to protect women and children, and has also created the Office for the Promotion of Equality (formerly the Gender Affairs Unit) within the prime minister's office. Women enjoy equal rights under East Timor's constitution. Nevertheless, women's participation in government is sharply lower than that of men. Civil society pressure for a quota for women's representation in government resulted in the election of 23 women (out of the original 88 members) to the Constituent Assembly.

Ecuador

Population: 13,000,000 **Political Rights:** 3
GNI/capita: \$1,830 **Civil Liberties:** 3
Life Expectancy: 74 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (95 percent),
 other (5 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Mestizo (65 percent), Amerindian
 (25 percent), white (7 percent), black (3 percent)
Capital: Quito



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
2,4PF	3,3PF	2,3F	2,3F	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF

Overview:

Vice President Alfredo Palacio replaced elected President Lucio Gutierrez on April 20, 2005. Following a month of street protests, nearly two-thirds of the National Congress's 100 members meeting in rump session voted to remove Gutierrez, who had sparked widespread opposition to his rule when he dissolved the Supreme Court. Upon taking office, Palacio—Ecuador's seventh president in 10 years—brushed off calls by Brazil and the United States, as well as by protestors at home, for a new election, announcing he would serve out Gutierrez's term. Palacio formed a heterogeneous coalition, ranging from the conservative Social Christian Party to a leftist Andean Indian party.

Established in 1830 after achieving independence from Spain in 1822, the Republic of Ecuador has endured many interrupted presidencies and military governments. The last military regime gave way to civilian rule when a new constitution was approved by referendum in 1978.

In January 2000, Vice President Gustavo Noboa took over as president after demonstrators had forced his predecessor to step down. The protests by indigenous groups, reportedly manipulated by putschist senior army commanders, were joined by those of significant numbers of mid-level military officers led by Colonel Lucio Gutierrez. Despite the protestors' acclamation of a three-person "junta" that included Gutierrez, Congress met in emergency session in Guayaquil to ratify Noboa, who did not belong to any political party, as the new constitutional president.

In the October 2002 legislative elections, the Social Christian Party secured the largest number of seats. Gutierrez won a surprise first-round victory in the concurrent presidential election, defeating two former presidents who stood as standard-bearers for Ecuador's traditional political parties. He emerged in the hard-fought campaign as an advocate for the elimination of the country's infamous corruption and the alleviation of its extraordinary rural poverty. A political novice at the head of a leftist coalition sustained by the country's increasingly empowered Indian groups, Gutierrez went on to best populist banana magnate Alvaro Noboa in the November 2002 runoff. Gutierrez was sworn into office in January 2003. His election marked the first time that Ecuador's chief executive shared the humble background and Indian

ethnicity of the country's majority; Indian communities are estimated to represent as many as 40 percent of Ecuador's 13 million people.

Despite the unprecedented incorporation of indigenous peoples in Gutierrez's government, by the end of 2003, the conflicting demands placed on Ecuador's still fragmented political system by his heterogeneous coalition and the need for economic reform resulted in the withdrawal of key political support by Indian and peasant communities. Supporters pointed out that Gutierrez's reforms—such as an overhaul of the corrupt customs service and the introduction of some tough fiscal policies, including adhering to a law requiring that part of any oil windfall be used to repay debt as well as increasing bus fares and energy prices—had resulted in successes in fighting inflation and vastly improved Ecuador's balance of payments.

The decision by the powerful indigenous Pachakutik movement—which combines a genuine concern for the rights of native peoples with characteristically left-wing positions on other issues, especially opposition to economic liberalism and "globalization"—to withdraw support for Gutierrez portended serious social tensions. In addition, the Gutierrez government became mired in internal disputes. Dissent over the fiscal reforms, as well as over government plans to encourage private investment in the oil industry and to usher in controversial labor reforms, boiled over into the streets, as one-time Gutierrez supporters expressed their frustration that the government had not done more to fight poverty. In November 2003, a scandal erupted over Palacio's alleged ties to a businessman detained on drug-trafficking charges who had contributed \$30,000 to the Gutierrez-Palacio campaign.

Gutierrez spent 2004 trying, albeit unsuccessfully, to establish his presidency's legitimacy following the rupture of his ruling coalition and his party's poor electoral showing in the October 2004 regional and municipal elections. Before the elections, Gutierrez, who had won the presidency on an anticorruption platform, faced serious questions about his commitment to transparency and honest government. Despite the election results, Gutierrez did not accede to pressure to resign and appeared to be trying to outmaneuver his many opponents.

During the 2004 campaign, Gutierrez met in Panama with self-exiled former president Abdala Bucaram, who was forced from office in 1997 on the grounds of "mental incapacity" amid rampant corruption scandals. The meeting with Bucaram, known as "El Loco" (The Madman), whose small political party was considered a key potential ally in the upcoming elections, triggered charges that the president was attempting to interfere with the judicial process; his spokesman denied the charge. The meeting, however, pointed to the virtual absence of support for Gutierrez in Congress, where he was forced to govern by means of temporary alliances. Gutierrez's political standing was also hurt when he dismissed the head of the national tax agency, who had won fame for temporarily closing business tax scofflaws and who had raised the country's tax collection. Another cause for concern was the increasing territorial reach and political influence of drug traffickers from neighboring Colombia.

In the October 2004 regional and municipal elections, Gutierrez's Patriotic Society Party failed to receive even the 5 percent of the vote required for official recognition as a political party, despite a 7 percent economic growth rate and a fiscal surplus. Subsequently, the country's largest opposition party and several others pressed for Gutierrez's removal. However, Gutierrez refused either to resign or to hold early elections and looked to change the alignment of political forces by judicial manipu-

lation. In April 2005, Gutierrez dismissed the Supreme Court on grounds of political bias. A newly appointed tribunal, chosen on the basis of loyalty to the president, granted immunity to several exiled politicians accused of corruption, a move that opened the door to the return of Bucaram—and to a possible parliamentary alliance between him and the president. However, when Bucaram returned to Ecuador vowing to lead a "revolution of the poor" in the manner of Venezuela's Hugo Chavez, middle-income sectors in Quito, still furious over the former president's misrule, joined the protest movement against Gutierrez. Despite the president's effort to placate the protestors by dismissing the new Supreme Court later in April, Gutierrez's focus on paying down the country's debt, his support for the U.S. military's war against drug trafficking in neighboring Colombia, and allegations of cronyism and corruption all served to spell the end of his presidency. His ouster, which came after the armed forces said that it could no longer support him, marked the third time in nine years that an elected president was thrown out of office by Congress and street protests.

Following Gutierrez's removal, Palacio replaced the armed forces' commanders and reinstated representatives from the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador at the head of several state bodies, the latter part of a balancing act that included a complex web of political and social forces essential to his political survival. The military also announced that one of Gutierrez's reforms—the armed forces' administration of the customs service—would end, as critics charged that efficiency had not improved and that corruption and theft remained rampant. Palacio also reversed Gutierrez's tough fiscal policies, diverting funds to social expenditures.

In August, Palacio declared a state of emergency in two oil-rich northeastern provinces where protests and a strike had brought the oil industry to a halt, giving troops permission to use "maximum force" to protect strategic installations. By late 2005, his early popularity quickly waning, Palacio appeared to seek to bolster his position by demanding that contracts with foreign oil companies investing in Ecuador be renegotiated in a way similar to that undertaken in Bolivia.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Ecuador can change their government democratically. However, the 2005 ouster of Gutierrez by an irregular session of the National Congress was evidence of the country's unstable political system. The 2004 regional and municipal elections were generally considered to be free and fair; however, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal admitted it was incapable of regulating campaign spending, and questions were raised about the registration of candidates as well as the geographic distribution of elected offices.

The 1978 constitution provides for a president elected for a four-year term. In 1998, the national Constituent Assembly mandated that by the year 2002, a presidential candidate would need to win 40 percent of the votes in first-round balloting and exceed by 10 percent those received by the nearest rival in order to avoid a runoff. The unicameral congress (Congreso Nacional) is composed of 100 members elected on a provincial basis every four years, with the next election to be held in October 2006.

Ecuador's largely personalistic, clientelist, and poorly institutionalized political parties and groupings include the Popular Democracy-Christian Democratic Union (DP-UDC), the Social Christian Party (PSC), the Ecuadorian Roldosista Party (PRE),

the Democratic Left (ID), the Pachakutik Movement (MUPP-NP), and the Alfarista Radical Front (FRA).

According to a government report published in 2000, corruption costs Ecuador more than \$2 billion a year. Ecuador was ranked 117 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Constitutional guarantees regarding freedom of expression are generally observed, and the media, which are mostly private, are outspoken. Journalists were the targets of violence during the year, and three were abducted by pro-Gutierrez militants. After Palacio replaced Gutierrez, systematic verbal attacks on the press by the executive and the legislative branches came to an end. On another positive note, under Palacio new regulations for implementing the Law on Transparency and Access to Public Information were passed, superseding those approved by Gutierrez, which had been strongly criticized by the press.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the government generally respects this right in practice. The government does not require religious groups to be licensed or registered unless they form nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that engage in commercial activity. The government allows missionary activity and religious demonstrations by all religions. Academic freedom is not restricted.

The right to organize political parties, civic groups, and unions is generally respected. Labor unions are well organized and have the right to strike, although the labor code limits public sector strikes. Ecuador has numerous human rights organizations, and despite occasional acts of intimidation, they report on arbitrary arrests and instances of police brutality and military misconduct.

The judiciary, generally undermined by the corruption afflicting the entire political system, is headed by a Supreme Court that, until 1997, was appointed by the legislature and thus subject to political influence. A new criminal justice procedural code that fundamentally changed Ecuador's legal system entered into force in July 2001. The new code includes the abandonment of the traditional modalities of the Continental (and Latin American) civil law system—investigation by judges, written testimony given *in camera*, judicially rendered verdicts—and their replacement by certain procedures traditionally associated with the Anglo-American common law system—an adversarial system, with investigation and charging assigned to a prosecutorial corps independent of the judiciary; oral testimony in open court; and verdicts rendered by lay juries. After former president Gutierrez dissolved the Supreme Court in April 2005, a legislatively mandated commission appointed judges to a new Supreme Court in November.

Torture and ill treatment of detainees and prisoners remain widespread. Police courts that are neither impartial nor independent continue to try members of security forces accused of human rights violations. In late 2005, the new defense minister, General Oswaldo Jarrin, announced that the armed forces would be restructured in a way that the military would remain outside the government and politics in general.

Ecuador is a transshipment point for cocaine passing from neighboring Colombia to the United States, as well as a money laundering haven. Widespread corruption in Ecuador's customs service led the government to privatize it in May 1999. The dollarization of the Ecuadoran economy appears to have had the unintended effect of making the country more attractive for money laundering and other financial criminal activity.

An upswing in the number of incursions from both Colombian guerrilla groups

and their paramilitary enemies into Ecuadoran territory exacerbated regional concerns about the extent to which the neighboring country's civil war would affect public safety and the survival of democratic institutions. Violent crime has undermined public faith in the police to maintain order.

Despite their growing political influence, indigenous people continue to suffer discrimination at many levels of society. In the Amazon region, indigenous groups have attempted to win a share of oil revenues and a voice in natural resources and development decisions. Although the government tends to consult indigenous communities on natural resources matters, their wishes are not always granted.

After the 2002 elections, women held 17 of 100 seats in Congress, the largest proportion in the country's history. Violence against women, particularly in indigenous areas where victims are reluctant to speak out against other members of their community, is common. Abortion is legal only if pregnancy threatens the woman's life or health, and in cases of rape if the victim is mentally retarded or insane. A 1987 law granted women the same rights as men with regard to divorce, property distribution, and inheritance, implementing provisions of the 1979 constitution that require equal rights for both sexes.

Egypt

Population: 74,600,000 **Political Rights:** 6

GNI/capita: \$1,390 **Civil Liberties:** 5

Life Expectancy: 70 **Status:** Not Free

Religious Groups: Muslim [mostly Sunni] (94 percent), other [including Coptic Christian] (6 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Eastern Hamitic stock [Egyptian, Bedouin, Berber] (99 percent), other (1 percent)

Capital: Cairo

Trend Arrow: Egypt received an upward trend arrow due to the holding of transparent and competitive presidential and legislative elections.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,5NF	6,5NF



Overview:

Egypt's witnessed its most transparent and competitive presidential and legislative elections in more than half a century and an increasingly unbridled public debate on the country's political future in 2005. Limited reforms promulgated by the government of President Hosni Mubarak did not allow for sweeping political change, however, while the arrest and prosecution of Egypt's leading secular liberal opposition leader was a stark reminder that the government has not forsworn arbitrary and ruthless suppression of dissent.

Egypt formally gained independence from Great Britain in 1922 and acquired full sovereignty following the end of World War II. After leading a coup that overthrew

the monarchy in 1952, Colonel Gamel Abdel Nasser established a repressive police state that he ruled until his death in 1970. The constitution adopted in 1971 under his successor, Anwar al-Sadat, established a strong presidential political system with nominal guarantees for most political and civil rights that were not fully respected in practice. Sadat signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1980 and established a strong alliance with the United States, which has provided the Egyptian government with roughly \$2 billion annually in economic and military aid for the last quarter century.

Following the assassination of Sadat in 1981, Mubarak became president and declared a state of emergency (which he has since renewed every three years, most recently in February 2003). Despite receiving enormous infusions of foreign aid, the government failed to implement comprehensive economic reforms. A substantial deterioration in living conditions for many Egyptians fueled an Islamist insurgency in the early 1990s. The authorities jailed thousands of suspected militants without charge and cracked down heavily on political dissent. Although the armed infrastructure of Islamist groups had been largely eradicated by 1998, the government continued to restrict political and civil liberties as it struggled to address Egypt's dire socioeconomic problems, particularly poverty and high unemployment among college graduates.

High levels of economic growth in the late 1990s temporarily alleviated these problems, but the country experienced an economic slowdown after the September 11, 2001, attacks in the United States, with tourism revenue, Suez Canal receipts, expatriate remittances, and direct foreign investment declining substantially. Popular disaffection with the government spread palpably, and demands for political change became more vocal. Antiwar protests during the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003 quickly evolved into antigovernment demonstrations, which sparked a harsh crackdown by security forces that left hundreds injured.

In the face of both rising internal discontent and growing Western pressure for political and economic liberalization, the government embarked on a high-profile effort to cast itself as a champion of reform in 2004.

Mubarak removed several "old guard" ministers who had built extensive patronage networks over the past two decades, appointed a new cabinet of younger technocrats, and introduced some economic reforms, such as a major overhaul of customs regulations. However, the awarding of all key economic portfolios in the new cabinet to associates of the aging president's 41-year-old son, Gamal, raised concerns that Mubarak was paving the way for a hereditary transition, while the political reform plan unveiled by the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) in September 2004 was largely cosmetic.

A broad consensus emerged in 2004 among leftist, liberal, and Islamist political forces as to the components of desired political reform: direct, multicandidate presidential elections; the abrogation of emergency law; full judicial supervision of elections; the lifting of restrictions on the formation of political parties; and an end to government interference in the operation of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). However, the opposition remained polarized between unlicensed and licensed political groups, with the latter mostly accepting the regime's decision to put off reform until after the 2005 presidential and parliamentary elections.

In December 2004, an informal movement encompassing a broad spectrum of secular and Islamist activists, calling itself Kifaya (Arabic for "enough"), held the

first-ever demonstration explicitly calling for Mubarak to step down. Despite a heavy-handed response by security forces, Kifaya persisted with the demonstrations in 2005, leading other opposition groups to do likewise. In a country where the president and his family had long been immune from direct public criticism, it suddenly became fashionable to publicly campaign for his ouster.

Reluctant to crack down decisively on the demonstrations for fear of alienating the West, the government was quick to suppress opposition leaders who crossed the line. In January 2005, the authorities arrested the country's most prominent secular liberal politician, Ghad (Tomorrow) Party chairman Ayman Nour, on charges of forging signatures in his party's petition for a license. (It was widely rumored that he had backtracked on a promise not to oppose Mubarak's reelection in exchange for receiving the license in 2004.)

In February, Mubarak publicly called for an amendment to the constitution allowing for Egypt's first multicandidate presidential election. The amendment, approved by parliament on May 10, restricted eligibility to candidates nominated by licensed parties or a substantial bloc of elected officials. Consequently, all major opposition groups denounced the amendment and called for a boycott of the May 25 referendum approving it.

The presidential election campaign was characterized by open and contentious public debate, as well as by an unprecedented assertion of judicial independence. The Judges Club (a private syndicate) successfully pressured the authorities to permit more direct (if inadequate) judicial supervision of the voting, while the government's refusal to permit independent local monitors was overturned in court just hours before the election. Nevertheless, the results were predictably lopsided—Mubarak won 88 percent of the vote, while Nour finished a distant second with 7 percent. Two (out of three) rounds of legislative elections, held in November, witnessed a strong showing by the Muslim Brotherhood, which increased its representation in parliament fivefold, but otherwise confirmed the NDP's political dominance. The third round was scheduled for December 1, 2005.

Turnout in both elections (and in the constitutional referendum) was under 25 percent. Violent attacks on opposition voters by security forces and progovernment thugs increased in the second round of parliamentary elections, and the authorities arrested more than 500 Muslim Brotherhood activists prior to the third round.

Terrorist violence by Islamist extremists, which returned to Egypt in 2004 after a seven-year abeyance, continued in 2005. In April, two attacks on tourists in Cairo left three people dead and at least two dozen wounded. In July, three terrorist bombings in the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheikh killed at least 75 people.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Egyptians cannot change their government democratically. The process of electing the president, who appoints the prime minister, cabinet, and all 26 provincial governors, is not fully competitive. Article 76 of the constitution, as amended in May 2005, requires that prospective presidential candidates must either be on the executive board of a political party controlling at least 5 percent of the seats in both houses of parliament, or secure the support of 250 members of parliament and municipal councils (a grandfather clause exempted candidates in the 2005 elections).

The 454-seat People's Assembly (Majlis al-Sha'b), or lower house of parliament,

exercises limited influence on government policy, as the executive initiates almost all legislation. The partially elected upper house, the Consultative, or Shura, Council (Majlis al-Shura), functions only in an advisory capacity. As a result of government restrictions on the licensing of political parties, state control over television and radio stations, and systemic irregularities in the electoral process, legislative elections do not meet international standards. NDP candidates won 87 of the 88 seats in the Majlis al-Shura (upper house of parliament) contested in the June 2004 elections.

Owing mainly to closer judicial supervision of the polls, presidential and parliamentary elections in 2005 witnessed substantially fewer allegations of massive fraud and violent intimidation than in preceding election cycles, but there were widespread irregularities in both, and international monitors were prohibited.

Political opposition remains weak and ineffective. A ban on religious parties prevents Islamist groups from organizing politically, although members of the Muslim Brotherhood compete in elections as independents. Political parties cannot be established without the approval of the Political Parties Committee (PPC), an NDP-controlled body affiliated with the Shura Council, which can reject applicants for failing to offer a "unique and distinct program that enriches political life." The Political Parties Law was slightly amended in 2005 to broaden the composition of the PPC. In April 2005, the PPC rejected an application by the Socialist Democratic Freedom Party.

Corruption in Egypt is a serious problem: investors frequently complain that red tape and bureaucratic inertia make bribery essential to doing business. Egypt was ranked 70 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is restricted by vaguely worded statutes criminalizing direct criticism of the president, the military, and foreign heads of state, as well as speech that is un-Islamic, libelous, harmful to the country's reputation, or disruptive to sectarian coexistence. In practice, imprisonment of journalists and closure of publications on these grounds have grown increasingly rare. In April 2005, three journalists were sentenced to one year's imprisonment for libeling a senior government official, but they remained free during the year; a second major libel case ended with acquittals. Several journalists critical of the government have been brutally assaulted (and in one case murdered) by unidentified assailants in previous years. In November 2005, a journalist for Al-Jazeera satellite TV was beaten just prior to a scheduled interview with an opposition politician.

The government encourages legal political parties to publish newspapers, but restricts the licensing of nonpartisan newspapers and exercises influence over all privately owned publications through its monopoly on printing and distribution. The three leading daily newspapers are state controlled, and their editors are appointed by the president. Several independent newspapers, such as the daily *Al-Masri al-Yom* (Egypt Today) and the weekly *Nahdet Misr* (Egyptian Renaissance), regularly published criticism of the government in 2005. Foreign publications and Egyptian publications registered abroad (usually in Cyprus) are subject to direct government censorship, but the authorities did not prevent specific issues of such publications from hitting the newsstands in 2005 (in contrast to previous years), and there was only one major case of distributors being forced to remove specific content from a publication: in February, an article was removed from *Al-Masri al-Yom*.

The government owns and operates all terrestrial broadcast television stations.

Although several private satellite television stations have been established, their owners have ties to the government and their programming is subject to state influence. In May 2005, Egyptian police briefly detained an Al-Jazeera film crew to prevent it from covering a meeting of the Judges Club. Films, plays, and books are subject to censorship, especially on grounds of containing information "not in accordance with the principles of Islam" or harmful to the country's reputation. In October 2005, the book *Wahhabi Islam: From Revival to Global Jihad* was banned.

The government does not significantly restrict or monitor internet use, but publication of material on the internet is subject to the same statutes as the regular press. In October 2005, a law student was briefly detained after attacking the government in his blog. The Muslim Brotherhood claimed that the government continued to pressure the country's main internet service providers to block access to its website.

Islam is the state religion. The government directly appoints the preachers and staff of registered mosques and closely monitors the content of sermons in thousands of small, unauthorized mosques (known as *zawaya*). Most Egyptians are Sunni Muslims, but Coptic Christians comprise a substantial minority and there are small numbers of Jews, Shiite Muslims, and Baha'is. Although non-Muslims are generally able to worship freely, religious expression considered deviant or insulting to Islam is subject to prosecution. In March 2005, Ibrahim Ahmad Abu Shusha was sentenced to three years' imprisonment for claiming to be divine, and 11 of his followers were sentenced to one-year prison terms. Anti-Christian employment discrimination is evident in the public sector, especially the security services and military. The government frequently denies or delays authorization of applications to build and repair churches. Muslim extremists have carried out several killings of Coptic villagers and frequent attacks on Coptic homes, businesses, and churches in recent years. Members of the Baha'i faith continue to be denied a range of civil documents—including identity cards, birth certificates, and marriage licenses—by the government.

Academic freedom is limited in Egypt. Senior university administrators are appointed by the government, and the security services reportedly influence academic appointments and curriculum on sensitive topics. University professors and students have been prosecuted for political and human rights advocacy outside of the classroom.

Freedom of assembly and association is heavily restricted. Organizers of public demonstrations, rallies, and protests must receive advance approval from the Ministry of the Interior, which is rarely granted. An unprecedented number of unauthorized proreform demonstrations took place during 2005, mostly without direct government interference. Police or plainclothes security agents forcibly dispersed major demonstrations on March 28, May 4 and 25, and July 30, injuring dozens of people and detaining at least 600 people. The Law of Associations prohibits the establishment of associations "threatening national unity [or] violating public morals," prohibits NGOs from receiving foreign grants without the approval of the Ministry of Social Affairs, requires members of NGO governing boards to be approved by the ministry, and allows the ministry to dissolve NGOs without a judicial order. In February, alleged plainclothes security agents disrupted a meeting organized by the World Center for Human Rights, overturning tables and threatening participants. The 2003 Unified Labor Law limits the right to strike to "non-strategic" industries and requires workers to first obtain approval for a strike from the government-con-

trolled Egyptian Trade Union Federation—the country's only legal labor federation. No major strikes occurred in 2005. Egyptian law establishes a minimum wage and requires companies to provide social security insurance, but off-the-record employment is widespread, especially in the agricultural sector.

The regular judiciary is widely considered the most independent and impartial in the Arab world. The Supreme Judicial Council, a supervisory body of senior judges, nominates and assigns most judges. However, the Ministry of Justice controls promotions and compensation packages, giving it undue influence. Security cases are usually placed under the jurisdiction of exceptional courts that are controlled by the executive branch and deny defendants many constitutional protections. The Emergency State Security Courts, empowered to try defendants charged with violating decrees promulgated under the Emergency Law, issue verdicts that cannot be appealed and are subject to ratification by the president. Although judges in these courts are usually selected from the civilian judiciary, they are appointed directly by the president. Egyptian officials have upheld an August 2004 pledge to try only security-related offenses in emergency courts. Civilians charged with security-related offenses can also be referred by the president to military courts. Since military judges are appointed by the executive branch to short, renewable, two-year terms, these tribunals lack independence. Verdicts by military courts are often handed down on the basis of little more than the testimony of security officers and informers, and are subject to review only by a body of military judges and the president.

The Emergency Law restricts many basic rights. It empowers the government to wiretap telephones, intercept mail, search persons and places without warrants, and indefinitely detain without charge suspects deemed a threat to national security. Local and international human rights organizations estimate that 10,000-15,000 people are currently detained without charge on suspicion of security or political offenses (in addition to several thousand who have been convicted of such offenses). In 2002, the UN Committee against Torture concluded that there is "widespread evidence of torture and ill-treatment" of suspects by the State Security Intelligence agency. At least seven suspicious deaths of detainees in government custody were reported by human rights groups in 2005. The trial of Ayman Nour was suspended for several months after a key witness revealed that he had been coerced into testifying against the dissident leader. Conditions in Egyptian prisons are very poor; prisoners are subject to overcrowding, a lack of sanitation, hygiene, and medical care, and abuse and torture.

The authorities arbitrarily block dissidents from leaving the country to attend high-profile events abroad. In May 2005, playwright Ali Salaam was denied permission to travel to Israel.

Although the constitution provides for equality of the sexes, some aspects of the law and many traditional practices discriminate against women. Unmarried women under the age of 21 are not permitted to obtain passports without permission from their fathers. A Muslim female heir receives half the amount of a male heir's inheritance (Christians are not subject to provisions of Islamic law governing inheritance matters). Domestic violence is common, and marital rape is not illegal. Job discrimination is evident even in the civil service. The law provides for equal access to education, but the adult literacy rate of women lags well behind that of men (34 and 63 percent, respectively). Female genital mutilation is practiced, despite government efforts to eradicate it.

El Salvador

Population: 6,900,000 **Political Rights:** 2

GNI/capita: \$2,340 **Civil Liberties:** 3

Life Expectancy: 70 **Status:** Free

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (83 percent),
other (17 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Mestizo (90 percent), white (9 percent),
Amerindian (1 percent)

Capital: San Salvador



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
3,3PF	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F

Overview:

Crime and gang violence continued to plague the country in 2005, leading to the deaths of thousands of people. El Salvador also suffered from Hurricanes Adrian and Stan and the eruption of the Ilamatepec volcano, resulting in many deaths and the displacement of thousands. In November, a U.S. court found former deputy defense minister Nicolas Carranza complicit in the murder and torture of civilians during El Salvador's civil war.

The Republic of El Salvador was established in 1859, and more than a century of civil strife and military rule followed. The country endured a civil war from 1979 to 1992 that left more than 75,000 dead and 500,000 displaced. During the civil war—which pitted the right-wing military government against Marxist guerrillas led by the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN)—paramilitary death squads terrorized the capital of San Salvador and other urban centers. The National Republican Alliance (ARENA) has held presidential power since 1989. The current president, Elias Antonio "Tony" Saca Gonzalez, is the third president elected since the end of the civil war.

In March 2003 parliamentary elections, the FMLN—which transformed from rebel group to opposition political party following the civil war—captured 31 seats, the largest number in the 84-seat Legislative Assembly. ARENA lost 2 seats from the 2000 elections, down to 27. The Partido de Conciliacion Nacional (PCN) gained 2 seats, up to 16, and moved quickly to establish an alliance with the FMLN to pass legislation.

The months before the March 2004 presidential election were tense with threats of violence and intervention from both within the country and abroad. However, the polls were relatively peaceful and free of major irregularities. ARENA candidate Saca captured 58 percent of the vote, while Shafik Handal, of the FMLN, received 36 percent. In June, Saca was sworn into office, along with the first Salvadoran woman to be elected vice president, Ana Vilma de Escobar.

The country's homicide rate increased dramatically to 43.3 homicides per 100,000 people in 2005, up 83 percent from 2004; the rate made El Salvador one of the most dangerous countries in the world, behind only Colombia and Guatemala in the

Western Hemisphere. President Saca's administration blamed street gangs (*maras*) for much of the violence, claiming that as much as 60 percent of the country's murders were due to gang violence. However, the national police disputed that view and said most murders were due to domestic violence, with gang murders accounting for no more than 30 percent of the national homicide total. According to the British Broadcasting Corporation, gang violence resulted in the deaths of over 3,000 Salvadorians in 2005.

Following the lead of other Central American leaders, Saca extended the use of "iron fist" (*mano duro*) policies against the country's powerful gangs. These policies allowed the arrest and detention of suspected gang members for wearing gang colors or displaying gang tattoos. Saca's administration estimated at least 100,000 gang members and their associates were behind the country's crime wave. The country's most powerful gang, Mara Salvatrucha (also known as MS-13) has international reach, with members in other Central American countries and in the United States.

Saca's antigang policies often employed the police and the military in house-to-house sweeps of various neighborhoods, a tactic that recalled the violent civil war era. More than 9,000 gang members were collected in these sweeps, and more than 4,000 remained in custody at the end of the year. However, judges often refused to approve new warrants for such wide searches, saying they were overly broad and often unfairly branded people as members of the violent gangs. Human rights groups accused the police of extrajudicial killings in their fight against the gangs; Saca was forced to order an official investigation into possible police misconduct and the rise of death squads run by off-duty Salvadoran police. Police were also accused of indiscriminately murdering homeless street children.

The ghosts of the civil war death squads continued to haunt the country, along with past abuses by the military. In March 2005, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights of the Organization of American States ordered a new investigation into the 1981 massacre of more than 500 people by government troops in the village of El Mozote. Saca denounced the investigation, saying it was a dangerous precedent and could disrupt the country's peace. In 1993, President Alfredo Cristiani declared a general amnesty for crimes committed during the war; Salvadoran law bars trials for those accused of human rights violations during the civil war.

However, in November 2005, a U.S. federal court in Memphis, Tennessee, found El Salvador's former deputy defense minister, General Nicolas Carranza, responsible for the torture and murder of civilians during the civil war, saying that Carranza had ordered his troops to commit atrocities. The court ordered Carranza to pay \$1.5 million to each of the four families that had brought charges against him in civil court. Carranza, a naturalized U.S. citizen, had relocated to Memphis in 1985, during the war. Against this backdrop, Shafik Handal, the leader of the FMLN, asked the United Nations for human rights monitoring after he received numerous death threats.

Handal's controversial party leadership divided the country's left wing during 2005. A new party, the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR), split from the FMLN, taking with it four seats in the country's National Assembly. With that defection, the FMLN held the same number of legislative seats, 27, as ARENA.

The country was beset by natural disasters and continued economic problems. In May 2005, Hurricane Adrian struck El Salvador, killing two people and displacing

some 20,000. Torrential rains and mudslides following Hurricane Stan flooded at least 300 communities, killed over 70 people, and displaced more than 50,000. Damage from the storms was estimated in the hundreds of millions of dollars. Also in October, the Iamatepec volcano erupted, killing at least two people and forcing thousands to be evacuated from affected areas.

The government estimated that at least 36 percent of the population lives in poverty. Together, underemployed workers and the unemployed make up 70 percent of the potential workforce. Although ARENA politicians believed the December 2004 ratification of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) would eventually rescue the country from its economic woes, the country's leftist political factions opposed the agreement. CAFTA is a free trade agreement between the United States, the Dominican Republic, and five Central American countries.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of El Salvador can change their government democratically. The 2003 legislative and 2004 presidential elections were free and fair. The 1983 constitution and subsequent reforms provide for a president elected for a five-year term and the 84-member, unicameral National Assembly, elected for three years.

Following the 2005 defection of the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR) from within the FMLN, both the FMLN and ARENA hold 27 seats in the National Assembly. The National Conciliation Party (PCN), which is usually allied with ARENA, holds 16 seats in the Assembly. The Christian Democratic Party (PDC) and its ally, the United Democratic Center (CDU), each hold 5 seats. The FDR controls 4 seats.

Corruption is regarded as a serious problem throughout government, particularly in the country's judicial system. El Salvador was ranked 51 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The media are privately owned, but ownership is confined to a small group of powerful businessmen. There are five newspapers with a combined daily circulation of about 250,000. One government and five private television networks reach most of the country. However, TeleCorporacion Salvadoreno (TCS), which is openly aligned with ARENA, owns three of those networks and dominates the country's ratings. There is unrestricted access to the internet, and the government and private organizations have worked to extend internet access to the poor.

Salvadoran journalists practice self-censorship and are subject to more overt censorship imposed by media owners with strong political and economic ties to the Salvadoran elite. Those who speak out, such as controversial anchorman Mauricio Funes, often end up without a place to ply their trade. In February 2005, the Mexican owners of Canal 12, where Funes worked, stopped transmission of his news and interview program during a live broadcast when he complained about editorial changes at the network. Journalists are also hemmed in by criminal defamation laws and the right of judges to close legal proceedings to the media for national security reasons. In 2003, the National Assembly changed the code of criminal procedure to exempt journalists from having to reveal their sources if ordered to testify in a court case. In 2005, there was an increase in the number of journalists who suffered physical attacks due to their work. More than 10 journalists were assaulted by either protesters or the National Civil Police while covering street demonstrations.

The government abstains from any intervention in religious freedom. Academic freedom is respected.

Freedom of assembly and association is respected. El Salvador features a wide array of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that generally operate without government restrictions. However, some international NGOs reported difficulties in registering with the government. Unions have a strong and organized presence. Public employees are not allowed to have unions; they are represented by professional and employee organizations that engage in collective bargaining.

The judicial system continues to be ineffectual and corrupt and to promote impunity, especially for those politically, economically, or institutionally well connected. The Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman, who is elected by the National Assembly for a three-year term, was created by the 1992 peace accords. However, the office itself has been accused of corruption and is hampered by staffing problems.

Human rights violations have declined steadily since the end of the civil war in 1992. Nevertheless, political expression and civil liberties are still limited by sporadic political violence, repressive police measures, and vigilante groups committing extrajudicial killings against suspected criminals and gang members. The recent crime wave has also been fed by the deportation of hundreds of Salvadorans with criminal records from the United States.

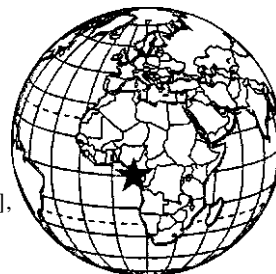
Complaints of police brutality and corruption are widespread. Prisons are overcrowded, and up to three-quarters of the prisoners are waiting to be charged and tried. Thousands of prisoners in the system launched a major hunger strike in the fall of 2005 to protest poor conditions. Inmates complained that they are tortured and denied food, medical care, and family visits.

There are three different indigenous groups in El Salvador: Nahua-Pipiles, Lencas, and Cacaoperas. However, much of the indigenous population has been assimilated into Spanish culture. There are no national laws regarding indigenous rights. According to the U.S. State Department's 2005 human rights report, access to land and credit were problems for indigenous peoples.

Violence against women and children is widespread and common. While women are granted equal rights under family and property law, they were occasionally discriminated against in practice; women also suffer discrimination in employment. Human trafficking for purposes of prostitution is a serious problem. Child labor is also a major problem in the country.

Equatorial Guinea

Population: 500,000 **Political Rights:** 7
GNI/capita: \$700 **Civil Liberties:** 6
Life Expectancy: 45 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (predominant)
Ethnic Groups: Bioko [primarily Bubi, some Fernandinos],
 Rio Muni [primarily Fang], other
Capital: Malabo



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	6,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF

Overview:

President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo granted amnesty in June 2005 to six Armenian pilots included in the group of 22 people convicted for their alleged involvement in a 2004 coup plot. In September 2005, a military court handed down sentences of up to 30 years to a separate group of Equatorial Guineans for plotting against the government in October 2004. International groups criticized the conduct of these trials, which allegedly included torture of the defendants. The rapid rise in oil revenues has primarily enriched members of Obiang's family, who form the country's ruling elite. During 2005, the government harassed the country's sole opposition leader, and confiscated copies of the opposition's newspaper.

Equatorial Guinea achieved independence from Spain in 1968. It has since been one of the world's most tightly closed and repressive societies. President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo seized power in 1979 by deposing and murdering his uncle, Francisco Macias Nguema. Demands from donor countries for democratic reforms forced Obiang to legalize a multiparty system in 1992, though he and his clique continued to control political power. The 1996 presidential election, won by Obiang, was marred by official intimidation, a near total boycott by the political opposition, and very low voter turnout. The ruling Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea (PDGE) won 75 of 80 seats in similarly flawed parliamentary elections in 1999. Many opposition candidates were arrested or confined to their villages prior to the polls.

Four opposition challengers withdrew from the December 2002 presidential election, citing irregularities. Obiang won a third seven-year term with 99.5 percent of the vote. Following the election, the government announced the formation of a "government of national unity" that brought members of eight small parties into the cabinet. Despite an extensive reshuffle in 2004, key cabinet positions continue to be held by presidential relatives and loyalists.

The PDGE won 68 of 100 seats in the April 2004 parliamentary elections, with allied parties taking 30. The opposition Convergence Party for Social Democracy (CPDS), which complained of numerous irregularities and voter intimidation, won the remaining two seats.

In June 2005, Obiang granted amnesty to six Armenian pilots included in the group of 22 people convicted in November 2004 for their alleged involvement in a

coup plot discovered in March 2004. Amnesty International had expressed concern over the likely use of torture in extracting confessions from the defendants, particularly in the case of a German suspect who died in custody. Many of the alleged plotters, some of whom were tried in Zimbabwe, have ties to the defunct mercenary firm Executive Outcomes, founded by apartheid-era South African military officers.

The Equatorial Guinean government accused Severo Moto, an opposition figure living in exile in Spain; South African financier and oil broker Eli Calil; and Sir Mark Thatcher, son of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, of being behind the scheme to oust Obiang. As part of a plea bargain, Thatcher testified in a South African court that he had unwittingly helped to bankroll the coup attempt. Moto and eight members of his "government in exile" were tried in absentia and convicted of treason. A separate group of Equatorial Guineans accused of trying to topple Obiang in October 2004 received sentences of up to 30 years in prison in September 2005. According to Amnesty International, all but two of the defendants who appeared in court said they had been tortured. Of the six defendants tried in absentia, three were allegedly held incommunicado in Equatorial Guinea after being abducted from Nigeria and Benin.

Equatorial Guinea is Africa's third-largest oil producer, and per capita gross domestic product is among the highest on the continent. Despite the country's economic windfall from oil, however, there have been few improvements in the country's living standard. The majority of the country's impoverished citizens depend on subsistence agriculture, while ruling elites reap growing financial gain from oil profits. Equatorial Guinea ranked 121 out of 177 countries on the 2005 UN Development Program's Human Development Index.

World Bank programs were cut off in 1993 because of corruption and mismanagement. The government has since attempted to negotiate a "shadow" fiscal management program with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Equatorial Guinea declared its intent to implement the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative in September 2004.

Equatorial Guinea concluded a security agreement with Sao Tome and Principe in August 2005 aimed at guaranteeing the safety of offshore oil rigs, as well as controlling clandestine immigration and drug trafficking and guaranteeing the security of maritime and air traffic.

The UN has since 2004 served as mediator in a dispute between Equatorial Guinea and Gabon over exploration rights in the potentially oil-rich Corisco Bay Islands. The Equatorial Guinean government briefly accused Gabon of providing assistance to the October 2004 coup plotters.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Equatorial Guinea cannot change their government democratically, and the country has never held a credible election. President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, whose current seven-year term will end in 2009, holds broad powers and limits public participation in the policy-making process. The 100 members of the unicameral House of People's Representatives are elected to five-year terms but wield little power. Despite Obiang's iron grip over the country, however, members of his Mongomo clan are increasingly divided and compete with each other for political influence and financial gain.

After Obiang's overwhelming but highly irregular electoral victory in 2002, most opposition parties joined a coalition with the ruling party, although several remain officially banned or operate in exile. In June 2005, the government briefly detained and interrogated CPDS secretary-general Placido Miko Abogo on his return from an international conference in Sao Tome and Principe on oil and transparency, allegedly on suspicion of his having had contact with mercenaries.

A U.S. Senate investigation found in July 2004 that at least \$35 million has been siphoned from accounts held in the Washington, D.C.-based Riggs Bank by Obiang, his family, and senior officials of his regime. The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission and the U.S. Justice Department are investigating payments from U.S. oil companies for possible violations of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. The Riggs account manager for Equatorial Guinea was arrested with his wife in May 2005 after the FBI alleged they tried to move nearly \$1 million in fraud proceeds out of the country. Equatorial Guinea ranked 152 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Press freedom is constitutionally guaranteed, but the government restricts this right in practice. The 1992 press law authorizes government censorship of all publications, and nearly all print and broadcast media are state run and tightly controlled. A few private newspapers and underground pamphlets are published irregularly. Criticism of the country's leadership is not tolerated, and self-censorship is widespread. Publications that irk the government are banned from the newsstands without explanation. In June 2005, authorities seized 200 copies of the country's sole opposition newspaper, *La Verdad*. Equatorial Guinea has one internet provider affiliated with the government telephone monopoly, and there were unconfirmed reports that the government monitored citizens using the internet.

The constitution guarantees religious freedom, and government respect for freedom of individual religious practice has generally improved. The government does not restrict academic freedom, though faculty practice self-censorship.

Freedom of association and assembly is restricted. Authorization must be obtained for any gathering of 10 or more people for purposes deemed political. There are no effective domestic human rights organizations, and the few international nongovernmental organizations operating in Equatorial Guinea are prohibited from promoting or defending human rights. Dozens of opposition activists remain in prison.

Though the constitution provides for the right to organize unions, only the Small Farmers Syndicate has legal recognition. The government has refused to register the Equatorial Guinea Trade Union, whose members carry out activities in secret. The multinational oil industry has attempted unsuccessfully to reduce government control over the industry's hiring process.

The judiciary is not independent, and laws on search and seizure—as well as detention—are routinely ignored. Amnesty International and the International Bar Association allege that the trials for two separate groups of alleged coup plotters were marked by flagrant human rights abuses, including torture and forced confessions. Unlawful arrests are common, and government security forces routinely act with impunity, using torture and excessive force. Civil cases rarely go to trial. A military tribunal handles cases tied to national security. Prison conditions, especially in the notorious Black Beach prison, are often life-threatening.

All citizens are required to obtain permission to travel abroad from the local police commissioner, and some members of opposition parties have been denied this permission. Those who do travel abroad are sometimes subjected to interrogation upon their return.

Obiang's Mongomo clan of the majority Fang ethnic group monopolizes political and economic power to the exclusion of other groups. Differences between the Fang and the Bubi are a major source of political tension and often erupt into violence. Fang vigilante groups abuse Bubi citizens with impunity.

Constitutional and legal protections of equality for women are largely ignored, and violence against women is widespread. Traditional practices discriminate against women, including the practice of primogeniture and polygamy. Few women have educational opportunities or are able to participate in the formal economy or government. Abortion is permitted to preserve the physical health of the mother, but only with spousal or parental authorization.

Eritrea

Population: 4,700,000 **Political Rights:** 7
GNI/capita: \$190 **Civil Liberties:** 6
Life Expectancy: 58 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Muslim, Coptic Christian, Roman Catholic, Protestant
Ethnic Groups: Tigrinya (50 percent), Tigre and Kunama (40 percent), Afar (4 percent), Saho (3 percent), other (3 percent)
Capital: Asmara



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
6,4PF	6,4PF	6,4PF	7,5NF	7,5NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF

Overview:

In 2005, the government of President Isaias Afwerki continued its repressive policies, forbidding pluralism in the political and civic arenas. In fact, stricter regulations regarding the functioning of local and international development nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) were enacted, and the government asked the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to end its operations in the country. Tensions remained high with Ethiopia, as the government objected to the inconclusive results of an internationally mediated solution to its long-standing border dispute.

In 1950, after years of Italian occupation, Eritrea was incorporated into Ethiopia. Eritrea's independence struggle began in 1962 as a nationalist and Marxist guerrilla war against the Ethiopian government of Emperor Haile Selassie. The seizure of power by a Marxist junta in Ethiopia in 1974 removed the ideological basis of the conflict, and by the time Eritrea finally defeated Ethiopia's northern armies in 1991, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) had discarded Marxism. Internationally recognized

independence was achieved in May 1993 after a referendum supervised by the United Nations produced a landslide vote for statehood.

War with Ethiopia broke out in 1998. In May 2000, an Ethiopian military offensive succeeded in making significant territorial gains. Eritrea signed a truce with Ethiopia in June 2000, and a peace treaty was signed in December 2000. The agreement provided for a UN-led buffer force to be installed along the Eritrean side of the contested border and stipulated that further negotiations should determine the final boundary line. The war had dominated the country's political and economic agenda, reflecting deeper issues of nationalism and political mobilization by a government that has long used the threat of real or perceived enemies to generate popular support and unity.

In May 2001, a dissident group of 15 senior ruling-party members (the "Group of 15") publicly criticized Isaias and called for "the rule of law and for justice, through peaceful and legal ways and means." Eleven members of this group were arrested in September 2001, allegedly for treason (three members who were out of the country at the time escaped arrest, and one withdrew his support for the group). The small independent media sector was also shut down, and 18 journalists were imprisoned. In 2005, the Eritrean government further clamped down on the NGO sector by withdrawing tax exemptions and increasing requirements for registration. Political dissidents and journalists imprisoned in 2001 remained in jail despite widespread international calls for their release. The United Nations warned that the humanitarian situation in Eritrea was deteriorating, mainly because of recurrent drought and the protracted stalemate in the peace process with Ethiopia.

During the year, tensions remained high with Ethiopia. The Eritrean government claimed that Ethiopians were not respecting the 2000 border agreement, and in 2005, the authorities banned U.N. helicopter flights in its airspace, restricted U.N. ground patrols, and expelled some of the peacekeepers. The conflict has taken a toll on the economy. The UN Human Development Index ranks Eritrea 156 out of 177 countries, with an average \$130 in per capita annual income.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Eritreans cannot change their government democratically. Created in February 1994 as a successor to the EPLF, the Popular Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) maintains complete dominance over the country's political life. Instead of moving toward creating a framework for a democratic political system, since the end of the war with Ethiopia, the PFDJ has taken significant steps backwards. The 2001 crackdown against those calling for greater political pluralism, and subsequent repressive steps, have chilled the already tightly controlled political atmosphere.

In 1994, a 50-member Constitutional Commission was established. In 1997, a new constitution was adopted, authorizing "conditional" political pluralism with provisions for a multiparty system. The constitution provides for the election of the president from among the members of the 150-member National Assembly by a vote of the majority of its members. In 2000, the National Assembly determined that the first elections would be held in December 2001 and appointed a committee that issued draft regulations governing political parties. These draft regulations have never been enacted, and independent political parties authorized by the constitution do not exist. National elections have been postponed indefinitely. In 2004, regional assembly

elections were conducted, but they were carefully orchestrated by the PFDJ and offered no real choice.

Eritrea has long maintained a reputation for a relatively low level of corruption. In recent years, however, it appears to have increased somewhat. Eritrea was ranked 107 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Government control over all broadcasting and pressures against the independent print media have seriously constrained public debate. In its September 2001 crackdown, the government banned all privately owned newspapers while claiming that a parliamentary committee would examine conditions under which they would be permitted to re-open. Journalists arrested in 2001 remain imprisoned, and other journalists have subsequently been arrested. The Committee to Protect Journalists determined in 2005 that Eritrea had the worst record in Africa in terms of imprisoning journalists. The independent media in Eritrea has in effect ceased to exist. Internet use remains limited, with an estimated 9,500 users in 2003 out of a population of more than four million.

The government places significant limitations on the exercise of religion. It recognizes only four officially sanctioned religions—Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Roman Catholicism, and the Evangelical Church of Eritrea. In 2005, the Eritrean government allegedly dismissed the leader of the Orthodox Church, Patriarch Abune Antonios, from his position, although a government spokesman denied this action was taken. Reports suggested that he had objected to government interference in the church and the arrest of three priests. Religious persecution of minority Christian faiths has escalated in recent years, particularly against Jehovah's Witnesses (who were stripped of their basic civil rights in 1994) and evangelical and Pentecostal churches. Members of other minority churches have been jailed and tortured or ill-treated to make them abandon their faith. Muslims have been targeted too, some held in secret incommunicado detention for years on suspicion of links with an Islamist armed opposition group operating from Sudan.

Academic freedom is constrained. High school students are required to undertake a highly unpopular policy of obligatory national service, often at a station far from their homes such as at the military training camp in Sawa (in the far western part of the country, near the Ethiopian border). This conscription lasts for extended and open-ended periods of time. No conscientious objector clause exists. Critics have alleged that such activities constitute forced labor.

The government continues to maintain a hostile attitude towards civil society. Independent NGOs are not allowed, and the legitimate role of human rights defenders is not recognized. International human rights NGOs are barred from the country. In June 2005, Eritrea enacted legislation to regulate the operations of all NGOs, including requiring them to pay taxes on imported materials. In addition, NGOs are required to submit project reports every three months and will have to renew their licenses annually. Local NGOs will be required to have \$1,000,000 in operating capital; international groups will have to have twice as much. Of Eritrea's current 58 registered NGOs, 20 are international.

Reflecting the government's hostile attitude toward international aid organizations, in August 2005 the U.S. ambassador confirmed that the Eritrean government had asked the USAID to cease its operations. Relations between the aid community

and the Eritrean government had deteriorated following the government's impounding of more than 100 vehicles and a new proclamation requiring aid agencies to pay taxes on the import of relief items, including food.

The civil service, the military, the police, and other essential services have some restrictions on their freedom to form unions. In addition, groups of 20 or more persons seeking to form a union require special approval from the Ministry of Labor. Conscription of men aged 18 to 45 into the military has also created a scarcity of skilled labor.

A judiciary was formed by decree in 1993. It has never adopted positions significantly at variance with government perspectives. A low level of training and resources limits the courts' efficiency. Constitutional guarantees are often ignored in cases relating to state security. The provision of speedy trials is limited by a lack of trained personnel, inadequate funding, and poor infrastructure.

According to a 2004 report by Amnesty International, torture, arbitrary detentions, and political arrests are widespread. Religious persecution and ill-treatment of those trying to avoid military service are increasing, and torture is systematically practiced by the army. Political prisoners and members of minority churches are said to be particularly singled out. Prison conditions are poor, and prison monitors such as the International Committee of the Red Cross have been denied access to detainees.

There have been reports of government and societal discrimination against the Kunama, one of nine ethnic groups, who reside primarily in the west. Historically, the Kunama have resisted attempts to integrate them into the national society.

Official government policy is supportive of free enterprise, and citizens generally have the freedom to choose their employment, establish private businesses, and function relatively free of government harassment. Until recent years, government officials enjoyed a reputation for relative probity.

Women played important roles in the guerrilla movement, and the government has worked in favor of improving the status of women. In an effort to encourage broader participation by women in politics, the PFDJ named three women to the party's executive council and 12 women to the central committee in 1997. Women participated in the Constitutional Commission (filling almost half of the positions on the 50-person committee) and hold senior government positions, including the positions of minister of justice and minister of labor. Approximately 40 percent of all households are headed by women. Equal educational opportunity, equal pay for equal work, and penalties for domestic violence have been codified. However, traditional societal discrimination persists against women in the largely rural and agricultural country.

Estonia

Population: 1,300,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$45380 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 72 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Evangelical Lutheran, Russian Orthodox, Estonian Orthodox, other
Ethnic Groups: Estonian (67.9 percent), Russian (25.6 percent), other (6.5 percent)
Capital: Tallinn



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In March 2005, Juhan Parts resigned as prime minister after parliament passed a vote of no confidence against Justice Minister Ken-Marti Vaher over his proposed anti-corruption measures. The Reform Party's Andrus Ansip was confirmed as the new prime minister. Relations with Moscow deteriorated after Russia withdrew from the border treaty signed in May.

Dominated by Sweden in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and annexed by Russia in 1704, Estonia became independent in 1918. Soviet troops occupied the country during World War II, following a secret protocol in the 1939 Hitler-Stalin pact that forcibly incorporated Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania into the USSR. Under Soviet rule, approximately one-tenth of Estonia's population was deported, executed, or forced to flee abroad. Subsequent Russian immigration substantially altered the country's ethnic composition, with ethnic Estonians constituting just over 61 percent of the population in 1989. Estonia regained its independence with the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. It adopted a new constitution in July 1992 and held its first legislative elections in September of the same year. Russian troops withdrew from Estonia in August 1994.

In the March 2003 parliamentary elections, the Center Party of Estonia and Res Publica, a newly formed right-of-center party, each won 28 seats in the 101-seat parliament. Despite his party's having received fewer votes than the Center Party, Res Publica head Juhan Parts outmaneuvered Center Party leader Edgar Savisaar to form a ruling coalition with the neoliberal Estonian Reform Party and the right-of-center People's Union and became prime minister.

In 2005, the squabbling between Res Publica and the Reform Party increased, mainly over Parts's decision to ask President Arnold Ruutel to replace two of Reform's ministers. In November 2004, the defense minister, Margus Hanson, was dismissed after classified documents, which under the law should not be removed from government premises, were stolen from his home. In February 2005, Foreign Minister Kristina Ojuland was forced to resign following the disappearance of 91 confidential documents from the Foreign Ministry. In Ojuland's case, the Reform Party was dissatisfied that Parts had opted to publicly announce the decision to sack the minister instead of privately asking Ojuland to resign from her post.

The crisis came to a head in March 2005, after Parts chose to resign his post as prime minister following a vote of no confidence that the parliament had passed against Vaher, the justice minister. Vaher's political descent began after he announced plans to implement a quota system for how many corruption cases needed to be prosecuted every year in each region by each prosecutor. In the view of many in the public, such a proposal was reminiscent of the old Soviet regime from which they wanted to distance themselves. Parts's resignation resulted in the formation of a new cabinet headed by the Reform Party's Andrus Ansip, who assumed the post of prime minister.

In 2005, Estonia's relations with Russia continued to deteriorate. In March, Ruutel declined an invitation to attend celebrations in Moscow marking the end of World War II because of the Estonian population's still-passionate feelings about Soviet postwar occupation of Estonia. In May, the two countries signed a long-anticipated border treaty, which did not survive its infancy. In June, the Estonian parliament introduced an amendment to the agreement referring to the Soviet occupation of Estonia, which provoked Russia to withdraw from the treaty.

Estonia was admitted to NATO in March 2004, and it joined the European Union (EU) the same year. Following the rejection of the EU constitution by French and Dutch voters in May 2005, Estonian support for the constitution decreased. However, the Estonian government does not plan to hold a national referendum on the issue and will continue the process of ratification of the EU constitution. In September, the government approved the plan to adopt the euro by January 2007.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Estonians can change their government democratically. The 1992 constitution established a 101-member, unicameral legislature, the Riigikogu, elected for four-year terms, with a prime minister serving as head of government and a president in the largely ceremonial role of head of state. After the first president was chosen by popular vote in 1992, subsequent presidential elections reverted to parliamentary ballot. The prime minister is chosen by the president and confirmed by the parliament. The March 2003 parliamentary elections were free and fair and were conducted in accordance with the comprehensive dictates of the recently implemented Riigikogu Election Act. The Center Party of Estonia was able to capture 25.4 percent of the vote, Res Publica 24.6 percent, Estonian Reform Party 17.7 percent, Estonian People's Union 13 percent, Pro Patria Union (Fatherland League) 7.3 percent, and People's Party Moodukad 7 percent. With the October 2005 local elections, Estonia became the first country in the world to enable citizens to vote countrywide over the internet.

Estonia is considered the least corrupt country in the former Soviet Union. Corruption in the national government is low, although some concerns exist at the local level due to the lack of oversight mechanisms. Estonia is among the world's leaders in the use of e-government: an impressively transparent system makes government decisions almost instantaneously available on the internet, where Estonians may comment and exchange views. Estonia was ranked 27 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The government respects freedom of speech and the press. Three national television stations, including two in private hands, broadcast both Estonian- and Russian-language programs. However, considering the size of the Russian population

in Estonia, the proportion of programs in the Russian language remains small. Dozens of independent newspapers and radio stations offer diverse viewpoints, and Estonia is one of the most internet-friendly countries in the world. According to the U.S. State Department, the Law on Language prohibits the use of any language other than Estonian on public signs, advertisements, and notices, including election posters.

Religious freedom is respected in law and practice in this predominantly Lutheran country. While Estonia has very few restrictions on academic freedom, both officials in Moscow and ethnic Russians living in Estonia have opposed legislation that, by 2007, mandates the use of Estonian as the language of instruction in what are currently Russian-language schools.

The constitution guarantees freedom of assembly and association, and the government respects these rights in practice. The civil society sector is vibrant, although many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) still face some organizational and financial challenges. The government involves NGOs in drafting of legislation and NGOs are invited to testify on pending policies. Political parties are allowed to organize freely, although only citizens may become members. Workers have the right to organize freely, to strike, and to bargain collectively. In December 2003, Estonia saw its first major strike since independence, when some 20,000 workers participated in a one-day strike coordinated by the Organization of Employee Unions and aimed at greater benefits for teachers and cultural workers.

The judiciary is independent and generally free from governmental interference. A courts act adopted in June 2002, intended to restrict executive influence over the judiciary, continued to be successfully implemented, and a new criminal procedure code adopted in February 2003 took effect in the summer of 2004. As a result, the arbitrary, legally weak court decisions that were a feature of post-Soviet Estonia have become increasingly rare, according to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Heritage Foundation, and the U.S. and Canadian governments. There have been reports that some police officers physically or verbally abuse suspects. Despite ongoing improvements in the country's prison system, overcrowding, a lack of financial resources, and inadequately trained staff remain problems.

Of Estonia's population of 1.4 million, more than 1 million are Estonian citizens, of which some 120,000 have been naturalized since 1992. Approximately 170,000 people are noncitizens, the majority of whom are ethnic Russians. Estonia's Citizenship Law has been criticized for effectively disenfranchising many Russian speakers through an excessively difficult naturalization process. Many ethnic Russians arrived in Estonia during the Soviet era and are now regarded as immigrants who must apply for citizenship, a process that requires Estonian-language capability, five years' residency, and knowledge of the constitution and Citizenship Law. Although noncitizens may not participate in national elections, they can vote (but not serve as candidates) in local elections. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other international organizations have found Estonia's citizenship laws to be satisfactory. In December 2003, the government passed legislation that allowed for reimbursement of 50 percent of the costs related to language and citizenship examinations for successful examinees; the EU reimburses the other 50 percent.

In May 2001, parliament adopted legislation setting out specific requirements of

Estonian-language proficiency for private sector employees, such as pilots, rescue workers, and teachers; the law built upon a previous amendment to the language law passed in June 2000 requiring that Estonian be used in areas of the private sector deemed to be in the public interest, such as health and safety. Despite allegations of discrimination against ethnic Russians in the workplace, education, housing, and social services, a July OSCE resolution on national minorities was not critical of Estonia. That same month, the Dutch ambassador to Russia, Tiddo Hofstee, affirmed Estonia's compliance with the Copenhagen criteria on the protection of ethnic minorities.

Although women enjoy the same legal rights as men, they continue to be underrepresented in senior business positions and in the government. The Gender Equality Act, which entered into force in May 2004, stipulates legal penalties for discrimination based on sex. Although the principle of equal pay in Estonia was established in 2001 through the amended Wages Act, the actual implementation of this regulation has fallen short. The study released by the Open Society Institute in May 2005 found that women in Estonia are paid approximately 25 to 30 percent less than men, which makes Estonia one of the worst performers in this respect within the group of 10 countries with which it joined the EU in 2004.

Ethiopia

Population: 77,400,000 **Political Rights:** 5
GNI/capita: \$90 **Civil Liberties:** 5
Life Expectancy: 48 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Muslim (45-50 percent), Ethiopian Orthodox (35-40 percent), animist (12 percent), other
Ethnic Groups: Oromo (40 percent), Amhara and Tigrean (32 percent), Sidamo (9 percent), other (19 percent)
Capital: Addis Ababa



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
4,5PF	4,4PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF

Overview:

Ethiopia's defining political event in 2005 was the May election for the lower house of parliament, the House of People's Representatives, which resulted in a major increase in representation by opposition candidates. The ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and its allies won 327 seats, while the two main opposition parties took 161 seats, up 12 seats from the previous parliament. The EPRDF maintained its hold on power, and Prime Minister Meles Zenawi was reelected by the House of Representatives. Notwithstanding their significant gains, opposition parties vociferously argued that interference and fraud in the electoral process deprived them of victory. Street demonstrations led to violence, excessive use of government force, and widespread arrest—including leading opposition figures on treason charges. A continuing drought and the prospect of re-

newed violence with Eritrea over its long-running border dispute were also major issues of concern during the year.

One of the few African countries never to have been colonized, Ethiopia ended a long tradition of imperial rule in 1974, when Emperor Haile Selassie was overthrown in a Marxist military coup. Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam subsequently became the leader of a brutal dictatorship that was overthrown by a coalition of guerrilla groups, with leadership from the northern Tigray region in 1991. These groups were spearheaded by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), itself an alliance of five parties, and Zenawi Meles became prime minister.

The EPRDF government instituted a transition period that resulted in the appearance of democratic institutions. In the May 2000 national elections, the EPRDF gained a landslide victory against a weak and divided opposition, after which parliament reelected Meles to another five-year term. Opposition parties and some observers criticized the government's conduct of the vote, stating that the polls were subject to government interference, that media coverage was significantly tilted in the EPRDF's favor, and that opposition supporters were subjected to harassment and detention. However, the opposition was able to engage in some criticism of the government in the media during the official election campaign, and a series of unprecedented public debates were broadcast over state-run radio and television during the electoral campaign.

A dispute over the border with neighboring Eritrea resulted in open warfare from 1998 until 2000. In the wake of the bloody conflict, the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC), a mediating body established to draw up a new border, announced its decision, which included assigning the town of Badme to Eritrea in April 2002. The boundary commission's decisions were supposed to be binding on both sides, but Ethiopia formally rejected the EEBC decision. The result is an indefinite postponement of the physical demarcation of the new border.

Considerable focus in 2004 was centered on the upcoming national elections. Critics of the government, who argued that the playing field was seriously imbalanced in favor of the ruling coalition, cited draft press and nongovernmental organization (NGO) laws that potentially could be used by the government to further inhibit the NGO sector. A leading NGO in restive Oromia state was closed by the government. In addition, guerrilla activity continued by the Oromo Liberation Front and other groups amid intimidation of regime opponents, especially in the southern Oromo-dominated region.

In early June 2005, the initial announcement of election results—indicating a victory by the ruling coalition—sparked calls of fraud and violent street protests in the capital, Addis Ababa, an opposition stronghold. Gunfire from security forces killed 42 people and wounded more than 60 others. More than 4,000 people were arrested. The government subsequently imposed a ban on demonstrations in the capital and, in September, arrested additional opposition supporters.

After considering challenges to the election results, in September the National Electoral Board officially declared that the ruling EPRDF had won a total of 327 seats. According to the board, the opposition, led by the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) and United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF), won a total of 161 seats—12 more than in the previous parliament. The governing coalition also won elections for eight of nine regional parliaments.

Ethiopia also suffered through a serious drought in 2005. The lack of rain in the southern part of the country left some 1.75 million people in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The agency also warned that a crisis loomed in the northeastern Afar region of Ethiopia.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Ethiopians cannot change their government democratically, although the 2005 election marked a potential step forward in the development of the country's democratic political culture. In addition to widespread internal dissent, the European Union and other observers stated that these elections did not meet international standards. By contrast, however, former U.S. president Jimmy Carter, who led a team of observers at the May 15 polls, concluded that despite serious problems—including poor voter-registration lists and significant administrative irregularities—the polls essentially represented the will of the Ethiopian people.

The 2005 national election was the third since 1991. Previous elections included polling for local officials (1992), a Constituent Assembly (1994), and regional and national legislatures (1995 and 2000). These resulted in allegations from opposition parties and civil society of serious irregularities, including unequal access to media, biased election officials, lack of transparent procedures, a flawed election law, and a partisan National Electoral Board. The ruling EPRDF proclaimed the 2000 elections "free and fair" and used its overwhelming victory to consolidate power. Regional elections in 2001 were marred by killings, candidate harassment, voter intimidation, and allegations of ballot-box stuffing.

The EPRDF has been in power since 1991, although six other major parties and numerous smaller ones participate in the political system. The country's legislature is bicameral, and executive power is vested in a prime minister, who is selected by the House of People's Representatives. The 1995 constitution has a number of unique features, including decentralization based on ethnicity and the right to secession. The government has devolved some power to regional and local governments. However, the reality differs from what is constitutionally mandated, seriously limiting the right of the people to select their government in practice. In 2003, the central government acquired additional powers to intervene in states' affairs in situations where public security was deemed to be at risk.

More than 60 legally recognized political parties are currently active in Ethiopia, although the political scene continues to be dominated by the EPRDF. While opposition parties claim that their ability to function is seriously impeded by government harassment, observers note that opposition parties have at times also failed to comport themselves in a fashion consonant with a democratic political culture. For example, some parties have supported, either directly or indirectly, armed resistance to the government.

Ethiopia was ranked 137th out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index. The government has taken a number of initiatives to limit corruption, although it has also been accused of participating in corrupt practices.

The press is dominated by state-owned broadcast media and government-oriented newspapers. Opposition and civic organizations criticize slanted news cover-

age. A number of privately owned newspapers exist, but they struggle to remain financially viable and also face intermittent government harassment.

Both Reporters Without Borders and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) criticized repressive actions by the Ethiopian government against the press in 2005, including harassment, arrests, and the revocation of press credentials. The CPJ stated that harassment and intimidation of the media had increased as coverage of opposition complaints about irregularities on polling day and in vote counting increased. A draft press law was widely criticized by press freedom groups in 2004 as further chilling the press environment; it was not enacted in 2005. Issues of concern include restrictions on who may practice journalism; government-controlled licensing and registration systems; harsh sanctions for violations of the law, including up to five years' imprisonment; excessively broad exceptions to the right to access information held by public authorities; and the establishment of a government-controlled press council with powers to engage in prior censorship.

The government announced in 1999 that private FM radio stations with a range of approximately 95 miles around Addis Ababa would be permitted. No licenses have yet been issued, although the government has notified three media groups with links to the EPRDF that they have been short-listed to receive licenses. Under the draft press law, cross-ownership of newspapers and FM stations would not be permitted. This provision has drawn criticism from the independent media, which argue that, in practical terms, the provision would limit freedom of expression. There is extremely limited internet usage, mainly in the major urban areas.

Constitutionally mandated religious freedom is generally respected, although religious tensions have risen in recent years. The Ethiopian Coptic Church is influential, particularly in the north. In the south, there is a large Muslim community, made up mainly of Arabs, Somalis, and Oromos.

Academic freedom is restricted. In recent years, student strikes to protest various government policies and to seek an end to police brutality have resulted in scores of deaths and injuries and in hundreds of arrests, including arrests of prominent human rights leaders. Student grievances include perceived government repression of the Oromo ethnic group. Many students were killed, injured, or arrested as a result of protests against the May 2005 election.

Freedom of assembly and association is limited, although a large and increasing number of NGOs are active. However, NGOs are generally reluctant to energetically discuss issues and advocate policies that may bring them into conflict with the government. A draft NGO law, which includes a provision permitting the government to arbitrarily close NGOs at any time, is opposed by much of the civil society sector. In 2005, the government threatened to ban the Christian Relief and Development Association (CRDA), an umbrella body representing more than 250 international and local charities, because of alleged "political bias" expressed in CRDA criticisms of the government's response to postelection protests.

According to the Workers' Group of the International Labor Organization (ILO), severe restrictions on the rights of trade unions exist. The labor law only authorizes one trade union in companies employing more than 20 workers. Government workers in "essential industries," a term that is broadly defined, are not allowed to strike. The Confederation of Ethiopian Unions is under government control. The law governing trade unions states that a trade organization may not act in an overtly politi-

cal manner. Some union leaders have been removed from their elected office or forced to leave the country. All unions must be registered, although the government still retains the authority to cancel union registration.

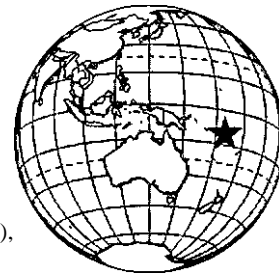
The judiciary is officially independent, although there are no significant examples of decisions at variance with government policy. The competencies of police, judicial, and administrative systems at the local level are highly uneven. Some progress has been made in reducing a significant backlog of court cases.

The government has tended to favor Tigrayan interests in economic and political terms. Politics within the EPRDF have been dominated by the Tigrayan People's Democratic Front. Discrimination and repression against other groups, especially the Oromo, has been widespread.

In October the government announced the establishment of a women's affairs ministry, and in recent years legislation has been passed designed to protecting women's rights in a number of different areas. In practice, however, women's rights continue to be routinely violated. Women have traditionally had few land or property rights, especially in rural areas, and few opportunities for employment beyond agricultural labor. Violence against women and social discrimination are reportedly common. Societal norms and limited infrastructure prevented many women from seeking legal redress, particularly in rural zones. While illegal, the kidnapping of women and girls for marriage purposes continues in parts of the country.

Fiji

Population: 800,000 **Political Rights:** 4
GN/capita: \$2,690 **Civil Liberties:** 3
Life Expectancy: 68 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Christian (52 percent),
Hindu (38 percent), Muslim (8 percent), other (2 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Fijian [Melanesian-Polynesian] (51 percent),
Indian (44 percent), other (5 percent)
Capital: Suva



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
4,3PF	4,3PF	4,3PF	2,3F	6,3PF	4,3PF	4,3PF	4,3PF	4,3PF	4,3PF

Overview:

In 2005, Fiji continued to live in the shadow of the May 2000 coup. A proposal to grant amnesty to individuals involved in coups was strongly opposed by the military, the church, and civil society groups. Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi was appointed vice president to replace Ratu Jope Seniloli, who was found guilty of involvement in the May 2000 coup. A new, multiracial National Alliance Party of Fiji was formed; race continues to be the defining feature in Fijian politics.

Fiji was colonized by Britain in 1874, and became independent in 1970. Intense ethnic rivalry between the indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians has become the main

source of political and social tension. Indians were first brought to Fiji by Britain in the 19th century to work on sugar plantations, and today make up nearly half of the total population. They are active in all spheres of society and control a large share of the economy. The Indo-Fijian-led Alliance Party ruled until 1987 when Sitiveni Rabuka, a senior army officer of Fijian extract, overthrew the government. Democratic institutions were slowly restored, and a new constitution was adopted in 1997. However, in May 2000, George Speight, an indigenous Fijian, overthrew the Labour Party-led elected government of Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry, an Indo-Fijian. Speight and his armed band took the cabinet hostage, and many civilian indigenous Fijians destroyed Indo-Fijian homes and businesses. Speight surrendered after a 56-day standoff, and was sentenced to death for treason (later commuted to a life sentence) in 2002. The military installed Laisenia Qarase, a banker and indigenous Fijian, to lead an interim government.

Qarase, of the United Fiji Party, was elected prime minister in 2001. The constitution requires any party receiving more than 10 percent of seats be offered cabinet posts, but Qarase refused to appoint Labour Party members to his cabinet and neither a supreme court ruling nor negotiations changed his mind.

Recovery from the effects of the coup has been slow and arduous. Poverty and crime are worsening, according to human development indicators of the UN Development Program. Some 28 percent of Fijians were reported to live in poverty, and child mortality accounts for more than 75 percent of all deaths. In 2005, there was a 70 percent increase in rape cases reported. Many Fijians are leaving for jobs overseas. While a total of 566 suspects have been tried and sentenced—including 92 soldiers and Vice President Ratu Jope Seniloli—the government does not appear sincerely committed to justice and reconciliation. For example, Seniloli was sentenced to eight months in prison in August 2004, but released after just three months for unspecified health reasons. Also, Seniloli kept his post and collected salary while in prison. In September 2005, Qarase appointed Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu, his former lands minister convicted for involvement in the May 2000 coup, to head the transport and shipping portfolio. Also, the government's Reconciliation, Tolerance, and Unity bill would give amnesty to those found guilty of involvement in the May 2000 coup, immunity to those not yet charged, and erase the criminal records of those convicted. The opposition parties, the Fijian law society, the Roman Catholic Church in Fiji, human rights groups, the military, and the public all strongly rejected this proposal. The strong public reaction pushed Qarase to amend the amnesty provision of the bill; parliamentary debate of the bill was delayed until **2006**.

Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi's appointment as vice president in January was well received by the people. Ratu Joni is known for his belief in peaceful coexistence among the country's different races and religions. The newly formed National Alliance Party of Fiji promotes itself as a multiracial party, and aims to tap into voter disappointment with the racially divisive politics of the government and the main opposition Labour Party. Meanwhile, municipal elections in the capital were marred by irregularities and thousands were unable to vote because their names were missing or misspelled in the final rolls. Also, only 15 to 20 percent of registered voters turned out for this election, which gave the ruling party 12 of the 20 municipal seats.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Fiji can change their government democratically. The bicameral parliament consists of the 32-seat Senate and the 71-seat House of Representatives. In the House, whose members are elected for five-year terms, 25 seats are open to all races and ethnicities, 23 are reserved for Fijians, 19 for Indo-Fijians, 3 for other ethnic groups (mainly citizens of Caucasian and East Asian extraction), and 1 for voters on Rotuma Island. Prime Minister Qarase and his United Fiji Party came to power in the 2001 elections. President Ratu Josefa Iloilo is the head of state and commander in chief of the military. The president is appointed to a five-year term by the Great Council of Chiefs in consultation with the prime minister. The 1997 constitution ended the guarantee of a parliamentary majority by indigenous Fijians, but various laws and policies give preferential treatment to indigenous Fijians and discriminate against non-indigenous Fijians. The constitution empowers the Great Council of Chiefs, a traditional indigenous Fijian body, to name the largely ceremonial president, who in turn approves the nominations of the Senate. National elections will be held in 2006.

Official corruption and abuses are widespread, hindering the country's economic recovery. In 2004, the government endorsed measures to create an anti-corruption agency. The public is strongly behind this effort, but necessary laws and resources have yet to be made available. Fiji was ranked 55 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The government has considerable authority to censor the media and restrict freedom of speech. The Television Act grants the government powers to influence programming content. The Press Correction Act authorizes officials to arrest anyone who publishes "malicious" material and to order a publication to print a "correcting statement" to an allegedly false or distorted article. The Fiji Media Bill, proposed in 2003, would allow the government to regulate the content and conduct of the media. Widespread public opposition has kept the bill from moving forward. The government owns Fiji Television. A new paid-television license was granted to Ba Province, but the government rejected Beijing's petition for a Chinese-language television license. The government-owned Fiji Broadcasting Corporation operates four radio stations and broadcasts in English, Fijian, and Hindustani. The government also owns stake in several newspapers. In January 2005, Qarase announced plans to sell the government's shares in the *Daily Post*, the largest circulating newspaper in Fiji. Government ownership of the newspaper had not affected its editorial independence, and the sale was not expected to usher any significant change for the newspaper. There government does not control access to the internet. Access is primarily limited by cost and connectivity constraints outside the capital.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion. Religious affiliation largely runs along ethnic lines: indigenous Fijians are Christians and Indo-Fijians are mostly Hindus. The number of attacks on Hindu and Muslim places of worship has increased in recent years. A local Hindu leader reported in 2005 that there had been 152 cases of desecration of all places of worship since 2001. The Methodist Church holds considerable political influence. Its current leader has called for a more restrained role for his church in politics.

Academic freedom is generally respected. Fiji, as host to the University of South Pacific, is a center for higher education for the South Pacific region. However, the country's education system suffers from lack of funding, facilities, qualified person-

nel at all levels, and increasing political intervention. For example, the government proposed granting free high school education only to indigenous Fijians. Non-indigenous Fijians widely criticized this plan, and so did former prime minister Sitiveni Rabuka, who said it would promote segregation. The proposal had not moved further. A new government proposal in May 2005 would require Fijian language instruction in all schools.

Freedom of assembly and association is guaranteed in the constitution, but new laws in 2000 require organizers to obtain government permission for gatherings, which is approved on a case-by-case basis. The Emergency Powers Act of 1998 allows parliament to censor the press, ban public meetings, authorize searches without warrants, and seize private property during a declared state of emergency. Workers can organize and several trade unions exist, but they face considerable restrictions on their activities. In August 2005, nurses went on strike for a pay increase (they got much of what they asked for); in September, workers at a teacher's college went on strike for back pay (the police removed them from the college).

The judiciary is independent, and trials are generally free and fair. Many politicians and soldiers have been found guilty of treason or other crimes committed during and after the May 2000 coup. In September 2005, the Suva High court ordered the government-owned *Daily Post* to publish an apology for defying court orders and printing stories related to a case being heard. However, the courts are severely backlogged due to a lack of funds. Suspects are frequently held for long periods before trials and prisons are severely overcrowded with poor sanitary and living conditions. In fact, the high court ordered the release of two robbery suspects in October 2004 because of poor prison conditions. In January 2005, the government announced plans to build the country's first new prison facility in 24 years; however, funds have yet to be allocated for the new prison, projected to be complete in 2011. The population is troubled by worsening crime rates and the international community, especially Australia and New Zealand, are worried about instability in Fiji and the country becoming a center for transnational organized criminal activities. Australia and New Zealand are funding training for police and army cadets, and committed \$2.3 million and \$3.6 million, respectively, to help finance the 2006 general elections.

Political, economic, and social debates are frequently divided along ethnic lines, and race-based discrimination is pervasive. The main rivalry is between the indigenous Fijians, who dominate government and the armed forces, and the Indo-Fijians, who control much of the economy. Indigenous Fijians receive preferential treatment in education, housing, land acquisition, and other areas. Some jobs are not open to non-indigenous Fijians. Such discrimination and political and economic troubles have caused more than 120,000 Indo-Fijians to leave Fiji in recent years. Part of the void left by Indo-Fijians is filled by legal and illegal mainland Chinese migrants. Although ethnic Chinese make up about 1 percent of the population, they now control about 5 percent of the economy, which makes them new targets of indigenous Fijian resentment. Attacks of Chinese homes and businesses have been reported. Muslims, too, feel increasingly under pressure to defend their religion and their identity. Muslim leaders publicly denied allegations that foreign students in Fiji are being trained to become terrorists by Islamic fundamentalists.

Discrimination and violence against women are widespread. Women are not well represented in government and leadership positions, and do not enjoy equal pay.

The number of rape, child abuse, and incest cases continues to rise. Women's groups claim that many offenders use traditional reconciliation mechanisms to avoid felony charges, and bribery and corruption delay police action. There were some reports of human trafficking involving Chinese women, and Chinese make up a significant portion of the estimated 7,000 Asian illegal migrants in Fiji. In November 2005, the government suspended the director of the immigration department and began investing officials for accepting bribes and selling passports. Violence against homosexuals was reported to be on the rise. The high-profile trial and conviction of an Australian man and a Fijian citizen for "unnatural offense" and "indecent practice between two males" spurred public debate on legal protections for homosexuals and other minorities. The government takes the position that protection against discrimination does not include homosexuality. Nevertheless, the government rejected in November 2005 the Methodist Church's petition to stage a second protest against homosexuality on the grounds that it would encourage discrimination and hatred against gays.

Finland

Population: 5,200,000 **Political Rights:** 1

GNI/capita: \$27,060 **Civil Liberties:** 1

Life Expectancy: 79 **Status:** Free

Religious Groups: Lutheran National Church (84.2 percent), other Christian (1.1 percent), Greek Orthodox (1.1 percent), none (13.5 percent), other (0.1 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Finnish (93 percent), Swedish (6 percent), other, (including Lapp [Saami]) (1 percent)

Capital: Helsinki

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F



Overview:

In June 2005, the Finnish government called the Italian ambassador for a meeting after the Italian Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, made a gaffe about the Finnish president, Tarja Halonen. A seven-week-long paper strike in June 2005 stopped the production of paper and cost the country as much as 1.5 billion euros. Helsinki hosted a series of peace talks between the Indonesian government and exiled rebels from its Aceh Province. In March 2005, the Finnish government made public a National Action Plan to combat trafficking.

Finland was ruled by Sweden until the early eighteenth century and then became a Grand Duchy of Russia until its independence in 1917. The country is traditionally neutral, but its army has enjoyed broad popular support ever since it fended off a Russian invasion during World War II. Finland joined the European Union

(EU) in 1995 after its friendship treaty with the Soviet Union became void. It has been an enthusiastic member state and is the only Nordic country to have adopted the euro.

In the 2002 presidential election, Taija Halonen, of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), was chosen as the country's first woman president. She defeated four other female candidates—from a total field of seven—from across the political spectrum to serve a six-year term.

The Center Party came to power after winning 55 seats in the parliamentary elections held on March 16, 2003. The second-largest party, the SDP, had led the ruling coalition since 1995. It remains part of the new ruling coalition, which also includes the Center Party and the Swedish People's Party (representing the Swedish-language minority). Anneli Jaatteenmaki replaced the SPD's Paavo Lipponen as prime minister, becoming the first woman to hold the post. However, just two months after she was chosen, Jaatteenmaki stepped down when it was alleged that she had leaked information from classified foreign policy documents and then lied about having done so. Jaatteenmaki had used evidence from the documents, which included details of Lipponen's confidential discussions with U.S. president George W. Bush, in her public attacks against Lipponen's pro-U.S. stance on the war in Iraq. After Jaatteenmaki's resignation, Matti Vanhanen, of the Center Party, succeeded her.

A Helsinki court unanimously acquitted Jaatteenmaki of breaching official secrets in March 2004. However, Martti Manninen, a presidential aide who had given her the documents, was found guilty of violating the Official Secrets Act and fined 3,600 euros. Jaatteenmaki subsequently drew the most votes in the Finnish elections for the European Parliament.

Finland emerged as a leader of the smaller states within the EU during the 2003 drafting of the EU constitution. Unlike in other EU member states, the proposed constitution is uncontroversial in Finland, and Prime Minister Vanhanen ruled out a possible referendum on the treaty in August 2004. Finns continued to debate the proposal of abandoning their traditional neutrality and seeking membership in NATO, an issue of particular relevance given the recent inclusions of the nearby Baltic States in the alliance.

In June, the Finnish government arranged a meeting with the Italian ambassador after Berlusconi made a gaffe about the Finnish president. Berlusconi, who is a former cruise ship crooner, said that he had used his "playboy skills" on Halonen to persuade her to give Italy the European Food Safety Authority. Berlusconi's comments were made in an address at the opening of the Authority in Parma, Italy. Berlusconi further commented negatively about the quality of Finnish food. The Finnish government did not pursue the issue.

The production of paper was halted during a seven-week-long paper strike starting in May 2005, with a cost to the country of as much as 1.5 billion euros. Paper accounts for one-quarter of Finnish exports; Finland also supplies 4 percent of the world's total paper market and 60 percent of the European magazine paper market. A brief strike in September by the employees of Finland's public broadcaster, YLE, left public television and radio stations off the air for 10 hours. The strike was called to protest plans by YLE to cut up to 200 jobs.

Helsinki hosted a series of peace talks between the Indonesian government and exiled rebels from the country's Aceh Province. The talks, the first of which occurred shortly after the tsunami of December 2004, were sponsored by the Crisis Manage-

ment Initiative, a nongovernmental organization founded by former Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari, who was the mediator for the talks.

In September 2005, the World Economic Forum ranked the Finnish economy as the most competitive in the world, followed by that of the United States. All five Nordic countries—Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, and Norway—were in the top 10 positions. The ranking, the Geneva-based organization argued, disproves the common belief that higher taxes hinder competitiveness. Rather, the report further argued, in the case of the Nordic countries, "high levels of government revenue have delivered world-class educational establishments, an extensive safety net and a highly motivated and skilled labor force."

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Finland can change their government democratically. The prime minister in Finland has primary responsibility for running the government. The president, who is mainly a figurehead, is directly elected for a six-year term. The president appoints the prime minister and the deputy prime minister from the majority party or majority coalition after elections. Parliament must approve the selection.

Representatives in the 200-seat unicameral parliament, the Eduskunta, are elected to four-year terms. The Åland Islands—an autonomous region that is located off the southwestern coast of Finland and whose inhabitants speak Swedish—have their own 29-seat parliament and have one seat in the national legislature. The indigenous Saami of northern Finland also have their own parliament.

During the March 2003 parliament elections, the two main winners were the Finnish Center party with 24.7 percent of the vote and the Social Democratic Party of Finland with 24.5 percent of the vote. Other parties include the National Coalition (18.5 percent), Left Alliance (9.9 percent), Green League (8.0 percent), Christian Democrats (5.3 percent), Swedish People's Party (4.6), and True Finns (1.6).

Finland has been rated the least-corrupt country in the world in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index since 2000. However, in June 2005, Kaj-Erik Relander, the former chief executive of the telecommunications operator Sonera, was convicted of abusing communications privacy laws. Relander had ordered the illegal scrutiny of staff phone calls. Finnish law stipulates that only the police with a court order can examine the details of dialed and received calls. In September 2004, the chief of the country's Security Police (SUPO), Seppo Nevala, was suspended for his involvement in a related case; he is suspected of trying to conceal the illegal procurement of telecommunication logs by a regional SUPO chief.

The law provides for freedom of speech and respected these rights in practices. Finland has a large variety of newspapers and magazines. Newspapers are privately owned but publicly subsidized, and many are controlled by or support a particular political party. Finnish law gives every citizen the right to publish and guarantees the right of reply to individuals who are subjected to heavy criticism in the press. In February 2004, the Eduskunta substantially liberalized a controversial media law that placed burdensome restrictions on internet publishers and service providers. As a result, internet traffic logging is no longer required, and online discussion groups are beyond the scope of the law. However, web publications must name a responsible editor in chief and archive published materials for at least 21 days.

Finns enjoy freedom of religion. Both the predominant Lutheran Church and the

smaller Orthodox Church are financed through a special tax, from which citizens may exempt themselves. Other religious groups are eligible for tax relief if they register and are recognized by the government. Religious education is part of the curriculum in all public schools, but students may opt out of these classes in favor of more general education in religion and philosophy. The government respects academic freedom.

Freedom of association and assembly is respected in law and in practice. The country has a robust civil society. Workers have the right to organize, bargain collectively, and strike. More than 70 percent of workers belong to a trade union.

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, which consists of the Supreme Court, the supreme administrative court, and the lower courts. The president appoints Supreme Court judges, who in turn appoint the lower court judges. The Ministry of the Interior controls police and Frontier Guard forces. While ethnic minorities and asylum seekers report occasional police discrimination, there were no reports of human rights abuses, according to the U.S. State Department 2005 report on human rights.

The rights of ethnic and religious minorities are protected in Finland. Since 1991, the indigenous Saami, who make up less than 1 percent of the population, have been heard in the Eduskunta on relevant matters. The constitution guarantees the Saami cultural autonomy and the right to their traditional means of livelihood, which include fishing and reindeer herding. Their language and culture are also protected through financial support. However, representatives of the community have complained that they cannot exercise these rights in practice and that they do not have the right to self-determination in land use.

While Roma (Gypsies) also make up a very small percentage of the population, they are more widely disadvantaged and marginalized. In May 2004, a new Aliens' Act streamlined the procedures for asylum and immigration applications as well as for work and residency permits. The new law also allows for the granting of residency permits for individual humane reasons. Despite these changes, the number of asylum approvals has declined in recent years.

The criminal code covers ethnic agitation and penalizes anyone who threatens any racial, national, ethnic, or religious group. In June 2004, the distributor of an anti-Semitic book was ordered by the Ministry of Justice to pay a fine and remove the book from circulation. Despite the existence of racial tensions, Finland is the only major European country that has not produced a far-right anti-immigrant political party.

The government, under pressure from international human rights bodies, has commissioned a prominent historian to advise whether a study reevaluating Finnish collaboration with Nazi Germany during World War II is warranted.

Women enjoy a high degree of equality with men. In 1906, Finland became the first country in Europe to grant women the vote and the first in the world to allow women to become electoral candidates. In the current parliament, 38 percent of the delegates and 8 of 18 government ministers are women. Taija Halonen was the first woman to be elected president in Finland. However, women continue to earn 10 percent less than men of the same age, education, and profession, and they are generally employed in lower-paid occupations.

Finland is both a destination and a transit country for trafficked people. In Au-

gust 2004, new legislation came into power, making trafficking in persons a criminal offense. In March 2005, the Finnish government unveiled a National Action Plan to combat trafficking. The plan includes the establishment of a national assistance coordinator for victims, temporary residences for victims, a witness protection program, and legal and psychological counseling for victims.

↓ France

Population: 60,700,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$24,730 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 80 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (83-88 percent), Protestant (2 percent), Muslim (5-10 percent), Jewish (1 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Celtic and Latin with Teutonic, Slavic, North African, Indochinese, Basque minorities
Capital: Paris



Trend Arrow: France received a downward trend arrow due to a failure to integrate immigrants from North Africa into the country's economic and social mainstream and related riots by immigrant youth.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

Despite official support from the two main parties and the president, Jacques Chirac, French voters rejected the draft constitution for the European Union (EU) in 2005. This (along with a no vote on the same referendum in the Netherlands days later) put the constitution on hold. The crisis weakened Chirac's ruling party, leading to the installation of a new prime minister, Dominique de Villepin. De Villepin was subsequently partly successful in restoring the government's popularity and initiative, though by year's end the country had experienced riots by immigrant youth stemming from France's failure to integrate North African immigrants into the country's economic and social mainstream.

After the French Revolution of 1789, republics alternated with Bonapartist and Bourbon monarchies until the creation of the Third Republic in 1871. Invaded and defeated by Germany in World War II, France was split into an occupied northern part and the collaborationist Vichy regime in the south. After the war, democracy was restored, and Charles de Gaulle, Free France's wartime leader, became president with the creation of the presidential system of the Fifth Republic, which stands today.

Jacques Chirac was first elected president in 1995. In the first round of the May 2002 presidential election, it was expected that he and Lionel Jospin, the prime minister and head of the rival Socialist Party, would receive the most votes and move to the second round. However, Jean-Marie Le Pen, the head of the far-right, xenopho-

bic National Front, stunned France and the world by receiving more votes than Jospin. Chirac defeated Le Pen overwhelmingly in the second round, and in the subsequent June parliamentary elections, the newly created Union for a Presidential Majority (UMP) won a comfortable majority of seats in parliament for Chirac.

In late 2002, France supported UN Security Council Resolution 1441, which threatened "serious consequences" against Iraq if it did not comply with weapons inspectors. However, France clearly never supported an early war and fought to prolong inspections. When the United States sought a second resolution explicitly declaring Iraq in breach of its obligations and paving the way to war, France stated that it would veto any such resolution. Along with the opposition of Russia, another permanent veto-holder on the Security Council, France effectively blocked UN authorization for the war in early 2003 in a move that severely strained French relations with the United States but which bolstered Chirac's popularity at home.

Since the war, Chirac has worked to strengthen the European Union (EU) as a counterweight to American power. In negotiations during 2003 and 2004, France sought to include a strong "common foreign and security policy" in the EU's new draft constitution. However, under the final draft document, any EU foreign policy would be subject to a veto by each EU member.

With the economy fairly weak after the 2002 polls, the government, led by Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin, began a bold series of reforms aimed at trimming pensions, loosening labor-market restrictions, and shaking up health care. These moves quickly disillusioned the voting public, and Chirac and his party suffered in the 2004 elections. In March, the UMP was humiliated at regional elections, losing 20 of 21 mainland regions. This was followed in June with a decisive defeat at the European Parliament elections. Like most ruling parties across the EU, the UMP did badly, winning just 16 percent of the vote; the opposition Socialist Party took 29 percent. Unexpectedly, Raffarin survived in his post as prime minister.

Political events in 2005 hinged on the May vote on the EU constitution. The yes campaign was supported by both major parties—Chirac's Gaullist center-right UMP and the center-left Socialist Party. However, dissidents on both sides, including a popular former Socialist Party prime minister, Laurent Fabius, and a former Gaullist interior minister, Charles Pasqua, opposed it, as did the Communist left and the xenophobic far right. Many voters thought that the constitution would make it easier for foreign workers to take skilled jobs in France (incorrectly conflating the constitution with a "services directive," a proposed EU law that was not directly related). In addition, many took the constitution as a referendum on the (also unrelated) question of Turkey's EU application, which most French voters oppose.

The yes campaign weakened in the months before the vote, and almost 55 percent voted against the document. Days later, the Netherlands also rejected the constitution in a referendum. These two countries were founding members of the original European Community, and their rejection of the document has likely doomed this version of the constitution permanently.

France has long been a dominant member—perhaps the single most powerful one—of the EU, and its failure to win support for a constitution among its own people had great political reverberations. Among talk of "no more politics as usual," Chirac, as expected, finally replaced Raffarin as prime minister. Unexpectedly, he replaced him with Dominique de Villepin, an aristocratic former interior minister and foreign

minister. To some surprise, De Villepin was popular in his first few months on the job, saying he would focus on the economy and jobs. Growth in the gross domestic product was expected to be slow—as little as 1 percent in 2005. The government proposed a flattening and simplification of the tax code and relaxed some provisions of the mandatory 35-hour workweek in 2005, recognizing its cost to small businesses in particular.

In November 2004, a popular former minister, Nicolas Sarkozy, left the cabinet to become the head of the UMP. He was reappointed interior minister in June 2005. His tough law-and-order policies won him acclaim with many French voters. He is expected to run for president in 2007, where he might face De Villepin as a rival to be the candidate from the center right.

However, Sarkozy's policies were unpopular with many ethnic minorities in France, mainly North African Arabs and blacks, who felt unfairly targeted. The accidental deaths of two North African-descended teenagers, electrocuted in a power substation while fleeing police, touched off weeks of riots, including massive property damage, especially car-burnings, at least one death, and many injured. The violence caused the government to invoke a state of emergency and a rarely used curfew law. The disturbances provoked a major discussion in France about the failure to integrate minorities successfully into French society.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

French citizens can change their government democratically. The president is elected for a five-year term (reduced from seven years as of the 2002 election). The key house of parliament, the lower National Assembly, is also elected to a five-year term; the upper house, the Senate, is an indirectly elected body. The prime minister must be able to command a majority in parliament. For most of the Fifth Republic's history, the president and prime minister have been of the same party, and the president has been the most powerful figure in the country. However, there have been several periods, such as that which preceded the 2002 elections, in which the president and prime minister were of rival parties. Under these circumstances, the prime minister has the dominant role in domestic affairs, while the president retains control over the armed forces and largely guides foreign policy.

Parties organize and compete on a free and fair basis. Political parties with significant support range from the largely unreformed French Communist Party on the left to the anti-immigrant and anti-EU National Front on the right. France remains a relatively unitary state, with some administrative powers devolved to regions and smaller prefectures, but with key decisions made in Paris.

President Jacques Chirac has used his office to head off allegations of corruption stemming from his time as mayor of Paris, claiming immunity as head of state to prevent prosecutions as long as he remains president. However, his protegee, Alain Juppe, was convicted in January of allowing UMP party workers to be paid out of Paris's municipal treasury when Juppe was the city's treasurer and Chirac was its mayor. Members of the French elite, trained in a small number of prestigious schools, often move between politics and business, increasing opportunities for corruption. France was ranked 18 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The French media operate largely freely and represent a wide range of political

opinion. An 1881 law forbids "offending" various personages, including the president and foreign heads of state, but the press remains lively and critical. However, the media are not entirely free of harassment. Journalists covering events involving the National Front have been attacked by supporters of the party. Seven reporters had their phones tapped between 2000 and 2002 as part of a government investigation into Corsican separatist violence. Two reporters were arrested on December 30, 2002, after filming the deportation of a Malian immigrant. There was a failed attempt to murder a journalist for the newspaper *Le Figaro* in Corsica in 2003. Internet access is unrestricted.

Freedom of religion is protected by the constitution, and strong antidefamation laws prohibit religiously motivated attacks. Not all branches of the Church of Scientology and the Jehovah's Witnesses are recognized as religious associations for tax purposes. A new law that took effect in 2004 bans "ostentatious" religious symbols in schools. Believed by most to be aimed at the *hijab* (headscarf worn by Muslim women and girls), the controversial ban was supported by most voters. Militants kidnapped two French journalists in Iraq in August 2004, demanding unsuccessfully that the ban be overturned; the journalists were freed in December that year. Academic freedom is generally respected.

Freedom of assembly and association are respected. Civic organizations and non-governmental organizations can operate freely. Trade unions are strong in France, although membership has declined over the past two decades.

France has a well-qualified judiciary, and the rule of law is well established. The legal system is based on Roman code law, and French citizens are largely treated equally under the law. However, France's stiff antiterrorism campaign has included surveillance of mosques, and raids for unrelated reasons (such as tax inspections) sometimes target places where Muslims in particular are found (such as *halal* butchers). Terrorist suspects can be detained for up to four days without being charged. France is more willing than other European countries to deport radical Muslim clerics for speech considered incitement to extremism or terrorism. The police are frequently criticized for aggressiveness in random personal checks, which often target youths of North African and African descent. Such police checks have deepened resentment between minorities and the authorities. A Council of Europe delegation reported in 2004 that French prisons suffer from overcrowding and poor conditions, though no prisoner maltreatment was found.

The violence of late 2005 has fueled concerns about Arab and black immigration and the failures of integration policy in France. The rise of the National Front has tempted the government to tighten immigration and asylum rules, which are perceived to be abused by economic migrants. In 2005, the government supported the beginning of talks on Turkish accession to the EU, but there is strong popular opposition in France to Turkish membership. The issue of Corsica continues to fester. In December 2001, the government devolved some legislative autonomy to the island and allowed teaching in the Corsican language in public schools. However, voters on the island, which hosts a sometimes violent separatist movement, rejected a government proposal for devolution of more power to local Corsican institutions in June 2003.

Gender equality is protected in France, and a law governing the 2002 legislative election threatened to reduce public funding for political parties that ran fewer than 50 percent women candidates for the National Assembly. No party fully complied;

the Socialists, who introduced the parity bill, ran 37 percent women. Despite equal legal status and well-established social liberty, women earn about three-quarters of what men earn. The rights of homosexuals are protected in France, and a type of nonmarriage civil union, the PACS, or civil solidarity pact, is recognized.

Gabon

Population: 1,400,000 **Political Rights:** 6*
GNI/capita: \$3,340 **Civil Liberties:** 4
Life Expectancy: 56 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Christian (55-75 percent), animist (25-45 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Bantu, other Africans, Europeans
Capital: Libreville



Ratings Change: Gabon's political rights rating declined from 5 to 6 because of flawed, uncompetitive elections and continuing military influence over the electoral process.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	6,4PF

Overview:

President Omar Bongo, already Africa's longest-serving ruler, won another seven-year term in a flawed November 2005 election, which was marred by a lack of competition and continuing military influence over the electoral process. Poor fiscal management and declining oil revenues have lowered the living standards of many Gabonese, though new oil discoveries and higher prices on the world market bolstered an economic turnaround in 2005. The government successfully concluded a stand-by agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in September 2005.

Straddling the equator on Central Africa's West Coast, Gabon gained independence from France in 1960. Omar Bongo, whom France raised from soldier to president in 1967, completed the consolidation of power begun by his predecessor, Leon Mba, by officially declaring Gabon a one-party state in 1968. France maintains a military contingent in Gabon and has intervened twice to preserve Bongo's regime. In 1990, protests prompted by economic crisis forced Bongo to accept a conference that opposition leaders hoped would promote a peaceful democratic transition. However, Bongo retained power in rigged 1993 presidential elections, sparking violent protests repressed by the presidential guard. The 1996 parliamentary elections were also seriously flawed.

Following opposition gains in the 1996 local government polls, along with mayoral victories in several major cities, including Libreville, the government transferred key electoral functions from the electoral commission to the Interior Ministry. Bongo's electoral victory in 1998, with 61 percent of the vote, followed a campaign that made profligate use of state resources and state media. Polling, partially boycotted by the opposition, was marked by serious irregularities.

A partial opposition boycott and low voter turnout, as well as government interference in the polls, helped assure victory for the ruling Gabonese Democratic Party (PDG) in the December 2001 National Assembly polls. The PDG gained 88 of 120 seats. In 2002, legislative by-elections, held to fill seats nullified in the 2001 legislative elections, resulted in the PDG and allied parties holding 107 seats, against the 13 held by the opposition in the National Assembly. In the 2003 senatorial elections, municipal and regional government officials elected 91 senators, all from the PDG, to six-year terms. There were widespread reports of irregularities, and the elections were considered neither free nor fair.

In 2003, led by the ruling PDG, parliament removed a 1997 constitutional amendment that imposed term limits on the presidency. This move, which allows Bongo to seek reelection indefinitely, also replaced the country's runoff system with a single round of voting in all elections. These changes, marking the sixth time the constitution has been amended since the introduction of a multiparty system in 1990, were resisted by most opposition parties and widely viewed as an attempt to make Bongo president for life.

Bongo is adept at the use of patronage in undermining the opposition. His bloated government presently counts 44 ministries, which he uses to undermine and reward former opposition leaders with jobs and access to state resources. Many observers believe that he is grooming his son, Ali Bongo Ondimba, to succeed him. The younger Bongo has been defense minister since 1999.

After results of a census released in 2005 showed that the population had grown 50 percent from 1993-2003, opposition leaders and independent experts accused the government of inflating the figures in order to stuff the electoral register with false names and manipulate economic data to qualify for increased aid.

The 2005 presidential election took place over two days, with security forces voting on November 25 and the public on November 27, an arrangement criticized by the opposition for heightening opportunities for fraud. Though generally peaceful, the election was marred by irregularities, including incomplete and inaccurate electoral lists, the abuse of government resources, and unequal access to the media. Opposition candidates charged PDG stalwarts with vote buying, multiple voting, and ballot stuffing. Bongo won with approximately 79 percent of the vote. Pierre Mamboundou of the Union for Gabonese People (UPG) won 14 percent, with former cabinet minister Zacharie Myboto coming in third. Myboto was forced to run as an independent when the government refused to register his newly created party, the Gabonese Union for Democracy and Development (UGDD). Overall, the election lacked competition and reflected continuing military influence over the electoral process. The government claimed a voter turnout of over 63 percent, though other observers reported that actual participation may have been as low as 30 percent.

Three decades of autocratic and corrupt rule have made Bongo among the world's richest men, although some money has trickled down to rural areas and contributed to higher education standards. Gabon's economy rebounded slightly in 2005 from new oil discoveries and higher prices on the world market. Overly dependent on oil for decades, Gabon still faces overall dwindling production, heavy debt, and a stagnant economy. To secure a stand-by agreement signed with the IMF in September 2005, Gabon agreed to a series of economic reforms, including the privatization of its state-owned companies and the reduction of public sector employment and salary growth.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Gabon cannot change their government democratically. With the lifting of term limits on the presidency and the continued co-optation and marginalization of the political opposition, President Omar Bongo took 79 percent of the vote to win a sixth, seven-year term in the flawed November 2005 presidential election. Gabon's bicameral legislature consists of a Senate with 91 seats and a lower chamber, the National Assembly, with 120. Senators are elected to six-year terms by regional and municipal government officials. National Assembly members are elected by direct popular vote to serve five-year terms. National Assembly elections are slated for December 2006, with Senate elections scheduled for early 2009.

Bongo's PDG has held power continuously since its creation in 1968, and is the only party with national reach. Of 35 registered parties, 29 belong to the presidential majority.

A special government ministry to fight corruption was established in 2003, but it has yet to issue a report or take action against corrupt officials. Revelations during high-profile corruption trials in France involving the TotalFinaElf oil company that tens of millions of dollars in bribes were paid to Bongo have had no fallout for the president at home. Gabon was ranked 88 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Press freedom is guaranteed in law but often restricted in practice. State censorship of the press continued in 2005, with publications printed outside of the country subject to review before distribution. The state is authorized to criminalize civil libel suits. One independent newspaper, *Nku 'u Le Messenger*, was banned for more than two weeks in August 2005 for criticizing the National Council for Communication, a government body that determines accreditation for professional journalists. The 2003 suspensions of the satirical weeklies *Misamu* and *Sub-Version* and the bi-monthly newspaper *La Sagaie* remained in effect. At least 10 private weeklies, mainly controlled by opposition parties, are published irregularly. Almost all Gabonese private newspapers are printed in Cameroon because of the high costs at the only local printing company. At least six private radio and television broadcasters have been licensed and operate, but their viability is tenuous and most of the programming is nonpolitical. At the end of 2002, there were three internet service providers in the country, two of which are privately owned. The government did not restrict access to or use of the internet.

Religious freedom is constitutionally guaranteed and respected. The government does not restrict academic freedom.

The rights of assembly and association are constitutionally guaranteed, but permits required for public gatherings are sometimes refused. During the election campaign, the government banned all marches by political groups except those allied with President Bongo's campaign. Freedom to form and join political parties is generally respected, but civil servants may face harassment because of their associations. Several government employees were fired in 2005 because of their association with former cabinet minister Zacharie Myboto, who founded a new party, the UGDD, in April 2005 and contested the November presidential election as an independent candidate. Nongovernmental organizations operate openly, but local human rights groups are weak and not entirely independent. Virtually the entire formal private sector workforce is unionized. Collective bargaining is allowed by industry, not by firm.

The judiciary suffers from political interference. Rights to legal counsel and a public criminal trial are generally respected. However, judges may deliver summary verdicts, and torture is sometimes used to produce confessions. Prison conditions are marked by beatings and insufficient food, water, and medical care. Arbitrary arrest and long periods of pretrial detention are common.

While no legal restrictions on travel exist, harassment on political and ethnic bases has been reported. In September 2005, the president announced that the government would revoke the passport of anyone who criticized the government in press conferences abroad. Discrimination against African immigrants, including harassment by security forces and arbitrary detention, is a problem. Most of Gabon's several thousand indigenous Pygmies live marginalized in the forest without access to government services.

Gabon has come under scrutiny for the exploitation of thousands of child laborers who are sent from other Central or West African countries to work as domestic servants. The government has cooperated with international organizations to fight child trafficking but says it lacks sufficient funds and resources to tackle the problem.

Legal protections for women include equal-access laws for education, business, and investment. In addition to owning property and businesses, women constitute more than 50 percent of the salaried workforce in the health and trade sectors, and women hold high-ranking positions in the military and judiciary. Women continue to face legal and cultural discrimination, however, particularly in rural areas, and domestic violence is reportedly widespread. Polygynous marriages are more common than monogamous relationships, which provide more legal protection to women, particularly regarding property rights in case of divorce. Common law marriage, which is accepted socially and practiced widely, affords women no property rights. Abortion is prohibited.

The Gambia

Population: 1,600,000 **Political Rights:** 5*

GNI/capita: \$270 **Civil Liberties:** 4

Life Expectancy: 53 **Status:** Partly Free

Religious Groups: Muslim (90 percent), Christian (9 percent), indigenous beliefs (1 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Mandinka (42 percent), Fula (18 percent), Wolof (16 percent), Jola (10 percent), Serahuli (9 percent), other (5 percent)

Capital: Banjul

Ratings Change: The Gambia's political rights rating declined from 4 to 5 due to the failure to allow the opportunity for a rotation of power in the lead-up to elections in 2006.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,6NF	7,6NF	7,5NF	7,5NF	7,5NF	5,5PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4F	5,4PF



Overview:

Press freedom in The Gambia suffered a serious setback in 2005 with the murder of a prominent journalist and the passage of new restrictive press laws. During the year, authorities arrested three prominent opposition leaders for alleged subversion. Meanwhile, President Yahya Jammeh announced that he would seek another five-year term in presidential elections scheduled for October 2006.

After gaining independence from Britain in 1965, The Gambia functioned as an electoral democracy under President Sir Dawda Jawara and his People's Progressive Party for almost 30 years. A 1981 coup by leftist soldiers was reversed by intervention from Senegal, which borders The Gambia on three sides. The two countries formed the Confederation of Senegambia a year later, but it was dissolved in 1989. Senegal declined to rescue the Jawara government again when Lieutenant Yahya Jammeh spearheaded a military coup in 1994. The leaders of the coup denounced the ousted government's alleged corruption, promising transparency, accountability, and early elections. Instead, they quickly imposed draconian decrees curtailing civil and political rights and the free media. A new constitution, adopted by a closely controlled 1996 referendum, allowed Jammeh to transform his military dictatorship into a nominally civilian administration.

Jammeh secured a victory in the October 2001 presidential poll, defeating opposition leader Ousainou Darboe, a human rights lawyer who headed a three-party opposition coalition, by 53 percent of the vote to 33 percent. Three other candidates won a combined total of 14 percent. While the Independent Electoral Commission was under some pressure by the ruling party, it generally operated freely. However, there were lingering concerns about Jammeh's commitment to democracy when several opposition supporters, human rights workers, and journalists were detained after the polls. Following the vote, allegations surfaced that Jammeh's party had brought in members of his ethnic group living in neighboring Senegal and had issued them voter cards.

In the January 2002 National Assembly elections, the ruling Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC) won all but three seats. The polls showed signs of improvement over the previous, highly flawed, legislative vote in 1997. However, there were some administrative problems with voter registration, and the major opposition coalition boycotted the polls.

Officials announced in November 2005 that three opposition leaders had been arrested for alleged "subversive activities." Hamat Bah of the National Reconciliation Party, Omar Jallow of the People's Progressive Party, and Halifa Sallah of the People's Democratic Organization for Independence and Socialism had formed a coalition in 2004 with the United Democratic Party. The coalition, the National Alliance for Development and Democracy, had made a strong showing in parliamentary by-elections in October 2005. Officials said the three men posed a threat to national security but did not release further details.

Jammeh announced that he will run in presidential elections scheduled for October 2006. Although in 2005 the political opposition formed a coalition to pose a more formidable challenge to Jammeh, no clear opposition candidates have emerged. Meanwhile, journalists suspected that Jammeh was attempting to gain greater control of the press ahead of the presidential poll through the promulgation in 2005 of new restrictive press laws—including legislation making all press offenses, including libel, punishable by imprisonment of six months or more.

A poor, tiny country, with few natural resources, The Gambia depends on exports of peanuts and other commodities. However, oil has been discovered offshore. Tourism and remittances from Gambians living abroad are important sources of foreign exchange.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of The Gambia cannot change their government democratically. The 2001 presidential election was a more legitimate exercise than previous polls, despite being marred by sporadic violence and other irregularities. The president is both chief of state and head of government. He is elected by popular vote for a five-year term; the number of terms is not restricted. Of the 53 seats in the unicameral National Assembly, 48 are elected by popular vote and five are appointed by the president; members serve for five years. Main political parties include the ruling Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction the Gambian People's Party-Progressive People's Party-United Democratic Party coalition, the National Convention Party and the National Reconciliation Party.

Despite government anticorruption efforts, official corruption remains a serious problem in The Gambia. The country's anticorruption commission began hearings in July 2004 as part of President Yahya Jammeh's "Operation No Compromise." Chaired by a Nigerian judge, the commission is probing the acquisition of assets by active and retired ministers and senior military officials during Jammeh's decade in power. No elected lawmaker has had to appear, and neither has the president. The Gambia was ranked out 103 of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Press freedom is guaranteed, but harassment and self-censorship sometimes inhibit free expression by the country's independent print media. Private broadcasters and newspapers in The Gambia struggle to pay high licensing fees. State-run

Radio Gambia broadcasts only tightly controlled news that is also relayed by private radio stations. A single, government-run television station operates. Citizen FM broadcasts in a number of indigenous languages and is an important source of independent information for rural Gambians. Authorities shut down the station in October 2001, and it remained closed in 2005. The government does not restrict internet access;

The independent press suffered a serious blow in December 2004 with the murder of prominent journalist Deyda Hydara, managing editor of *The Point* newspaper who also worked for Agence France-Presse and the Paris-based Reporters Without Borders (RSF). Hydara, a veteran campaigner for press freedom, was gunned down in his car at night on his way home from work. Hundreds of people marched through the streets of Banjul in a peaceful protest against Hydara's murder. RSF, which said that his death had striking similarities to murders of other critics of the Jammeh government, called for an independent commission to investigate the killing.

Hydara's murder came two days after the National Assembly passed amendments to the Criminal Code and the Newspaper Act. The amendments made all press offenses, including libel, punishable by imprisonment of six months or more. The amendments also canceled existing publication and broadcasting licenses, forcing the media to register again at five times the cost. Facing a lawsuit by independent journalists, the National Assembly repealed the controversial National Media Commission Act on the same day the amendments were passed. The act provided for the creation of a commission that had the power to decide who is and is not a journalist and to deny the right to confidentiality of sources. The commission could issue arrest warrants for journalists and jail journalists for contempt for up to six months.

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists in April 2005 said a series of unsolved arson attacks and unchecked threats, as well as the passage of the restrictive new press laws, have created deep mistrust between The Gambia's small independent press and the government. Hydara's murder and the government's failure to bring the perpetrators to justice have compounded suspicions.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed, and the government respects this right. Academic freedom is guaranteed and respected.

Freedom of assembly and association are guaranteed, but these rights are not always respected in practice. Security forces often crack down violently on demonstrators. Human rights groups and other nongovernmental organizations generally operate freely, although human rights workers and members of the political opposition occasionally face harassment. Gambians, except for civil service employees and members of the security forces, have the right to form unions, strike, and bargain for wages. Unions are most active in the modern wage sector, where about 20 percent of the workforce is employed.

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary. Lower courts are hampered by corruption and are sometimes subject to executive influence, but the judiciary has demonstrated its independence on several occasions, at times in significant cases. A number of judges have been brought to The Gambia from other African countries, and they tend to operate fairly and vigorously. Local chiefs preside over courts at the village level. The judicial system recognizes customary law, or Sharia (Islamic law), primarily in marriage matters.

Although the Jammeh government has made some steps toward political openness, it still has extensive repressive powers. A 1995 decree allows the National In-

telligence Agency to cite "state security" to "search, arrest, or detain any person, or seize, impound, or search any vessel, equipment, plant, or property without a warrant." In such cases, the right to seek a writ of habeas corpus is suspended. Torture of prisoners in jails has been reported, although conditions in some of the country's prisons have improved.

Impunity for the country's security forces is a problem. The National Assembly passed a law in 2001 giving amnesty "for any fact, matter or omission to act, or things done or purported to have been done during any unlawful assembly, public disturbance, riotous situation or period of public emergency." The legislation was backdated to April 2000, when security forces had cracked down on demonstrators, killing 16 people. Military decrees giving authorities broad power to detain individuals indefinitely without charge "in the interest of national security" still exist.

Ethnic groups in Gambia live harmoniously. The constitution prohibits discrimination based on religion, language, ethnicity, gender, and other factors, and the government generally enforces these provisions.

Religious and traditional obstacles to the advancement of women are being addressed by both the government and women's organizations. Higher education and wage employment opportunities are still far fewer for women than for men, especially in rural areas. However, the government has waived school fees for girls, and women occupy senior government posts, including those of vice president and education minister. Sharia provisions regarding family law and inheritance restrict women's rights. Female genital mutilation is not banned and is widely practiced, but women's groups are working to eliminate the practice, and the government supports these efforts.

Georgia

Population: 4,500,000 **Political Rights:** 3
GNI/capita: \$770 **Civil Liberties:** 3*
Life Expectancy: 72 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Orthodox Christian (83.9 percent),
 Muslim (9.9 percent), Armenian-Gregorian (3.9 percent),
 other (2.3 percent)

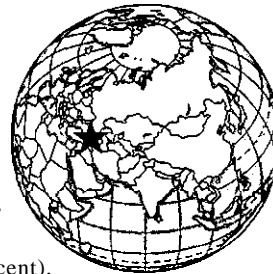
Ethnic Groups: Georgian (70 percent), Armenian (8 percent),
 Russian (6 percent), Azeri (6 percent), Ossetian (3 percent),
 Abkhaz (2 percent), other (5 percent)

Capital: Tbilisi

Ratings Change: Georgia's civil liberties rating improved from 4 to 3 due to a continued consolidation of individual rights and freedom of expression.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
4,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	3,4PF	3,3F



Overview:

Two years after the popular uprising against corrupt governance that became known as the "Rose Revolution,"

Georgia in 2005 confronted the difficult reality of effectively implementing democratic reforms. Parliamentary by-elections held in October seemingly provided President Mikhail Saakashvili backing for his political program, as the governing National Movement Party won all five seats contested. At the same time, the absence of a credible opposition to the governing party presented a significant challenge for Georgia's deeper political and institutional development.

Absorbed by Russia in the early nineteenth century, Georgia gained its independence in 1918. In 1922, it entered the USSR as a component of the Transcaucasian Federated Soviet Republic, becoming a separate union republic in 1936. An attempt by the region of South Ossetia in 1990 to declare independence from Georgia and join Russia's North Ossetia sparked a war between rebels and Georgian forces. Although a ceasefire was signed in June 1992, the territory's final political status remains unresolved.

Following a national referendum in April 1991, Georgia declared its independence from the Soviet Union, which then collapsed in December of that year. Nationalist leader and former dissident Zviad Gamsakhurdia was elected president in May. The next year, he was overthrown by opposition forces and replaced with former Georgian Communist Party head and Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze. Parliamentary elections held in 1992 resulted in more than 30 parties and blocs gaining seats, although none secured a clear majority.

In 1993, Georgia experienced the violent secession of the long-simmering Abkhazia region and armed insurrection by Gamsakhurdia loyalists. Although Shevardnadze blamed Russia for arming and encouraging Abkhazian separatists, he legalized the presence of 19,000 Russian troops in Georgia in exchange for Russian support against Gamsakhurdia, who, defeated, reportedly committed suicide. In early 1994, Georgia and Abkhazia signed an agreement in Moscow that called for a ceasefire, the stationing of Commonwealth of Independent States troops under Russian command along the Abkhazian border, and the return of refugees under UN supervision. In parliamentary elections in November and December 1995, the Shevardnadze-founded Citizens' Union of Georgia (CUG) captured the most seats, while Shevardnadze was elected with 77 percent of the vote in a concurrent presidential poll.

The ruling CUG repeated its victory four years later, in the October 1999 parliamentary election. Election observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) concluded that, despite some irregularities, the vote was generally fair. In the April 2000 presidential poll, Shevardnadze easily won a second five-year term with a reported 81 percent of the vote. While Shevardnadze's win was widely anticipated, the large margin of his victory led to accusations of electoral fraud. Election monitors noted numerous and serious irregularities, including ballot-box stuffing, inflated voter turnout figures, and a strong pro-Shevardnadze bias in the state media.

Following the parliamentary elections, various competing factions developed within the CUG, which had dominated Georgian politics for much of the 1990s. Shevardnadze himself faced growing opposition from prominent members, including Speaker of Parliament Zurab Zhvania and Justice Minister Mikhail Saakashvili, who criticized the president's failure to contain widespread corruption throughout

the country. While Shevardnadze resigned as CUG chairman in September 2001, Saakashvili left the CUG to form his own party, the National Movement, and a formal party split was ratified in May 2002. Local elections held in June saw the CUG lose its long-standing dominance to several rival parties, including the New Rights Party, which was formed by many prominent businessmen, the National Movement, and the Labor Party. Subsequently, Saakashvili was named to the influential post of chairman of the Tbilisi City Council.

A flawed parliamentary vote on November 2, 2003, served as the catalyst for the civic action that ultimately led to Shevardnadze's resignation from office. According to official Central Election Commission results, the For New Georgia pro-presidential coalition led by Shevardnadze received 21 percent of the vote. The Union of Democratic Revival (UGR), a party led by Aslan Abashidze, the leader of the republic of Abkhazia, won almost 19 percent of the vote. Saakashvili's National Movement came in a close third with 18 percent, followed by the Labor Party with 12 percent. The only other two parties to pass the 7 percent threshold to enter parliament were the opposition Buijanadze-Democrats alliance formed by Zhvania and Speaker of Parliament Nino Buijanadze, which captured almost 9 percent of the vote, and the New Rights, that secured 7 percent.

The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy, a domestic monitoring organization that conducted a parallel vote tabulation, concluding that the National Movement had won the election with nearly 27 percent of the vote, with For New Georgia placing second with about 19 percent. Monitors from the OSCE reported that the elections fell short of international standards for democratic elections. Among the violations noted were ballot-box stuffing, inaccurate voter lists, biased media coverage, harassment of some domestic election monitors, and pressure on public employees to support progovernment candidates.

A series of mass public demonstrations took place in the aftermath of the flawed vote. On November 22, protesters led by Saakashvili broke into the parliament building and forced Shevardnadze, who was addressing the new legislature's opening session, to flee the building. Shevardnadze resigned the following day, and Burjanadze was named interim president. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court cancelled the results of the parliamentary election.

Snap presidential elections were called for January 4, 2004, with Saakashvili effectively facing no opposition. Capitalizing on mass dissatisfaction with corruption, cronyism, and poverty, Saakashvili won the poll with an overwhelming 96 percent of the vote. In new parliamentary elections held on March 28, 2004, the National Movement-Democrats bloc (composed of Saakashvili's National Movement and the Buijanadze-Democrats) captured about two-thirds of the seats, followed by the Rightist Opposition bloc (composed of the Industrialists and New Rights Party) with nearly 10 percent; seven other parties received 8 percent or less of the total number of seats.

The high expectations that accompanied Saakashvili's coming to office gave way to a more sober recognition that implementing serious reforms will be a difficult and long-term effort. Over the course of 2005, the authorities attempted to rein in corrupt officials, institutionalize the rule of law, and bring about more effective governance in what had been a corrupt and quasi-failed state.

Despite opposition efforts to present a unified candidate, Saakashvili's administration appeared to receive backing for its policy course when the governing Na-

tional Movement Party swept all five seats in parliamentary by-elections held on October 1, 2005. Prior to the vote, Saakashvili had portrayed the elections as a referendum on his administration's performance. Whether the opposition will be able to organize and present a more credible challenge is among the most important institutional issues confronting Georgia in the near- to mid-term.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Georgia can change their government democratically. While the constitution and the election law provide for universal suffrage and equal voting rights, the November 2003 parliamentary elections, which led to President Eduard Shevardnadze's ouster, as well as previous elections, fell short of international standards for democratic elections. According to an observer mission from the OSCE, the January 2004 presidential and March 2004 parliamentary elections represented "commendable progress in relation to previous elections." The 2005 elections fit this pattern of improvement, although the absence of a political opposition capable of contesting power remains critical. Parliamentary terms are four years. Presidential terms are five years, with the next elections scheduled for 2009.

In 2005, parliament passed amendments to modify its composition that are slated to come into affect after the next parliamentary elections, scheduled to be held in 2008. The number of members of parliament will shrink from the current 235 to 150, with 100 members to be elected by party lists and 50 under a first past-the-post system.

The Rose Revolution in 2003 brought about the creation of the National Movement, which is the country's dominant party. In addition, there are two parliamentary opposition blocs, the New Conservatives-Industrialists and the Democratic Front faction (which came into being in late 2005. It is comprised of two party groups, Republicans and Conservatives, which were formerly part of the National Movement, along with a number of independent members of parliament).

The current administration of President Saakashvili has made a priority of addressing corruption, which has plagued Georgian society. A number of officials accused of corruption or embezzlement during the Shevardnadze era were arrested in 2004. In June 2005, the Georgian government adopted a National Anticorruption Strategy and Action Plan, which seeks to improve the transparency and effectiveness of the civil service, while strengthening the role of inspectors general within public agencies; the implementation of this plan is in its nascent stages. Georgia was ranked 130 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Georgia's constitution provides guarantees for press freedom. Before the Georgian leadership change, the country's independent press was able to publish critical political analyses, although economic constraints limited the circulation of most newspapers, especially outside the capital. In December 2004, a Law on Broadcasting was adopted, and in 2005, State TV and Radio was transformed into Georgian Public Broadcasting. The Public Broadcasting entity is supervised by a nine-member board appointed by parliament, with two candidates for each position preselected by the president from among a number of applicants. In December 2005, the board is expected to issue the first guidelines for the new leadership of public broadcasting, which are meant to give priority to the development of balanced and comprehensive information programming. In 2004, the government adopted a new law on libel, stipu-

lating that libel cases will be considered in civil rather than criminal courts. The new law provides that statements made in parliament, in the courts, and during political debates are not considered libel; moves the burden of proof to the accuser; and specifies entire companies, rather than individual reporters, as defendants. The authorities do not restrict access to the internet.

Freedom of religion is respected for the country's largely Georgian Orthodox population and some minority religious groups traditional to the country, including Muslims and Jews. However, members of nontraditional religious minority groups, including Baptists, Pentecostals, and Jehovah's Witnesses, face harassment and intimidation by law enforcement officials and certain Georgian Orthodox Church extremists.

Although the government does not restrict academic freedom, the country's educational system confronts widespread corruption. Students often pay bribes to receive high marks or pass entrance examinations. To meet this challenge, national exams for university admissions were administered by the Education Ministry in 2005.

The authorities generally respect freedom of association and assembly. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are able to register and operate without arbitrary restrictions. The community of NGOs in Georgia is large and active and plays an important role in public debates and discussions. The constitution and the Law on Trade Unions allow workers to organize and prohibit antiunion discrimination. The Amalgamated Trade Unions of Georgia, the successor to the union that existed during the Soviet period, is the principal trade union confederation. It is not affiliated with, and receives no funding from, the government.

The judiciary is not fully independent and continues to suffer from extensive corruption and from pressure exerted by the executive branch. The payment of bribes to judges is reported to be common. As part of the effort to reduce corruption and improve the performance of law enforcement, the government dismissed half of the police force in August 2004. Despite recent reform efforts, the law enforcement community continues to face accusations of torture, particularly with respect to pretrial detention. In 2005, a measure was adopted that places a limit of four months on pretrial detention, as opposed to the previous limit of nine months. Testimony by police officials is now open to challenge in the courts.

The government generally respects the rights of ethnic minorities in non-conflict areas of the country. Freedom of residence, as well as the freedom to travel to and from the country, is generally respected.

Societal violence against women is a problem. While there are no laws that specifically criminalize spousal abuse or violence against women, the Criminal Code classifies rape, including spousal rape, and sexual coercion as crimes. Although Georgian law prohibits trafficking in persons, the country is a source, transit point, and destination for trafficked persons.

Germany

Population: 82,500,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$25,270 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 79 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Protestant (34 percent),
 Roman Catholic (34 percent), Muslim (3.7 percent),
 other (28.3 percent)

Ethnic Groups: German (92 percent), Turkish (2 percent),
 other (6 percent)

Capital: Berlin



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In September 2005 parliamentary elections, the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU), representing the center-right opposition, won the most seats, defeating Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder's Social Democratic Party (SPD) by a small margin. Unable to form a government with its preferred junior partner, the CDU/CSU formed a grand coalition with the SPD.

The modern German state emerged in 1871 out of the fragmented Germanic states that existed until then. Defeated in World War I, and again more devastatingly in World War II, Germany was divided into two states—the capitalist and democratic Federal Republic in the west and the Communist German Democratic Republic in the east—during the ensuing Cold War. In 1989, the Berlin Wall keeping East Berliners from fleeing west was opened, and in 1990, East Germany was absorbed into the Federal Republic. Despite more than a decade of massive subsidies, eastern Germany remains considerably poorer than the rest of the country, with higher levels of unemployment. This economic situation is seen to have contributed to higher levels of support for political groups on the far right and far left in the former East.

A coalition of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Green Party was first elected in 1998, with the SPD's Gerhard Schroeder as chancellor. The government's first term was marked by slow economic growth (just 0.6 percent and 0.2 percent in 2001 and 2002), and the SPD's poll ratings languished in late 2002. However, Schroeder's vocal opposition to the U.S.-led war in Iraq appealed to voters, and the coalition parties bested the opposition alliance of the Christian Democratic Union and Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) in the September 2002 legislative elections.

Poll ratings sank quickly again after the election, and the SPD lagged far behind the CDU/CSU in polls for most of Schroeder's second term. The primary reason was dissatisfaction with the economy, which shrank slightly in 2003. The unemployment rate remains stubbornly high, at around 10 percent. Schroeder began to tackle this issue in earnest with labor-market reforms in 2002. His proposals included making it easier for firms to fire workers, encouraging the creation of part-time and lower-wage

"mini-jobs," and cutting benefits to the unemployed if they prove unwilling to take an available job or to move to take a job.

Nonetheless, the piecemeal reforms both irritated labor unions, a key component of the SPD's electoral base, and failed to ignite the economy quickly enough for voters. Gross domestic product (GDP) grew by just 1.6 percent in 2004 and was forecast to grow weakly in 2005 as well. Schroeder had promised in 1998 to cut unemployment to below 3.5 million, but at the end of two terms, just under 5 million were unemployed. The SPD's defeat in North Rhine-Westphalia, a heartland for the party, in May 2005 led the chancellor to call for a vote of confidence, which he planned to lose in order to bring elections forward by a year. He duly lost the vote, but Germany's constitution makes it difficult to call early elections. Only after the Constitutional Court approved the move were parliamentary elections set for September 18.

The CDU/CSU chose Angela Merkel, its parliamentary leader, as its candidate for chancellor, and the alliance led throughout the campaign. Its preferred coalition partner was the smaller Free Democratic Party (FDP), a socially liberal party that favors free markets. The CDU/CSU's campaign was seen as lackluster and error-prone, however; Merkel named a flat-tax advocate as her finance minister designate, a move that worried many voters even though a flat tax was not part of the party's official platform. As a result, the CDU/CSU gradually lost support over the course of the campaign and in the end won just 225 seats to the SPD's 222. Though the FDP did well, winning 61 seats (against 47 in the previous Bundestag), the CDU/CSU and FDP did not have enough total seats to form a government. However, the SPD and Greens also fell short of a majority. (A newly formed Left Party, consisting of left-wing SPD rebels and the successor to East Germany's Communist party, took 54 seats in its first election.) The standoff led to protracted coalition negotiations, unusual for Germany. In the end, the only possible combination was a grand coalition between the CDU/CSU and the SPD. Merkel became Germany's first female chancellor.

In 2005, Germany's government agreed with its European Union (EU) partners to open negotiations with Turkey on EU membership, despite some German concerns about accepting Turkey. Merkel is on record as opposing Turkish membership, but the EU's official negotiating position is that negotiation does not guarantee Turkey's admission.

Germany remains in conflict with some EU partners over its budget deficit. Maintaining a deficit below 3 percent of GDP was a condition of Germany's accepting the euro as its currency, which it did in 1999. Germany breached this deficit ceiling in 2002, 2003, and 2004 and was on track to do so again in 2005. Because it was Germany that insisted on the 3 percent rule when the euro was created, this situation has given rise to some animosity from Germany's fellow EU countries, particularly the Netherlands.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Citizens of Germany can change their government democratically. The constitution provides for a lower house—the Bundestag, or parliament—elected by a 50-50 mixture of proportional representation and single-member districts, to be reelected at least every four years. The chancellor must control a majority in the Bundestag. The Bundesrat, or Federal Council, represents the states and approves much key legis-

lation, including economic bills. Its members are delegates from the individual state governments, and each state's delegation must vote as a block. The head of state is a largely ceremonial federal president, chosen jointly by the Bundestag and a group of state representatives. Germany is strongly federal; state governments have considerable authority over areas such as education and policing, as well as substantial powers to tax and spend. The chancellor is elected by the Bundestag and usually serves for the duration of a four-year legislative session. He or she can only be deposed mid-term if the Bundestag chooses a replacement (in a so-called constructive vote of no confidence).

Political pluralism in Germany has been constrained by laws restricting the far left and far right. The Communist Party of Germany was banned in the Federal Republic in 1956. However, the former ruling East German Communist Party, now the PDS, was a legal and democratic, if far-left, party that participated in state governments. It recently merged with former SPD members from the left wing of the party to form the new Left Party for the 2005 election.

The two main far-right parties—the National Democratic Party (NDP) and the German People's Union (DVU)—are hostile to immigration and the EU. Although they sometimes receive a small share of the vote—the NDP won 9 percent in a state election in Saxony in 2004—they are routinely kept out of government and pose little threat to democratic governance. Their support, like that of the Left Party, is greater in the former East Germany, where unemployment and economic conditions feed political frustration. However, the alteration of asylum laws has undercut basic support for the far-right parties, which once again won no seats in the 2005 federal election. (Parties must win at least 5 percent of the vote to be represented in the Bundestag, a provision designed to prevent the proliferation of parties and the instability that characterized Germany in the Weimar era between the world wars.) Nazism is illegal, but the government's attempts to ban the NDP were stalled in court when it was revealed that many of those testifying against the party were government agents.

Germany's government is accountable through open debates in parliament, which are covered widely in the media. The government is free of pervasive corruption and was ranked 16 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is protected in the constitution, and the media are largely free and independent. However, it remains illegal to advocate Nazism or deny the Holocaust. German authorities have sought to prosecute internet users outside Germany posting Nazi propaganda aimed at Germany, although prosecution is technically impossible to implement. In March 2003, the Constitutional Court ruled that surveillance of journalists' phone calls could be deemed legal in "serious" cases (on a case-by-case basis) by judges. The lack of a definition of "serious" is a cause for concern to reporters, who fear that the word's vagueness invites abuse. Germany is one of the few European countries without freedom of information legislation.

Freedom of belief is protected under law. Religions that fulfill certain requirements have the status of a "corporation under public law," and the government collects taxes from church members on the churches' behalf, for a fee. However, Germany has taken a strong stance against the Church of Scientology, which it deems an economic organization rather than a religion. Major parties deny membership to

Scientists, and the group has been under surveillance by government intelligence agencies. The Jehovah's Witnesses were denied public law corporation status in 1997 for failing to demonstrate "indispensable loyalty" to the democratic state, but this ruling was overturned on church-state separation grounds by the high court in 2000. However, as of November 2004, the case was still under review by the courts, which have expressed concern that the child-rearing practices of the Jehovah's Witnesses do not conform to international human rights law. The Jehovah's Witnesses do have tax-exempt status. Two states, Bavaria and Baden-Wuerttemberg, have passed laws prohibiting Muslim female teachers from wearing headscarves (*hijab*) on duty. Academic freedom is respected.

Civic groups and nongovernmental organizations may operate without hindrance. The right of peaceful assembly is not infringed upon, except in the case of outlawed groups, such as those advocating Nazism or opposing Germany's democratic order. Trade unions, farmers' groups, and business confederations are free to organize, and they have traditionally played a strong role in Germany's consensus-based, policy-making system. However, unions have weakened in recent years.

The judiciary is independent, and the rule of law prevails. The Federal Constitutional Court vets the compatibility of laws with the basic law. In addition to having its own provisions, Germany is a party to the European Convention on Human Rights. Prison conditions are adequate. Anti-immigrant sentiments have led to attacks on members of ethnic minorities.

Women's rights are strongly protected, with generous maternity policies and antidiscrimination laws, though the latter do not prevent some wage discrimination. There are six women in the 14-member federal cabinet. Limited gay partnership rights are permitted.

Ghana

Population: 22,000,000 **Political Rights:** 1*

GNI/capita: \$320 **Civil Liberties:** 2

Life Expectancy: 58 **Status:** Free

Religious Groups: Indigenous beliefs (21 percent), Muslim (16 percent), Christian (63 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Akan (44 percent), Moshi-Dagomba (16 percent), Ewe (13 percent), Ga (8 percent), other (19 percent)

Capital: Accra

Ratings Change: Ghana's rating for political rights improved from 2 to 1 due to fair and competitive presidential and parliamentary elections and a general maturing of the country's electoral institutions.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
3,4PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,2F	2,2F	1,2F



Overview:

President John Kufuor won a second four-year term in December 2004 elections that bolstered Ghana's reputa-

tion as a stable democracy. The ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) maintained its majority in concurrent parliamentary elections. A strike by doctors demanding back payment for overtime work in September 2005 crippled hospitals across the country.

Once a major slaving center and long known as the Gold Coast, Ghana, a former British possession, became black Africa's first colony to achieve independence in 1957. After the 1966 overthrow of its charismatic independence leader, Kwame Nkrumah, the country was wracked by a series of military coups for 15 years. Successive military and civilian governments vied with each other in both incompetence and deception.

In 1979, Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings led a coup against the ruling military junta and, as promised, returned power to a civilian government after a purge of corrupt senior army officers. However, the new civilian administration did not live up to Rawlings's expectations, and he seized power again in December 1981 and set up the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC). The radically socialist, populist, and brutally repressive PNDC junta banned political parties and free expression. Facing a crumbling economy, Rawlings, in the late 1980s, transformed Ghana into an early model for the structural adjustment programs urged by international lenders. A new constitution adopted in April 1992 legalized political parties; Rawlings was declared president after elections that were neither free nor fair.

The December 1996 presidential and parliamentary elections conducted under the 1992 constitution allowed Ghanaians their first opportunity since independence to choose their representatives in genuine elections. Rawlings's victory in the 1996 presidential poll, which was generally regarded as free and fair, was assured by the then-ruling party's extensive use of state media and patronage, as well as by opposition disunity.

The 2000 presidential and parliamentary polls were hailed in Africa and abroad as a successful test of Ghana's democracy. The presidential poll marked the first time in Ghana's history that one democratically elected president was succeeded by another. The opposition, led by John Kufuor and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), alleged intimidation and other irregularities as the second round of voting began. However, those claims dissipated as the polling proceeded and Kufuor's looming victory became apparent. He won soundly with 57 percent of the vote in the second round of polling, compared with 43 percent for John Atta Mills, who was vice president under Rawlings. The elections were hailed as having been conducted both freely and fairly. During concurrent legislative polls, the opposition also broke the stranglehold of Rawlings's National Democratic Congress (NDC) on parliament.

In the December 2004 presidential elections, Kufuor won 53 percent of the vote, followed by Atta Mills with 44 percent. The two other presidential candidates, Edward Mahama of the Grand Coalition (GC) and George Aggudey of the Convention People's Party (CPP), won less than 2 percent each. Mills and his party alleged irregularities and called for a vote recount, but the Electoral Commission turned down the request.

In concurrent legislative elections, in which candidates from eight parties contested 230 seats for parliament, the NPP maintained its majority. The NPP won 128 seats followed by 94 seats for the NDC, 4 for the GC, and 3 for the CPP. A coalition

of civil society groups—the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers—deployed thousands of monitors across the country for both polls. Some sporadic violence was reported, as well as a few incidents of intimidation and some irregularities, but domestic and international observers judged the elections generally free and fair.

Driven by high global prices for cocoa and gold, two of Ghana's main exports, the country's growth rate has exceeded 5 percent. The reputation of the Kufuor government for good governance has won aid from Western donors. Ghana qualified in 2004 for debt relief under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries initiative of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which will slash the country's \$6 billion external debt in half over 20 years and reduce debt service payments each year. Japan has cancelled Ghana's \$1 billion debt to Tokyo. Ghana's government in 2005 cut back on oil subsidies by raising consumer fuel prices by 50 percent.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Ghana can change their government democratically. The December 2004 presidential and parliamentary elections were considered generally fair and competitive.

The president and vice president are elected on the same ticket by popular vote for four-year terms. Members of Ghana's unicameral 230-seat parliament are elected for four-year terms.

The government of President Kufuor has made efforts to improve transparency and reduce corruption, but graft remains a widespread problem. Ghana was ranked 65 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is constitutionally guaranteed and generally respected. Numerous private radio stations operate, and several independent newspapers and magazines are published in Accra. State media outlets sometimes criticize government policies but avoid direct criticism of the president. Fulfilling a campaign promise, the Kufuor government repealed Ghana's criminal libel law and otherwise eased pressure on the press in 2001. Internet access is unrestricted.

Religious freedom is respected, and the government has increased its prosecution of perpetrators of religious violence. Academic freedom is guaranteed and respected. A ban on campus demonstrations has not been enforced or challenged.

The right to peaceful assembly and association is constitutionally guaranteed, and permits are not required for meetings or demonstrations. Numerous nongovernmental organizations operate openly and freely.

Under 2003 labor laws that conform with International Labor Organization (ILO) conventions, every worker has the right to form or join a trade union. About 20 percent of the workforce is employed in the formal sector. A national labor commission, which is composed of government, employer, and organized labor representatives, was created to help resolve labor disputes, first through mediation and then through arbitration; Kufuor set up the commission in 2003 to improve worker-employer relations.

A strike by doctors demanding back payment for overtime work in September 2005 crippled hospitals across the country. The government said the strike was illegal because of a law banning health and essential services workers from striking.

Ghanaian courts have acted with increased autonomy under the 1992 constitution, but corruption remains a problem. A parliamentary committee on judicial corruption has recommended establishing and enforcing codes of conduct, disciplin-

ary mechanisms, and transparent complaint procedures. Traditional courts often handle minor cases according to local customs that fail to meet constitutional standards. Scarce judicial resources compromise the judicial process, leading to long periods of pretrial detention under harsh conditions.

Members of the police force were responsible for several deaths in 2005, and there were credible allegations that police beat and abused suspects, prisoners, and demonstrators. While the government has taken steps to improve prisons, conditions are very harsh and sometimes life threatening; prisons are overcrowded and do not provide prisoners with adequate nutrition or medical care. Security forces manning checkpoints to catch criminals and seize weapons occasionally solicited bribes from motorists.

Ghana's National Reconciliation Commission finished hearing testimony from more than 2,000 people in 2004. The reconciliation panel was based on South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. While the hearings covered all of Ghana's history since independence, much of the focus was on the early years of rule under Rawlings in the 1980s. The proceedings were seen as a test of the flexibility of the country's democracy and of how well Ghana could look into its past, acknowledge its failings, and continue to move democratically into the future.

Communal and ethnic violence occasionally flares in Ghana. In 2005, Ghana hosted more than 15,000 refugees from who fled their country when violence broke out following disputed presidential elections in April.

Despite women's equal rights under the law, Ghanaian women suffer societal discrimination that is particularly serious in rural areas, where opportunities for education and wage employment are limited. Women's enrollment in universities, however, is increasing. Domestic violence against women is said to be common but often remains unreported. Legislation in 1998 doubled the prison sentence for rape. Female genital mutilation (FGM) was made illegal in Ghana in 1994, and those who perform the operation face a prison sentence of at least three years. In January 2004, an elderly woman was sentenced to prison for five years for performing FGM. Ghana has been coordinating with regional countries and the ILO to create a comprehensive plan to address the growing problems of child trafficking and child labor.

Greece

Population: 11,100,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$13,230 **Civil Liberties:** 2
Life Expectancy: 79 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Greek Orthodox (98 percent),
 Muslim (1.3 percent), other (0.7 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Greek (98 percent), other [including
 Macedonian, Turkish] (2 percent)
Capital: Athens



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F

Overview:

Greece's parliament elected a new president, Karolos Papoulias of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), in March 2005. Greek unions called for a 24-hour general strike in June in protest of the conservative government's economic reforms. The Greek parliament overwhelmingly approved the first European Union (EU) constitution in April at a special session. Greece tentatively considered a new name for the Republic of Macedonia proposed by a special UN envoy.

Modern Greece began in 1830, when the country gained its independence from the Ottoman Empire. The ensuing century brought continued struggle between royalists and republican forces. During World War II, Greece fell to Germany in 1941 after a failed invasion by Italy the year before. From 1942 to 1944, local Communist and royalist forces put up a strong resistance against the Nazis, which were eventually defeated with the help of British forces in 1944. National solidarity broke down in the early postwar period, when royalists won national elections and eventually defeated the Communists in a civil war. In 1967, a group of army officers staged a military coup, suspending elections and arresting hundreds of political activists. A referendum in 1974 rejected the restoration of the monarchy, and a new constitution in 1975 declared Greece a parliamentary republic.

During parliamentary elections in March 2004, the New Democracy party received 45 percent of the vote, winning 165 of the 300 seats in the unicameral parliament. New Democracy defeated the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), which won 117 seats, and the Communist Party of Greece, which captured 12 seats. A coalition of leftist and environmentalist movements (the former Synaspismos, or SYN) won six seats. PASOK had governed the country since 1981, except for a brief period from 1990 to 1993, when New Democracy was in power.

A three-year-old nationalist and xenophobic party, the far-right Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS), won 4.1 percent of the vote during European Parliament elections in June 2004. LAOS, which had failed to pass a 3 percent threshold to win seats during the March national parliamentary elections, is led by a populist journalist, Yeoryios Karatzafaris, who has been accused by various human rights groups of

holding racist and anti-Semitic views. Support for LAOS represents the largest increase in support for the far right in the country in 20 years.

In September 2005, a pan-European, neo-Nazi gathering, sponsored by the Greek far-right group Golden Dawn, took place in an undisclosed location in Greece despite a government ban. Golden Dawn members frequently paint anti-Semitic graffiti on bridges and other structures across the country.

The Greek parliament overwhelmingly approved the EU's first constitution in April at a special session. The vote was backed by 268 votes in the 300-member parliament.

Greece tentatively considered a new name for the Republic of Macedonia—Republic of Makedonia-Skopje—proposed by a special UN envoy. Greece has waged a long campaign to deny its northern neighbor's use of the "Macedonia" name, which is also that of a northern Greek province.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Greeks are free to change their government democratically. All 300 members of the unicameral parliament are elected according to a system of proportional representation. The president is elected by parliament to a five-year term. The parliament elected a new president, Karolos Papoulias of PASOK, in March 2005; he was the sole candidate. The president must be elected by a two-thirds majority or, on the third ballot, by a three-fifths majority. The Greek president has no legislative power but can declare war and grant pardons. The prime minister, the most powerful person in Greek politics, is chosen by the president and is usually the leader of the party with a majority in parliament; the current prime minister is Konstandinos Karamanlis of the New Democracy (ND).

There are currently five political parties represented in parliament: the conservative governing party, ND; the main opposition, PASOK; the Communist Party of Greece (KKE); the Coalition of Left and Progressive Forces (Synaspismos); and the Democratic Socialist Movement (Dikki).

The country generally has fair electoral laws, equal campaigning opportunities, and a system of compulsory voting that is weakly enforced. Some representatives of the Roma (Gypsy) community complain that certain municipalities failed to register Romanies who did not fulfill basic residency requirements.

Corruption continues to be a problem, although efforts have been made by the government to rectify this situation. Greece was ranked 47 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index, the lowest among all EU members. However, Prime Minister Karamanlis has been running a campaign to clean up corruption, including an investigation into bribe-taking judges. Moreover, according to the U.S. State Department, in 2004, the Bureau of Internal Affairs of the Ministry of Public Order—which oversees the country's police forces—undertook several anticorruption measures, including the dismissal and suspension of officers involved in corrupt activities such as taking bribes and forging documents.

The constitution includes provisions for freedom of speech and the press. There are, however, some limits to speech that incites fear, violence, and disharmony among the population, as well as publications that offend religious beliefs, that are obscene, or that advocate the violent overthrow of the political system. Under a new media

law in the country, media companies—television stations, radio stations, newspapers and magazines—are required to have registered shares held by individuals. The law, which also limits foreign ownership of Greek media, has been cited by the EU for possible incompatibility with the provisions of the European Community Treaty dealing with the free movement of capital and freedom of establishment. Internet access is not restricted. In April, the Austrian author Gerhard Haderer was acquitted of charges of blasphemy that were lodged against him in January by a Greek court for his depiction of Jesus Christ as a "hippie" in his book, *The Life of Jesus*. The government does not restrict academic freedom.

While the constitution guarantees the right of all citizens to practice the religion of their choice, the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ is considered the "prevailing" religion of the country. Members of some minority religions face social discrimination and legal barriers. For example, some religious groups have encountered legal restrictions to inheriting property as a religious entity. Although all religions, including the Orthodox Church, have to pay taxes, the government subsidizes the Orthodox Church. In addition, "known" religious groups are required to obtain permits from the Ministry of Education and Religion in order to open houses of worship. The law prohibits proselytizing, and consequently, Mormons and members of the Jehovah's Witnesses are routinely arrested and have reported abuse by police officers for their religious beliefs. Anti-Semitism remains a problem in the country. Athens has no official, state-recognized mosque. Muslims in the city must meet and pray in dozens of unofficial prayer rooms, some in garages and private homes. Although the parliament passed a bill in 2003 allowing the construction of the city's first Islamic cultural center, building has not yet begun.

The constitution allows for freedom of association, although there are limits on the freedom of groups representing ethnic minorities. International and national nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) generally operated in the country without government interference. In some cases domestic human rights groups received government funding and assistance. The right to freedom of assembly is guaranteed by the constitution and generally protected by the government.

The constitution and laws provide workers with the right to join and form unions. Twenty-six percent of all nonagricultural salaried workers are union members. In June 2005, Greek unions called for a 24-hour general strike to protest the conservative government's economic reforms, which include a pension overhaul and the introduction of short-term civil service contracts. This strike follows another widespread strike across the country in March 2005 that was called by trade unions to protest rising unemployment and inflation, as well as pension and social security issues. The country's deficit is almost twice the amount allowed by the stability pact for countries in the euro zone.

The judiciary is independent, and the constitution provides for public trials. However, a number of NGOs have raised concerns about the ill-treatment of detainees, especially immigrants and members of religious minorities, by law enforcement officials. Concerns have also been raised about the overcrowding of prisons.

Although military service is compulsory, conscientious objectors (for religious and ideological reasons) can participate in an alternative national service—to work in state hospitals or municipal services in lieu of military service. However, the law has been criticized, in part, for imposing a punitive length of time: alternative service

is double the 18 months required for military service. In March, the UN Human Rights Committee criticized Greece's conscientious objector policy for its length of service and its punitive character.

Despite government efforts, racial intolerance is still pervasive in society and is often expressed by people in the media, in politics, and in the Orthodox Church. Ethnic and religious minority groups face a number of barriers. The government does not officially recognize the existence of any non-Muslim minority groups, particularly Slavophones. In addition, the government does not recognize Macedonian as a language, as officials fear the secessionist aspirations of this group. Using the term *Turkos* or *Tourkikos* ("Turk" and "Turkish," respectively) in the title of an association is illegal and may lead to persecution. Police officers have recently been provided with sensitivity training with respect to human rights and the prohibition of racial discrimination.

Immigrants are disproportionately affected by institutional problems in the judicial system. Bureaucratic delays in the legalization process for immigrants forces many into a semi-legal status when they are not able to effectively renew their immigration papers, putting them in jeopardy of deportation. In addition, because the translation service in the Greek court system is underfinanced, many defendants who do not speak Greek are not properly advised of their rights. Greece has been criticized by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and human rights organizations for its treatment of thousands of asylum seekers, many of whom cross into the country from Turkey. The BBC reported that many migrants who manage to enter the country illegally are locked up in unhygienic, overcrowded detention centers, without any prior screening to determine whether their claims are legitimate.

The Roma community continues to face considerable discrimination. In preparation for the 2004 Olympic Games, more than a hundred Roma were evicted in 2002 from a construction site in Athens near the Olympic stadium. Amnesty International has reported that the government has yet to honor its agreement to effectively provide these individuals with rent subsidies to live in alternative accommodations.

Women lack specific legislation to deal with domestic violence and, in addition, face sex-based discrimination in the workplace. Progress, however, has been made for women in politics. During the 2004 elections, women gained 14 percent of the seats in parliament, almost double the 8.7 percent they had held after previous elections.

Trafficking in women and children for prostitution remains a problem, despite efforts by the government over the past few years to address the issue. The country was placed on the U.S. State Department's Tier 2 Watch List for a second consecutive year for failing to make significant efforts to combat trafficking; Greece is the only Western European country with this rating. Some law enforcement officials, on the payroll of organized crime gangs, aid traffickers. A number of NGOs are working in the country to combat trafficking and have received financial and other assistance from the government, which has made efforts in the area of prevention by launching a national victim's hotline in 2005 and co-sponsoring training on the implementation of the trafficking law.

Grenada

Population: 100,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$3,760 **Civil Liberties:** 2
Life Expectancy: 71 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (53 percent),
Anglican (13.8 percent), other Protestant (33.2 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Black (82 percent), mulatto (13 percent),
European and East Indian (5 percent)
Capital: St. George's

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F

Overview:

Prime Minister Keith Mitchell continued to battle allegations of corruption in 2005. As the island began to recuperate from the devastation wrought by Hurricane Ivan in 2004, the government completed an inquiry into allegations of police looting and negligence in the aftermath of the storm.

Grenada, a Commonwealth member that gained independence from Britain in 1974, includes the islands of Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Maurice Bishop's Marxist New Jewel Movement seized power in 1979. In 1983, Bishop was murdered by New Jewel hard-liners Bernard Coard and Hudson Austin, who took control of the country in the name of the People's Revolutionary Government (PRG). A joint U.S.-Caribbean military intervention removed the PRG. In 1986, Coard and 18 others were sentenced to death; subsequently, 2 were pardoned, and 17—who became known as the "Grenada 17"—had their sentences commuted to life imprisonment.

Grenada has been ruled by Prime Minister Keith Mitchell since he first came to power in the 1995 elections, when his New National Party (NNP) won a bare majority of 8 seats in the 15-seat House of Representatives. In January 1999, Mitchell called elections 18 months early after the resignation of Foreign Minister Raphael Fletcher left the ruling NNP with a minority government of seven seats in the House of Representatives; the election results left his party with a clean sweep of all 15 seats.

In the run-up to the November 7, 2003, elections, the Mitchell government was accused of garnering voter support by giving public workers retroactive payments. The opposition also reported discrepancies in voter lists. Nevertheless, the elections were deemed to be generally free and fair. The NNP captured 8 seats, while the National Democratic Party (NDP), headed by Tillman Thomas, won 7 seats.

Relations between the Mitchell government and the parliamentary opposition remained contentious, with frequent allegations of wrongdoing. An inquiry continued into accusations that Mitchell accepted \$190,000 from German-born Eric E. Resteiner in exchange for Resteiner's appointment as trade counselor for Grenada. Mitchell maintained that the money had been approved by the cabinet and was for legitimate expenses regarding trade promotion. In February 2005, Grenadian authorities began investigations into the possibility of fraud in the Agricultural Emer-

gency Rehabilitation Program when farmers began to complain that they had not received payments.

In March 2004, the Grenada high court ruled unconstitutional the sentences given to 14 members of the Grenada 17. The government appealed the decision to the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court and won a reversal of the high-court decision. The 17 now remain in jail pending an appeal to the Privy Council in London. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission—which was formally inaugurated in September 2001 and has a mandate to investigate violence from the mid-1970s to the late 1980s—is expected to review the convictions of the Grenada 17. However, subsequent delays and controversies have hampered the inquiry and delayed the release of the final report. Upon the death of former U.S. President Ronald Reagan in 2004, Grenada's parliament passed a resolution praising the former president's role in restoring democracy to the island.

In September 2004, Grenada was all but ruined by Hurricane Ivan. The damage neared \$900 million, more than twice the country's annual GDP. Agriculture and tourism were upended, and unemployment jumped to 20 percent. However, the devastation failed to inspire a detente between the government of Prime Minister Mitchell and the opposition, which has sued to contest the government's one-seat majority in the parliament.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Grenada can change their government democratically. The 2003 parliamentary elections were considered generally free and fair, despite some allegations of voter-list manipulation. The bicameral parliament consists of the directly elected 15-seat House of Representatives, whose members serve five-year terms, and the 13-seat Senate, to which the prime minister appoints 10 senators and the opposition leader 3. The prime minister is typically the leader of the majority party in the House of Representatives and appointed by the governor general, who represents the British monarchy.

Grenada's main political parties are the ruling New National Party (NNP), the minority party of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), the Grenada United Labor Party (GULP), and the People Labor Movement (PLM).

Grenada was not ranked by Transparency International in its 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index. After the suspension of the Economic Citizenship Program that allowed the purchase of Grenadian nationality following September 11, 2001, allegations surfaced in August 2004 that some passports had been issued without following appropriate procedures and that the records of these documents were missing from the Immigration Department; the controversy remains unresolved.

The right to free expression is generally respected. The media, including three weekly newspapers and several other publications, are independent and freely criticize the government. A privately owned corporation, with a minority government share, owns the principal radio and television stations. In addition, there are nine privately owned radio stations, one privately owned television station, and a privately owned cable company. All media outlets are independent of the government and regularly report on various political views. Access to the internet is unrestricted.

Citizens of Grenada generally enjoy the free exercise of religious beliefs, and there are no official restrictions on academic freedom.

Constitutional guarantees regarding freedom of assembly and association are respected. Grenada has a robust civil society that participates actively in domestic and international discussions, although limited resources hamper the effectiveness of this sector.

Workers have the right to organize and bargain collectively. Numerous independent labor unions represent an estimated 20 to 25 percent of the workforce. All unions belong to the Grenada Trades Union Council (GTUC). A 1993 law gives the government the right to establish tribunals empowered to make "binding and final" rulings when a labor dispute is considered of vital interest to the state; the GTUC claimed that the law was an infringement on the right to strike.

The authority of Grenada's independent and prestigious judiciary is generally respected by the 782-member Royal Grenada Police Force. There are no military courts. In 1991, Grenada rejoined the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States court system, with the right of appeal to the Privy Council in London. Detainees and defendants are guaranteed a range of legal rights, which the government respects in practice. However, a lack of judges and facilities has created a backlog of six months to one year for cases involving serious offenses.

In June 2005, Prime Minister Keith Mitchell released a report on the actions of the Royal Grenada Police Force in the aftermath of Hurricane Ivan. Police officers were accused of looting and criticized for their inability to restore order; several top police officials were asked to resign.

Amnesty International has advocated that the government carry out an independent judicial review of the convictions of the Grenada 17. In 2003, Amnesty International classified the Grenada 17 as political prisoners, finding that their original trial was unfair and that subsequent appeals were manipulated for political reasons.

Like many Caribbean island nations, Grenada has suffered from a rise in violent, drug-related crime, particularly among increasingly disaffected youth. Prison conditions are poor, although they meet minimum international standards and the government allows visits by human rights monitors. Hurricane Ivan caused severe damage in 2004 to the country's only prison, and a new facility is expected to address some of the shortcomings of the old one. Flogging is still legal but rarely used, and then primarily as a punishment for sex crimes and theft cases.

There are no significant minority issues in Grenada. Women are represented in the government, though in greater numbers in the ministries than in parliament. Women generally earn less than men for equal work. Domestic violence against women is common, and most instances of abuse are not reported, while others are settled out of court. Spousal rape has been criminalized.

Guatemala

Population: 12,700,000 **Political Rights:** 4
GNI/capita: \$1,910 **Civil Liberties:** 4
Life Expectancy: 66 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic, Protestant,
indigenous beliefs
Ethnic Groups: Mestizo (55 percent), Amerindian
(43 percent), other (2 percent)
Capital: Guatemala City



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF

Overview:

In 2005, Guatemala continued to deal with pervasive gang violence, including a number of gang-related attacks in prisons in August and September. The country's role as a transit site for illegal drugs headed to the United States was a major issue throughout the year; in November, the head of Guatemala's antidrug agency, Adan Castillo, was charged with drug trafficking by the U.S. government. The year also saw a series of developments in the continuing efforts to bring former officials to justice for crimes committed during the country's long civil war.

The Republic of Guatemala, which was established in 1839, has endured a history of dictatorship, coups, and guerrilla insurgency. Civilian rule followed the 1985 elections, and a 36-year civil war, which claimed the lives of more than 200,000 people, ended with the signing of a peace agreement in 1996. The peace accords led to the successful demobilization of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) guerrillas and their political legalization. A truth commission mandated by the peace accords began receiving complaints of rights violations committed during the conflict. However, in a May 1999 referendum, voters rejected a package of amendments to the constitution, approved by Congress a year earlier and prepared in accordance with the peace plan. The general consensus was that the government had failed to implement substantive reforms redressing social and economic inequalities, including ending impunity in favor of the military, fully recognizing the rights of the Maya Indians, and reforming taxation to pay for health, education, and housing programs for the poor.

In July 2003, the constitutional court ruled that retired General Efraim Rios Montt—whose 18 months as ruler of Guatemala in 1982 and 1983 saw the army employ brutal, "scorched earth" tactics against the URNG—could stand for the presidency. Before the decision, violent demonstrations were staged in Guatemala City, as the National Guatemalan Republican Front (FRG) brought armed supporters to intimidate the court's justices and critics. He was later chosen as the FRG's candidate.

In November 2003 parliamentary elections, while the FRG lost its congressional majority, it still captured 44 seats, with the Grand National Alliance (GAN) holding 49 seats and National Union for Hope (UNE), 34 seats. At the local level, the FRG

was the most successful party, having won over 100 municipalities; GANA won 69; and UNE, 33. Presidential elections held concurrently with the legislative polls were marked by less than the expected violence, although voting was suspended in seven municipalities. Oscar Berger of GANA, a former mayor of Guatemala City, received 34 percent of the vote. The UNE's Alvaro Colom obtained 26 percent of the ballot, and Rios Montt came in a distant third with 19 percent. Since no candidate polled more than 50 percent, a runoff election was held on December 28 between Berger—who won with 54 percent of the vote—and Colom.

Efforts to bring to justice government officials and military personnel responsible for human rights abuses during the civil war proceeded in 2005, with mixed results. In February, Guatemala's highest court stopped the trial of 16 soldiers charged with killing more than 200 people in the village of Dos Erres in 1982. The court ruled that such massacre cases were covered by the 1996 amnesty agreed to at the end of the war; human rights groups denounced the ruling as disastrous. The following month, an appeals court shortened by 10 years the sentences of two former army officers convicted of the 1998 murder of Bishop Juan Gerardi. In July, firemen stumbled upon a vast archive of documents dealing with the government's counterinsurgency campaign, documents that security forces had consistently denied existed. The archive, which was handed over to the human rights ombudsman's office, included files recording government-orchestrated assassinations and disappearances. Also in 2005, indigenous rights activists and Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchu took her fight to charge Guatemalan leaders with genocide to Spain's Constitutional Court. In October, the court ruled that cases of genocide committed abroad could be judged in Spain, even if no Spanish citizens were involved; the decision reversed a Spanish Supreme Court ruling that had denied Menchu's petition. Her suit accused Guatemalan government and military officials of illegally imprisoning, torturing, and murdering thousands of Mayans during the civil war. (In April, five FRG activists were convicted of racial discrimination against Menchu; the five were among a group of FRG supporters who taunted Menchu during the 2003 trial to determine Rios Montt's eligibility for the presidency.)

In August, Mexican authorities arrested seven former members of the former Guatemalan counterinsurgency military unit known as the Kaibiles; four were still part of the military and were listed as deserters. Mexican officials accused them of training and working for Mexican drug gangs. The former Kaibiles had links to a special military intelligence unit, the Estado Mayor Presidencial (EMP), once set up in Guatemala's Presidential Palace. Established under the regime of Lucas Garcia, the EMP was due to be dismantled as part of the 1996 peace accords. However, that did not happen until 2003 after pressure from both the United States and the United Nations.

U.S. officials noted that, through connections with generals who ran the EMP, drug gangs had penetrated to the core of the Guatemalan state. In November, Adan Castillo—the head of Guatemala's antidrug agency, the Anti-Narcotic Analysis and Information Service (SAIA)—was arrested, along with two other SAIA officials, by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency on a trip to the United States. The agency accused them of facilitating drug imports into the United States. Officials in the United States estimate that 75 percent of the cocaine in the country is imported through Guatemala.

Guatemala is beset with crime and violence spawned by youth gangs known as

maras. The favorite targets of the gangs are public buses: 180 buses were hijacked and robbed by the gangs in 2005. The most powerful *mara*, a large gang from El Salvador known as Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13), waged a gang war against its rival M-18 in Guatemala throughout the year to take control of local drug distribution. The gang violence spilled over into the country's prisons with coordinated attacks by Salvatrucha gang members in four different prisons in August 2005. The attackers killed 35 members of the M-18 gang and wounded 80. Another attack the next month at San Jose Pinula Prison left 14 M-18 gang members dead. Authorities estimate that the gangs have at least 8,000 members in Guatemala.

During 2005, President Berger saw a number of his party allies defect from GANA after he reneged on a campaign promise not to negotiate with the FRG on political matters. However, Berger openly sought the help of FRG leader Rios Montt in a bid to pass a sweeping package of fiscal reforms through Congress. The reforms, which revamp the country's tax structure and add new taxes to fully fund various provisions of the peace accords, were passed in 2005. However, the price was a splintering of GANA, leaving it with 38 seats in Guatemala's legislature. The right-wing FRG held 31 seats; the National Unity for Hope (UNE), a center-left party, held 25 seats; the National Advancement Party (PAN) held 17 seats; and the Patriotic Party (PP), formerly a part of GANA, held 9 seats. A number of small parties and independents held the remaining 15 seats, including the New National Alliance (ANN), the Unionist Party (PU), the Guatemalan Christian Democracy (DCG), and the URNG.

In October, Tropical Storm Stan caused massive landslides and flash flooding that destroyed villages, displaced some 90,000 people, and led to the confirmed deaths of 652 mostly indigenous Guatemalans. The death toll, however, was projected to reach into the 2,000s.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Guatemala can change their government democratically. The 1985 constitution, amended in 1994, provides for a four-year presidential term and prohibits reelection. The unicameral Congress of the Republic, consisting of 158 members, is elected for four years. Though the campaigns were marred by instances of intimidation, violence, and fraud, the 2003 presidential and legislative elections were regarded by international observers as generally free and fair.

Corruption is widespread, and efforts to promote transparency have made little progress. Guatemala was ranked 117 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index. In April, a Guatemalan court stripped former president Alfonso Portillo of his immunity from prosecution. Portillo is accused of taking \$15.7 million from the country's defense budget for his personal use and the use of his associates and political allies. Portillo fled to Mexico before the court's order was official, and he is fighting extradition. (Portillo had fled Mexico and evaded prosecution there in the 1980s for killing two of his former students. He admitted to the killings during his Guatemalan presidential campaign in 1999, after the Mexican statute of limitations had expired on the case.) Portillo's vice president, Francisco Reyes Lopez, was arrested for his part in the diversion of military funds, but he was released on bail and remains in Guatemala.

While freedom of speech is protected by the constitution, those who loudly condemn the government or past human rights abuses can become targets for per-

secution. The press and most broadcast media outlets are privately owned, and media ownership is extremely concentrated. A Mexican broadcaster owns a monopoly of broadcast television networks and has significant holdings in radio. Newspaper ownership is concentrated in the hands of moderate business elites. Most newspapers have centrist or conservative editorial views. Six dailies are published in the capital, but only two of those newspapers circulate in other parts of the country.

Violence against journalists as a means of intimidation continued to diminish in 2005. However, members of paramilitary peasant groups (known as PACs) attacked two reporters covering a protest in the capital that demanded compensation for PAC service during the civil war. Guatemala's highest court suspended various criminal libel laws, which had contributed to self-censorship in the country. A regional court also convicted a former PAC member and the former mayor of Huehuetenango of kidnapping four journalists in 2003. Former military intelligence officers linked to the EMP were sentenced to 16 years in prison for leading an assault in 2003 on the home of the publisher of *elPeriodico*, the country's most independent daily. The government does not restrict internet access.

The constitution guarantees religious freedom. However, members of the indigenous communities have faced discrimination for the open practice of their Mayan religion. The government does not interfere with academic freedom. However, academics have been targets of death threats for raising questions about past human rights abuses or continuing injustices.

The constitution guarantees freedom of association. Nevertheless, human rights groups are the targets of frequent death threats and the victims of violence. The Guatemalan human rights prosecutor's office pushed for a UN-appointed commission to curb threats and attacks against human rights activists. The resulting entity, the Commission for the Investigation of Illegal Bodies and Clandestine Security Apparatus, was created in 2004. Freedom of assembly is guaranteed and is generally respected in practice. In 2005, however, police used force to break up several violent demonstrations.

Trade unions are targets of intimidation, physical attacks, and assassination, particularly in rural areas during land disputes. Workers are frequently denied the right to organize and are subjected to mass firings and blacklisting, particularly in export-processing zones, where the majority of workers are women. Sexual harassment in the workplace remains legal.

The judiciary is plagued by corruption, inefficiency, capacity shortages, and violent intimidation of judges, prosecutors, and witnesses. According to the U.S. State Department's human rights report, eight judicial sector workers were killed in 2005. While the constitution provides for a litany of procedural rights, the ineffectiveness of the judiciary restricts these rights in practice. The indigenous population continues to be shut out from the national justice system. Although indigenous languages are now being used in courtrooms around the country, Guatemalan authorities mostly dismiss traditional justice systems.

Police regularly employ lethal force, in many instances without justification. Police officers abuse and torture suspects, corruption is pervasive, and some police officers engage in extortion and kidnapping for ransom. Human rights groups have accused the police of extrajudicial killings of suspected gang members as a reaction to the growing level of crime. cursory recruitment efforts have resulted in only a hand-

fill of indigenous recruits for the National Civilian Police (PNC). Prison conditions are harsh, and prisons are rife with gang-related violence and drug-related corruption. Problems in the country's prisons had political repercussions in 2005. After a daring escape by 19 prisoners at El Infiernito prison in October, President Oscar Berger ordered the military to establish a presence at each of the country's prisons and provide a security barrier. When Defense Minister Carlos Aldana moved too slowly to implement the president's wishes, Berger fired him. Using the military to maintain order remains controversial because the peace accords created limits on how the military could be used to provide internal security. However, former president Alfonso Portillo had called out the military to maintain order and fight crime on numerous occasions.

The Berger administration has cut the size of the military by 43 percent, and the military's budget was slashed to \$15.5 million. However, for the first time in 15 years, partially because of the military reductions, the United States is providing more than \$3 million in military aid. Human rights groups denounced the resumption of military aid, noting that the Guatemalan military remained corrupt and unrepentant for human rights violations of the past and citing the military's ties to drug traffickers.

Crime is a major problem in Guatemala. More than 5,500 people were murdered in Guatemala in 2005, the highest number since the end of the civil war; Guatemala has one of the worst murder rates in the Western Hemisphere. In 2005, instances of vigilante justice increased.

More than 80 percent of the population lives below poverty levels, and infant mortality rates among the Maya are among the highest in the hemisphere. Discrimination against the Mayan community continues to be a major concern. The government approved the eviction of indigenous groups from areas of development, including the site of the Chixoy Dam project.

Violence against women and children is widespread. Street children and women, especially those believed to be engaged in prostitution, are the most common victims of murder. Women and children are drawn into prostitution both locally and in neighboring countries. In the first 10 months of 2005, Guatemalan authorities reported the murder of 531 women, a higher number than that for the same period in 2004. In June, Amnesty International released a report documenting a sharp rise in the number of women murdered and sexually assaulted since 2001, condemning the environment of impunity in which these crimes take place and calling on the government to take immediate action.

Guatemala has the highest rate of child labor in the Americas, with one-third of school-aged children forced to work on farms or in factories. As much as 20 percent of the workforce consists of children. Guatemala is a source, transit, and destination country for its own nationals and other Central American women and children trafficked for purposes of both sexual exploitation and child labor.

Guinea

Population: 9,500,000 **Political Rights:** 6
GNI/capita: \$430 **Civil Liberties:** 5
Life Expectancy: 49 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Muslim (85 percent), Christian (8 percent), indigenous beliefs (7 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Peuhl (40 percent), Malinke (30 percent), Soussou (20 percent), other (10 percent)
Capital: Conakry



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview:

The government of President Lansana Conte announced that local elections would be held in December 2005. The polls are considered to be a test of Guinea's commitment to democratic reform as concerns mount over the country's potential transition should the ailing Conte die before his term expires in 2010. Conte survived an assassination attempt in January 2005. In an effort to win back much needed foreign aid, the government in August liberalized Guinea's broadcast media.

Under Ahmed Sekou Toure, Guinea declared independence from France in 1958. Alone among France's many African colonies, Guinea rejected continued close ties with France. Paris retaliated quickly, removing or destroying all "colonial property" and enforcing an unofficial but devastating economic boycott. Sekou Toure's one-party rule became highly repressive, and Guinea was increasingly impoverished under his Soviet-style economic policies. Lansana Conte seized power in a 1984 coup and was nearly toppled by a 1996 army mutiny. In the midst of general looting in Conakry, he rallied loyal troops and reestablished his rule.

Conte was returned to office in a 1998 presidential election that was marked by state patronage, media that strongly backed the incumbent, broad manipulation of the electoral process, and opposition disunity. Although the polls were an improvement over past elections, hundreds of people were arrested after the vote, including the official third-place finisher, Alpha Conde. The June 2002 People's National Assembly elections, in which the ruling Progress and Unity Party easily won a two-thirds majority, were not considered fair because of an opposition boycott and the government's control of the electoral process. Conte won a third presidential term in a December 2003 election that was boycotted by the country's major opposition parties and that international observers criticized as neither free nor fair.

Guinea's first municipal elections in a decade were scheduled for December 2005. They are among reforms Guinea has begun taking to win back foreign aid that has dropped off because of concerns over the country's record on governance and human rights. Donors have also called on Guinea to revise electoral lists and set up an independent electoral commission.

The Brussels-based International Crisis Group said in a June 2005 report, "Stopping Guinea's Slide," that the local elections would determine the quality of Guinean democracy: "If they fail, the presidential succession will likely be disastrous." The group maintained that Guinea risked becoming West Africa's "next failed state" unless efforts were made to assure a peaceful transition following Conte's departure, arguing that tension between military-backed political agitators and the opposition could split the country along ethnic lines or open it up to former fighters in the West African region.

Conte survived an assassination attempt in Conakry in January 2005 when armed men fired several shots at the car in which he was riding. He has been in poor health in recent years and has sought treatment abroad; reports citing diplomats say Conte suffers from diabetes and a suspected heart ailment. Investigators with the Special Court for Sierra Leone have said that former Liberian president Charles Taylor was behind the assassination attempt; Conte had allegedly backed a group of rebels who ousted Taylor in 2003. In recent years, Guinean fighters have participated in conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone, while Liberian and Sierra Leonean fighters have fought in Guinea.

Guinea is one of the world's largest producers of bauxite and is also rich in gold, diamonds, and iron ore. However, corruption, mismanagement, and conflict have negatively affected the economy. In the past two years, the government has struggled to stem mounting public discontent over high prices for staple goods, which have been blamed on corruption. The World Bank in 2004 halted the disbursement of further loans to Guinea and suspended field projects following the government's failure to pay off debt-servicing arrears. Lenders have cited Guinea for bad governance, lack of transparency, corruption, and improper economic practices.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Guinea cannot change their government democratically. A referendum held in 2001 proposed to extend presidential terms from five to seven years, allow for unlimited terms in office, and eliminate presidential age limits. The provisions in the referendum were approved in a flawed vote that was boycotted by members of the opposition and marked by low turnout. The referendum also granted President Lansana Conte the power to appoint local officials and Supreme Court judges. The 114 members of the unicameral People's National Assembly are elected by direct, popular vote to serve five-year terms. The prime minister is head of government.

The government controls the national election commission, as well as registration and election procedures, including the casting and counting of votes. In the December 2003 presidential election, Conte, who reportedly captured more than 90 percent of the vote, faced only one relatively unknown opponent in the poll; a Supreme Court panel had disqualified six other presidential hopefuls for reasons ranging from a failure to pay the application fee to questionable dates of birth. Main opposition parties boycotted the election, and members of the opposition accused Conte of taking control of the electoral commission and of using state funds to finance his campaign. Although the government said turnout was more than 80 percent, human rights groups estimated that it was less than 15 percent and cited several instances of blatant vote rigging.

A key opposition leader, Alpha Conde, returned to Guinea in 2005 after two years

in self-imposed exile. He was arrested in the run-up to the 1998 presidential election and was charged with plotting to topple Conte. He spent more than two years in prison before being pardoned by presidential decree.

The cabinet and armed forces leadership include members of all major ethnic groups in Guinea, but a disproportionate number of senior military officers come from Conte's Soussou ethnic group. Politics and parties are largely defined along ethnic lines.

Corruption has been cited as a serious problem in the country by both the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Guinea was not ranked by Transparency International in its 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The government has wide powers to bar any communications that insult the president or disturb the peace, and defamation and slander are considered criminal offenses. A restrictive press law allows the government to censor or shutter publications on broad and ill-defined bases. Several newspapers in Conakry offer sharp criticism of the government despite frequent harassment. The print media have little impact in rural areas, where incomes are low and illiteracy is high. Foreign-based publications, such as the French news weekly *Jeune Afrique L'Intelligent*, are occasionally seized by authorities and prevented from being distributed if they carry articles on sensitive topics, such as the president's health. Internet access is unrestricted.

In August, Conte signed a decree to end a decades-long state monopoly on broadcasting by allowing private radio and television to operate. The decree excludes political parties and religious movements from broadcasting. "This is an important first step, but the true test will be whether the government uses political criteria in granting licenses, and whether stations are allowed to broadcast freely," said the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists.

Constitutionally protected religious rights are respected in practice, although the main body representing the country's Muslims, who constitute a majority of the population, is government controlled. In January, authorities briefly detained dozens of people at a mosque located near the site of the alleged assassination attempt against Conte.

Academic freedom is generally respected, but the government influences hiring and the content of curriculums. A handful of students were detained in March following a walkout by students at Guinea's main university. Authorities disbanded the university's student union after the strike, which was the latest in a series of protests against plans to demolish dormitories.

Several statutes restrict freedom of association and assembly in apparent contravention of constitutional guarantees. The government may ban any gathering that "threatens national unity." Nevertheless, several human rights groups and many other nongovernmental groups operate openly in Guinea. The constitution provides for the right to form and join unions. Several labor confederations compete and have the right to bargain collectively. Unions in rural areas sometimes face harassment and government interference. Police fired on demonstrators demanding their wages in a rural mining town in December 2004, killing one man. There were several strikes and demands for higher wages by miners, teachers, and others in 2005.

While nominally independent, the judicial system remains affected by corruption, nepotism, ethnic bias, and political interference, and lacks resources and

training. Minor civil cases are often handled by traditional ethnic-based courts. Arbitrary arrests and detention are common, and there are reports of persistent maltreatment and torture of detainees. Prison conditions are harsh and sometimes life threatening. Security forces commit abuses, including torture and extrajudicial execution, with impunity.

Ethnic identification is strong in Guinea, and there is widespread societal discrimination by members of all major ethnic groups. The ruling party is more ethnically integrated than opposition parties, which have clear regional and ethnic bases. The International Crisis Group has warned that squabbling for power among Guinea's three main ethnic groups—the Soussou, the Peuhl, and the Malinke—and among the country's different political and military factions could plunge the country into the kind of chaos seen in neighboring Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Cote d'Ivoire.

Women have far fewer educational and employment opportunities than men, and many societal customs discriminate against women. Constitutionally protected women's rights are often unrealized. Women have access to land, credit, and business, but inheritance laws favor men. Violence against women is said to be prevalent. Spousal abuse is a criminal offense, but security forces rarely intervene in domestic matters. Women's groups are working to eradicate the illegal, but widespread, practice of female genital mutilation.

Guinea-Bissau

Population: 1,600,000 **Political Rights:** 3*
GNI/capita: \$140 **Civil Liberties:** 4
Life Expectancy: 44 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Indigenous beliefs (50 percent),
Muslim (45 percent), Christian (5 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Balanta (30 percent), Fula (20 percent),
Manjaca (14 percent), Mandinga (13 percent), Papel (7 percent),
other (16 percent)
Capital: Bissau



Ratings Change: Guinea-Bissau's political rights rating improved from 4 to 3 due to presidential elections deemed fair and competitive.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
3,4PF	3,4PF	3,5PF	3,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	6,4PF	4,4PF	3,4PF

Overview:

Ousted military ruler Joao Bernardo Vieira won presidential elections in July 2005, defeating Malam Bacai Sanha, a former interim president, in a runoff vote. The presidential polls were the latest step in efforts to restore democratic rule in Guinea-Bissau following a civil war and six years of political turmoil. Vieira dissolved the government, led by rival Carlos Gomes Junior, in October and installed a political ally.

Guinea-Bissau won independence from Portugal in 1973, after a 12-year guerrilla war. The African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC) held power for the next 18 years. Luis Cabral became president in 1974 and made Joao Bernardo Vieira his prime minister; however, Vieira toppled Cabral in 1980. Constitutional revisions in 1991 ended the PAIGC's repressive one-party rule. Vieira, a former guerrilla commander in the war for independence, won the country's first free and fair presidential election in 1994, but he eventually came to be seen as the leader of a corrupt ruling class.

An army mutiny broke out in 1998 after Vieira sacked General Ansumane Mane, accusing him of smuggling arms to rebels in the southern Casamance region of neighboring Senegal, which for years had complained that Guinea-Bissau was backing the rebels. Encouraged by France, Senegal and Guinea sent about 3,000 troops to intervene on behalf of Vieira. The troops were eventually replaced by fewer than 600 unarmed West African peacekeepers, which made Vieira vulnerable to his overthrow in May 1999 by a military junta led by Mane.

In the November 1999 presidential elections, none of the 12 candidates won the first round. Populist Kumba Yala, of the Social Renewal Party (PRS), won a January 2000 second-round runoff over Bacai Sanha of the PAIGC, by 72 percent of the vote to 28 percent. However, fighting broke out in 2000 between military supporters of Yala and those of Mane after Mane declared himself the head of the armed forces; Mane was subsequently killed. In November 2002, Yala dissolved the National People's Assembly. He failed to promulgate a constitution approved in 2001, and Guinea-Bissau was governed by decree.

By the time the military, led by General Verissimo Correia Seabra, intervened in 2003, civil servants had not been paid for nearly a year, there was no constitution, strikes were rampant, and parliamentary elections had been postponed four times. As a result of consultations with a spectrum of political groups, a Transitional National Council (TNC) was established to oversee a pledged return to elected government. A businessman, Henrique Rosa, was named interim president. After the coup, a blanket amnesty was granted to all those involved. Nonetheless, in October 2004, soldiers staged a mutiny, killing Seabra.

In March 2004 legislative elections that were considered free and fair by international observers, the PAIGC won 45 of the 100 seats in the National People's Assembly, followed by the PRS with 35 seats, and the United Social Democratic Party (PUSD) with 17 seats. Smaller parties captured the remainder.

As president for almost two decades, Vieira had introduced multiparty politics and had liberalized the economy, but critics had accused him of human rights abuses. After returning to Guinea-Bissau in April 2005, Vieira contested the presidency as an independent candidate.

There¹ were fears that the July 2005 presidential elections would be marred by violence. Prior to the first round of voting, Yala demanded that he be reinstated as president, and several of his armed supporters briefly occupied the presidential palace; Yala had been barred from taking part in any political activity following his ouster in 2003. Vieira had also been barred from participating in the elections because of his asylum status; he had been living in exile in Portugal for six years. The Supreme Court, however, cleared the way for both Yala and Vieira to contest the presidential polls; failure to do so probably would have fueled further unrest in Guinea-Bissau,

where the armed forces have been fractured along the country's political and ethnic rivalries.

More than a dozen candidates vied for the presidency in the first round, but only three made a strong showing. Sanha won 36 percent, followed by Vieira with 29 percent, and Yala with 25 percent. Sanha's PAIGC disputed the results of the first round and demanded a recount in some parts of the country. The electoral commission said there had been some voting irregularities, but the Supreme Court determined that the voting had been free and fair. In the second round of voting, the election was tipped in favor of Vieira after Yala threw his support behind the former military ruler. Yala had the backing of many in his Balanta ethnic group, which is the country's largest.

Both Yala and Vieira are considered divisive figures in Guinea-Bissau, and the country's stability is by no means guaranteed, despite the holding of free and fair elections and the resumption of foreign aid to help rehabilitate the economy. Among the tasks that the newly elected Vieira faces is restructuring the bloated armed forces.

After failing to wait for a confidence vote by the National People's Assembly, Vieira in October replaced Gomes Junior with Aristides Gomes as prime minister. Gomes Junior, of the PAIGC—which holds the majority in the Assembly—had the right to nominate a new prime minister. Analysts said Vieira's actions called into question the new administration's commitment to establishing a unity government.

The vast majority of Guinea-Bissau's one million citizens survive on subsistence farming, and cashew nuts are a key export. The country suffers from a heavy external debt and has pervasive underemployment, although there are hopes for substantial oil reserves offshore. A conference of international donors held in February 2005 yielded pledges of millions of dollars to help Guinea-Bissau's economy recover. The successful conduct of the elections will help guarantee that the international financing is forthcoming. Salary arrears owed to civil servants, teachers, and soldiers have been paid.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Guinea-Bissau can change their government democratically. The 100 members of the unicameral Assembly are elected by popular vote to serve a maximum of four years. The president is elected for a five-year term and may serve no more than two terms.

Both direct presidential polls and legislative elections in 1994 were judged free and fair by international observers, as was the presidential 1999 election. Voting in the 1999 legislative elections was declared free and fair by international observers despite widespread delays, isolated cases of violence, and other voting irregularities. The March 2004 legislative elections were marked by strong turnout, and international observers declared the polls largely free and fair despite some administrative problems such as ballot shortages and polling booths opening late. A national electoral commission oversaw the 2005 presidential elections, and at least 200 international observers monitoring the poll said that the elections had been "free, fair, and transparent." More than 80 percent of registered voters turned out in the first round of voting; turnout was lower in the second round.

Guinea-Bissau was not ranked in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index. Official graft is a serious problem.

Freedom of speech and the press is guaranteed, but journalists occasionally practice self-censorship and face some harassment. There are several private and community radio stations. Several private newspapers publish sporadically, more because of financial constraints than government interference. Internet access is unrestricted.

Religious freedom is protected and is usually respected in practice. Guinea-Bissau expelled five leaders of the Ahmadiyya sect in 2001 and had just authorized a resumption of the sect's activities in January 2005. But officials said clashes in February 2005 between local Muslims and members of the Ahmadiyya prompted a decision to suspend the activities of the Ahmadiyya in March. The Ahmadiyya profess allegiance to Islam, but are considered heretics by the government in their native Pakistan.

Academic freedom is guaranteed and respected.

The right to peaceful assembly and association is guaranteed and usually respected in practice. Up to 15,000 people participated in a "march for peace" in May prior to the presidential election; the march was carried out peacefully. After the first round of voting in June, a small number of protesters clashed with security forces after demanding that their candidate, former president Yala, be declared the winner of the poll. Reports said three people were killed.

Nongovernmental organizations and human rights groups operate openly. The right to strike is guaranteed. Collective bargaining rights are not guaranteed, but a National Council for Social Consultation has been established, including the government, workers, and employers, to deal with labor issues. Most wages are established in bilateral negotiations.

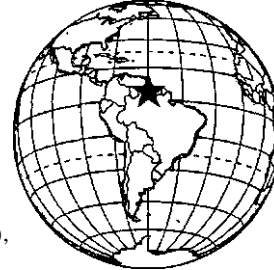
Freedom of the judiciary was increasingly limited by former president Yala. However, significant strides have been made in restoring a level of judicial independence since Yala's ouster in 2004. The transitional government reinstated Supreme Court judges who had been barred or arrested. However, poor training, scant resources, and corruption remained problems. Traditional law usually prevails in rural areas. Police routinely ignore privacy rights and protections against search and seizure. Prison conditions are poor but generally not life-threatening.

Ethnic identity is strong in Guinea-Bissau, and ethnicity is a serious factor in politics and governance. In December 2004, the new chief of staff of the armed forces appointed 65 senior officers who had been purged in recent years. The move was aimed to provide more ethnic and political balance to the upper ranks of the armed forces. The military has been dominated by the majority Balanta ethnic group. Those appointed included several close associates of Vieira.

Women face some legal and significant traditional and societal discrimination, despite legal protection. They generally do not receive equal pay for equal work and have fewer opportunities for education and jobs in the small formal sector. Women of certain ethnic groups cannot own or manage land or inherit property. Domestic violence against women is common, and female genital mutilation is legal and widespread. The government has formed a national committee to discourage the practice.

Guyana

Population: 800,000 **Political Rights:** 3*
GNI/capita: \$990 **Civil Liberties:** 3*
Life Expectancy: 63 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Christian (50 percent), Hindu (35 percent), Muslim (10 percent), other (5 percent)
Ethnic Groups: East Indian (50 percent), black (36 percent), Amerindian (7 percent), other (7 percent)
Capital: Georgetown



Ratings Change: Guyana's political rights and civil liberties ratings declined 2 to 3, and its status from Free to Partly Free, due to the government's failure to fully investigate the emergence of anticrime death squads and the growing influence of the illegal narcotics trade on the country's political system.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	3,3PF

Overview:

A 2005 official inquiry that cleared a government minister of allegations of involvement with racially tinged anti-crime death squads angered the Guyanese political opposition and soured an already tense atmosphere in the run-up to the 2006 elections. Increases in crime, violence, and political uncertainty were reflected in a growing unease about the appearance of drug gangs, with narcotics interests controlling as much as 11 percent of the country's gross domestic product.

From independence in 1966 until 1992, Guyana was ruled by the autocratic, predominantly Afro-Guyanese People's National Congress (PNC). Descendants of indentured workers from India—known as Indo-Guyanese—make up about half of the population, while about 36 percent are Afro-Guyanese descended from African slaves.

In 1992, Cheddi Jagan was elected president in Guyana's first free and fair election. Upon his death five years later, he was succeeded by his wife, Janet, who resigned in 1999 due to poor health. Her successor, Finance Minister Bharrat Jagdeo of the PPP/C—an alliance of the predominantly Indo-Guyanese People's Progressive Party (PPP) and the Civic Party—was reelected in March 2001 after 90 percent of eligible voters turned out to cast their ballots in voting that showed the country's continuing divisions along racial lines. Jagdeo's first initiative on being declared the winner was to make a televised national appeal to his countrymen to begin a process of national healing. In mid-2001, violence erupted in several small towns in protest against crime, poverty, and poor public services.

A rising crime rate and a parliamentary impasse dominated Guyana's political scene throughout 2002. The PPP/C and the main opposition People's National Congress/Reform (PNC/R) traded bitter words over the issue of payment for opposition members engaged in a boycott of parliament that began in March 2002 and lasted for 14 months.

In 2002, an outbreak of violent crime exacerbated uneasy relations between the two main ethnic groups. In September, the PPP/C-dominated parliament passed four anticrime initiatives. However, PNC/R representatives who boycotted the legislative session claimed that the measures would not solve Guyana's crime problem, but rather were meant "to arm the regime with the draconian powers of dictatorship." In January 2003, Amnesty International said that the recently adopted anticrime legislation's mandatory death penalty provisions for those committing a "terrorist act" were "in breach of international law."

The political climate appeared to improve, however briefly, in early 2004, when the two main parties announced that they had reached agreement on a wide variety of issues, including tax reform, procurement, and the composition of the commissions that control appointments, promotions, and discipline in the judiciary, the police, public administration, and public education.

Then, in January 2004, a police informant brought public accusations of the existence of death squads whose members included serving and former police officials, who enjoyed official sanction and had killed some 64 people. Investigations of gun licenses and telephone records revealed alleged links to Guyana's home affairs minister, and both the United States and Canada revoked the minister's visa without publicly stating their reasons. However, efforts to probe the charges, which created both a domestic and an international outcry, ground to a standstill when the informant himself was murdered in June and the chief magistrate heading the inquiry quit, following reports that she herself was on a death squad "hit list." The charges also spilled over into the political arena, when the PNC/R announced it was breaking off a "constructive engagement" dialogue with the government begun in May 2003.

Officials admitted that following the death of the informant—who alleged the death squads targeted Afro-Guyanese in majority-black villages—potential witnesses were afraid to come forward. In protest of the alleged involvement of the home affairs minister with the death squads, the PNC/R boycotted most sessions of parliament for several weeks, including the presentation and debate of the 2004 budget. The breakdown occurred just after the two parties announced agreement on a wide range of issues.

Although an official inquiry in 2005 largely exonerated Home Affairs Minister Ronald Gajraj of involvement with the death squads, it criticized various aspects of his conduct, such as using as an informant a known criminal who—it was later revealed—was a professional hit man, and granting firearms licenses before police background checks of applicants were finished. Significant questions remained unanswered regarding Gajraj's alleged involvement in serious criminal activities. The opposition called for an investigation that met minimum international requirements, such as a credible and secure witness protection program and a role for the Caribbean Community and Common Market (Caricom) and other international bodies in the taking of evidence both inside and out of the country.

On March 1, 2005, the State Department's International Narcotics Control Strategy Report described Guyana as an increasingly important drug-transit country, whose inadequate resources for law enforcement, poor interagency coordination, and weak judicial system reflected a lack of political will to deal with the issue and was emblematic of counter-narcotics operations compromised by corruption and

official interference. The informal economy, it said, is driven primarily by drug proceeds and may be equal to 50-60 percent of formal-sector economic activity.

In January 2005, the government declared Georgetown a disaster zone as severe flooding followed days of continuous rain. More than 30 people were killed, tens of thousands of people displaced from their homes, and widespread damage was done to agriculture. The record rainfalls helped dampen prospects for an economic turnaround.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Guyana can change their government democratically. The 2001 elections generated a broader consensus about the importance of election reform to the democratic process. The 1980 constitution provides for a strong president and a 65-seat National Assembly, elected every five years. An Assembly Speaker is also elected, and two additional, nonvoting, members are appointed by the president. The leader of the party winning the plurality of parliamentary seats becomes president for a five-year term, and the president appoints the prime minister and cabinet.

The PNC/R has said it will not run in the 2006 election unless the Guyana Elections Commission carries out a full re-registration of voters to cleanse the electoral roll and thus prevent ballot rigging. Critics also say the commission should be reconstituted as a nonpartisan body after the 2006 elections, rather than have its members continue to be nominated by the two main parties. The most important political parties or groupings in Guyana are the Alliance for Guyana (AFG; including the Guyana Labor Party and the Working People's Alliance); the Guyana Action Party (GAP); the Guyana Labor Party (GLP), the People's National Congress/Reform (PNC/P), the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C); Rise, Organize and Rebuild (ROAR); The United Force (TUF), and the Working People's Alliance (WPA).

Guyana was ranked 117 out of 159 countries surveyed by Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index. The U.S. State Department has declared the country to be a transshipment point for South American cocaine destined for North America and Europe, with counter-narcotics efforts undermined by corruption that is allegedly widespread and reaches to high levels of government, but remains uninvestigated.

Several independent newspapers operate freely, including the daily *Stabroek News*. The government owns and operates the country's sole radio station, which broadcasts on three frequencies, and there are no private radio stations. Seventeen privately owned television stations freely criticize the government. However, opposition party leaders complain that they lack access to the state media. There were no government restrictions on the internet.

Guyanese generally enjoy freedom of religion, and the government does not restrict academic freedom.

The government largely respects freedom of assembly and association in practice. The freedom to organize labor unions is also generally respected. Labor unions are well organized. However, companies are not obligated to recognize unions in former state enterprises sold off by the government.

The judicial system is independent, although due process is undermined by shortages of staff and funds. Guyana was the only former British colony in the Caribbean to have cut all ties to the Privy Council of London, the court of last resort

for other former colonies in the region. In 2005, Guyana was one of only a handful of Caribbean countries to adopt the Trinidad-based Caribbean Court of Justice as its highest appellate court, replacing the Privy Council. Prisons are overcrowded, and conditions are poor.

The Guyana Defence Force and the Guyana Police Force are under civilian control, the latter invested with the authority to make arrests and maintain law and order throughout the country. Racial polarization has seriously eroded Guyana law enforcement. Many Indo-Guyanese say they are victims of Afro-Guyanese criminals at the same time that they are largely ignored by the predominantly Afro-Guyanese police; many Afro-Guyanese claim that the police are manipulated by the government for its own purposes. Although official inquiries have repeatedly pointed to the need for improved investigative techniques, more funding, community-oriented policing, better disciplinary procedures, and greater accountability—as well as a better ethnic balance—in the police force, the government has given mostly lip service to the proposed reforms. While authorities have taken some steps to investigate extrajudicial killings, and charges have been brought against some officers, abuses are still committed with impunity.

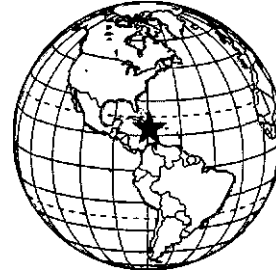
Racial clashes have diminished within the last decade. However, long-standing animosity between Afro- and Indo-Guyanese remains a deep concern. A Racial Hostility Bill passed in September 2002 increased the penalties for race-based crimes. In May 2003, the government appointed an ethnic relations commission to help combat discrimination and reduce social tensions.

Nine groups of indigenous peoples in Guyana number approximately 80,000 people. Human rights violations against them are widespread and pervasive, particularly concerning the failure of the state to adequately respect indigenous land and resource rights. Indigenous peoples' attempts to seek redress through the courts have been met with unwarranted delays by the judiciary. On a positive note, in September 2005, five Amerindian communities were presented with land titles. However, a month later, a joint coalition of indigenous nongovernmental organizations charged that some provisions of a new Amerindian bill were unacceptable, as their rights to lands, territories, and resources and to self-determination were neither adequately recognized nor protected, and that those provisions were incompatible with the constitution and international human rights laws. The Guyana Action Party enjoys strong Amerindian support in the country's south.

Violence against women, including domestic violence, is widespread. Although rape, including spousal rape, is illegal, it is a serious but infrequently reported or prosecuted problem. While increasing numbers of victims report these crimes to the authorities, victims are socially stigmatized. The Guyana Human Rights Association has charged that the legal system's treatment of victims of sexual violence is intentionally and systematically humiliating. Sodomy is punishable with up to life in prison. Guyana has the second highest HIV prevalence rate in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Haiti

Population: 8,300,000 **Political Rights:** 7
GNI/capita: \$400 **Civil Liberties:** 6
Life Expectancy: 52 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (80 percent),
Protestant (16 percent), other (4 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Black (95 percent), mulatto and white
(5 percent)



Capital: Port-au-Prince

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
4,5PF	4,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	6,5NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF

Overview:

In 2005, Haiti descended into violence as the listless government of interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue and an ineffective UN peacekeeping force struggled to move the country toward its first democratic elections in more than five years. Ousted president Jean-Bertrand Aristide remained a popular figure among a large segment of the population, but his party was accused of fomenting violence and faced internal persecution. More than 30 candidates sought the presidency in elections scheduled for February 2006, but frontrunner and former president Rene Preval benefited from an upsurge of political support among the country's poor.

Since gaining independence from France in 1804 following a slave revolt, the Republic of Haiti has endured a history of poverty, violence, instability, and dictatorship. A 1986 military coup ended 29 years of rule by the Duvalier family, and the army ruled for most of the next eight years. Under international pressure, the military permitted the implementation of a French-style constitution in 1987.

Jean-Bertrand Aristide was first elected president in 1990. After calling on his supporters to use force in defending his government, he was deposed by a military triumvirate after only eight months in office and sent into exile. While paramilitary thugs terrorized the populace, the regime engaged in blatant narcotics trafficking. The United States and the United Nations imposed a trade and oil embargo, and the United Nations authorized the deployment of a multinational force in July 1994 to facilitate the return of the legitimate Haitian authorities. In September 1994, facing an imminent U.S. invasion, the officers stepped down. U.S. troops took control of the country, and Aristide was reinstated. Aristide dismantled the military before the June 1995 parliamentary elections got under way. International observers questioned the legitimacy of the election, and Aristide's supporters fell out among themselves. The more militant Lavalas Family (FL) Party remained firmly behind him, while the National Front for Change and Democracy (FNCD), a leftist coalition that had backed him in 1990, claimed fraud and boycotted the runoff elections. The FL won an overwhelming parliamentary majority.

The FL nominated Rene Preval, who had been Aristide's prime minister in 1991, as its presidential candidate, despite the fact that he was not a party member. In the

December 17, 1995, election, which was marred by irregularities and fraud, Preval won about 89 percent of the vote with a turnout of less than one-third of those eligible; he took office on February 7, 1996. The United Nations had planned to withdraw its troops by the end of the month. The new U.S.-trained Haitian National Police (HNP), however, lacked the competence to fill the void. At Preval's urging, the United Nations extended its stay but by June cut its presence to 1,300; the final U.S. combat force had withdrawn two months earlier.

Aristide, previously revered as a defender of the powerless, was swept to victory again in November 2000. The elections were boycotted by all major opposition parties and held amid widespread civil unrest and voter intimidation. Aristide ran on a populist platform of economic reactivation; opponents claimed he was bent on establishing a one-party state. Aristide's win of nearly 92 percent of the vote in the presidential poll was mirrored in contests for nine Senate seats—all won by his FL party—giving his new government all but one seat in the upper house. In May 2000 parliamentary elections, which opponents claimed were rigged, the FL won 80 percent of the seats in the lower house.

Although constitutionally elected, Aristide ultimately lacked the domestic legitimacy and international backing to stay in power. Aristide's troubled government, unable to overcome the fraudulent elections of 2000, found itself alone as the mandates of four senators and all 83 deputies expired on January 12, 2004.

With no possibility for popular elections to be held in January and left with only 15 sitting senators—9 had already resigned—Aristide would be forced to govern by decree. The opposition, united under the Democratic Convergence (DC), remained unwilling to negotiate a political solution that would keep Aristide in office. In the meantime, an armed revolt, led by a combination of Haitian political gangs and former army officers, threatened Aristide's hold on power. The United States and France declined to send peacekeepers in the absence of a political settlement between Aristide and opposition groups, and he was forced to resign and accept eventual exile in South Africa.

The circumstances surrounding Aristide's resignation on February 29, 2004, were quickly papered over by a constitutional transition that elevated Boniface Alexandre, head of the Supreme Court, to the position of president. Former prime minister Yvon Neptune, an Aristide ally, agreed to remain in office to help the transition process. Political decay continued throughout the rest of the country. By March 1, the National Resistance Front for the Liberation of Haiti, led by the controversial Guy Philippe, a former soldier and the U.S.-trained chief of police of Cap-Haïtien, rolled into Port-au-Prince. Without a mandate to disarm the new arrivals, an international peacekeeping force—sent under UN auspices to restore order—limited itself to patrols, while generalized looting took place.

On March 10, a commission of elder statesmen announced that Gerard Latortue, who had been in exile in Miami, would become the country's new prime minister. The multinational peacekeeping force gradually extended its reach from the capital and was renewed by the leadership of Brazil and forces from Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay, as well as others. These forces eventually reached 7,400 troops and civilian police, but a protracted struggle only led to an uneasy peace, with the peacekeepers holding nominal control over the country but having a continuous presence only in major cities.

Political stability did not follow the anarchy that coincided with the departure of Aristide. The government of Prime Minister Latortue, lacking a strong political base, continued to try to establish order, primarily through the use of a retrained police force. During the summer of 2005, Haiti experienced an explosion in homicides and kidnappings that seriously threatened the ability of international troops to provide security for the electoral process.

The proposed 2005 electoral timetable suffered repeated postponements throughout the year. The first round of elections was originally scheduled for mid-October, then pushed back to November 20, and then further delayed. Despite the urging of the UN Security Council and other international bodies, Haitian electoral authorities decided to postpone the first round of presidential and legislative elections until February 7, 2006. The interim government and international authorities agreed that a newly elected government should be sworn into office no later than February 7, 2006—the date that would have marked the end of former president Aristide's term had he not been ousted prematurely.

Haiti's electorate consists of approximately 4.5 million potential voters, and more than 3 million had registered for the 2006 elections. Meanwhile, more than 30 candidates registered for the presidential race, but the interim government questioned the validity of those who may also have U.S. citizenship, which sparked strenuous debate among Haitians living overseas. The Provisional Electoral Council was widely seen as ineffective, and the United Nations and Organization of American States had to step in to fill the gap.

Haiti has the lowest life expectancy and highest infant mortality rates in the Western Hemisphere. Haiti's people are among the poorest in the Western Hemisphere and have the lowest levels of human development, including a literacy rate below 50 percent. In the view of many foreign and local observers, Haiti today represents the closest example of a failed state in the Western Hemisphere.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Haiti cannot change their government democratically. Credible charges of irregularities and fraud have beset every election since 1990. Haiti's 1987 constitution provides for a president elected for a five-year term, an elected National Assembly composed of the 27-member Senate and the 83-member Chamber of Deputies, and a prime minister appointed by the president. Senators are elected for six-year terms, and deputies for four-year terms.

Haiti's political party system has undergone a complete meltdown, and few organized party structures exist, although there are at least 100 political parties, most affiliated with a single leader or clique. The most relevant of these embryonic party structures in Haiti today are the Lespwa grouping of former president Rene Preval, former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide's Lavalas Party, the Protestant evangelist party of Union, and the socialist coalition party of Fusion.

Haiti was ranked 155 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech and the press continues to be limited, and violence against journalists is common. International observers find that media outlets still tend to practice self-censorship from fear of violent retribution. There are a variety of newspapers, including two French-language ones, with a combined circulation of less

than 20,000 readers. Many newspapers include a page of news in Creole. While opposition to the government can be found in the written press, access to such views is beyond the reach of most Haitians, primarily because of illiteracy and cost. There are 275 private radio stations, including more than 40 in the capital. Most stations carry news and talk shows, which many citizens regard as their only opportunity to speak out with some freedom. Television is state run and strongly biased toward the government. There are five television stations, and although satellite television is available, it has a minimal impact, as most Haitians cannot afford access to television. The few stations carrying news or opinion broadcasts express a range of views. There is no official censorship of books or films, and access to the internet is free, but Haitian citizens fear violence from nonstate actors if they express their views freely.

The government generally respects religious and academic freedom. However, the absence of a functional police force means that there is little protection for those who are persecuted for their views by state or nonstate actors.

Freedom of assembly and association, including labor rights, is not respected in practice. Haiti has rich civil society traditions at the local level, but many of its formally organized civil society groupings have been co-opted by political and economic elites for their own gain. Unions are too weak to engage in collective bargaining, and their organizing efforts are undermined by the country's high unemployment rate.

The judicial system continues to be corrupt, inefficient, and dysfunctional. The legal system is burdened by a large backlog of cases, outdated legal codes, and poor facilities. Moreover, business is conducted in French, rather than Creole, Haiti's majority language. Prison conditions are harsh, and the ponderous legal system guarantees lengthy pretrial detentions.

The Haitian National Police (HNP) force, currently estimated at 4,000 officers, virtually collapsed during the 2004 uprising and is only slowly evolving into a recognizable force. The HNP has been accused of using excessive force and mistreating detainees, and accusations of corruption are frequent. The HNP has been used against protesters attacking the government, but it is too disorganized and poorly equipped to be an effective instrument of state repression except on an ad hoc basis. Police brutality is still on the rise, and there is credible evidence of extrajudicial killings by members of the HNP. The UN peacekeeping force has helped to instill a minimum level of security in some parts of the country, but much of Haiti remains ungovernable.

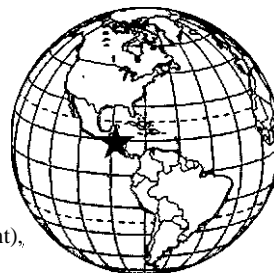
In 2005, urban violence in the Port-au-Prince slums of Cite Soleil and Bel Air proved to be especially debilitating to efforts to move the country toward new elections. Mob violence and armed gangs pose serious threats in urban areas. Former soldiers and others linked to the former military regime, as well as common criminals, are responsible for much of the violence, including political assassinations. Break-ins and armed robberies are commonplace, and many observers tie the growing violence directly to increases in the drug trade and local narcotics consumption. Haitian officials also say that the rise in crime is due to the repatriation of convicted criminals from other countries, particularly the United States. Turf wars between rival drug gangs have resulted in the killing of scores of people, including police officers. Private security forces that carry out extralegal

searches and seizures are flourishing. The trafficking of drugs and people is a serious problem.

There is widespread violence against women and children. Up to 300,000 children serve in *restavec* ("live with," in Creole), a form of unpaid domestic labor with a long national history.

Honduras

Population: 7,200,000 **Political Rights:** 3
GNI/capita: \$970 **Civil Liberties:** 3
Life Expectancy: 71 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (97 percent), other [including Protestant] (3 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Mestizo (90 percent), Amerindian (7 percent), black (2 percent), white (1 percent)
Capital: Tegucigalpa



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
3,3PF	3,3F	2,3F	2,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF

Overview:

While official results had not been announced by the end of November 2005, Manuel Zelaya of the opposition Liberal Party (PL) seemed poised to capture the presidency of Honduras in elections held that month. Gang violence, the dominant issue in the presidential campaign, continued to plague Honduras, including the murder of 28 people on a bus in December 2004. In November, mudslides and flooding caused by Tropical Storm Gamma wrought extensive destruction on the northern coast and left at least 32 people dead.

The Republic of Honduras was established in 1839, 18 years after independence from Spain. Honduras has endured decades of military rule and intermittent elected governments, with the last military regime giving way to elected civilian rule in 1982. However, the military continued to be the most powerful institution in the country through much of the 1980s and 1990s. Through the country's constitution, Honduran presidents have the power to veto the military and choose its leaders; during the latest run of democratic government, the first president to exercise that power did so in 1999.

The 1969 armed conflict between Honduras and El Salvador over land, sometimes known as the "Soccer War," ended with a peace treaty in 1980. In 1992, the International Court of Justice ruled that 69 percent of the territory in dispute should go to Honduras, and the court ruled further, in late 2003, against El Salvador's latest appeal. Nonetheless, in 2004, El Salvador again appealed the judgment, citing new evidence.

Gang violence has escalated in Honduras in recent years, including attacks against both civilians and the police. In response, Congress unanimously approved

a law in August 2003 banning gangs and stiffening the penalties for gang membership. As a result, membership in a gang is now punishable by up to 12 years in prison, and gang leaders can be fined up to \$12,000; at least 1,600 gang members have been arrested under that law since 2003. The government of President Ricardo Maduro also ordered the country's military to help maintain order in major cities, and the military has often spearheaded antigang raids as part of Maduro's "iron fist" approach to dealing with gang members. The Salvadoran gang Mara Salvatrucha (also known as MS-13) has recruited the most gang members in the country and has perpetrated countless acts of violence. In December 2004, the gang hijacked a bus in San Pedro Sula and killed 28 people aboard, leaving messages opposing Maduro's anti-gang policies and efforts to reinstate the death penalty. In early 2005, police arrested nine MS-13 members in connection the massacre, and the gang leader, Ebert Anibal Rivera, was arrested in the United States. Later in the year, Defense Minister Andreas Brehme confirmed that MS-13 had made credible death threats against Maduro, and that the gang now had links with Colombia's guerrilla group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). MS-13 was helping the FARC with its drug distribution business in Central America in exchange for arms and cash. The government reported there may be as many as 100,000 gang members and gang affiliates in the country among hundreds of gangs, some affiliated with larger international gangs such as MS-13.

After a fractious electoral campaign in 2005, power was set to change hands from President Maduro of the National Party (PN) to Jose Manuel Zelaya Rosales of the Liberal Party (PL). At the end of November, Zelaya was ahead in an incomplete vote count; however, the announcement of a Zelaya victory by the country's electoral commission drew strenuous protests from the camp of PN candidate Porfirio Lobo Sosa. In the concurrent legislative election, the PL took control of the unicameral National Congress, winning 62 seats in the 128-seat legislature; the PN won 55 seats. The Democratic Unification Party (PUD), a new party, won 5 seats, the most among minor parties. The Christian Democrats (PDC) won 4 seats, and the National Innovation and Unity Party (PINU) took 2 seats.

Zelaya and Lobo had been tied in pre-election polls, and the election campaigns for both the presidency and concurrent legislative and local elections were marred by violence. PN activists clashed with campaigners for the PL in San Pedro Sula, the country's second-largest city and business center. During several incidents, PL campaigners were left injured from severe beatings, and one PL campaigner was shot and killed. An election monitor for the PL was also killed by PN activists.

Crime, violence, and the growing problem of street gangs dominated the presidential candidates' campaign. Lobo—the former president of the country's National Congress and a former Communist who switched allegiance to the conservative PN—called for the continuation of strong antigang measures begun under Maduro and the institution of the death penalty for crimes such as sexual assault, kidnapping, and murder. While Zelaya opposed capital punishment, he advocated life sentences for those judged to be "career criminals."

In November, Tropical Storm Gamma struck the northern coast of Honduras, causing massive flooding and mudslides that destroyed homes and infrastructure. At least 25,000 people were displaced, and at least 32 people were killed.

Honduras is a very poor country; at least 70 percent of Hondurans live in poverty, and at least 30 percent of the country is unemployed.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Honduras can change their government democratically. The 2005 elections, although marred by violence and vote counting problems, were considered free and fair by observers from the Organization of American States (OAS) and local organizations. The constitution provides for a president and a 128-member, unicameral National Congress, both elected for four-year terms. The number of votes received by a party's presidential candidate determines the proportional representation of each party.

The country's major political parties include: the Liberal Party (PL), the National Party (NP), the Democratic Unification Party (PUD), the Christian Democrats (PDC), and the National Innovation and Unity Party (PINU).

Official corruption and the lingering power of the military have dominated the political scene since the return to civilian rule in 1982. In 2005, the government implemented an anticorruption plan, and Jose Manuel Zelaya Rosales made fighting corruption under a "citizens empowerment" program a major platform of his presidential campaign. However, effective enforcement of anticorruption measures is by no means assured. Honduras was ranked 107 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Authorities generally respect constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech and of the press. Newspapers circulate freely, numerous radio and television stations broadcast freely, and there is free access to the internet. However, media ownership is concentrated in the hands of a few powerful business interests with intersecting political and economic ties, resulting in self-censorship. Access to government officials and information is a significant obstacle for many journalists. In addition, corruption among journalists remains a problem. Journalists are sometimes given cash awards by government agencies and private interests, widely perceived to be payment for favorable coverage. Also, some journalists work multiple jobs, often moonlighting as public relations officials for government agencies that they cover. In May, the Supreme Court struck down restrictive defamation laws that had outlawed insulting public officials.

Freedom of religion is respected. During the year, the country's Supreme Electoral Court struck down a 184-year-old ban on clerics' running for elected office. Academic freedom also is generally honored.

Constitutional guarantees regarding freedom of association are generally respected, and citizens have the right to freely assemble. Labor unions are well organized and can strike, although labor actions often result in clashes with security forces. Labor leaders and members of religious groups and indigenous-based peasant unions pressing for land rights remain vulnerable to repression.

The judicial system is weak and open to corruption, and due process is generally not followed. Death threats and violent attacks continue against judges who take on human rights cases. Prison conditions are deplorable, and prisoners awaiting trial are housed with convicted inmates. Drug trafficking through Honduras is on the rise, and drug-related corruption is pervasive.

The police are underfunded, ill trained, understaffed, and highly corrupt. Extra-

judicial killings, arbitrary detention, and torture by the police are significant problems. Members of the police and military are accused of running death squads that target street children. The group Casa Alianza claims there have been as many as 2,300 extrajudicial killings of young people (under 23 years of age) in the streets of Honduras since 1998, with those figures increasing in 2005. A former assistant chief of the National Police claimed she knew of death squads, such as one called Los Magnificos, that were made up of police and former members of the military bent on a mission of "social cleansing." Some of these death squads grew out of the infamous Battalion 316, which operated as a military death squad performing extrajudicial killings in the 1980s. President Ricardo Maduro did admit that some overzealous elements of the police and military had carried out such executions, but he called such incidents "isolated."

The military exerts considerable, if waning, influence over the government. Moreover, the pervasive corruption in the country has also infected that institution. Military officers have been found guilty of drug trafficking, including taking sides in cartel turf wars and protecting drug shipments in transit through Honduras. During 2005, President Maduro depended on the military numerous times to maintain order in the country's crime-plagued major cities.

Although indigenous rights made advances during the late 1990s, the country's economic and security problems have stalled any momentum for further change.

Some 85,000 workers, mostly women, are employed in the low-wage *maquiladora* (assembly plant) export sector. Child labor is a problem in rural areas and in the informal economy. Prostitution, involving local women and children as well as sex workers from neighboring countries, is a serious problem. Casa Alianza estimates that as many as 10,000 girls and boys are working as prostitutes.

HIV/AIDS is on the rise in Honduras. In 2005, Honduras reported that 66,000 people died of AIDS, while 200,000 new cases were registered with the health system. The United Nations estimates that as much as 2 percent of the country's population may have HIV/AIDS.

Hungary

Population: 10,100,000 **Political Rights:** 1

GNI/capita: \$6,350 **Civil Liberties:** 1

Life Expectancy: 73 **Status:** Free

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (51.9 percent), Calvinist (15.9 percent), Lutheran (3 percent), Greek Catholic (2.6 percent), other (26.6 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Hungarian (90 percent), Roma (4 percent), German (3 percent), other (3 percent)

Capital: Budapest



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

The popularity of the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSzP) suffered in 2005 as a result of the country's mediocre economic performance. During the year, the issue of the budget deficit dominated politics; Hungary is running the second-highest deficit in the European Union (EU), which it joined in 2004. Failure to bring the deficit under control threatens Hungary's chances of adopting the euro as its currency by 2010.

King Stephen I, who ruled from 1001 to 1038, is credited with founding the Hungarian state. In the centuries that followed, Hungarian lands passed through Turkish, Polish, and Austrian hands. In the mid-nineteenth century, Hungary established a liberal constitutional monarchy under the Austrian Hapsburgs, but two world wars and a Communist dictatorship in the twentieth century forestalled true independence.

The Soviet Union crushed an uprising by Hungarians seeking to liberalize the political and economic system in 1956, an event that remains prominent in the country's consciousness. Subsequent Communist policy was relatively liberal compared with policies in the rest of the Soviet bloc, but in the late 1980s, the country's economy was in sharp decline, and the Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party came under intense pressure to accept reforms. Ultimately, the party congress dissolved itself, and Hungary held its first free, multiparty parliamentary election in 1990. Since that time, government control in Hungary has passed freely and fairly between left- and right-leaning parties. The country has followed an aggressive path of reform and pursued the popular cause of European integration.

The current political landscape reflects the thin margin of power enjoyed by the governing coalition since a closely contested 2002 parliamentary election. After two rounds of voting, Prime Minister Viktor Orban's ruling coalition of the Hungarian Civic Party-Hungarian Democratic Forum (Fidesz-MDF) won just over 44 percent of the vote (188 mandates) and was unable to retain control of parliament. The Hungarian Socialist Party (MSzP) won 42.8 percent (178 mandates), and the Alliance of Free Democrats (SzDSz) narrowly exceeded the 5 percent threshold (19 mandates).

Voters elected one candidate on a joint MSzP-SzDSz ticket. Following the election, the MSzP formed a majority government in partnership with the SzDSz. The new Socialist-Liberal government elected Peter Medgyessy as prime minister.

Medgyessy focused on fiscal consolidation. He also sent Hungarian troops into Iraq, an unpopular move for many voters. After years of negotiation, and an 84 percent yes vote in a referendum in 2003, Hungary entered the European Union (EU) on May 1, 2004, as 1 of 10 mostly formerly Communist countries joining the bloc. However, shortly afterward, the MSzP, like most governing parties in the EU, did badly in elections to the European Parliament, winning just 9 of 24 seats.

In August, Medgyessy initiated a cabinet reshuffle, removing the SzDSz economy and transport minister, Istvan Csillag. When the SzDSz refused to accept the decision, Medgyessy offered to resign as a way of pressuring the party to accede. However, the MSzP accepted his resignation. After appearing ready to back Peter Kiss to replace Medgyessy, the party decided instead to back Ferenc Gyurcsany, a former businessman and sports minister.

In office, Gyurcsany's biggest challenge is to bring Hungary's finances under control while keeping the support of the left wing of the MSzP. Hungary's budget deficit of around 5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) is the second-highest (as a percentage of GDP) in Europe, behind Greece. Hungary must maintain a deficit of 3 percent of GDP to adopt the euro as its currency (replacing the Hungarian forint), but the government will have to struggle to do so by the target date of 2010. The MSzP's relative weakness was shown when it failed to agree with the SzDSz on a nominee for the largely symbolic presidency, allowing the Fidesz-MDF-led opposition to pass its nominee, Laszlo Solyom, through parliament on a third ballot. A general election is due in 2006.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Hungary can change their government democratically. Voters elect representatives every four years to the 386-seat, unicameral National Assembly under a mixed system of proportional and direct representation. A proposal to move to pure proportional representation has been discussed but has not yet been adopted, as has a proposal to shrink parliament to fewer than 300 members. The Hungarian parliament elects both the president and the prime minister.

Post-Communist elections in Hungary have been generally free and fair, although some problems persist. During the heated 2002 parliamentary elections, few parties respected campaign spending caps. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe observed that state media coverage frequently favored the ruling Fidesz party, and that government-sponsored "voter education" advertisements appeared to mirror Fidesz-sponsored campaign ads.

The main political parties are the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSzP) and the conservative Fidesz-Hungarian Democratic Forum (Fidesz-MDF). The Alliance of Free Democrats (SzDSz), a free-market and limited-government party, is the third-largest party but has considerably less support than the other two, narrowly clearing the minimum 5 percent threshold required to enter parliament in 2002. No other parties won seats in the 2002 elections.

Prior to the 2002 election, Fidesz and Lungo Drom, a national Roma (Gypsy) party, concluded a political cooperation agreement. Despite this development, only

four Roma candidates were elected to the National Assembly (two from Fidesz and two from the MSzP), the same number as in the previous election. Toward the end of 2002, the European Commission reported that Hungary was not meeting its constitutional obligation to ensure direct parliamentary representation of minorities. Hungary's constitution guarantees national and ethnic minorities the right to form self-governing bodies, and all 13 recognized minorities have exercised this right.

While challenges still remain, previous and current governments have taken measures to introduce stronger penalties for bribery and to implement a long-term anticorruption strategy. However, some corruption persists. In 2003-2004, a major corruption scandal involving Hungary's second-largest bank touched then-prime minister Peter Medgyessy and Laszlo Csaba, the finance minister. Csaba was a director of K&H, the bank involved in the scandal, and Medgyessy was the chairman of Inter-Europa, another bank involved in the affair. There were allegations of questionable public tenders in 2004, and Deputy Speaker of Parliament Ferenc Wekler resigned after his personal vineyard received large state subsidies. Hungary was ranked 40 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech is respected, and independent media operate freely in Hungary, although within a highly polarized atmosphere. However, political controversy continues to trouble state television and radio. A 1996 media law requires both ruling and opposition parties to share appointments to state media oversight boards. Left-leaning opposition parties had previously accused the Fidesz Party of stacking the oversight boards with supporters. After losing power in the parliamentary elections, Fidesz leaders accused the new Socialist-Liberal government of attempting to inappropriately influence state television and radio. A large number of libel suits in 2004, some resulting in suspended prison sentences for journalists, contributed to the tense media atmosphere. Foreign ownership of Hungarian media (7 of 10 national daily newspapers) is high, but the successful launch of a private Hungarian television station has challenged the argument that state-supported media are necessary for balanced coverage. Internet access is unrestricted.

The constitution guarantees religious freedom and provides for the separation of church and state. While adherents of all religions are generally free to worship in their own manner, the state provides financial support and tax breaks to large or traditional religions, such as the Roman Catholic Church. Some critics have charged that these practices effectively discriminate against smaller denominations. The state does not restrict academic freedom.

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly, and the government respects this right in practice. Nongovernmental organizations are active in Hungary and operate without restrictions. The government respects citizens' rights to form associations, strike, and petition public authorities. Trade unions account for less than 30 percent of the workforce.

Hungary has a three-tiered, independent judiciary in addition to the Supreme Court and a Constitutional Court. The constitution guarantees equality before the law, and courts are generally fair. Limited budget resources leave the system vulnerable to outside influence, but court funding is being improved, as required by EU membership. The police have been criticized for racist attitudes toward the Roma

minority despite a government campaign against anti-Roma racism. Prisons suffer from overcrowding but generally are approaching western European standards.

Hungary implemented a legal rights protection network in 2001 to provide legal aid to the Roma community and passed an antidiscrimination law that was introduced in 2003 as a requirement of EU membership. The government has also created the Roma Coordination Council, appointed special commissioners in the Ministry of Education and Employment and the Ministry of Labor to specifically oversee Roma issues, and named a minister-without-portfolio in the prime minister's office to promote equal opportunity. However, the Roma population continues to face widespread discrimination in many respects, and Roma are five times more likely to live in poverty than the population as a whole.

In 2001, parliament passed the controversial Status Law granting special health and educational benefits to ethnic Hungarians residing outside the country, causing concern in Romania and Slovakia, which have large Hungarian minorities. In 2003, Hungary modified the application of the law to address these concerns, as well as those of the EU. In December 2004, a referendum was held on extending citizenship to Hungarians abroad, reawakening some concern among Hungary's neighbors. Though a majority voted in favor, turnout was insufficient for the referendum to pass.

Women possess the same legal rights as men, although they face hiring and pay discrimination and tend to be underrepresented in senior-level business and governmental positions. Hungary is primarily a transit point, but also a source and destination country, for trafficked persons, including women trafficked for prostitution.

Iceland

Population: 300,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$38,620 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 81 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Lutheran Church of Iceland
 (85.5 percent), other (14.5 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Homogeneous mixture of descendants
 of Norse and Celts (94 percent), population of foreign
 origin (6 percent)
Capital: Reykjavik



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

The approval rating for Prime Minister Halldor Asgrimsson dropped steadily since he took over the post in late 2004 from David Oddsson, the Independence Party leader. An Icelandic court dismissed fraud charges against Jon Asgeir Johannesson, the head of the retail investment company Baugur, which has become a leading in-

vestor in the UK's retail market. Iceland granted citizenship to former world chess champion Bobby Fischer, who arrived in the country in March 2005.

After being dominated for centuries by Denmark and Norway, Iceland gained independence from Denmark in 1944. It became a founding member of NATO in 1949 and, two years later, entered into a defense agreement with the United States that has allowed it to keep no military forces of its own. In 1985, Iceland declared itself a nuclear-free zone. Although the United States had proposed a withdrawal from Iceland, in 2003 the two countries decided that the U.S. Air Force base will remain, at least in the short term.

In general elections held on May 10, 2003, David Oddsson's right-of-center Independence Party won 34 percent of the votes, gaining only two seats more than the left-leaning Social Democratic Alliance. As a result, the Independence Party formed a ruling coalition with the Progressive Party, acceding to the condition that Oddsson would hand over the post of prime minister to Progressive Party leader Halldor Asgrimsson the following year. This condition was fulfilled on September 15, 2004, with Oddsson taking Asgrimsson's previous post as foreign minister.

Iceland began whale hunting in 2003 after not having done so since 1989. Although the program was apparently set up for "scientific" purposes, it has been severely criticized by environmentalists and Iceland's own tourism sector, which fears that the hunting could damage the country's booming whale-watching industry. In response, the Fisheries Ministry announced in June 2004 that it would cull only 25 minke whales that year, a substantial decrease from the ministry's previous projections. Countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom have formally condemned the practice, which a majority of Iceland's population supports.

In May 2004, the president, Olafur Ragnar Grimsson, refused to sign a law passed by parliament placing limits on media ownership—the first time an Icelandic president had vetoed a law in the republic's 60-year history. The veto catalyzed a constitutional controversy, as many felt that the president had overstepped the office's traditionally apolitical bounds. The controversy was exacerbated by the fact that the legislation was sponsored by then-Prime Minister Oddsson. The proposed law would have, in part, withheld broadcasting licenses from companies whose main businesses are not in the field of media or from companies that own shares in other businesses outside the field of media. The veto would have forced Icelanders to vote on the issue in a referendum. However, because the government eventually withdrew the law, a national referendum was not held.

The approval rating for Prime Minister Halldor Asgrimsson, who presided over a number of controversial issues, dropped steadily in 2005 since he took over the post in late 2004. The decline also affected support for the prime minister's party, the Progressive Party.

Iceland granted citizenship to former world chess champion Bobby Fischer, who arrived in the country in March 2005. Fischer, who is wanted in the United States for breaking international sanctions by playing a match in Yugoslavia in 1992, spent eight months in detention in Japan, where he had previously lived undetected for many years.

An Icelandic court dismissed fraud charges against Jon Asgeir Johannesson, the head of the retail investment company Baugur, which has become a leading re-

tail investor at home and abroad. According to Baugur, the charges, which were based on alleged breaches of accountancy rules, were politically motivated. The offices of *Frettabladid*, the largest daily newspaper in Iceland, were raided by police in October 2005 after an injunction was issued banning the newspaper from publishing e-mail messages and documents related to the Baugur case. Baugur owns a controlling share of Nordurljos (Northern Lights), which owns *Frettabladid*. The International Federation of Journalists warned the Icelandic government that the raid endangered press freedom in the country.

While Iceland has strong historical, cultural, and economic ties with Europe, Icelanders are hesitant to join the European Union (EU), primarily because of the EU's Common Fisheries Policy, which Icelanders believe would threaten their own fishing industry, upon which Iceland's economy is largely dependent. While Oddsson ruled out joining the EU, Asgrimsson is more EU-friendly and has expressed willingness to compromise on fisheries issues. The largest opposition party, the Social Democrats, favors EU membership for Iceland. In the meantime, the country has access to European markets as a member of the European Economic Area.

In September 2005, the World Economic Forum ranked the Icelandic economy seventh out of 117 in the world in terms of competitiveness. The country moved up three positions from the previous year.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Iceland can change their government democratically. Foreigners can also vote in municipal elections if they have been residents in the country for at least five years (three years for Scandinavian citizens). The constitution, adopted in 1944, vests power in a president, whose functions are mainly ceremonial; a prime minister; a 63-seat, unicameral legislature (the Althingi); and a judiciary. The president is directly elected for a four-year term. The legislature is also elected for four years (subject to dissolution). The prime minister, who performs most executive functions, is appointed by the president but is responsible to the legislature. Elections are free and fair.

Five political movements are represented in the Althingi. The largest is the Independence Party, whose leader, David Oddsson, was Europe's longest-serving prime minister until he handed over power to Progressive Party leader Halldor Asgrimsson in September 2004. Although the Independence Party has dominated Icelandic politics since the country's independence, elections are competitive.

Corruption is not a problem in Iceland. Transparency International ranked Iceland the least corrupt country of the 159 countries surveyed in its 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press. A wide range of publications includes both independent and party-affiliated newspapers. An autonomous board of directors oversees the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service, which operates a number of transmitting and relay stations. There are both private and public television stations. However, media ownership is concentrated, with the Nordurljos (Northern Lights) Corporation controlling much of the private television networks, most radio stations, and two out of three of the country's national newspapers. A proposed law to restrict media ownership was the cause of one of the country's most severe political crises in 2004.

The constitution provides for the right to form religious associations and to

practice any religion freely, although nearly 90 percent of Icelanders belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church. The state financially supports and promotes the church, through a church tax and religious instruction in schools. However, citizens who do not belong to a recognized religious organization may choose to give the tax to the University of Iceland and have their children exempted from religious instruction.

Academic freedom is widely respected and enjoyed, and the education system is free of excessive political involvement.

Rights to freedom of association and peaceful assembly are respected. Many domestic and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate freely in Iceland and enjoy extensive government cooperation. In late 2004, the government cut all direct funding to the Icelandic Human Rights Center, an organization started by NGOs to collect information on human rights issues in Iceland and abroad. According to the Council of Europe, authorities felt that structural funding of independent human rights organizations from government sources was highly problematic. As a result, funding for the Center has been cut drastically. About 85 percent of all eligible workers belong to labor unions, and all enjoy the right to strike.

The judiciary is independent. The law does not provide for trial by jury, but many trials and appeals use panels consisting of several judges. All judges, at all levels, serve for life. Since amendments made in 1996, the constitution states that all people shall be treated equally before the law, regardless of sex, religion, opinion, ethnic origin, race, property, or other status. However, there is no constitutional provision specifically prohibiting racial discrimination. The U.S. State Department reports that in 2003 the UN Committee against Torture (CAT) issued a report that was critical of the country's legal provisions against torture. CAT's report states that the laws do not clearly define and prohibit torture, nor, the report argues, do the laws prohibit the court's use of evidence obtained through torture. The government disagreed with the report's findings. Prison conditions generally meet international standards.

In May 2004, the Act on Foreigners, which specifies the government's powers with regard to foreigners, including refugees and asylum seekers, was amended to close perceived loopholes in the legislation. Foreign spouses must now be at least 24 years of age. In addition, authorities can now search houses without a prior court order in some cases of suspected immigration fraud. These new provisions led to criticism by human rights organizations, which claimed the law was discriminatory and violated privacy rights.

1998, Iceland agreed to give its citizens' genetic data to a private medical research company to create a national medical record database, an action that has raised fears over privacy issues. Objections from patients and doctors, as well as security considerations, have stymied the completion of the database.

Women enjoy equal rights in Iceland, and more than 80 percent participate in the workforce. Of the 63 members of the Althingi, about 30 percent are women, although there is no quota for the representation of women in parliament. There has been some concern about women of immigrant origin, who may not have the opportunity to learn the Icelandic language and customs and may be unaware of their rights and status under the law. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance has also criticized Iceland concerning immigrant women who become sex-trade workers in the country. The government participates in the Nordic-Baltic Action Group against Human Trafficking.

India

Population: 1,103,600,000 **Political Rights:** 2
GNI/capita: \$540 **Civil Liberties:** 3
Life Expectancy: 62 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Hindu (80.5 percent),
 Muslim (13.4 percent), Christian (2.3 percent),
 other (3.8 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Indo-Aryan (72 percent), Dravidian
 (25 percent), other (3 percent)
Capital: New Delhi



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
2,4PF	2,4PF	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F

Overview:

India's year-old government, headed by the Congress Party, remained secure at the end of 2005. Its policy flexibility is somewhat constrained because the coalition depends for its majority on a group of leftist parties, which have strong views on certain economic reform and foreign policy issues. However, the government rescinded several measures introduced by the previous government, which was headed by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Those measures, which were detrimental to human rights, included controversial antiterrorism legislation and the use of biased school textbooks. The peace dialogue with Pakistan continued during the year. The two countries took further steps to expand transport and diplomatic links and held regular but inconclusive talks on eight baskets of issues, including the future of the disputed territory of Kashmir. Owing to the sustained efforts of local activists and lawyers and, at the national level, of India's Supreme Court and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), some moves were made during 2005 to ensure that the 2002 killings in Gujarat will not remain unpunished. Nevertheless, the BJP-dominated Gujarat state government remained reluctant to provide an adequate level of rehabilitation for the victims of the violence or to bring those accused of crimes to trial.

India achieved independence in 1947 with the partitioning of British India into a predominantly Hindu India, under Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, and a predominantly Muslim Pakistan. The centrist, secular Congress Party ruled almost continuously at the federal level for the first five decades of independence. From the mid-1990s onward, however, the structure of government changed. The Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) became a major factor in parliament and a regular contender for power, leading governments on three occasions. In addition, the pattern shifted from single-party to coalition governments, typically involving large numbers of parties and an increasingly important role for parties based in a single state.

The period since 1990 has also been a time of major economic reform, with the Congress government initiating a shift toward market-oriented policies following a balance of payments crisis in 1991. In December 1992, Hindu fundamentalists sup-

ported by major figures in the BJP destroyed a sixteenth-century mosque in the northern town of Ayodhya, and some 2,000 people, mainly Muslims, subsequently died in riots and police gunfire. This incident highlighted the dilemma that has plagued the BJP: on the one hand, its traditional program strongly favored a vigorous promotion of what it regarded as Hindu cultural interests; on the other, it recognized that it needed to moderate its program in order to win elections and govern.

Atal Behari Vajpayee's formation of a government in 1998 marked the arrival of the BJP as a regular contender for national leadership. His government fell after a regional party defected, but it won reelection in 1999 as the lead partner in the 22-party National Democratic Alliance. In February 2002, at least 58 people were killed in Godhra, Gujarat, when a fire broke out on a train carrying members of a Hindu extremist group. A Muslim mob was initially blamed for the fire, and in the anti-Muslim riots that followed throughout Gujarat, an estimated 2,000 people were killed and 100,000 were left homeless and dispossessed. The violence was orchestrated by Hindu nationalist groups, who organized transportation and provisions for the mobs and provided printed records of Muslim-owned property. Evidence that the BJP-led state government was complicit in the carnage prompted calls for Chief Minister Narendra Modi's dismissal. Although the central government tried to distance itself from these events, Modi retained the support of the party leadership and won state elections held later that year.

The rehabilitation of those displaced by the violence, as well as the prosecution of those responsible for murder, rape, and destruction of property, made little headway during 2005. In addition, witnesses in the few cases that have been brought to trial continue to face threats and intimidation at the hands of local authorities and Hindu nationalist sympathizers, as have lawyers and activists working on witnesses' behalf. On several occasions during 2004, the Supreme Court made attempts to correct the Gujarat state government's abysmal prosecution record. In March, it ordered that witnesses be given protection by national forces rather than by Gujarat state police; in April, it ordered that the high-profile Best Bakery case be retried outside of Gujarat; and in August, it directed the state government to review more than 2,000 closed riot cases and reexamine acquittals to determine the possibility of filing appeals. As a result, a number of cases are under review or are being retried in other states.

Relations between India and Pakistan worsened in December 2001 following an attack on the Indian parliament building by a Pakistan-based militant group, and the two countries came close to war in 2002. Following sustained diplomatic pressure on the part of the United States and others, there was some easing of tensions between the two countries. They instituted a ceasefire in November 2003, and initiated formal talks in January 2004 on eight baskets of issues, including the disputed territory of Kashmir. Follow-up discussions have continued on a regular basis, and periodic meetings of the two national leaders have made clear that they want to continue the dialogue. A number of confidence-building measures, such as improved nuclear safeguards, reopened transport links, and an increased diplomatic presence, have gradually been implemented.

In April 2005, the two governments agreed to establish a bus service between the two sides of Kashmir, restoring a road connection that had been closed for over fifty years. After an earthquake devastated Kashmir in early October, the two gov-

ernments eventually agreed to open five crossing points across the Line of Control, which separates the two halves of Kashmir, in order to facilitate family contacts and improve relief efforts. However, individuals with connections to Pakistan-based militant groups continue to carry out terrorist attacks within India. In October, three coordinated bombs set off in crowded Delhi markets killed 62 and injured several hundred.

Buoyed by improving relations with Pakistan and victories in several key state elections, as well as high levels of economic growth, the BJP government decided to call an early national election in the spring of 2004. However, in a surprise result, it was defeated—final results gave the BJP only 137 seats out of 545, and its allies also performed poorly. Consequently, the main opposition Congress Party was able to form a coalition government with a large collection of regional parties, with a majority that depended on additional parliamentary support from a group of leftist parties. In a further surprise, Congress leader Sonia Gandhi declined the position of prime minister and instead appointed former finance minister Manmohan Singh to the post. However, in a unique power-sharing arrangement, she remains party leader and wields considerable leverage over official policy.

In the postelection period, the new United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government agreed to a Common Minimum Program that promised a renewed focus on effective governance, a social-democratic budget, and the reversal of several policies initiated by the previous government, including the repeal of controversial antiterrorism legislation and the removal from state-run schools of school textbooks that had been imbued with Hindu nationalist ideology. However, the UPA has found it difficult to implement some of its economic policies because of tensions among its vast range of disparate coalition partners as well as the adversarial stance on many issues taken by the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M), one of its leftist allies. The CPI-M has strong objections to the privatization of public sector assets, any measures that will impair the job security of public sector unions, and labor law reform, and has made clear that it will strenuously resist them. The leftist parties and the Congress have also put in place certain measures designed to bring economic relief to the poor, especially a partial rural employment scheme. The government has therefore moved fairly cautiously in extending economic reform, although the main outlines of the market-oriented economic policies put in place after 1991 enjoy broad consensus.

As a political force, the BJP, now in opposition, has remained weak and plagued by in-fighting and succession battles. However, a coalition in which the BJP is a junior partner won key state elections held in Bihar; results announced in November 2005 showed a decisive defeat for the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), which is one of the key partners in the central governing coalition.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of India can change their government democratically. The 1950 constitution provides for a lower house, the 545-seat Lok Sabha (House of the People), whose members are directly elected for five-year terms (except for 2 appointed seats for Indians of European descent) and determine the leadership and composition of the government. Members of the 245-seat upper house, the Rajya Sabha (Council of States), are either elected by the state legislatures or nominated by the president; they serve

staggered six-year terms. Executive power is vested in a prime minister and a cabinet, while an indirectly elected president serves as head of state.

India is a mature democracy that has held regular and reasonably free elections since independence. A large number of regional and national parties participate, and sitting governments are thrown out of office with increasing regularity. Under the supervision of the vigilant Election Commission of India (ECI), recent elections have generally been free and fair. The spring 2004 national elections saw a decline in levels of election-related violence, but some vote fraud and other minor irregularities occurred in Bihar despite the introduction of electronic voting machines throughout the country. State elections held in Bihar and Jharkhand in February 2005 and municipal elections held in Calcutta in May, however, were marred by more widespread violence. Badly maintained voter lists and the intimidation of voters are also matters of concern.

Despite the vibrancy of the Indian political system, effective and accountable rule continues to be undermined by political in-fighting, pervasive criminality in politics, decrepit state institutions, and widespread corruption. Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index ranked India 88 out of 159 countries. The electoral system depends on black money obtained through tax evasion and other means. Politicians and civil servants are regularly caught accepting bribes or engaging in other corrupt behavior but are rarely prosecuted. Moreover, criminality is a pervasive feature of political life, and a number of candidates with criminal records have been elected, particularly in the state legislatures. In 2002, the ECI was able to implement a Supreme Court directive requiring candidates seeking election to declare their financial assets, criminal records, and educational backgrounds. However, *The Economist* reported in June 2004 that 100 of the 545 members of the Lok Sabha were facing criminal charges. In November 2005, Foreign Minister Natwar Singh was forced to resign after he was named in a UN report on the Iraqi "oil-for-food" scandal.

India's private press continues to be vigorous and is by far the freest in South Asia, although journalists face a number of constraints. In recent years, the government has occasionally used its power under the Official Secrets Act (OSA) to censor security-related articles. In May 2005, the International Federation of Journalists welcomed the passing of a Right to Information Bill and called for the scrapping of the OSA. Intimidation of journalists by a variety of actors continues; on several occasions during the year, reporters were attacked by police or others while attempting to cover the news, and a number of journalists were arrested under false charges. The broadcast media are predominantly in private hands, but the state-controlled All India Radio enjoys a dominant position, and its news coverage favors the government. Potentially inflammatory books and films are occasionally banned or censored by the national or state governments. Internet access is unrestricted, although some states have proposed legislation that would require the registration of customers at internet cafes.

The right to practice one's religion freely is generally respected. Although violence against religious minorities, including attacks on clergy and the destruction of churches and mosques, remains a problem, and prosecution of those involved in such attacks continues to be inadequate, activists have noted that levels of communal violence decreased during 2005. Members of the *sangh parivar*, a group of Hindu

nationalist organizations including the BJP, and some local media outlets promote anti-minority propaganda. Legislation on the books in several states, including Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat, criminalizes religious conversions that take place as a result of "force" or "allurement," although Tamil Nadu repealed its anticonversion law during the year. These laws have been opposed by human rights activists and religious groups, who argue that the statutes' vague provisions could be misused.

The promotion of Hindu nationalist ideology by the former BJP government also affected the educational system; textbooks rewritten to favor a Hindu extremist version of history were introduced in late 2002, despite protests from academics, minority leaders, and advocates of secular values. However, after being elected in 2004, the new Congress-led government pledged to reverse the "saffronization" of education. According to the U.S. State Department's 2005 International Religious Freedom Report, the government released new textbooks in March 2005 based on the texts used prior to the controversial 2002 updates. Nevertheless, texts that promote communal ideologies continue to be used in some private Hindu and Muslim schools. Academic freedom is also occasionally threatened by intimidation of and attacks on professors and institutions: in February, a professor in Bangalore was assaulted by student activists, apparently as a result of his support for proposed talks between the government and Naxalite rebels.

There are some restrictions on freedom of assembly and association. Section 144 of the criminal procedure code empowers state-level authorities to declare a state of emergency, restrict free assembly, and impose curfews. Officials occasionally use Section 144 to prevent demonstrations, and police sometimes use excessive force against demonstrators. Human rights groups say that police and hired thugs have occasionally beaten, arbitrarily detained, or otherwise harassed villagers and members of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) who protest forced relocation from the sites of development projects.

Human rights organizations generally operate freely. However, Amnesty International's 2004 report noted that the intimidation of human rights defenders by officials and other actors, including threats, legal harassment, the use of excessive force by police, and occasionally lethal violence, remains a concern. In Gujarat, activists and organizations that have taken an active role in pushing for justice following the 2002 riots have faced harassment from state authorities, including targeted investigations by income tax authorities or the police, according to Human Rights Watch. The work of rights activists may also be hindered by a 2001 Home Ministry order that requires organizations to obtain clearance before holding international conferences or workshops if the subject matter is "political, semi-political, communal, or religious in nature or is related to human rights." Foreign monitors are occasionally denied visas to conduct research trips in India on human rights-related issues.

Workers regularly exercise their rights to bargain collectively and strike; in September 2005, trade unions called a massive general strike to protest proposed labor law amendments. However, the Essential Services Maintenance Act enables the government to ban strikes in certain key industries and limits the right of public servants to strike. In July, protests by employees outside a Honda plant in Gurgaon, in Haryana state, turned violent when police used batons against workers. The Solidarity Center estimates that there are roughly 90 million child laborers in India. Many work in

the informal sector in hazardous conditions, and possibly 15 million of these are bonded laborers.

The judiciary is independent of the executive. Judges have exercised unprecedented activism in response to public interest litigation over official corruption, environmental issues, and other matters. However, in recent years, courts have initiated several contempt-of-court cases against activists and journalists, raising questions about their misuse of the law to intimidate those who expose the behavior of corrupt judges or who question their verdicts. Contempt laws are draconian and do not accept truth as a defense.

Corruption in the judiciary is reportedly rife, and access to justice by the socially and economically marginalized sections of society remains limited. The court system is severely backlogged and understaffed, which results in the detention of a large number of persons who are awaiting trial. In 2003, the government-appointed Malimath Committee recommended an overhaul of the Indian criminal justice system. However, rights groups noted that its proposals could weaken the rights of the accused and of women while increasing the power of judges and the police.

Particularly in rural India, instances of parallel justice dispensed by caste *panchayats* (informal councils) or Muslim religious leaders, who issue edicts concerning marriage, divorce, and other social customs, remains a concern. In the worst cases, such edicts result in violence or persecution against those who are perceived to have transgressed social norms, particularly women and members of the lower castes.

Police sometimes torture or otherwise ill-treat suspects to extract confessions or bribes. Custodial rape of female detainees continues to be a problem, as does routine abuse of ordinary prisoners, particularly minorities and members of the lower castes. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), whose profile has grown since its creation in 1993, is headed by a retired Supreme Court judge and handles roughly 75,000 complaints each year. However, while it monitors abuses, initiates investigations, and makes independent assessments, its recommendations are often not implemented and it has few enforcement powers. In addition, the commission has no jurisdiction over the armed forces, which severely hampers its effectiveness.

Reports by the NHRC, Human Rights Watch, and a number of other groups allege that police in Gujarat were given orders by the state government not to intervene during the communal violence that engulfed the state in 2002 and that police are reluctant to register complaints against or arrest those accused of murder, rape, or complicity in the rioting. After the legal machinery in Gujarat was deemed to be biased, the Supreme Court ordered two trials, including the Best Bakery case, to be retried in other states. The court also ordered the review of more than 2,000 closed complaints and 200 acquittals. These retrials and reviews are currently ongoing. More generally, the failure of the Indian criminal justice system to provide equal protection under the law to minorities, *dalits* (untouchables), and members of other lower castes and underprivileged groups, such as tribals, remains a concern.

Police, army, and paramilitary forces continue to be implicated in disappearances, extrajudicial killing, rape, torture, arbitrary detention, and destruction of homes, particularly in the context of insurgencies in Kashmir, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, and several other northeastern states. The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) and the Disturbed Areas Act remain in effect in several states, and these grant security forces broad powers of arrest and detention. Security forces also continued to

detain suspects under the broadly drawn National Security Act, which authorizes detention without charge for up to one year. The criminal procedure code requires the central or relevant state government to approve prosecution of security force members; such approval is rarely granted. As a result, impunity for security forces implicated in past human rights abuses remains the norm. After the alleged custodial rape and killing of a civilian, Thangjam Manorama, in July 2004, antigovernment protests erupted in the northeastern state of Manipur, with protestors demanding that the AFSPA be lifted. In November 2004, the prime minister announced that the government had appointed a committee to review the AFSPA.

In March 2002, the controversial Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) was passed by a special joint session of parliament. In addition to widening the definition of terrorism and banning a number of terrorist organizations, the bill also increased the state's powers of investigation and allowed for up to 90 days of preventive detention without charge. However, the act was used in a number of states to detain political opponents, members of minority groups (including tribal members, dalits, Muslims, and others), and other ordinary citizens, as well as against terrorist suspects; both Indian and international NGOs have documented that it was overwhelmingly used against Muslims. However, in a positive step, the new government repealed POTA in September 2004 and ordered a review of all cases where a suspect was held under the act.

In India's seven northeastern states, more than 40 insurgent groups, who seek either greater autonomy or complete independence for their ethnic or tribal groups, sporadically attack security forces and engage in intertribal violence. The rebel groups have also been implicated in numerous bombings, killings, abductions, and rapes of civilians. In October 2005, tension between two ethnic groups in Assam flared up, resulting in the deaths of more than 90 people and the displacement of more than 40,000. In a quarter of India's 593 districts, spanning nine states, left-wing guerrillas called Naxalites, who control some rural areas, killed more than 500 police officers, politicians, landlords, and villagers during the year. Land mine blasts, assassinations, and other instances of violence intensified in early 2005 prior to the February elections in Bihar, where such groups are most active. In November, Maoists in Bihar stormed a prison, freeing 400 prisoners and killing several members of the Ranvir Sena, an upper-caste militia. Two of the largest groups, the Maoist Communist Centre and the People's War Group (PWG), a guerrilla organization that aims to establish a Communist state in the tribal areas of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Jharkhand, Bihar, and Chhattisgarh, merged in October 2004. In January 2005, the PWG pulled out of a tentative peace process that had begun six months earlier, which led to heightened levels of violence during 2005.

The constitution bars discrimination based on caste, and laws set aside quotas in education and government jobs for members of the so-called scheduled tribes, scheduled castes (*dalits*), and other backward castes (OBCs). In addition, women and religious and ethnic minorities are adequately represented in national and local government, and in 2004, Manmohan Singh, a Sikh, became India's first prime minister from a minority group. However, members of the lower castes, as well as religious and ethnic minorities, continue to face routine unofficial discrimination and violence. The worst abuse is experienced by the 160 million *dalits*, who are often denied access to land or other public amenities, abused by landlords and police, and

forced to work in miserable conditions. In January 2005, Human Rights Watch urged the Indian government to ensure that victims of the December 2004 tsunami that struck coastal Tamil Nadu receive equal access to rehabilitation and compensation after reports surfaced that *dalit* communities were being discriminated against.

Tension between different ethnic groups over land, jobs, or resources occasionally flares into violent confrontation, and sporadic Hindu-Muslim violence remains a concern. In July 2005, ethnic Assamese began a drive to evict hundreds of Muslims from some districts in northern Assam, claiming that they were in fact migrants from Bangladesh. Other forms of discrimination against Muslims are sometimes excused in the context of ongoing tensions with Pakistan as well as the global campaign against terrorism. Although India hosts several hundred thousand refugees from various neighboring states, it has no national refugee law, and the treatment of displaced persons varies widely, according to Refugees International.

Each year, several thousand women are burned to death, driven to suicide, or otherwise killed, and countless others are harassed, beaten, or deserted by husbands, in the context of dowry and other disputes. Despite the fact that making demands for dowry is illegal and that hundreds are convicted each year, the practice continues. In August 2005, however, the lower house of parliament passed legislation intended to increase protections for women facing domestic abuse. Rape and other violence against women remain serious problems, with lower-caste and tribal women being particularly vulnerable to attacks. Muslim women and girls were subjected to horrific sexual violence during the communal violence that engulfed Gujarat in 2002, and there have been few official attempts to provide rehabilitation for those victims still alive or to prosecute their attackers, according to a 2003 Amnesty International report.

Muslim personal status laws as well as traditional Hindu practices discriminate against women in terms of inheritance rights. The malign neglect of female children after birth remains a concern. An increasing use of sex-determination tests during pregnancy, after which female fetuses are more likely to be aborted, and the practice of female infanticide by those who cannot afford the tests have contributed to a growing imbalance in the male-female birth ratios in a number of states, particularly in the northwest.

Indonesia

Population: 221,900,000 **Political Rights:** 2*
GNI/capita: \$810 **Civil Liberties:** 3*
Life Expectancy: 68 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Muslim (88 percent), Protestant (5 percent), Roman Catholic (3 percent), Hindu (2 percent), Buddhist (1 percent), other (1 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Javanese (45 percent), Sundanese (14 percent), Madurese (7.5 percent), Malay (7.5 percent), other (26 percent)
Capital: Jakarta



Ratings Change: Indonesia's political rights rating improved from 3 to 2, its civil liberties rating from 4 to 3, and its status from Partly Free to Free, due to peaceful and mostly free elections for newly empowered regional leaders, an orderly transition to a newly elected president that further consolidated the democratic political process, and the emergence of a peace settlement between the government and the Free Aceh movement.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,5NF	7,5NF	6,4PF	4,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	2,3F

Overview:

Indonesia continued to move toward democratic consolidation in 2005. Following the largely successful 2004 presidential and legislative elections, nationwide direct local elections were held in 2005, with relatively limited instances of localized (though often still substantial) violence. In his second year as president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (known as SBY) earned marks for making serious, if cautious and inconsistent, efforts to fight corruption and to reform the political system. On another front, Indonesia's insurgency-plagued Aceh province in northern Sumatra was hit by a devastating tsunami in December 2004. Cooperation between government troops and insurgents evolved into ceasefire negotiations, and in August 2005, Indonesia signed a peace agreement with Acehese separatists.

Indonesia won full independence in 1949 following a four-year, intermittent war against its Dutch colonial rulers. After several parliamentary governments collapsed, the republic's first president, Sukarno, took on authoritarian powers in 1959 under a system that he called "Guided Democracy." Sukarno retained his political supremacy by balancing the country's two most powerful groups—the conservative Indonesian National Army (TNI) and the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI)—against each other. This unstable political triad came apart in 1965, when the army, led by General Suharto, crushed an apparent coup attempt that it blamed on the PKI. In the aftermath, the TNI and its conservative Muslim allies engaged in mass acts of violence against suspected PKI members that ultimately left an estimated 500,000 dead. With the backing of the TNI, Suharto eased aside the populist Sukarno and formally became president in 1968.

Having eliminated the PKI, Suharto's "New Order" regime merged "old order"

political parties into two easily controlled parties, and created the Golkar party based on bureaucratic and military interests. Heavily constrained and manipulated elections, held at five-year intervals, ensured that Golkar always won with impressive margins. During his 32 years in power, Suharto created a patrimonial political system that rewarded supporters—increasingly, family members—and punished opponents.

Suharto also embarked on an economic development program under which the Indonesian economy grew by an annual average of 7 percent for three decades; as a result, millions of Indonesians rose from poverty. In the 1990s, Suharto's children and cronies were the major beneficiaries of state privatization schemes and also often ran large business monopolies that operated with little oversight. When Indonesia was hit by the Asian financial crisis, which devalued the currency by more than 5,000 percent over six months, Suharto agreed to a \$43-billion International Monetary Fund bailout in October 1997. In 1998, the country's economy shrank by 13.8 percent, the largest single-year contraction for any country since the Great Depression.

Soaring prices and rising unemployment led many Indonesians to demonstrate against the corruption, collusion, and nepotism of the Suharto regime. In the midst of devastating urban riots in May 1998, Suharto resigned. He was succeeded by Vice President B. J. Habibie, a long-time Suharto loyalist. Responding to the *reformasi* (proreform) movement and attempting to shore up his political legitimacy, Habibie removed legal constraints on the free functioning of the press, labor unions, and political parties.

In June 1999, Indonesia held its first free legislative elections since 1955. The Indonesian Democratic Party-Struggle (PDI-P), led by Sukarno's daughter Sukarnoputri Megawati, won 154 of the 462 contested seats. Golkar won 120 seats. In October 1999, the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), consisting of members of the elected House of Representatives (DPR) and 195 appointed members, selected Muslim leader Abdurrahman Wahid as president and Megawati as vice president.

Hopes that the two reformist leaders—representing moderate Islam and Indonesian nationalism—could tackle Indonesia's deep-seated political, economic, and social issues went unfulfilled. Wahid's credentials as a democratic reformer and champion of religious freedom gave him opportunities to call for an end to an insurgency in Aceh and the deadly ethnic and sectarian violence raging in the Moluccas, Sulawesi, and Kalimantan—but he chose not to do so. Moreover, Wahid did little to revive the economy, and his administration was dogged by allegations of corruption. Facing impeachment charges, Wahid called on the armed forces to declare a state of emergency. The TNI refused, Wahid was impeached, and Megawati became president in July 2001.

Megawati generally is credited with stabilizing Indonesia's volatile post-1997 economy, which only returned to pre-crisis per capita income levels in 2004. However, critics charge that she failed to rein in corrupt elites, who drained economic resources and stunted political development. Many observers claim that corruption rose under Megawati, in part because government moves toward decentralization expanded local government powers without extending effective oversight to government activities.

Megawati's government faced perhaps its toughest challenges on the internal security front. The government took a tough line against Jemaah Islamiyah, a network of Islamic militants in Southeast Asia loosely linked to al-Qaeda, the terrorist network. Security forces arrested scores of suspected terrorists after the 2002 bombing on the resort island of Bali that killed 202 people. A similar hard-line approach to the insurgencies in Aceh and Papua did not lead to peace. Voters punished Megawati for these perceived failures by giving the PDI-P less support in the April 2004 parliamentary elections, with many voters embracing the Democratic Party (PD), the electoral vehicle for Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (known as SBY), who had earlier resigned his position as Megawati's coordinating minister for political and security affairs. Electoral advances for the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) largely reflect reform-oriented voters' attraction to the party's anticorruption platform. In May 2004, the government lifted a year-old martial-law decree in Aceh, even as the military continued offensives against separatist rebels.

On September 20, 2004, SBY won 61 percent of the vote and claimed a mandate for change. While SBY earned marks for making serious, if cautious and inconsistent, efforts to fight corruption and reform the political system, SBY will need to overcome tensions and rivalries inside the government, as well as shifting political alliances, to implement his agenda. SBY's PD holds only 55 out of 550 seats, while the two other parties that formally support SBY command 111 votes. The People's Coalition, which will probably support the president most of the time, commands 233 seats. Perhaps the most intriguing postelection development involves SBY's relationship with his vice-president, Jusuf Kalla. Originally expelled from Golkar for supporting SBY in the 2004 elections, Kalla was readmitted to the party and elected to the party's leadership post. While the alliance between SBY and Golkar gives the president greater parliamentary strength, Kalla's prominence in the party has sparked speculation that he harbors his own presidential ambitions, and could soon break with the president to challenge SBY.

In December 2004, Indonesia's oil-rich, insurgency-plagued Aceh, a province of 4.6 million people in northern Sumatra, was hit by a devastating tsunami. The monster wave left nearly 169,000 dead or missing, and rendered over one half million people homeless. Estimates of property damage lie between \$4.5 and \$5 billion. The initial government response was plagued by inefficiency and press restrictions reminiscent of the pretransition order. Yet, in time, the international and national attention focused on the area began to produce unanticipated benefits. Although internal security concerns remained significant during the year, cooperation between government troops and insurgents evolved into ceasefire negotiations, and Indonesia signed a peace agreement with the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) in August 2005. In December, the International Crisis Group reported that "The Aceh peace process is working beyond all expectations."

Still, following the tsunami, and perhaps in partial reaction to the billions of relief aid dollars that poured into the province in its aftermath, so-called Sharia police began to enforce elements of Sharia (Islamic) law; these "police" have been widely accused of arrogance, arbitrary harassment and illegal detention. Courts convicted several suspects in the 2002 Bali bombing, including Abu Bakar Bashir, the man suspected of serving as Jemaah Islamiyah's spiritual leader. Nevertheless, terrorism continued to be a substantial problem, as demonstrated by an October 2005 bomb-

ing in Bali that killed 27 people. Similar attacks, some apparently perpetrated by militant Islamist groups, and others related to communal conflict, have periodically occurred across Indonesia, including a high-profile case in which three girls were beheaded in Poso, Sulawesi, in November 2005. Still, in this case, as in the aftermath of a May 2005 bombing in Tentena, Central Sulawesi, security forces were quick to intervene to prevent the conflict from escalating. Many analysts say that the government must take the sensitive step of investigating the handful of Islamic boarding schools allegedly linked to Jemaah Islamiyah and further professionalizing intelligence operations.

While initially wary, investors began to direct capital back into Indonesia after SBY's electoral victory in 2004, and by early 2005, the Jakarta stock exchange had expanded by 20 percent. While this reinvestment is encouraging, corruption, and a poor regulatory environment continue. Moreover, the country will feel the economic consequences of the 2004 tsunami for some time to come. Nevertheless, investor confidence seems to be improving, particularly after decisions such as the removal of fuel subsidies.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Indonesia can change their government democratically. In 2004, for the first time, Indonesians directly elected their president and all the members of the House of Representative (DPR), as well as representatives to a new legislative body, the Regional Representatives Council (DPD). (Before 2004, presidents were elected by the legislature, itself composed of a combination of elected and appointed officials.) The DPD is tasked with proposing, discussing, and monitoring laws related to regional autonomy. Presidents and vice presidents can serve up to two five-year terms. Legislators also serve five-year terms.

Beginning in June 2005, staggered, direct elections took place across Indonesia to select regional heads. While voter turnout (65 to 75 percent) was lower than in the previous year's national elections, the polls were generally considered to be free, fair, and relatively peaceful.

In 2004 and 2005, both new parties—such as the PD and the PKS—and established parties gained office. Still, some electoral rules favor larger, more established parties and may limit political access. For example, independent candidates cannot contest elections—candidates must be nominated by political parties—and voters choose parties, not candidates, in the voting booth. Parties, in turn, must prove they have a nationwide network of members and offices before they can make nominations. Parties that fail to win 3 percent of the vote are not allowed to contest future elections. Although from 2004 onward, the president will continue to be directly elected, beginning in 2009 the presidential candidate must be nominated by at least 15 percent of the members of parliament (the DPR). Similarly, since direct elections for provincial governors and regents began in 2005, candidates have needed 15 percent of the vote in local assemblies to secure a nomination.

The military formally withdrew from politics when it lost its 38 appointed seats in the MPR in 2004. However, the army also maintains a "territorial network" of soldiers in every district and village, which gives it influence at the local level. Discussions to disband the territorial structure were on the agenda early in the reformasi era, when the military was discredited because of its shooting of prodemocracy

advocates and its links to Suharto. The military's stock in the eyes of the public increased, however, as a result of its decision to remain impartial during the Wahid impeachment process and because of the legitimacy Megawati bestowed upon it. The appointment to the post of defense minister of Juwono Sudarsono, a respected civilian who served in this position during the Wahid administration, is a positive sign. Juwono's efforts to ensure civilian control of the military by folding the TNI into the civilian-led Ministry of Defense became bogged down when only military personnel were deemed qualified to take up positions in the ministry. A key obstacle to civilian control over the military has long been the fact that the TNI receives only 30 percent of its funding from the state budget, relying on military-run charities and businesses for the bulk of its financing. Discussions to privatize military-run charities and businesses were revived in early 2005, but have so far yielded no action plan.

Corruption remains endemic in Indonesia, including throughout the judiciary. In 2003, the government created the Corruption Eradication Commission, a group of special prosecutors with the power to investigate any suspected misconduct involving government officials who are believed to have cost the state more than one billion rupiah, approximately \$10,500. The government has no formal right to intervene with the work of this body. In 2005, election-related corruption came under closer scrutiny, with several high-ranking electoral officials indicted for graft. Most of these cases, however, involved profiteering on the distribution of election-related paraphernalia, rather than vote buying. The charges were brought by the official Indonesian Corruption Watch, headed by veteran legal aid activist Tenten Madduki Marzuki, whose leadership in this area has drawn widespread praise. Still, even successful convictions of high-profile defendants—such as the 2005 corruption conviction of former Aceh governor Abdullah Puteh (sentenced to 10 years in jail)—have produced scandal; two court clerks active in the appeal in that case were arrested for taking bribes issued to further Puteh's defense. Indonesia was ranked 137 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The state of press freedom in Indonesia is mixed. The Committee to Protect Journalists calls Indonesia a success story because of the very low level of attacks on journalists in the country. Still, libel laws and political pressure make the media less free in what they can report and in how they frame their stories. In the aftermath of the tsunami, Aceh was closed to members of the foreign media, and government delegations visited local newspapers to express displeasure at their reporting on the Aceh situation—a move that in Indonesia has exceptionally intimidating overtones. Charges of criminal defamation are often leveled at journalists. Television station ownership and licensing rules are currently in a state of confusion. Until recently, Indonesian's 10 large private television stations (there is also a national government station) were owned by cronies of former President Suharto. New regulations adopted in 2003 aimed at diversifying broadcast media ownership by allowing licenses only at the provincial level. While the idea was to encourage diverse, small-scale television broadcasts, the regulations, by the end of 2005, were still extremely unclear and had not produced the intended diversification of media ownership. There are over 62,000 internet hosts in Indonesia and an estimated 8 million internet users. Indonesians of all faiths can generally worship freely in this predominantly Muslim

nation, although officials monitor and have outlawed some extremist Islamic groups. Indonesia officially recognizes five faiths—Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism—and although Islamic holidays predominate, holy days such as Good Friday, Waisak (a Buddhist holiday), and Nyepi (a Balinese/Hindi festival) are public holidays. Animists, Confucians, Baha'is, and others whose faith is not among Indonesia's five officially recognized religions have difficulty obtaining national identity cards, which are needed to register births, marriages, and divorces. Members of the Ahmadiyah sect, which many Muslims view as heretical, are subject to frequent instances of religious intolerance and harassment. In July, mobs repeatedly attacked the Ahmadiyah compound in West Java. Academic freedom in Indonesia is generally respected.

Indonesia has many effective, outspoken human rights groups, including Imparsial, Humanika, and the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation. However, they face "monitoring, abuse, and interference by the government," the 2005 U.S. State Department's human rights report said. Independence activists in Aceh, Papua, and Maluku, and labor and political activists in Java and Sulawesi, all remain likely targets for human rights abuse. The case of Munir Said Thalib, a prominent rights activist who died of arsenic poisoning in 2004 while on a flight from Jakarta to Amsterdam, remains unsolved and a cause for great concern. Although the government generally respects the right of freedom of assembly, the authorities have restricted this right in conflict areas.

Indonesian workers can join independent unions, bargain collectively, and, except for civil servants, stage strikes. Government enforcement of minimum-wage and other labor laws is weak, however, and there are credible reports of employers dismissing or otherwise exacting retribution from union organizers. Moreover, unions allege that factory managers at times use youth gangs or plainclothes security forces—often off-duty soldiers and police—to intimidate workers or break strikes. Roughly 10 to 15 percent of Indonesia's 80 million industrial workers are unionized.

SBY has made legal reform a key objective of his new government and has appointed well-known reformers to the positions of attorney general and chief justice of the Supreme Court. Indonesia's judicial system, according to its new attorney general, Abdul Rahman Saleh, is so mired in corruption that justice typically is awarded to the highest bidder. Saleh's reform efforts have become at least partially sidetracked as a result of a peripheral dispute between his office and legislators. According to the 2005 State Department's human rights report, bribes influence prosecution, conviction, and sentencing in countless civil and criminal cases, and court outcomes are often influenced by military personnel and government officials. Courts often limit defendants' access to counsel and allow forced confessions in criminal cases. Saleh attributes the problem in part to extremely low salaries for judicial officials, as well as to the traditional lack of punishment for illegal activity. The Supreme Court continues to discipline judges in an unprecedented manner, with five dismissed in the second half of 2004 alone. Still, the assumption of legal corruption is so pervasive that the *Legal Review* recently published a list detailing the price of victory in court cases, said to vary with the trial venue (prices ranged \$8,300 at the Bandung District Court to as much as \$600,000 at the Supreme Court).

The two-year-old Constitutional Court, however, has established an early record for independent rulings that take due consideration of legal principles. In 2004, it

infuriated some in the government with its ruling that the government's attempt to apply new antiterrorist laws retroactively was unconstitutional. More recently, when SBY took the economically necessary, but broadly unpopular, step of doubling gasoline prices, the court ruled that the move to impeach the president on the basis of that policy had no legal standing.

The judiciary's weakness has helped perpetuate human rights abuses by security forces. In Aceh, the army has been implicated in summary killings, "disappearances," rapes, illegal detentions, and other abuses against suspected GAM guerrillas or sympathizers, according to Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (HRW). Legal actions against GAM supporters have taken place without defendants being granted legal representation. Army abuses also continue in Papua. It is expected that peace agreements in Aceh will diminish the frequency of both government human rights abuses and rebel violence against government officials and civilians. In general, the recent peace seems to be holding through the initial, disarmament phase.

Indonesian forces enjoy near impunity in encounters with ordinary criminal suspects. Meanwhile, Amnesty International continues to receive reports of torture by soldiers and police, not only of suspects in conflict zones but also of criminal suspects, peaceful political activists, and Indonesians involved in land and other disputes with authorities. In addition, guards routinely mistreat and extort money from inmates in the country's overcrowded prisons. According to HRW, "Indonesian military officers and soldiers who commit human rights violations remain largely beyond the reach of the law." HRW goes on to report that no senior military officers have been held accountable for human rights violations anywhere in the archipelago, and that convictions in one test case for justice in Suharto-era attacks were overturned in July 2005.

Efforts to curb military impunity were dealt a setback by the acquittals or relatively short jail terms handed down in cases related to the 1999 violence in East Timor that killed more than 1,000 civilians. In a series of trials that ended in August 2004, a Jakarta court acquitted 12 defendants and handed down jail terms of between three and ten years to 6 found guilty. That trial process drew to a close in late 2004 and was largely judged a failure. In response to moves in the international community to establish a war crimes tribunal, Indonesia and East Timor established a Commission on Truth and Friendship, which met for the first time in August 2005. Significantly, the committee does not have prosecutorial powers, thus continuing the pattern of impunity for military offenders.

Ethnic Chinese continue to face some harassment and violence, though far less than in the late 1990s, when violent attacks killed hundreds and destroyed many Chinese-owned shops and churches. Unlike other Indonesians, ethnic Chinese must show a citizenship card to obtain a passport, credit card, or business license or to enroll a child in school—a requirement that makes them vulnerable to extortion by bureaucrats. Ethnic Chinese make up less than 3 percent of the nation's population, but are resented by some Indonesians for holding the lion's share of private wealth. A few ethnic Chinese have amassed huge fortunes in business, though most are ordinary traders or merchants.

Ethnic Dayaks in Kalimantan and other members of Indonesia's other minority groups face considerable discrimination. The government at times fails to stop min-

ing and logging companies from encroaching on communal land in Kalimantan and other areas—often in collusion with local military and police—and appropriates land claimed by indigenous Indonesians for development projects without fair compensation.

In a positive development, peace is slowly returning to areas of the archipelago that recently have been torn by violence along ethnic or sectarian lines, including the Moluccas, central Sulawesi, and Kalimantan. However, setbacks continue to occur. In October 2005, three Christian girls were beheaded and dismembered by a group of Muslim youths in Poso Central Sulawesi, a development that led police to immediately strengthen security to prevent the Muslim-Christian violence that tore areas of the nation apart in the late 1990s. In Bekasi, West Java, individuals claiming to be members of the Islam Defenders Front have blocked three churches from holding services for months, leading to tension-filled confrontations between Christian and Muslim mobs. In Kalimantan and other areas, many disputes between ethnic groups are said to be linked to the government's decades-old policy of resettling tens of thousands of Indonesians to remote parts of the archipelago from overcrowded areas such as Java.

Indonesian women face considerable discrimination. They are often steered by factory employers into low-level, low-paying jobs, and female university graduates reportedly receive salaries that are 25 percent lower, on average, than those paid to their male counterparts. Female household servants at times are forced to work without pay, for extremely low wages, or in situations of debt bondage. Female genital mutilation is reportedly still practiced in some areas, although the more extreme forms of the practice apparently are becoming less common. Trafficking of women for prostitution, forced labor, and debt bondage reportedly continues unabated, often with the complicity or involvement of police, soldiers, and officials, despite the recent passage of a child-trafficking bill and of stiffer provisions against trafficking of women. Abortion is illegal in Indonesia, except to save a woman's life. Divorce is legal, following efforts of the judge to effect reconciliation; in cases of divorce, the court renders a decision concerning child custody. Indonesia does not have anti-sodomy laws.

Iran

Population: 69,500,000 **Political Rights:** 6
GNI/capita: \$2,010 **Civil Liberties:** 6
Life Expectancy: 70 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Shia Muslim (89 percent),
 Sunni Muslim (9 percent), other (2 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Persian (51 percent), Azeri (24 percent),
 Gilaki and Mazandarani (8 percent), Kurd (7 percent),
 Arab (3 percent), other (7 percent)
Capital: Tehran

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
6,7NF	6,7NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF

Overview:

Political and civil liberties in Iran continued to deteriorate in 2005. The ruling clerical establishment engineered the election of a conservative president, Mahmoud Ahmadi-nejad, setting in motion a purge of reformers throughout the executive branch. Meanwhile, tensions between Iran and the West increased substantially due to Tehran's refusal to suspend its efforts to develop advanced nuclear technologies, suspected to be part of a covert nuclear weapons program.

In 1979, Iran witnessed a tumultuous revolution that ousted a hereditary monarchy marked by widespread corruption and brought into power the exiled cleric Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The constitution drafted by Khomeini's disciples provided for a president and parliament elected through universal adult suffrage; however, an unelected clerical body, the Council of Guardians, was empowered to approve electoral candidates and certify that the decisions of elected officials are in accord with Sharia (Islamic law). Khomeini was named Supreme Leader and invested with control over the security and intelligence services, armed forces, and judiciary. After his death in 1989, the role of Supreme Leader passed to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, a middle-ranking cleric who lacked the religious credentials and popularity of his predecessor. The constitution was changed to consolidate his power and give him final authority on all matters of foreign and domestic policy.

Beneath its veneer of religious probity, the Islamic Republic gave rise to a new elite that accumulated wealth through opaque and unaccountable means. By the mid-1990s, dismal economic conditions and a demographic trend toward a younger population had created widespread hostility to clerical rule. A coalition of reformers began to emerge within the ruling elite, advocating a gradual process of political reform, economic liberalization, and normalization with the outside world that was designed to legitimize, not radically alter, the current political system.

Representing this coalition, former culture minister Mohammed Khatami was elected president in 1997 with nearly 70 percent of the vote. Khatami's administration made considerable strides over the next few years in expanding public freedom. More than 200 independent newspapers and magazines representing a diverse ar-

ray of viewpoints were established, and the authorities relaxed the enforcement of strict Islamic restrictions on social interaction between unmarried men and women. Reformists won 80 percent of the seats in the country's first nationwide municipal elections in 1999 and took the vast majority of seats in parliamentary elections the following year, gaining the power to legislate major reforms.

The 2000 parliamentary elections prompted a backlash by hard-line clerics that continues to this day. Over the next four years, the conservative-controlled judiciary closed more than 100 reformist newspapers and jailed hundreds of liberal journalists and activists, while security forces cracked down ruthlessly on student protests against these measures. Significant political and economic reforms were overwhelmingly approved by parliament, only to be vetoed by the Council of Guardians.

Despite being reelected with 78 percent of the vote in 2001, Khatami did not use his popular mandate to challenge the country's ruling theocrats, ignoring recurrent pleas by reformist members of parliament to call a national referendum to approve vetoed reform legislation and repeatedly imploring citizens to refrain from demonstrating in public. Within the broader reform movement, Khatami was accused of not just being ineffective, but also of willingly serving as a democratic facade for an oppressive regime. Many Iranians abandoned hopes that the political system could be changed from within. Record low turnout for the February 2003 municipal elections resulted in a landslide victory by hard-liners and showed that the ability of reformist politicians to mobilize the public had deteriorated markedly.

Hard-liners triumphed in the February 2004 parliamentary elections after the Council of Guardians rejected the candidacies of most reformist politicians, including scores of incumbents. Emboldened by this electoral triumph, the clerical establishment quickly moved to further restrict public freedom. Several major reformist newspapers were closed, while dozens of journalists and civil society activists were arrested during the year as the authorities attacked the country's last refuge of free expression—the internet. In October, the head of the judiciary, Ayatollah Mahmoud Shahroudi, announced that "anyone who disseminates information aimed at disturbing the public mind through computer systems" would be jailed. The government also launched a crackdown on "social corruption," sending thousands of morality police and vigilantes into the streets to enforce Islamic dress codes and prevent public mingling of men and women.

The June 2005 presidential election swept away the last bastion of reformist political power in Iran. While the Council of Guardians ensured a reactionary outcome by rejecting the candidacies of popular reformers, the victory of Tehran mayor Mahmoud Ahmadinejad over other approved candidates in a two-round runoff election reflected popular desires for a change in the status quo. The son of a blacksmith, Ahmadinejad dresses modestly and lives in a working-class neighborhood. As Iran's first nonclerical president, he campaigned on promises to fight elite corruption and redistribute Iran's oil wealth to the poor and middle class.

Ahmadinejad signaled his intent to further erode political and civil liberties by awarding the powerful ministries of Information and the Interior to hard-liners who have been implicated directly in the extrajudicial killings of dissidents and other egregious human rights abuses. He quickly began a wide-ranging purge of the administration, including sacking 40 of Iran's most experienced diplomats and 7 state

bank directors. The new president and many of the new faces are veterans of the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), inspired more by militant anti-Western nationalism than by strictly theological dogma. His government tightened restrictions on foreign films and announced plans to impose more stringent controls on books, local films, and theater; however, it did not initiate a major rollback of the social liberalization Iran has witnessed over the past eight years. While the new president spent much time traveling around the country to meet with ordinary Iranians, he did not initiate any of the sweeping structural changes he promised during the election (such as shutting down Tehran's "ungodly" stock exchange).

The most significant impact of Ahmadinejad's ascension was felt in Iran's foreign policy. After two years of efforts by Britain, France, and Germany to convince Tehran to permanently halt its uranium-enrichment and plutonium-reprocessing programs, the new administration rejected a European Union (EU) package of economic incentives in August 2005 and resumed uranium conversion work. The following month, the International Atomic Energy Agency ruled that Iran was in "non-compliance" with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, raising the prospect that it will be censured by the UN Security Council. Rather than aiming to allay fears that Iran is seeking to develop nuclear weapons, Ahmadinejad seemed intent on enflaming them, declaring in September that Iran is "ready to transfer nuclear know-how to Islamic countries" and, in October, that Israel "must be wiped off the map." In view of Ahmadinejad's confrontation with the West, fear of appearing unpatriotic reinforced a trend toward self-censorship in the Iranian media and inhibited public criticism of the president.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Iranians cannot change their government democratically. The most powerful figure in the Iranian government is the Supreme Leader (Vali-e-Faghih), currently Ayatollah Ali Hoseini-Khamenei; he is chosen for life by the Assembly of Experts, a clerics-only body whose members are elected to eight-year terms by popular vote from a government-screened list of candidates. The Supreme Leader is commander in chief of the armed forces and appoints the leaders of the judiciary, the heads of state broadcast media, the commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, the Expediency Council, and half the members of the Council of Guardians. Although the president and parliament are responsible for designating cabinet ministers, the Supreme Leader exercises de facto control over appointments to the ministries of Defense, Interior, and Intelligence.

All candidates for election to the presidency and the 290-seat unicameral parliament are vetted for strict allegiance to the ruling theocracy and adherence to Islamic principles by the 12-person Council of Guardians, a body of 6 clergymen appointed by the Supreme Leader and 6 laymen selected by the head of the judiciary chief (the latter are nominally subject to parliamentary approval). The Council of Guardians also has the power to reject legislation approved by parliament; disputes between the two are arbitrated by the Expediency Council, another non-elected, conservative-dominated body, currently headed by former president Ali Akbar Rafsanjani.

The legitimacy of the June 2005 presidential election was undermined by the Council of Guardians' rejection of all but 8 of the 1,014 candidates who registered to run. Numerous irregularities, such as intimidation of voters by the military and hard-

line vigilantes, were reported in both rounds, but there was little evidence of systemic fraud.

Corruption is pervasive. The hard-line clerical establishment has grown immensely wealthy through its control of tax-exempt foundations (*bonyads*) that monopolize many sectors of the economy, such as cement and sugar production. Iran was ranked 88 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is limited. The government directly controls all television and radio broadcasting. Satellite dishes are illegal, though widely tolerated, and the authorities have had some success in jamming broadcasts by dissident overseas satellite stations. The Ministry of Culture must approve publication of all books and inspects foreign books prior to domestic distribution. The Press Court has extensive procedural and jurisdictional power in prosecuting journalists, editors, and publishers for such vaguely worded offenses as "insulting Islam" and "damaging the foundations of the Islamic Republic." The authorities frequently issue ad hoc gag orders banning media coverage of specific topics and events. The government systematically censors internet content by forcing internet service providers (ISPs) to block access to a growing list of "immoral sites and political sites that insult the country's political and religious leaders."

At least eight newspapers were suspended or closed by the authorities in 2005, and those that remained open were intimidated into practicing self-censorship. At least a dozen journalists and bloggers (writers of internet journals known as "weblogs," or "blogs") were indicted or convicted of press offenses during the year, and many more were summoned for questioning about their writings. In January, the authorities closed down one of the country's leading ISPs for violating filtering restrictions. In October, the Supreme Cultural Revolutionary Council, a body of clerics handpicked by the Supreme Leader, issued a ban on foreign films that promote immorality, violence, drug usage, liquor consumption, secularism, liberalism, anarchy, or feminism.

Religious freedom is limited in Iran, which is largely Shiite Muslim with a small Sunni Muslim minority. Shiite clerics who dissent from the ruling establishment are frequently harassed. Sunnis enjoy equal rights under the law, but there are some indications of discrimination, such as the absence of a Sunni mosque in Tehran and the paucity of Sunnis in senior government offices. The constitution recognizes Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians as religious minorities and generally allows them to worship without interference so long as they do not proselytize. However, they are barred from election to representative bodies (though a set number of parliamentary seats are reserved for them), cannot hold senior government or military positions, and face restrictions in employment, education, and property ownership. Some 300,000 Baha'is, Iran's largest non-Muslim minority, enjoy virtually no rights under the law and are banned from practicing their faith. Hundreds of Baha'is have been executed since 1979. In February, a military officer was discharged and sentenced to three years in prison for "deceiving the armed forces" about his conversion to Christianity.

Academic freedom in Iran is limited. Scholars are frequently detained for expressing political views, and students involved in organizing protests often face suspension or expulsion by university disciplinary committees. In the months following his

election, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad replaced the heads of at least a dozen major universities. The appointment of a conservative cleric, Ayatollah Abbasali Amid Zanjani, as head of Tehran University in November touched off a protest by hundreds of students.

The constitution permits the establishment of political parties, professional syndicates, and other civic organizations, provided they do not violate the principles of "freedom, sovereignty and national unity" or question the Islamic basis of the republic. The Iran Freedom Movement was banned in 2002 on such grounds. In 2005, at least three prominent dissidents were prevented by the authorities from traveling abroad, and at least two such dissidents were attacked and severely injured by unidentified assailants. Abdolfattah Soltani, a prominent human rights lawyer and co-founder of the Center for Defense of Human Rights, was arrested in July and detained throughout the year without formal charge.

The 1979 constitution prohibits public demonstrations that "violate the principles of Islam," a vague provision used to justify the heavy-handed dispersal of assemblies and marches. Hard-line vigilante organizations unofficially sanctioned by the conservative establishment—most notably the Basij and Ansar-i Hezbollah—play a major role in dispersing public demonstrations. In July, police forcibly dispersed a demonstration protesting the continued imprisonment of dissident Akbar Ganji, beating dozens of people with batons.

Iranian law does not allow independent labor unions to exist, though workers' councils are represented in the government-sanctioned Workers' House, the country's only legal labor federation. While strikes and work stoppages were not uncommon in 2005, the authorities forcibly dispersed demonstrations that criticized national economic policies. In April, an employee of the Iran Khodro automobile plant involved in protesting its labor policies was arrested and remained in prison without charge at year's end. In September, seven leaders of a Tehran bus workers' union were arrested during a strike and charged with disturbing public order. In November, five labor activists in the city of Saqqez were sentenced to two or more years in prison for involvement in illegal union activities.

The judicial system is not independent, as the Supreme Leader directly appoints the head of the judiciary, who in turn appoints senior judges. General Courts ostensibly safeguard the rights of defendants, but in practice suspects are frequently tried in closed sessions and without access to legal counsel. Political and other sensitive cases are tried before Revolutionary Courts, where due process protections are routinely disregarded and trials are often summary, lasting as little as five minutes. Dissident clerics are tried before the Special Court for the Clergy. The penal code is based on Sharia and provides for flogging, stoning, amputation, and death for a range of social and political offenses; these punishments are carried out in practice.

Although the constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, these practices are very common and increasingly routine. Suspected dissidents are often held in unofficial, illegal detention centers, and allegations of torture are common. Although legislation banning the use of torture in interrogations was promulgated in 2004, allegations of torture persisted in 2005.

There are few laws that discriminate against ethnic minorities, who are permitted considerable cultural and linguistic freedom. However, ethnic Kurds, Arabs, and Azeris complain of political and economic discrimination. Kurdish opposition groups

suspected of separatist aspirations, such as the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KDPI), are brutally suppressed. In April, security forces clashed with Arab protestors in the province of Khuzestan, which resulted in more than 50 reported deaths. In July, Kurdish political activist Shivan Qaderi was shot and killed in Mahabad by Iranian security forces, who reportedly tied his corpse to a military vehicle and dragged it around the city. Protests against the murder erupted throughout the western province of Kurdistan for over three weeks. Security forces killed at least 17 people and arrested hundreds. In September, two Kurds were executed for alleged links to separatist organizations.

Although women enjoy the same political rights as men and currently hold several seats in parliament and one of Iran's vice presidencies, they face discrimination in legal and social matters. A woman cannot obtain a passport without the permission of a male relative or her husband, and women do not enjoy equal rights under Sharia statutes governing divorce, inheritance, and child custody. A woman's testimony in court is given only half the weight of a man's. Women must conform to strict dress codes and are segregated from men in most public places.

Iraq

Population: 28,800,000 **Political Rights:** 6*
GNI/capita: \$1,090 **Civil Liberties:** 5
Life Expectancy: 59 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Muslim (97 percent) [Shia Muslim (60-65 percent), Sunni Muslim (32-37 percent)], other [including Christian] (3 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Arab (75-80 percent), Kurd (15-20 percent), other [including Turkmen and Assyrian] (5 percent)
Capital: Baghdad



Ratings Change: Iraq's political rights rating improved from 7 to 6 due to the holding of modestly successful elections to a transitional national assembly in January 2005 and the subsequent formation of a transitional government.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,5NF	7,5NF	6,5NF

Overview:

The ascension of a new government through procedurally free and fair elections in 2005 marked a major watershed in Iraq's transition to democracy. However, civil liberties came under increasing threat as Sunni Arab terrorist groups stepped up attacks on the civilian population (especially Shias), and the new Shiite-dominated government launched an aggressive counterinsurgency campaign, allegedly involving scores of extrajudicial executions of suspected Sunni Arab insurgents.

The modern state of Iraq, consisting of three former Ottoman provinces, was established after World War I as a League of Nations mandate administered by Great

Britain. The British installed a constitutional monarchy that privileged the Sunni Arab minority at the expense of Kurds and Shiite Arabs. Sunni Arab political dominance in Iraq, which formally gained independence in 1932, continued after the monarchy was overthrown in a 1958 military coup. The Arab nationalist Baath party seized power in 1968. The new regime's de facto strongman, Saddam Hussein, formally assumed the presidency in 1979.

Hussein brutally suppressed all opposition to his rule and sought to establish Iraq as a regional superpower by invading Iran in 1980. During the eight-year war, his regime used chemical weapons against both Iranian troops and rebellious Iraqi Kurds. Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait in 1990 and were ousted the following year by a U.S.-led coalition. After the war, the UN Security Council imposed economic sanctions on Iraq, pending the destruction of its weapons of mass destruction. Because of Iraq's refusal to fully cooperate with UN weapons inspectors, however, the sanctions remained in place for over a decade.

Following the establishment of a U.S.-enforced no-fly zone north of the 36th parallel in 1991, most of the three northern provinces of Erbil, Duhok, and Suleimaniyah came under the control of Massoud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), which established a Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). During the 1990s, northern Iraq experienced rapid economic development and a flourishing of political and civil liberties not seen elsewhere in the Arab world.

In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, U.S. president George W. Bush designated Iraq's weapons of mass destruction a salient threat to American national security and committed his administration to engineering Hussein's ouster. In March 2003, a U.S.-led military coalition invaded Iraq, captured Baghdad less than three weeks later, and established a Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) to administer the country temporarily. In July, after extensive negotiations with leading Iraqi political and religious leaders, the CPA appointed a 25-member Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) and granted it limited lawmaking authority.

The initial euphoria felt by many Iraqis after the regime's collapse was quickly tempered by the security vacuum, widespread looting, and acute electricity and water shortages that followed. Unemployment soared as a result of the CPA's decision to disband Iraq's 400,000-man army and dismiss upper-level Baath party members from government posts, which left some 35,000 civil servants out of work.

Sunni Arabs, who constitute roughly 20 percent of the population, viewed the prospect of majoritarian democracy with immense trepidation. Exploiting these fears, loose networks of former regime officials and foreign Islamist militants began organizing and funding an insurgency that rapidly gained strength in late 2003 and 2004. The insurgency combined sophisticated guerrilla warfare against coalition forces and nascent government security forces; sabotage attacks on vital infrastructure targets; suicide bombings against Shiite civilians and Iraqis viewed as collaborating with coalition forces; executions (often videotaped and made public via the internet) of humanitarian aid workers, civilian contractors, and other foreigners; and assassinations of prominent Iraqi public figures who support the interim government.

Deteriorating security conditions slowed progress in many critical areas of Iraq's reconstruction. Oil production remained well below its prewar level as a result of insurgents' sabotage, while essential public services, such as power and water, have

been repeatedly disrupted in most areas of the country. Residents of northern Iraq, where Kurdish militia forces (*peshmerga*) continued to maintain security, were spared most of these tribulations.

In spite of the escalating insurgency, Iraq's political transition has progressed substantially. In March 2004, the IGC adopted a Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) to serve as the country's interim constitution. In June, after weeks of UN-mediated negotiations among the main (noninsurgent) political groups, the CPA and the IGC transferred sovereignty to an Iraqi Interim Government (IIG), headed by Prime Minister Iyad Allawi.

Elections for the 275-seat Transitional National Assembly (TNA), along with simultaneous elections for provincial governments and the KRG, were held in January 2005. Insurgents' calls for a boycott and threats of violence on election day led the vast majority of Sunni Arabs to stay away from the polls, handing a landslide victory to the Shiite-led United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) and a joint KDP/PUK Kurdish coalition. After three months of contentious negotiations, the TNA selected a new Iraqi Transitional Government (ITG), headed by Prime Minister Ibrahim Jafaari.

The meager representation of Sunni Arabs in the TNA (only 17 seats) gave them little voice in the legislative process of drafting a permanent constitution. The final text that went to referendum clearly reflected the interests of Shiite and Kurdish coalitions, allowing for a federal system with powerful regional governments—recognizing autonomy for the KRG in northern Iraq and allowing predominantly Shiite provinces to form a similar autonomous regional government—and failing to unequivocally stipulate that revenue from oil and natural gas fields (located mostly in Kurdish and Shiite regions) be distributed equitably. Many articles of the constitution pertaining to internationally recognized political rights and civil liberties are vaguely worded and subject to implementing legislation, while its stipulation that the Federal Supreme Court include an unspecified number of "experts in Islamic jurisprudence" alongside civil judges represents an intrusion of clerical influence that is rare even in the Islamic world. The draft constitution was approved by a popular referendum in October, though two Sunni Arab provinces voted overwhelmingly against it.

The Sunni Arab community's self-exclusion from the political process paved the way for Shiite and Kurdish parties to extend their influence throughout government. Newly appointed interior minister Bayan Jabr, who formerly commanded the armed wing of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), infiltrated Shiite militia forces into the police and authorized more aggressive counterinsurgency operations. Extrajudicial detentions and killings by Shiite militias and militia-dominated police commandos, as well as Kurdish security forces in the north, rapidly proliferated during the year.

One silver lining of these ominous developments was a renewed willingness of Sunni Arabs to participate in the political system. In November, representatives of several indigenous insurgent groups reportedly held indirect talks with U.S. officials on the sidelines of an Arab League-sponsored reconciliation conference in Cairo. In sharp contrast to the January elections, many prominent Sunni Arab moderates announced their intention to run in the December 2005 elections for a full-term national assembly, which will have an opportunity to amend the constitution before it goes into effect in 2006.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Iraq cannot change their government democratically. The prime minister is the head of government. Under the TAL, the prime minister is chosen by the three-man Presidency Council, consisting of the president and two vice presidents, who are elected by the TNA. Although largely ceremonial in practice, the Presidency Council has some executive powers under the TAL, most notably the power to veto legislation passed by the TNA and appoint members of the Federal Supreme Court. While the Baath party is banned, political parties representing a wide range of viewpoints are allowed to organize and campaign freely.

The Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI), whose nine-member board was selected by a UN advisory committee, has sole responsibility for administering elections in Iraq. Elections in January and the constitutional referendum in October were certified as free and fair by international monitors. However, the TNA elections were marred by violence (44 Iraqis were killed near polling stations) and a Sunni Arab boycott (turnout, 58 percent overall, dipped to just 2 percent in the Sunni province of Anbar). Elections for a permanent, 275-seat Council of Representatives in December 2005 will use a multidistrict system, instead of the single nationwide district system used in the TNA elections (which inherently disadvantages regions where turnout is low).

Iraq is plagued by pervasive corruption. In August 2005, 27 former senior officials of the Allawi administration, including former ministers of defense, labor, transportation, electricity, and housing, were indicted in connection with the embezzlement of more than \$1 billion from military contract expenditures. Iraq was ranked 137 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression in Iraq is protected by the TAL and generally respected by the authorities. Over a dozen private television stations are in operation. Although most are affiliated with particular religious or political groups, the nonpartisan station Al-Sharqiya is the most widely watched Iraqi television station. Major Arab satellite stations are easily accessible, as roughly one-third of Iraqi families own a satellite dish. More than 130 print publications have been established since 2003 and are allowed to operate without significant government interference. Internet access is unrestricted, though limited to roughly 200,000 subscribers. No media outlets were suspended or closed in 2005, though the Qatar-based Al-Jazeera satellite television station has remained banned from working in the country since August 2004 for violating CPA Order 14, which prohibits media organizations from publishing or broadcasting material that incites violence or civil disorder.

Although the Iraqi media are not subject to any form of government censorship, violent retributions against journalists led most media outlets to practice some degree of self-censorship. In 2005, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 22 journalists and 3 media workers (drivers, bodyguards, and translators) were killed in Iraq. Of these, 16 were victims of targeted killings by suspected insurgents, three were targeted by suspected Shiite militias, two were incidental casualties of an insurgent suicide bombing, three were killed inadvertently by coalition forces, and one person was killed by unidentified forces while covering live combat operations. In addition, 14 journalists were abducted during the year by insurgent and other nonstate armed groups (including five who were later killed). At least seven journal-

ists were subjected to prolonged detention without charge or disclosure of supporting evidence by U.S. forces in Iraq on suspicion of aiding and abetting insurgents, one of whom remained in detention at year's end.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the TAL and generally respected by the government. Mosques, churches, and other religious institutions are allowed to operate with little formal oversight. All religious communities in Iraq were threatened by sectarian violence in 2005. Suicide bombings specifically targeting Shias claimed several hundred lives in 2005. In June, a suicide bomber attacked a Sunni religious meeting in Balad, killing 10 people. At least four members of Iraq's tiny 80,000-strong Sabaeen (Mandaean) minority were killed during the year by militant Islamists after refusing to convert to Islam at gunpoint.

Baathist-era restrictions on academic freedom were abolished in 2003. However, Kurdish parties in northern Iraq and Shiite parties in southern Iraq "controlled the pursuit of formal education and the granting of academic positions" at universities in their areas of influence, according to the 2005 U.S. State Department's human rights report. University professors were frequently targeted by extremist groups. In April 2005, the Basra De-Baathification Committee fired six University of Basra college deans after Shiite Islamists demanded their removal and threatened to kill their families.

Rights to freedom of assembly and association are recognized by the TAL and generally respected in practice. The new constitution guarantees these rights "in a way that does not violate public order and morality." Domestic and international nongovernmental organizations were able to operate without restrictions, though security constraints limited their activities in many regions. Peaceful demonstrations occurred frequently during the year without interference from coalition forces or the Iraqi government, except when they were in violation of curfews. Gatherings or rallies that violated anti-Baath strictures were considered illegal.

The TAL guarantees the right to "form and join unions" and to "strike peaceably in accordance with the law." While Iraq's 1987 labor law remains in effect, technically prohibiting unionization in the public sector—where the vast majority of Iraqi workers are employed—union activity has flourished in nearly all industries since 2003, and strikes have not been uncommon. The Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) was targeted by insurgents after it called for participation in the TNA elections. At least three union leaders, including IFTU International Secretary Hadi Saleh, were murdered in 2005.

The TAL provides for an independent judiciary. The Higher Judicial Council (HJC)—headed by the chief judge of the Federal Supreme Court and composed of Iraq's 17 chief appellate judges and several judges from the Federal Court of Cassation—has administrative authority over the court system in Iraq. In practice, however, judges have come under immense political pressure. Since judges were virtually required to be Baath party members prior to 2003, they are now subject to removal by the executive branch through selective enforcement of de-Baathification laws. The new constitution stipulates that trials must be conducted in public "unless the court decides to make it secret."

Persons accused of committing war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity fall under the jurisdiction of the Iraqi High Tribunal (IHT), previously known as the Iraq Special Tribunal. The IHT statute does not explicitly require that guilt be proven beyond a reasonable doubt and lacks adequate safeguards against self-

incrimination. In October 2005, Saddam Hussein and seven former Iraqi officials went on trial for the 1982 executions of more than 140 Shiites in the town of Al-Dujail (the first in a series of cases the IHT plans to prosecute). The murders of an IHT judge and two defense lawyers in the case raised questions about whether the government can ensure the security of participants.

Iraq's Criminal Procedure Code and the TAL prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention (except in undefined "extreme exigent circumstances"), though both practices are common in security-related cases. In March 2005, according to Iraqi press reports, the HJC rebuked the Interior Ministry for distributing an internal memo authorizing arrest without warrants in "non-exigent" circumstances. In November, U.S. troops raided a detention center controlled by the Interior Ministry and discovered 169 incommunicado detainees, most of whom bore evidence of severe mistreatment or torture. There were credible reports of other illegal detention facilities run by the Interior Ministry. Several hundred people, mostly Arab and Turkmen, were arrested during the year by Kurdish authorities and detained incommunicado at five illegal detention centers in northern Iraq. Although the exact number fluctuated during the year, well over 10,000 Iraqis suspected of involvement in the insurgency were held by the U.S. military at any given time, before being released or handed over to the Iraqi authorities. Most criminal trials are summary, often lasting less than 30 minutes.

Neither coalition forces nor the Iraqi authorities have established effective safeguards against the mistreatment of detainees. According to a U.S. military investigation, American forces in Iraq were responsible for "systemic" and "illegal abuse of detainees" at Abu Ghraib prison between August 2003 and February 2004. The torture and ill-treatment of suspects detained by the authorities in connection with security-related offenses is much more severe and widespread, with hundreds of reported cases in 2005, and coerced confessions are a common method of investigation. In July 2005, nine men detained by police in Baghdad suffocated to death after they were confined in a van for up to 14 hours in the blazing sun.

The National Security Order of July 2004 enables the prime minister to declare martial law for a 60-day period (renewable every 30 days with approval of the Presidency Council) in areas of the country where violence against citizens poses a "danger of grave proportions." Under martial law, the government can restrict freedom of movement and assembly. The state of emergency declared by Prime Minister Ibrahim Jafaari in November 2004 was continuously renewed throughout 2005, mainly so as to impose curfews in areas where security is lacking.

Sunni Arab insurgents massacred thousands of Iraqi civilians (mostly Shiites) in 2005. Scores (hundreds, by some estimates) of mostly Sunni Arab civilians were murdered during the year by Shiite militias and Shiite-controlled police units. In May, the bodies of 16 Sunni Arab farmers who had been detained by men wearing police uniforms were discovered near Baghdad. A few weeks later, the mutilated body of a Sunni cleric and member of the Association of Muslim Scholars, Hassan al-Nuaimi, was found in Baghdad, a day after he was arrested by the police. In August, the bodies of 36 Sunni Arabs, arrested by men wearing police commando uniforms a day earlier, were discovered. Although the Interior Ministry promised investigations of these and other cases, no new information on these crimes was released by the authorities for the remainder of the year.

The internal security forces are dominated by Shiites, and there were credible allega-

tions of employment discrimination against non-Shiites in some government institutions in 2005, such as the ministries of Health and Communications. Minorities in northern Iraq—Turkmen, Arabs, Christians, and Shabak—reported instances of discrimination and harassment at the hands of Kurdish authorities. Palestinians were the targets of harassment and discrimination by both police and the general public.

Iraq's Baathist-era Personal Status Law remains in force and guarantees equal rights for women, as does the TAL. The TAL guarantees Iraqi women 25 percent of the seats in the TNA, though in fact 87 women (32 percent) were elected in January 2005. The 37-member cabinet formed in May included six female ministers. Female enrollment in universities is 42 percent. Public security for Iraqi women remained a major problem in 2005. Women who hold jobs, attend university, or go out in public unveiled were frequently harassed, and in some cases killed, by radical Islamist groups (both Sunni and Shiite). According to *Newsweek*, 32 women were murdered by suspected Islamic extremists from March 2003 to January 2005 in Baghdad and Mosul alone. In March 2005, three women in the Shiite Sadr City district of Baghdad were gunned down after being accused of prostitution by local extremists. Municipal officials in Basra estimate that there were two to three murders of women per week in 2005, many of them by Shiite Islamist groups.

Ireland

Population: 4,100,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$27,010 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 78 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (88.4 percent),
Church of Ireland (3 percent), other 8.6 percent
Ethnic Groups: Celtic, English minority
Capital: Dublin



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

Ireland's government, led by the Fianna Fail Party, saw its poll ratings dip in 2005 despite an economy that continued to show steadily impressive economic growth. Two opposition parties agreed on a prospective electoral alliance for the next general election, due by 2007. The confirmed decommissioning of weapons by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in Northern Ireland gave a boost to one of the Irish republic's most important foreign-policy priorities.

The Irish Free State emerged from the United Kingdom after the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. (Six Protestant-majority counties in the province of Ulster remained within the United Kingdom.) A brief civil war followed, ending in 1923. In 1937, the Irish Free State adopted a new constitution and a new name—Ireland, or Eire.

Ireland has been independent in its foreign policy, staying out of World War II

and NATO. It joined the European Community (now the European Union, or EU) along with Britain and Denmark in 1973. As a member, thanks in part to large subsidies for poorer regions within the EU, Ireland has enjoyed high rates of economic growth and has gone from being one of the poorest countries in Europe to being richer than Britain by some measures. It adopted the euro on its launch (as an electronic currency only) in 1999 and introduced euro notes and coins in 2001.

Ireland has resisted any EU moves that would impinge on its neutrality, including the idea of setting up an EU military capability. Partly for this reason, Irish voters rejected the EU's Treaty of Nice in June 2001, temporarily blocking the enlargement of the EU into Eastern Europe. In a second referendum, in October 2002, Irish voters approved the treaty.

Growth in the gross domestic product averaged 8.6 percent from 1998 through 2002. This outstanding growth led to inflation and wage increases, which eroded Ireland's competitiveness. That erosion, compounded by a strong euro, has slowed growth to still-impressive rates, including 4.5 percent growth in 2004 and a similar result forecast for 2005. The slower growth has nonetheless hit the government's budget, forcing the country to take a step back from the highly generous fiscal policies of previous years.

Though the economy was forecast to pick up again in 2004, the budget tightening caused by the general slowdown after the 1998-2002 period led to voter disillusionment. This was further fed by a perception that the governing coalition—Fianna Fail, with its junior coalition partner, the Progressive Democratic Party—which has been in power since 1997, had begun to grow arrogant, increasing taxes after having promised before the 2002 general election not to do so. As a result, Fianna Fail did poorly in local elections in June 2004, despite the fact that the elections coincided with a popular government-sponsored referendum on tightening Irish citizenship laws. The voters' verdict was reconfirmed with another poor showing for Fianna Fail in European Parliament elections later that month. Prime Minister Bertie Ahern reshuffled his cabinet in September 2004, hoping to shore up the coalition before elections, which must be held by 2007.

Ireland won praise for its diplomacy in 2004, particularly for its success in holding the EU's rotating six-month presidency for the first half of the year. The biggest event was the enlargement of the EU by 10 new countries, mostly formerly Communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Irish diplomacy also helped bring about a draft constitution for the EU that would fundamentally change how the 25-member bloc is run. However, after French and Dutch voters rejected that constitution in referendums in 2005, the constitution is now all but dead.

The governing coalition, led by Fianna Fail in partnership with the much smaller Progressive Democratic Party, was shown several points behind a prospective opposition alliance between Fine Gael and the smaller Labour Party in an August poll. At a Labour Party conference, delegates voted in favor of an electoral alliance for the next general election, which is due by 2007. Meanwhile, Fianna Fail and the Progressive Democrats have disagreed about the pace of economic reforms in the state sector.

In September 2005, an independent commission confirmed that the IRA had decommissioned (that is, destroyed or permanently put out of use) its weapons. The decommissioning took place after a high-profile bank robbery linked to the IRA caused

the British and Irish governments to put heavy pressure on the militia to disarm and return to the peace process. New hope for the peace process in Northern Ireland, a British province, is a success in one of Ireland's most cherished foreign-policy objectives. Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA, is represented in the Irish parliament.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Ireland can change their government democratically. The legislature consists of a lower house (the Dail), whose 166 members are elected by proportional representation for five-year terms, and an upper house (the Seanad, or Senate) with 60 members, some appointed and some elected by a body representing various interest groups. The Senate is mainly a consultative body. The president, whose powers are largely ceremonial, is directly elected for a seven-year term. The prime minister is chosen by parliament.

The political party system is open to the rise and fall of competing groupings. The two largest parties—Fianna Fail and Fine Gael—do not differ widely in ideological orientation but mainly represent the opposing sides of the 1920s civil war. The smaller parties are the Labour Party, the Progressive Democrats, Sinn Fein, and the Greens.

Corruption has been an ongoing issue, with many scandals having involved members of Fianna Fail. Charles Haughey, a former prime minister who headed several governments from 1979 to 1992, was discovered in 1997 to have received up to one million euros from an owner of a food and textile retailer. Though there is no direct connection of corruption to Prime Minister Bertie Ahern, he was found to have signed blank checks as party leader. In 2005, accusations of cronyism were aired relating to the appointment of allegedly unqualified but politically connected individuals to government bodies. Ireland was ranked 19 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The media are free and independent, and internet access is unrestricted. The print media present a variety of viewpoints. Television and radio are dominated by the state broadcaster, RTE, but the growth of cable and satellite television is weakening its influence. The state maintains the right to censor pornographic and violent material, which critics charge is an anachronistic measure and possibly in contravention of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Government plans to introduce a mandatory press council continued to provoke debate in 2005. The government hopes both to relax defamation laws to include a defense of "fair approach" (that is, an honest mistake committed by journalists who reasonably believed their statements to be true) and to prevent intrusions into privacy by setting common standards of practice through the new council. Proposals to make the council mandatory, with government-appointed members, raised concerns about keeping the proper distance between government and the press.

Freedom of religion is provided for in the constitution, and discrimination on the basis of religion is illegal. Although the country is overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, there is no state religion, and adherents of other faiths face few difficulties with religious expression. Religious education is provided in most primary and secondary schools, on whose boards sit officials of the Catholic Church. However, parents may exempt their children from religious instruction, and the constitution requires equal funding for students wishing instruction in other faiths. Academic freedom is respected.

There is freedom of assembly and association, and nongovernmental organizations can operate freely. The right of public assembly and demonstration is not infringed. Collective bargaining is legal and unrestricted, and unions operate without hindrance.

The legal system is based on common law, and the judiciary is independent. In a 2003 visit, the Council of Europe found evidence of some ill-treatment, including beatings, of detainees by police, mostly at the time of their detention, but stated that prisons are generally well run. Despite equal protection for all under the law, the Irish Travellers, a nomadic group of about 25,000, face social discrimination in housing, hiring, and other areas.

Inequality persists in pay rates for men and women, but discrimination in employment on the basis of sex and sexual orientation is forbidden under national and EU law. The past two presidents have been women: Mary McAleese (elected in 1997 and reelected in 2004) and Mary Robinson (1990-1997). Abortion is legal only when the life of the mother is in danger.

Israel

Population: 7,100,000

[Note: includes about 220,000 Israeli settlers

in the West Bank, about 20,000 in the Golan Heights, and fewer than 5,000 in the Gaza Strip. Approximately 172,000 Jews and 170,000 Arabs live in East Jerusalem.]

GNI/capita: \$16,240

Life Expectancy: 80

Religious Groups: Jewish (76.5 percent), Muslim [mostly Sunni] (15.9 percent), Christian (2.1 percent), other 5.5 percent

Ethnic Groups: Jewish (80 percent), non-Jewish [mostly Arab] (20 percent)

Capital: Jerusalem

Ratings Change: Israel's civil liberties ratings improved from 3 to 2 due to a marked decrease in terrorist attacks in 2005, as well as a surge of civic activism surrounding the country's "disengagement" from the Gaza Strip.

Note: The numerical rating and status reflect the state of political rights and civil liberties within Israel itself. Separate reports examine political rights and civil liberties in the Israeli-occupied territories and in the Palestinian administered areas.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,2F



Overview:

The year 2005 saw a continued and substantial reduction in terrorist attacks in Israel, resulting in greater security and freedom of movement. The year was dominated by Israel's "disengagement" from the Gaza Strip—including the withdrawal of all Jewish settlers and Israeli armed forces from the territory—and a slew of related

political developments that led to the dissolution of parliament and the scheduling of general elections for 2006. The withdrawal, conducted in August and September, was preceded by large-scale demonstrations by both opponents and supporters of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to abandon all 21 settlements in the Gaza Strip and four settlements in the northern West Bank.

Israel was formed in 1948 from less than one-fifth of the original British Mandate of Palestine; the mandate was assigned to Britain by the League of Nations following the defeat of Palestine's previous rulers, the Ottoman Empire, in World War I. The British relinquished control of Palestine (separated in 1921 from the territory of Transjordan) to the United Nations in 1947; a UN partition plan dividing Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state was rejected by the Arab Higher Committee and the Arab League. Following Israel's 1948 declaration of independence, Israel was attacked by a coalition of Arab states. While Israel maintained its sovereignty and expanded its borders, Transjordan seized East Jerusalem and the West Bank, and Egypt took control of the Gaza Strip.

As a result of Israel's 1967 Six-Day War with Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, Israel occupied the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. Syria had previously used the Golan to shell towns in northern Israel. Israel annexed East Jerusalem in 1967 and the Golan Heights in 1981. It returned the Sinai to Egypt in 1982 as part of a peace agreement between the two countries.

In 1993, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's Labor-led coalition government secured a breakthrough agreement with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The Declaration of Principles, negotiated secretly between Israeli and Palestinian delegations in Oslo, Norway, provided for a phased Israeli withdrawal from the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip and for limited Palestinian autonomy in those areas, and for Palestinian recognition of Israel and a renunciation of terrorism. On November 4, 1995, a right-wing Jewish extremist, opposed to the peace process, assassinated Rabin in Tel Aviv.

At Camp David, United States, in July 2000 and at Taba, Egypt, in the fall and in early 2001, Prime Minister Ehud Barak and U.S. president Bill Clinton engaged the Palestinian leadership in the most far-reaching negotiations ever. The Palestinian leadership ultimately rejected the Israeli offers, leading some analysts to suggest that Yasser Arafat, the chairman of the Palestinian Authority, was not satisfied that Palestinian territory in the West Bank would be contiguous or would not accept Israel's refusal to recognize a comprehensive "right of return" allowing Palestinian refugees to live in Israel. Following the breakdown of negotiations and a controversial visit by Ariel Sharon, then Likud Party leader, to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem in September 2000, the Palestinians launched an armed uprising, effectively ending the peace process.

Sharon, campaigning on his ability to bring security to Israel, defeated Barak in prime ministerial elections in 2001. He was reelected in national elections in January 2003 against a backdrop of continuing Palestinian violence in Israel, characterized mainly by devastating suicide bombings in buses, cafes, restaurants, bars, and marketplaces. In March 2002, after a series of particularly devastating attacks, the government launched Operation Defensive Shield, re-occupying many of the areas in the West Bank ceded to the Palestinian Authority during the Oslo peace process.

Israel also began the construction of a controversial security barrier roughly along the West Bank side of the 1967 armistice line (Green Line).

Following the death of Arafat in November 2004, Mahmoud Abbas (also known as Abu Mazen), a moderate PLO leader, was elected president of the Palestinian Authority in January 2005. The following month, Abbas and Sharon met in Sharm al-Sheikh, Egypt and declared—though did not sign—a formal truce; Abbas had previously coordinated a *tahida* (declared calm) among some Palestinian militant groups, and Sharon vowed to refrain from attacking these groups in exchange for a halt in Palestinian attacks. The agreement did lead to a general decline in violence, but did not halt it. Nevertheless, the truce, along with the continued construction of the security barrier in the West Bank, Israeli intelligence operations, and targeted killings of suspected Palestinian terrorist operatives and leaders, helped reduce the overall level of terrorism inside Israel in 2005, continuing a trend from 2004. The Israel Defense Forces, or IDF, continued to carry out targeted killings of terrorist suspects in the West Bank and Gaza, in addition to staging air strikes, demolishing private homes, and imposing curfews. The United States, the European Union, and many other countries, along with the United Nations, criticized Israel for its tactics and for the deaths of innocent Palestinians during antiterror operations.

According to the Israeli Foreign Ministry, the year saw a slight decrease in the number of warnings of attacks and a more substantial decrease in the number of attacks and related casualties in Israel. Still, a number of terrorist attacks were perpetrated by Palestinian terrorists in 2005, including a shooting attack on the Israeli side of the Kami crossing station between Israel and Gaza, killing 6 civilians and wounding another 5; a suicide bombing at a Tel Aviv nightclub, killing 5 people and wounding 50; a suicide bombing at a mall in Netanya, killing 5 and wounding 90; a suicide bombing at the Beersheba bus station, injuring at least 10 people; and a suicide bombing at a market in Hadera, killing 6 and wounding 55 people. In addition, in August, a Jewish terrorist (and discharged IDF soldier) killed 4 Israeli Arabs and wounded 12 on a bus near Shfaram. Also, as in 2004, Palestinians in the Gaza Strip launched increasing numbers of crude, short-range Qassam rockets into Israel.

In September 2005, Israel completed its unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip and four northern West Bank settlements. In the Gaza Strip, all Israeli civilians and military personnel were removed from the territory by the IDF. The plan's implementation was preceded by a vigorous public debate and a slew of political maneuverings. While polls showed that at least two-thirds of Israelis favored Sharon's plan, public opposition was significant. Following Sharon's announcement of his disengagement plan in 2004, opponents began a mostly nonviolent campaign—led by leaders of the settler movement and religious Zionist political parties—to stop the withdrawals.

After the resignation or dismissal of several of Sharon's cabinet ministers over their opposition to the plan left the prime minister without a majority coalition in the Knesset, the opposition Labor Party, led by elder statesmen Shimon Peres, agreed to join Sharon's ruling Likud Party in a national unity government in December 2004. The following month, the IDF dismissed six high-ranking officers who had called on soldiers to disobey impending orders to evacuate Gaza. In March 2005, members of parliament opposed to the plan—many from within Likud—tried unsuccessfully to pass a bill mandating a public referendum on the withdrawals; the Knesset had ap-

proved the disengagement plan in October 2004. Amid increasing protests by its opponents, in June the Israeli Supreme Court declared the disengagement plan legal, rejecting an appeal by a group of Gaza settlers that the plan violated their civil rights and removing the final legal obstacle to the execution of the plan.

The implementation of the disengagement plan, however, did not stop further developments within Israel's dynamic political arena. In late September, Binyamin Netanyahu—a former prime minister, Likud leader, and disengagement opponent who had resigned his post as finance minister in August—led an attempt to force a leadership poll within the Likud Central Committee; the motion was narrowly defeated, 51 to 49 percent. In November, trade unionist Amir Peretz defeated Peres in an intraparty election for head of the Labor Party. Citing his opposition to the Sharon government's liberal economic policies, Peretz withdrew Labor from the governing coalition later that month and called for early elections. Also in November, Sharon shocked the political establishment by announcing he was leaving the right-wing Likud Party, which he helped found in 1973, and forming a new, centrist political party (later named Kadima). Sharon cited opposition within the Likud Party to his policies, as well as his overarching goal of achieving a lasting peace settlement with the Palestinians, as the primary reasons for his departure from Likud. The following day, President Moshe Katsav announced the dissolution of the Knesset and set parliamentary elections for March 2006.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Israeli citizens can change their government democratically, Although Israel has no formal constitution, a series of basic laws has the force of constitutional principles. A largely ceremonial president serves as chief of state while the prime minister, appointed by his or her party, serves as head of government. The unicameral Knesset (parliament) is composed of 120 seats, and members are elected by popular vote for four-year terms; the distribution of seats among Israel's wide range of political parties is determined by a system of proportional representation. Parties or candidates that deny the existence of the State of Israel as a Jewish state, those that oppose the democratic system, or those that incite racism, are prohibited.

Arab residents of East Jerusalem, while not granted automatic citizenship, were issued Israeli identity cards after the 1967 Six-Day War. However, by law, Israel strips Arabs of their Jerusalem residency if they remain outside the city for more than three months. Arab residents have the same rights as Israeli citizens, except the right to vote in national elections. They do have the right to vote in municipal elections and are eligible to apply for citizenship. Many choose not to seek citizenship out of solidarity with Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and because they believe East Jerusalem should be the capital of an independent Palestinian state. East Jerusalem's Arab population does not receive a share of municipal services proportionate to its numbers. Arabs in East Jerusalem do have the right to vote in Palestinian Authority elections. Under the 1948 Law of Return, all Jewish immigrants and their immediate family are granted Israeli citizenship and residency rights; other immigrants must apply for these same rights.

Israel was ranked 28 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index. In 2005, Israeli police launched an investigation into an alleged money laundering scandal at the country's largest commercial bank,

Bank Hapoalim, leading to the arrest of 25 employees and the freezing of \$375 million in funds. In August, Omri Sharon—a Likud member of Knesset and the son of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon—was indicted on corruption charges stemming from allegations of improper funding of his father's 1999 prime ministerial run. After his parliamentary immunity was lifted in July, Sharon was convicted in November of falsifying corporate documents and giving false testimony. According to Kol Yisrael radio, 11 members of Knesset were involved in criminal proceedings in November 2005.

Press freedom is respected in Israel, and the country features a vibrant and independent media landscape. All Israeli newspapers are privately owned and freely criticize government policy. The Israel Broadcasting Authority operates public radio and television services, and commercial television networks and radio stations are widely available. Most Israelis subscribe to cable or satellite television; internet access is widespread and unrestricted. While newspaper and magazine articles on security matters are subject to a military censor, the scope of permissible reporting is wide and there is a broad range of published material. In March 2005, the daily *Ha'aretz* and the Channel 2 television station were both made to apologize for failing to submit to the censor reports on the sale of military technology to China. That same month, BBC News similarly apologized to the government for not submitting for review an interview with Mordechai Vanunu, an Israeli citizen imprisoned for 18 years for committing espionage and disclosing information about Israel's nuclear weapons program; the government demanded the apology before renewing the visa of the BBC Jerusalem deputy bureau chief. Vanunu's release from prison in 2004 was conditioned on a series of restrictions on his speech and movement; the government warned Vanunu he would be brought to trial if he continued to speak to foreign media, among other prohibitions.

Journalists are occasionally subject to official restrictions. However, the independent judiciary and an active civil society adequately protect the free media. In 2004, the Supreme Court denied a government appeal to uphold a ban on granting press credentials to Palestinians. Israel's Government Press Office (GPO) had earlier ceased issuing press cards to Palestinians on security grounds; the government claimed some Palestinians posing as journalists used the cards to gain entry into Israel to carry out or abet terrorist attacks. In July 2005, pressure from press and civil rights groups led the GPO to reinstate the credentials of Yishai Carmeli-Polak, a journalist and documentary filmmaker who is a highly critical reporter of government policies.

While the basic laws and the Declaration of Independence declare Israel a "Jewish and democratic state," freedom of religion is respected. Christian, Muslim, and Baha'i communities have jurisdiction over their own members in matters of marriage, burial, and divorce. In the Jewish community, the Orthodox establishment generally handles these matters. As a result, the law does not allow civil marriages, which prevents Jews and non-Jews from marrying. Many Israelis choose to marry in civil ceremonies outside the country, rather than submit to a religious ceremony. In addition, Orthodox definitions of Jewish identity are used to determine if immigrants are eligible for the citizenship and residency rights awarded to Jews under the Law of Return. However, recent years have seen a steady erosion of the Orthodox monopoly on Jewish religious affairs. In 2004, the Sharon cabinet disbanded the Religious Affairs Ministry, effectively putting rabbinic courts under the control of the Justice Minis-

try and freeing up state resources to be allocated to non-Orthodox religious institutions. In March 2005, the Supreme Court ruled that the state must recognize as Jews people who undergo non-Orthodox conversions begun in Israel but formalized abroad; previously, only non-Orthodox conversions conducted entirely abroad were recognized. Muslim and Christian communities accuse the government of discrimination in resource allocation and upkeep of religious sites. In November, the government objected to the swearing in of Theophilus III as the Jerusalem patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church because it had not recognized him as such; the ceremony proceeded without disturbance.

Freedom of assembly and association are respected. Israel features a vibrant civic society that includes a diverse array of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and demonstrations are widely permitted. In the run-up to the implementation of the disengagement plan, both opponents and supporters of the plan staged large demonstrations. While most of the demonstrations were nonviolent, others employed more violent tactics. In April through June of 2005, antisengagement protestors blocked highways across Israel by setting up roadblocks, burning materials, and dousing roads with oil and nails; in April, protestors forcibly locked schools and nurseries across Tel Aviv. In July, about 10,000 opponents of disengagement gathered outside a village near the Gaza Strip, intending to march into the territory and disrupt the evacuation of settlements; after three days and repeated clashes with police—who prevented the protestors from marching to Gaza—the demonstration ended. In August, 25,000 to 50,000 Israelis demonstrated in the border town of Sderot, which has been the most frequent target of Palestinian rocket fire from Gaza. Hundreds of demonstrators were detained—and several indicted for endangering lives—during antisengagement protests. Media attention focused on the cases of seven young girls detained for more than three weeks because of their refusal to sign a pledge not to participate in "illegal demonstrations."

Workers may join unions of their choice and enjoy the right to strike and to bargain collectively. Three-quarters of the workforce either belong to unions affiliated with Histadrut (the national labor union) or are covered under its social programs and collective bargaining agreements. Beginning in November 2004, more than 100 workers at the Beersheva transportation company Metrodan struck for almost 150 days, the country's longest strike. Foreign workers in the country legally enjoy wage protections, medical insurance, and guarantees against employer exploitation. However, foreign workers who leave their original employers are shorn of these rights, considered illegal, and subject to deportation. Illegal workers are often at the mercy of employers, and many are exploited.

The judiciary is independent and regularly rules against the government. In February, Attorney General Meni Mazuz ordered the government to cease implementing the 1950 Absentee Property Law, which allowed the government to claim Arab-owned land in East Jerusalem from absentee landlords without compensation. In September, the Supreme Court ruled unanimously that the government must reroute part of the security barrier near the West Bank town of Qalqilya in order to reduce the barrier's impact on Palestinian villagers, the second such ruling in as many years. Security trials may be closed to the public on limited grounds.

The Emergency Powers (Detention) Law of 1979 provides for indefinite administrative detention without trial. The policy stems from emergency laws in place since

the creation of Israel. Most administrative detainees are Palestinian; there are approximately 7,000 Palestinians in Israeli jails. In 2005, there were credible reports that Palestinian detainees were subject to abuse and torture in Israeli jails.

In 2003, an independent commission issued its findings of a public inquiry into the shooting deaths of 13 Arab-Israelis by police in October 2000. The police opened fire on rioters demonstrating in support of the Palestinian uprising. The report identified discrimination against Israel's Arab minority as the primary cause of the riots and led to the initiation of criminal investigations of several of the police officers who had opened fire, labeling them "prejudiced." In September 2005, a Justice Ministry probe decided not to prosecute any policemen or officers involved in the October 2000 shootings, citing insufficient evidence; the decision was condemned by Israeli human rights and Arab rights organizations.

While extended full political rights, some one million Arab citizens of Israel (roughly 19 percent of the population) receive inferior education, housing, and social services relative to the Jewish population. Arab-Israelis are not subject to the military draft, though they may serve voluntarily. Those who do not join the army are not eligible for financial benefits—including scholarships and housing loans—available to Israelis who have served.

In January 2004, Sharon declared that every state-run company must have at least one Arab-Israeli on its board of directors. Before being convicted of corruption, Salah Tarif, an Arab-Israeli, was a member of Sharon's cabinet. Thirteen members of the Knesset are Arab-Israeli, most representing majority Arab political parties. An Arab-Israeli judge also sits on the Supreme Court.

Some Israeli analysts, including supporters of Arab minority rights, cautioned against the radicalization of segments of Israel's Arab population and of Arab residents of East Jerusalem. In March, Ashraf Qaisi was charged with murder for assisting and conspiring with the perpetrator of a Tel Aviv suicide bombing.

The state generally protects wide personal autonomy. However, the Law of Citizenship, passed in 2003, bars citizenship to Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza who marry Arab-Israelis. The law, extended for six months in July 2005, would ostensibly lead to the separation of families or to their relocation from Israel. As the law is not retroactive, it does not affect Palestinians previously granted citizenship. Some human rights groups characterized the law as racist. Israel maintained that the law was necessary because some Palestinians have opportunistically married Arab citizens of Israel so that they can move to the country to more easily carry out terrorist attacks or to slowly shift the demographic reality in their favor. At year's end, the Supreme Court was considering petitions by NGOs to have the law declared illegal. Most Bedouin housing settlements are not recognized by the government and are not provided with basic infrastructure and essential services.

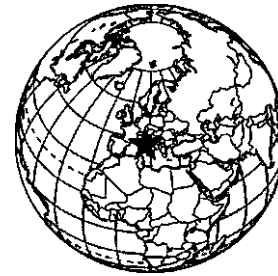
Freedom of movement is sometimes affected by security alerts and emergency measures that can subject Israelis to delays at roadblocks and public places. Israeli security forces and police sometimes carry out random, spot identity checks of civilians. By law, all citizens must carry national identification cards. The security fence restricts freedom of movement for some East Jerusalem residents. Upon his 2004 release, Mordechai Vanunu was subject to extensive travel restrictions.

Women have achieved substantial parity at almost all levels of Israeli society. Women are somewhat underrepresented in public affairs; 18 women sit in the 120-

seat Knesset. In the May 1999 election, an Arab-Israeli woman, Husaina Jabara, was elected to the Knesset for the first time. Arab women and religious Jewish women face some societal pressures and traditions that negatively affect their professional, political, and social lives. The trafficking of women for prostitution has become a problem in recent years. In March 2005, a parliamentary report claimed that 3,000 to 5,000 women—mostly from the former Soviet Union—have been smuggled into the country as prostitutes in the past four years.

Italy

Population: 58,700,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$21,570 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 80 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (predominant)
Ethnic Groups: Italian, small minorities of German, French, Slovenian, and Albanian
Capital: Rome



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1995	1997	1999	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

A political crisis enveloped Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi in April 2005 when one of his coalition partners left the government and another threatened to do the same. After the London bombings in July by Islamic extremists, Italy's parliament approved a new antiterrorism law that facilitated the expulsion of Islamic militants in the country. In April, parliament ratified the new European Union (EU) constitution, becoming the first founding member state to do so.

Modern Italy began with the mid-nineteenth century Risorgimento that brought together the various regions of the peninsula under the control of the northwestern region of Piedmont. Italy's liberal period ended abruptly with the rise to power of Benito Mussolini and the Fascist Party, which ruled the country for 20 years starting in 1922. During World War II, the country, under Mussolini, joined Germany and Japan as an Axis power, declaring war on France, Britain, and the Soviet Union and invading Greece. The Allied invasion in the south, along with the help of the anti-Fascist resistance in the north, led to Italy's eventual defeat in 1945. A referendum in 1946 replaced the monarchy with a republican form of government.

The "clean hands" corruption trials in the early 1990s led to the collapse of the major political parties that had dominated postwar Italian politics—the Christian Democrats, the Communists, and the Socialists. Since that time, many new parties and coalitions have emerged.

In the late 1990s, Italy began a number of institutional reforms to address a list of pressing issues, including revolving-door governments: Italy has had more than 50 governments since 1945. In 1993, a new electoral law switched the country from

a pure system of proportional representation to a (mostly) plurality system in an attempt to reduce the number of political parties that can obtain seats. Other reforms have included efforts to modernize the judiciary by streamlining the prosecution of cases in the courts and reducing unnecessary legislation in parliament.

The House of Liberties coalition, which won the last national elections, in May 2001, includes Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia, as well as the post-Fascist National Alliance, the regionalist Northern League, and other smaller parties. The elections in 2001 saw a drop in voter participation; about 85 percent of eligible voters went to the polls—a turnout that was lower than the postwar average of over 90 percent. The main opposition to the House of Liberties is the center-left Union Coalition, which was formed in October 2004 and includes, among other parties, the United in the Olive Tree, a coalition of the two main parties of the center-left (the Democratic Left and the Daisy Alliance), the far-left Communist Renewal, and the Union of Democrats for Europe. The constitution forbids the reemergence of the Fascist Party.

In mid-April 2005, a political crisis enveloped Berlusconi when the center-right Union of Christian Democrats (UDC) left his government. His main coalition partner, the rightist National Alliance, also threatened to quit. The departure of the UDC was sparked by the crushing defeat of Berlusconi's Forza Italia party in regional elections earlier in the month. Berlusconi, who was elected in 2001 and had maintained the longest-serving postwar cabinet, eventually formed a new government by the end of the month. In October 2005, Romano Prodi, a former European Commission president and Italian prime minister, won primary elections for the Center-Left's prime ministerial candidate by a wide margin.

In November 2005, the Senate approved a controversial bill paving the way for the first constitutional reform in 60 years. The bill, which was championed by the regionalist Northern League, will eventually devolve considerable powers to the country's 20 regions, reduce the number of MPs in both houses, and strengthen the power of the prime minister. Opponents argued that the bill will only widen the already pronounced economic gap between the wealthy North and poorer South.

Relations between the United States and Italy were strained over two international incidents during the year. In March, an Italian secret service agent was shot by U.S. soldiers at a checkpoint in Iraq just moments after he had rescued an Italian hostage. Italian and American investigators disagreed over major issues leading to the incident; the soldiers were eventually cleared of any wrongdoing over the killing of the agent, and Gianfranco Fini, the Italian foreign minister, called for a separate Italian inquiry into the incident. Nevertheless, in July 2005, the lower house of parliament approved funding for the 3,000 troops still stationed in Iraq.

In another incident, Italian courts in July issued 19 arrest warrants for alleged CIA agents accused of abducting an Islamic cleric in Milan in 2003. The abduction of the cleric, who was allegedly flown to Egypt for interrogation and tortured, is believed to be part of the controversial U.S. antiterrorism policy known as "extraordinary rendition"; none of the suspects were arrested.

The outgoing head of the Italian Red Cross admitted to Italian journalists that the Red Cross had treated four Iraqi insurgents in exchange for the release of two Italian aid workers, Simona Pari and Simona Torretta, who had been held for three weeks. The exchange had been kept a secret from the United States, which has opposed paying ransoms for kidnappers in Iraq.

After the London bombings in July 2005 by Islamic extremists, parliament approved a new antiterrorism law that includes surveillance of the internet and phone networks, interrogation of suspects without lawyers being present, imposition of prison sentences and fines for persons who purposely hide their faces in public, and implementation of more expeditious methods for expelling illegal immigrants who pose a security threat to the country. A suspected Islamic extremist and a Muslim cleric, who were both accused on separate occasions of being a "danger to national security," were expelled from the country under the new antiterrorism laws. One of the suspects of the London bombings, Hussain Osman, was arrested in Rome in July and extradited in September to the United Kingdom. He was arrested on a new European Arrest Warrant, which was introduced to EU members to facilitate the extradition of suspects of serious crimes, like terrorism, kidnapping, and illicit weapons trafficking, between member states.

In April, Italy's parliament ratified the new EU constitution, becoming the first founding member state to do so. However, shortly after the French and Dutch rejection of the constitution—in May and June, respectively—two ministers from the euroskeptic Northern League called for a return to the lira. In June, Umberto Bossi, the leader of the Northern League, made his first public address since suffering a heart attack in 2004.

Much of the country went into mourning after the death of Pope John Paul II on April 2; he was 84 and had led the Roman Catholic Church for 26 years.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Italians can change their government democratically. Although the role of the president, who is chosen by parliament and representatives of the regions, is largely ceremonial, Italian presidents, like the current Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, have not shied away from taking sides on national political issues. The president chooses the prime minister, who is often, but not always, a member of the largest party in the lower house, the Chamber of Deputies. The constitution also provides for 20 subnational administrative districts. Currently, 75 percent of the 630 seats in the Chamber of Deputies are elected in single-member districts while the other 25 percent are elected by proportional representation, with a 4 percent threshold. Deputies serve for five-year terms. The Senate consists of 315 seats, with members also serving five years.

The House of Liberties coalition is currently in power. The new electoral law of 1993 limits the chances of smaller parties to attain seats on their own, forcing them to align themselves with other parties in large coalitions on the left and right. In order to appease the interests of smaller parties, the current government in 2005 proposed changes to the law that would increase the number of seats allocated by proportional representation. The law was passed by the Chamber of Deputies in October 2005. The opposition Union strongly opposes such changes. In 2000, parliament approved a constitutional change that gives the estimated four million Italians abroad the right to vote, effective with the next national elections in 2006.

Corruption remains an issue in politics despite the changes in government coalitions over the past decade. Transparency International ranked Italy 40 out of 159 countries surveyed in its 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index, one of the worst rankings in Western Europe. In September 2005, Calisto Tanzi, founder of the Italian dairy company Parmalat, went on trial on charges of market rigging, misleading Italy's

stock market regulator, and providing false accounting information. A January 2004 investigation into Parmalat uncovered that the company had debts of around 14 billion euros in September of the previous year, close to eight times what the company's management had claimed at that time.

In September 2005, the government announced plans to reform the central bank, the Bank of Italy, after revelations that the governor, Antonio Fazio, had improperly favored an Italian bank over a Dutch bank in the takeover battle for another Italian bank. Fazio has been asked by the government to step down, but has so far refused to do so. The European Commission announced plans in November to take legal action against the Bank of Italy over its handling of recent mergers.

Freedom of speech and the press is constitutionally guaranteed. However, Italy continues to suffer from a concentration of media power in the hands of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, who, through his private media holdings and political power over the state television networks, controls 90 percent of the country's broadcast media.

In April 2004, the Senate adopted the Gasparri law on broadcasting, which ostensibly introduced a number of reforms, including the preparation for the switchover from analogue to digital broadcasting that is due to take place in 2006. However, the law has been heavily criticized for providing measures that serve the interests of Berlusconi's extensive media holdings. For example, the antitrust limits set by the law would enable Berlusconi to continue to dominate the private media market. In addition, the law removed a previous restriction on one person's owning more than two national broadcasting stations, allowing Retequattro, one of three television stations owned by the Berlusconi-dominated Mediaset group, to continue terrestrial broadcasting. However, shortly after Berlusconi's poor showing in the April 2005 elections, Fininvest, the company at the apex of Berlusconi's business empire, reduced its stake in Mediaset from 50.9 to 34.3 percent, minimizing his control of the media giant. The move, according to *The Guardian*, was intended to boost Berlusconi's image for the upcoming elections in spring 2006.

In January 2005, a court in Rome condemned the Italian public broadcaster RAI for the removal of a TV journalist, Michele Santoro, in 2002. Santoro was one of three journalists critical of the government who were removed from RAI for alleged "criminal use of public television." Parliament has still not passed a proposed bill that will abolish prison sentences for libel. After the London bombings in July 2005 by Islamic extremists, parliament approved a new antiterrorism law that includes surveillance of the internet and phone networks. The law allows the government to compile a list of mobile phone users to help the police investigating suspected terrorist crimes.

Freedom of religion is respected and guaranteed by the constitution. A revised Concordat in 1984 established the secular state in Italy. Although Roman Catholicism is the dominant religion, and the Catholic Church is granted some privileges by the state, there is no state religion. In addition, the state provides support, if requested, to other religions represented in the country. To date, the state has signed agreements with a number of religious groups but has yet to pass an omnibus religious freedom law. Academic freedom is respected and protected.

Italians are free to organize into social and political associations. However, a bill introduced into parliament by the conservative majority in 2004 sought to ban child

protests. The new law, if it goes into effect, will fine parents up to \$2,500 if they allow their children under 12 years of age to participate in street protests. Despite this, civil society remains robust. Between 35 and 40 percent of the workforce is unionized. In November 2005, the country was paralyzed by a national strike called by the three leading unions in protest over the government's proposed cuts in the 2006 budget. In December 2004, a similar nationwide strike against the government's economic policies—which included then plans for an \$8 billion cut in public sector spending—crippled the country for a day. The plans for cuts were in response to a European Commission's warning for Italy to reduce its public debt, which is the third largest in the world.

The independence of the country's judiciary continues to be undermined by long trial delays and the influence of organized crime. The 2005 U.S. State Department's human rights report states that trial delays are caused, in part, by the lack of any effective limits on the length of pretrial investigations, the large number of minor offenses included in the penal code, unclear and contradictory legal provisions, and insufficient resources, including an inadequate number of judges. The courts also have the ability to determine when a law's statute of limitations applies. In December 2004, judges dropped bribery charges filed in 1999 against Berlusconi for events that occurred in 1991. The charges were dropped on the grounds that the statute of limitations had expired.

Despite legal prohibitions against torture, there were reports of excessive use of force by the police, particularly against illegal immigrants. The brutality trial of 75 people, including some of Italy's most senior police officers, began in October 2005. The defendants are accused of orchestrating and participating in a campaign of brutality against protestors at the G8 summit in Genoa in 2001.

The country is a major port of entry for undocumented immigrants; large numbers of people from North Africa, the Middle East, China, and South Asia continue to arrive on the country's shores. A report by Amnesty International alleges that illegal immigrants in Italy are subject to abuse, as people are held in overcrowded and unhygienic holding centers and denied access to lawyers and experts, making it impossible for them to challenge detention or deportation orders. In March, Italy repatriated 180 boat people to Libya from the island of Lampedusa, off the coast of North Africa, sparking the ire of human rights groups that argued the move went against Italian and international law. According to Amnesty International, the action breached the UN Refugee Convention by not allowing people with a valid asylum claim to be properly assessed.

Strict fertility laws, strongly supported by the Vatican and Catholic politicians, remain in effect in the country after a referendum in June 2005 for relaxing the laws failed to reach the 50 percent turnout needed to be valid. The laws prevent sperm and egg donations and ban screening embryos for disease. Italian bishops and the newly elected Pope Benedict XVI had encouraged people to boycott the referendum on moral grounds.

Women benefit from liberal maternity-leave provisions and government efforts to ensure parity in the workforce. Women also have considerable educational opportunities. However, violence against women continues to be a problem. Around 11 percent of the 630 members of the Chamber of Deputies are women.

Italy is a destination and transit country for trafficking of women and children

for sexual and labor exploitation. Police arrested 70 people in Italy, Greece, and Turkey accused of smuggling Chinese workers into Italy. Many of the illegal immigrants are forced into involuntary servitude in Chinese workshops in the central cities of Prato and Florence. The police also arrested an Italian-Bulgarian human trafficking ring that was accused of selling newborn babies to childless couples. The country did, however, make efforts to tackle the problem of human trafficking in 2004. The government assisted victims with protection and reintegration aid and conducted public awareness campaigns to increase prevention.

Jamaica

Population: 2,700,000 Political Rights: 2
 GNI/capita: \$2,980 Civil Liberties: 3
 Life Expectancy: 73 Status: Free
 Religious Groups: Protestant (61.3 percent),
 Rastafari (34.7 percent), Roman Catholic (4 percent)
 Ethnic Groups: Black (91 percent), other [including white,
 Chinese, and East Indian] (9 percent)
 Capital: Kingston



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
2,3F	2,3F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F

Overview:

Jamaica continued to suffer from rampant crime and high levels of unemployment in 2005. During the year, Prime Minister Percival James Patterson announced the start of a debate on retaining or abolishing the country's death penalty.

Jamaica, a member of the Commonwealth, achieved independence from Great Britain in 1962. Since independence, power has alternated between the social-democratic People's National Party (PNP) and the conservative Jamaica Labor Party (JLP). In 1992, the PNP elected Percival James Patterson to replace Michael Manley as party leader and prime minister. In the 1993 parliamentary elections, which were marred by irregularities and violence, the PNP won 52 seats in the House of Representatives and the JLP won 8 seats. The parties differed little on continuing Jamaica's structural adjustment, begun in the 1980s to bring economic stability and growth to the country, although the JLP was hurt by long-standing internal rifts.

The Patterson government confronted labor unrest and an increase in violent crime carried out largely by gangs operating a lucrative drug trade only loosely tied to local party bosses. In 2000, Patterson promised to stanch Jamaica's "rampant criminality" by introducing new gun control efforts, creating a new police strike force to target organized crime, and reintroducing the death penalty. The promises came after criticisms from key leaders of the vital tourism industry joined complaints from Jamaicans of all walks of life demanding an end to the mostly drug-related street crime that had been spiraling upward over the previous two decades. The

fierce crime wave crippled local businesses and created an exodus of middle-class Jamaicans overseas.

In 2002, Patterson became the only prime minister in Jamaican history to be elected to three consecutive terms. His PNP won 34 of 60 seats in the House of Representatives and retained the office of prime minister for an unprecedented fourth term; the JLP took 26 seats. An observer delegation led by former U.S. president Jimmy Carter said that despite measures taken to restrain voter fraud, such activity remained high in areas controlled by politically linked gangs. Patterson also became the first chief executive to swear allegiance to the Jamaican people and constitution, rather than to the Queen of England.

A national crime plan, hammered out with the support of the JLP and the country's business community, helped to bring about large cocaine seizures. The plan included increased training for police, stronger criminal intelligence planning, and greater ties to foreign law enforcement agencies. In May 2003, the government announced that it was putting 1,000 new police officers on the streets.

In June 2003, the JLP won a landslide victory in bitterly contested local elections that appeared to be a referendum on the PNP's fiscal policies. The JLP secured control of 11 of the 13 municipal councils contested; 23 percent of the candidates were women. Following the vote, 27 people, including two police officers, were killed during operations conducted by security forces in western Kingston, and 16 others died in gun battles in the eastern part of the city, as gangs loyal to the country's two major political parties battled. The JLP announced in November that it was refusing to support a new antiterrorism bill that it claimed gave the government "draconian powers" to confiscate private property and to suppress antigovernment protests; the party continued its dissent through 2004. The PNP also pushed to give the military the power to conduct searches and make arrests even in the absence of the police.

In 2005, the Patterson government remained trapped by the vicious cycle in which violent crime helped to depress tourism and investment. Jamaica's already high murder rate has risen dramatically in the last two years, and the country is on track to exceed the 2004 benchmark of 1,445 homicides to reach nearly 1,700—a level of violence that is unrivaled outside of Colombia and South Africa. Meanwhile, the country's economic conditions kept it from alleviating unemployment or making expenditures on social development.

Edward Seaga's 30-year leadership of the JLP ended with the selection of Bruce Golding as the formal leader of the parliamentary opposition. After 12 years in power, Patterson announced that he would retire before April 2006, producing renewed competition for the future leadership of his party.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Jamaica can change their government democratically. The British monarchy is represented by a governor-general, who is appointed by the monarch on the recommendation of the Jamaican prime minister, the country's chief executive. Following legislative elections, the leader of the majority party or the leader of the majority coalition in the House of Representatives is appointed by the prime minister, who recommends the deputy prime minister. The bicameral parliament consists of the 60-member House of Representatives, elected for five years, and the 21-member Sen-

ate, with 13 senators appointed by the prime minister and 8 by the leader of the parliamentary opposition.

Jamaica's recent political history has been characterized by an ongoing rivalry between the left-of-center People's National Party (PNP), long dominated by the late Michael Manley, and the more conservative Jamaican Labor Party, whose long-time leader was Edward Seaga. In the 1970s, the two parties developed urban garrisons that by means fair and foul strived to bring their preferred candidates to power. In 2005, Prime Minister Percival James Patterson prepared to step down after more than 13 years in power, while the JLP nominated Bruce Golding to take on the party's leadership position.

In July 2005, the Access to Information Act of 2002 was due to become fully implemented. However, most of the 264 agencies were not ready to comply. Government whistle-blowers who ethically dissent over official acts of waste, fraud, or abuse of power are not well protected by Jamaican law, as required under the Inter-American Convention against Corruption. Jamaica was ranked 64 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitutional right to free expression is generally respected. Broadcast media are largely public but are open to pluralistic points of view. There are an estimated 1.9 million radios in Jamaica—the highest per capita ratio in the Caribbean—but only 330,000 television sets. Newspapers are independent and free of government control, although newspaper readership is generally low. Journalists are occasionally intimidated during election campaigns. Public opinion polls play a key role in the political process, and election campaigns feature debates on state-run television. The government does not restrict access to the internet.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the government generally respects this right in practice. The government does not restrict academic freedom.

Freedom of association and assembly is generally respected. Jamaica has a robust civil society, although the most influential nongovernmental actors tend to emanate from private sector associations. Labor unions are politically influential and have the right to strike. The Industrial Disputes Tribunal mediates labor conflicts.

The judicial system is headed by the Supreme Court and includes several magistrate's courts and a court of appeals, with final recourse to the Privy Council in London. A Trinidad-based Caribbean Court of Justice, which was inaugurated in April 2005, will become Jamaica's highest appellate court, replacing the Privy Council, whose recent rulings against the death penalty have angered many in Jamaica.

Despite government efforts to improve penal conditions, a mounting backlog of cases and a shortage of court staff at all levels continue to undermine the judicial system, which is slow and inefficient, particularly in addressing police abuses and the violent conditions in prisons. Before the government announced in October 2003 that it was adding 1,000 new police officers, Jamaica had just 2.9 officers per 100,000 people, compared with regional averages ranging from 3.2 to 6.9. In May 2005, Amnesty International reported that between 100 and 130 people were killed the previous year in a manner suggesting execution. Although there has been some willingness by authorities to charge police for extrajudicial killings, the system for investigating such abuses lacks personnel to probe abuses, protect crime scene evidence, take statements from officers in a timely manner, and conduct adequate autopsies of vie-

tims of alleged police misconduct. In July, the government submitted to parliament the Police Civilian Oversight Authority Act to improve accountability and adherence to policing standards.

There are continuing concerns over criminal justice practices, particularly the shooting of suspects by police. Officially, police are allowed to use lethal force if an officer's life is threatened or a dangerous felon is escaping, but in practice, its use is more widespread, and officials have promised to adopt a stricter use-of-force policy. Other disputed practices include death sentences following trials of questionable fairness, corporal punishment, alleged ill-treatment by police and prison wardens, and appalling detention centers and prisons.

A mounting crime rate in recent years led the government to take controversial steps toward restoring capital punishment and flogging; rights groups protested both measures. Critics charge that flogging is unconstitutional because it can be characterized as "inhuman or degrading punishment," which the constitution prohibits. In July 2004, the Privy Council struck down the Offences against the Person Act, which imposed a mandatory death sentence for certain crimes, saying that it amounted to inhuman and degrading punishment. In February 2005, Patterson announced the beginning of a debate on retaining or abolishing the death penalty.

Jamaica is a main transit point for cocaine shipped from Colombia through the Caribbean to U.S. markets, and the drug trade is now largely controlled by Colombian organized crime syndicates. Violence is the major cause of death in Jamaica, and the murder rate is one of the highest in the world. Much of the violence is the result of warfare between drug gangs known as "posses." Jamaican-born criminal deportees from the United States and a growing illegal weapons trade are major causes of the violence. Mobs have been responsible for numerous vigilante killings of suspected criminals. Inmates frequently die as a result of prison riots. Jamaican officials complain that the United States was flagrantly applying a double standard by demanding a full effort by Jamaica to help stop the flow of drugs into the United States, while at the same time failing to stem the flow of guns into Jamaica. However, in February 2004, Jamaica and the United States signed a new accord that increased U.S. authority to pursue suspected drug smugglers in the island's waters and airspace.

Persecution of homosexuals is rampant, with same-sex intercourse punishable by 10 years' imprisonment at hard labor. In recent years, several gay Jamaicans have been granted asylum in Britain on the grounds that they were in danger in Jamaica because of their homosexuality. In 2004, there was a growing debate over the anti-gay lyrics of Jamaican entertainers, particularly reggae singers. Many gays and lesbians do not report acts of violence committed against them because of police hostility. In June 2004, Brian Williamson, a spokesperson for J-FLAG (Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays), a leading advocacy group, was brutally murdered in his New Kingston apartment, although the motive for the attack was unclear. Public skirmishes between gay-rights groups and the police continued in 2005.

In 1998, a woman was for the first time elected speaker of parliament. Violence against women is widespread, but because social and cultural traditions work against its acknowledgment and reporting, estimates about its prevalence are unreliable. Although the constitution and the country's employment laws give women full le-

gal equality, workplace discrimination, including lower pay, is common. A UNICEF report found that 119 children were murdered, 430 were shot, and 900 were sexually abused in 2004. In June 2005, the U.S. State Department gave Jamaica a Tier 3 rating on human trafficking, which meant that the country does not comply with minimum standards and is not making an effort to do so.

Japan

Population: 127,700,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$34,180 **Civil Liberties:** 2
Life Expectancy: 82 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Shinto and Buddhist (84 percent), other [including Christian] (16 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Japanese (99 percent), other (1 percent)
Capital: Tokyo



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F

Overview:

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, the leader of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), took a major political gamble in August 2005. After the upper house of the Japanese Diet (parliament) failed to pass Koizumi's bill to privatize the Japanese postal system, he dissolved the lower house and called a snap election. Koizumi then barred LDP members who voted against his reform bill from participating in the election as party candidates. His political brinkmanship proved a tremendous success when the LDP won a landslide victory, widely seen as a popular mandate to implement privatization reforms.

Japan has operated as a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary democracy since its defeat in World War II. The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has been in power almost continuously since 1955, being out of power for only 10 months during the past 50 years. The LDP presided over Japan's economic ascent while maintaining close security ties with the United State during the Cold War. Japan's "iron triangle"—the close relationship between the LDP, banks, and big business representatives—was a major source of Japan's economic success. The LDP government was able to mandate that corporations, specifically construction firms in charge of major public works projects, rely on banks for capital, and the banks in turn took large equity stakes in the companies. In addition, the government was able to maintain centralized control over this operation through its influence over the banking sector. One negative result of this situation was that companies in debt would engage in politically expedient but financially unviable projects in order to reap governmental rewards. The iron triangle is often cited as a major source of corruption in the Japanese government, although it has been noted that through the efforts of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, corruption in the Japanese government has declined.

The economic sector in Japan has been in trouble since the early 1990s, following a crash in Japan's stock and real estate markets. While the fallout from this "burst bubble" was large, the Japanese economy has been slowly returning to a healthy state since 2002. The profits of Japanese companies have been growing, and the banking sector, which played a role in the economy's stagnation, is healthier now than it has been in over a decade. Furthermore, there has been job recovery; full-time employment rose dramatically in 2005.

Koizumi has been prime minister since 2001, and his administration's popularity has fluctuated. With less than 60 percent voter turnout, the LDP won 237 out of 480 seats in the November 2003 election for the lower house of the Diet, Japan's parliament. After the election, the LDP gained a simple majority by entering into a coalition with three independents and the New Conservative Party. The DPJ captured 177 seats—the largest tally for any opposition party since 1958, though changes in the size and electoral structure of parliament make comparisons difficult. The DPJ also gained 12 seats in the July 2004 election for the Diet's upper house, which brought the party's total to 50; the LDP won only 49 seats. The DPJ's strong performance in this election reflected the public's dissatisfaction with the LDP's reform program, specifically its proposed pension reforms.

A snap election held in September 2005 saw Koizumi's LDP win 296 seats in the 480-member House of Deputies, the Diet's lower house. The DPJ captured only 113 seats, down 64 seats from the previous election. The New Komeito Party won 31 seats and entered into a coalition with the LDP. The Japanese Communist Party (JCP) took nine seats, while the Social Democratic Party (SDP) took seven seats. A slew of other parties captured the remaining 27 seats.

The September election was prompted by the defeat of a bill in the upper house of the Diet to privatize Japan Post—not just a mail delivery service, but also the world's largest financial institution. The postal service operates a network of 24,700 branches that offer state-subsidized bank deposits and life insurance to tens of millions of Japanese citizens; Japan Post controls 330 trillion yen (US\$3 trillion) in household financial assets. The initial privatization bill passed by a slight majority in the lower house only to be rejected in the upper house, when 21 LDP members voted against the party. Koizumi responded by dissolving parliament and calling for a snap election. Furthermore, Koizumi refused to give party backing to those who voted against the reform bill. A month and a half after the election, the privatization plan passed; it will be implemented in graduated stages until 2017. Presently, Japanese economists are divided over the likely impact of privatization. However, gradual implementation is likely to reduce the effects felt by consumers of services currently provided by Japan Post. The privatization measures allow the government to tax the privatized postal service and thereby greatly increase government revenue.

Japan has continued to expand its role in peacekeeping and security, although its military is restricted by Article 9 of Japan's pacifist constitution to a self-defense role. The debate over whether or not to amend Article 9 is ongoing, especially in light of fears that North Korea has effectively developed a nuclear weapons program. Since 1992, Japanese troops have participated in several UN peacekeeping missions; Japanese warships provided logistical support to U.S.-led forces during the war in Afghanistan, and in 2003, parliament approved the dispatch of 1,000 troops to Iraq to provide logistical support to U.S.-led troops and humanitarian aid.

While Koizumi is credited with being successful on the domestic front, relations with both China and South Korea have deteriorated as a result of his annual visits to the Yasukuni shrine, a site honoring Japan's war dead—including a small number of war criminals. In addition, Japan's failed bid to secure a permanent seat on the UN Security Council weakened Koizumi's reputation as a leader who could aptly handle foreign policy.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Japan can change their government democratically. The prime minister—the leader of the majority party or coalition in the Diet's lower House of Deputies—is the head of government and appoints a cabinet of ministers. The House of Deputies (*Shugi-in*) serves four-year terms and is made up of 380 single-member constituency seats and 100 party block seats; an upper House of Councilors (*Sangi-in*), elected for three- and six-year terms, consists of 146 constituency seats and 96 party block seats. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's term limit will end in September 2006. Emperor Akihito serves as a ceremonial head of state.

Numerous political parties compete for political power. Currently, the LDP leads a coalition government with New Komeito, a party with close ties to a national Buddhist organization. Major opposition parties include the DPJ, the JCP, and the SDP.

Koizumi has focused his major reform efforts on breaking down the circles of corruption in the government that result from the iron triangle system, mostly by loosening ties between the government and big business. Japan was ranked 21 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index.

Japan's press is private and independent, but the presence of press clubs, or *kisha kurabu*, is an obstacle to press freedom. Press clubs ensure homogeneity of news coverage by fostering close relationships between the major media and bureaucrats and politicians. Government officials often give club members exclusive access to political information, leading journalists to avoid writing critical stories about government and reducing the media's ability to pressure politicians for greater transparency and accountability. These practices have been criticized by Reporters Without Borders and the European Union. Reporters outside the press club system conduct most of Japan's investigative journalism. Internet access is not restricted.

Japanese of all faiths can worship freely. Religious groups are not required to be licensed, but registering with government authorities as a "religious corporation" brings tax benefits and other advantages. There are no restrictions on academic freedom.

The constitution guarantees freedom of assembly and association. The political culture in Japan is strong, and there are active civic, human rights, social welfare, and environmental groups. Trade unions are independent, and with the exception of police and firefighters, all unionized workers have the right to strike.

Japan's judiciary is independent. There are several levels of courts, and suspects are generally given fair public trials by an impartial tribunal (there are no juries) within three months of being detained. Arbitrary arrest and imprisonment are not practiced. Prison conditions comply with international standards, although some human rights groups have criticized them for being overly disciplined. Prison officials sometimes use physical and psychological intimidation to enforce discipline or elicit confessions. The government sometimes restricts human rights groups' ac-

cess to prisons. The National Police Agency is under civilian control and is highly disciplined, though reports of human rights abuses committed by police persist.

Although the constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, creed, sex, and social status, certain groups of people continue to face unofficial discrimination. Japan's three million Burakumin, who are descendants of feudal-era outcasts, and the indigenous Ainu minority suffer from entrenched societal discrimination that prevents them from having equal access to housing and employment opportunities. Foreigners generally, and Koreans in particular, suffer the same disadvantage.

Women in Japan have legal equality, but discrimination in employment is particularly widespread. According to *The Times* (London), "only one in eight lawyers is a woman, as is one in ten company managers, one in thirty ambassadors and one in seventy senior civil servants." In addition, sexual harassment on the job is widespread. Violence against women is a problem that often goes unreported because of "social and cultural concerns about shaming one's family or endangering the reputation of one's spouse or children," according to the 2005 U.S. State Department's human rights report. September's snap election proved a major step for women in Japanese politics; 43 women were elected to Japan's 480-member parliament, the highest number ever. This resulted from Koizumi's decision to invite an unprecedented number of women to serve in the place of the ejected members of the LDP. Women candidates were awarded top spots on the party's list of candidates.

Jordan

Population: 5,800,000 **Political Rights:** 5
GNI/capita: \$1,850 **Civil Liberties:** 4
Life Expectancy: 72 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim (92 percent),
 Christian (6 percent), other (2 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Arab (98 percent), other [including
 Armenian] (2 percent)
Capital: Amman



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
4,4PF	4,4PF	4,5PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	5,5PF	6,5PF	5,5PF	5,4PF	5,4PF

Overview:

Bolstered by strong economic growth and an informal understanding between the government and opposition over the boundaries of acceptable public discourse, Jordan's limited expansion of civil liberties continued in 2005. Little progress was made in advancing political reform, however, and the bloody November 9 suicide bombings in Amman instigated the drafting of new antiterrorism legislation likely to erode some public freedom.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, known as Transjordan until 1950, was established as a League of Nations mandate under the control of Great Britain in 1921

and granted full independence in 1946. Following the assassination of King Abdullah in 1951, the crown passed briefly to his mentally unstable eldest son, Talal, and then to his grandson, Hussein. King Hussein's turbulent 46-year reign witnessed a massive influx of Palestinian refugees (who now comprise a majority of the population), the loss of all territory west of the Jordan River in 1967, and numerous assassinations and coup attempts by Palestinian and Arab nationalists. Although the 1952 constitution provided for a directly elected parliament, political parties were banned in 1956, and parliament was either suspended entirely or emasculated by government intervention in the electoral process for over three decades. While political and civil liberties remained tightly restricted, Hussein proved adept at co-opting—rather than killing, jailing, or exiling—his political opponents. As a result, Jordan avoided the legacy of brutal repression characteristic of other authoritarian regimes in the Arab world.

As a result of declining oil prices, which translated into reduced aid and worker remittances from the Arab Gulf countries, Jordan was forced to implement economic austerity measures in the late 1980s. These developments led to widespread rioting and mounting internal pressure for greater freedom and representation. In response, the government launched a rapid process of political liberalization and progressively eased restrictions on civil liberties. However, the reform process ground to a halt in the mid-1990s and suffered some reversals.

By the time of Hussein's death in 1999 and the ascension of his son, Abdullah, the kingdom was again faced with severe economic problems. The "peace dividend" expected to follow from Jordan's 1994 peace treaty with Israel, in the form of improved trade with the West Bank and increased investment from Western Europe, had not filtered down to the population at large. Faced with a crippling public debt and 27 percent unemployment, Abdullah launched a series of major economic reforms and signed one of the Arab world's first free-trade agreements with the United States.

The September 2000 outbreak of the al-Aqsa *intifada* (uprising) in the West Bank and Gaza inflamed anti-Israeli sentiments among Jordanians of Palestinian descent, leftists, and Islamists, who dominate much of civil society. As the violence next door continued unabated, the Professional Associations Council (PAC) formed an antinormalization committee to spearhead mass demonstrations demanding the annulment of Jordan's peace treaty with Israel. The government reacted by suppressing criticism of Jordanian relations with Israel and banning all demonstrations. In 2001, Abdullah dissolved the parliament, postponed parliamentary elections scheduled for November, and replaced elected municipal councils with state-appointed local committees. For more than two years, Abdullah ruled by decree, issuing more than 200 "temporary laws" that weakened due process protections and imposed new restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly.

Although the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq further inflamed popular opposition to the kingdom's foreign policy, Abdullah quickly moved to restore the country's limited democratic institutions and relax restrictions on freedom of expression. Reasonably free and transparent, though not fair, parliamentary and municipal elections were held in 2003. An informal understanding was reached between the palace and dissident leftist and Islamist groups: in return for limited freedom to express themselves and participate in the political system, the latter reportedly agreed to curtail

their efforts to mobilize public opinion against Jordan's pro-U.S. alignment as long as progress was being made at the economic level. Buoyed by an infusion of "oil grants" from the Arab Gulf states and a dramatic increase in economic assistance from the United States, Jordan's economy picked up steam.

Jordan's economic prosperity and relaxed restrictions on civil liberties continued in 2005. While dozens of Jordanians were jailed during the year for security offenses, only a handful of people were detained for peaceful expression of dissent, and only briefly. However, a further expansion of political and civil liberties remained stalled. In February, Abdullah appointed a 26-member National Agenda Committee to draft a framework for political, economic, and social reforms, but the committee's domination by palace loyalists indicated that its purpose was mainly to strike a consensus within the political elite, not the population at large. In March, Prime Minister Faisal al-Fayez introduced a bill that would strictly curtail the independence of professional associations; the move set off a storm of criticism from the associations, whose members in turn put pressure on parliament.

After returning from a visit to Washington, where his political reform program met with negative reviews from government officials and members of Congress, Abdullah replaced Fayez with Adnan Badran, a liberal academic. Badran withdrew the draft associations bill in the face of parliamentary opposition. Other draft laws pertaining to the electoral system, political parties, and the media were circulated during the year, but they were also stalled by parliamentary opposition. In June, Finance Minister Bassem Awadallah resigned after 49 members of parliament threatened a no-confidence vote. The vibrancy of public debate over the reform process and the assertiveness of parliament are positive indications that political liberalization is advancing.

On August 19, three rockets were fired at a pair of U.S. Navy ships in the port of Aqaba. On November 9, triple suicide bombings in Amman left 60 dead and more than 100 wounded. Two weeks later, King Abdullah appointed a former general as prime minister, Marouf al-Bakhit, and urged him to address security concerns while preserving the economic and political reform process. The new government began drafting antiterrorism legislation that will reportedly allow for the indefinite detention of terrorist suspects and establish severe penalties for publicly condoning acts of terrorism.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Jordanians cannot change their government democratically, King Abdullah holds broad executive powers and may dissolve parliament and dismiss the cabinet at his discretion; the king appoints members of the cabinet, led by a prime minister. The 110-seat lower house of the National Assembly, elected through universal adult suffrage, may approve, reject, or amend legislation proposed by the cabinet, but is limited in its ability to initiate legislation and cannot enact laws without the assent of the 55-seat upper house of the Assembly, which is appointed by the king. The lower house refused to ratify several major pieces of legislation in 2005. Regional governors are appointed by the central government, as are half of all municipal council members.

The electoral system is heavily skewed toward the monarchy's traditional support base. The single-member-district system, introduced in 1993, favors tribal and family ties over political and ideological affiliations, while rural districts with popu-

lations of Transjordanian origin are overrepresented relative to urban districts, where most Jordanians of Palestinian descent reside. (According to the *Financial Times*, Amman has a National Assembly member for every 52,255 voters, while the small town of Karak has a member for every 6,000 voters.) In 2003, only 27 percent of registered voters went to the polls in Amman, a possible indication that many Palestinian Jordanians still feel excluded from the political system.

Corruption in the executive and legislative branches of government is widespread, though the government has made progress in combating corruption in recent years. Several high-profile cases of embezzlement and abuse of authority by government employees were prosecuted in 2004. Jordan was ranked 37 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is sometimes restricted. Vaguely worded articles of the penal code and other legislation criminalize certain areas of peaceful expression, such as criticism of the royal family, slander of government officials, and speech that harms Jordanian foreign relations, enflames religious sensitivities, or undermines the state's reputation. In December 2004, prominent political activists Ali Hattar and Riyadh Nuwaisa were arrested after criticizing the United States at a conference in Amman; Hattar was later sentenced to three months in prison or a \$254 fine (he paid the fine). Although the government has officially relinquished its monopoly on television and radio outlets and issued several private broadcasting licenses, all broadcast news media remain under state control. Satellite dishes are widespread, however, giving most Jordanians access to foreign media. There are dozens of private newspapers and magazines, but the government has broad discretionary powers to close print publications and ban books. In April 2005, the government refused to license the publication of a book by political activist Ali Sanid recounting his experience in prison. In July, the government banned a book by Saddam Hussein.

There is no official advance censorship in Jordan, but the authorities are routinely tipped off about the contents of potentially offensive articles by informers at printing presses, and editors frequently come under pressure to remove such material. In April, the authorities forced the weekly *Al-Wihda* to remove an article criticizing the selection of the new cabinet as undemocratic. In May, the government forced the weekly *Al-Majd* to remove an interview with an Assembly member who expressed support for the Iraqi insurgency. Government intelligence agents frequently telephone Jordanian journalists with warnings about their writing. In March, a journalist and two editors of the daily *Al-Ghad* were briefly detained and questioned after the newspaper reported that a Jordanian citizen had carried out a suicide bombing in Iraq. In July, the government submitted a draft Law on Journalism and Publications that relaxes some restrictions on press freedom, but it was not ratified by year's end. While the Jordanian government denies restricting access to the internet—and in fact actively promotes it—websites airing critical views have been blocked in the past.

Islam is the state religion. The government appoints Islamic clergy, pays their salaries, and monitors sermons at mosques, where political activity is banned under Jordanian law. Sunni Muslims constitute 92 percent of the population, but Christians and Jews are officially recognized as religious minorities and allowed to worship freely. Baha'is and Druze are allowed to practice their faiths, but are not officially recognized. Academic freedom is generally respected in Jordan.

Freedom of assembly is heavily restricted. The Law on General Assemblies bans public demonstrations lacking written authorization from the regional governor. Although opposition groups complained that most of their requests were denied, the government allowed several licensed anti-Israeli and anti-American demonstrations to take place during the year. The government rejected at least four requests by professional associations to hold demonstrations in 2005.

Freedom of association is limited. While dozens of licensed nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) addressing political and social issues are allowed to operate freely, the government occasionally withholds licenses from NGOs deemed subversive. Workers have the right to bargain collectively but must receive government permission to strike. More than 30 percent of the workforce is organized into 17 unions. The judiciary is subject to executive influence through the Justice Ministry and the Higher Judiciary Council, whose members are appointed by the king. While most trials in civilian courts are open and procedurally sound, the State Security Court (SSC) may close its proceedings to the public (though this did not happen in 2005). A temporary law promulgated in 2001 allows the prime minister to refer any case to the SSC and denies the right of appeal to people convicted by the SCC of misdemeanors, which can carry short prison sentences.

Jordanian citizens enjoy little protection from arbitrary arrest and detention. Under the constitution, suspects may be detained for up to 48 hours without a warrant and up to 10 days without formal charges being filed; courts routinely grant prosecutors 15-day extensions of this deadline. Even these minimal protections are denied to suspects referred to the SSC, who are often held in lengthy pretrial detention and refused access to legal council until just before trial. At least 19 defendants standing trial for security-related offenses in 2005 claimed to have been tortured in custody.

Jordanians of Palestinian descent face discrimination in employment by the government and the military and in admission to universities. Labor laws do not protect foreign workers. Abuse of mostly South Asian domestic servants is widespread.

Women enjoy equal political rights, but face legal discrimination in matters relating to inheritance and divorce, which fall under the jurisdiction of Sharia (Islamic law) courts, and to child custody, as well as in the provision of government pensions and social security benefits. Marital rape is not illegal. A 2002 temporary law granting women the right to initiate divorce proceedings has been rejected repeatedly by the legislature, but remains in effect. Although women constitute only 14 percent of the workforce, the government has made efforts to increase the number of women in the civil service. Women are guaranteed a quota of six seats in parliament. The number of female cabinet ministers dropped from four to one following the appointment of Bakhit in November 2005. Article 98 of the penal code allows for lenient treatment of those convicted of "honor crimes" (the murder or attempted murder of women by relatives for alleged sexual misconduct). In 2005, at least 15 honor-crime murders were reported, and several defendants received short prison sentences (in two cases, only six months) for murdering female relatives.

Kazakhstan

Population: 15,100,000 **Political Rights:** 6
GNI/capita: \$1,780 **Civil Liberties:** 5
Life Expectancy: 66 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Muslim (47 percent), Russian Orthodox (44 percent), Protestant (2 percent), other (7 percent)



Ethnic Groups: Kazakh (53 percent), Russian (30 percent), Ukrainian (4 percent), Uzbek (3 percent), German (2 percent), other (8 percent)
Capital: Astana

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview:

During the months preceding the December 4, 2005, presidential election, the Kazakh government intensified pressure on the country's civil society sector through harassment of, and attacks against, opposition activists and independent journalists. The authorities also enacted new restrictive laws, including legislation on extremism and national security that further curtailed the activities of religious groups, media outlets, political parties, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Meanwhile, President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who enjoys sweeping political power, was widely expected to secure an overwhelming victory in the upcoming presidential poll.

This sparsely populated, multiethnic land stretching from the Caspian Sea to the Chinese border was gradually conquered by Russia during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. After a brief attempt at independence in 1917 in the wake of the Russian Revolution, Kazakhstan became an autonomous Soviet republic in 1920 and a union republic in 1936.

The former first secretary of the Communist Party, Nursultan Nazarbayev was elected president on December 1, 1991, just two weeks before Kazakhstan declared independence from the USSR. The country's first national legislative elections, in March 1994, were invalidated by the Constitutional Court a year later because of numerous irregularities. Nazarbayev subsequently dissolved parliament and called for a referendum on April 29, 1995, in which a reported 95 percent of voters supported the extension of his five-year term from 1996 until December 2000. An additional referendum in August of that year, which was boycotted by the main opposition parties, approved a new constitution strengthening the powers of the presidency. In the December 1995 elections for a new bicameral parliament, Nazarbayev supporters captured most of the seats in the legislature.

In October 1998, parliament approved Nazarbayev's call for presidential elections to be moved forward from December 2000 to January 1999, as well as an amendment to the constitution extending the presidential term of office from five to seven years. The key challenger, former prime minister Akezhan Kazhegeldin, was banned

from competing on a legal technicality, while two other candidates were known supporters of the incumbent. Nazarbayev was reelected with a reported 80 percent of the vote.

Otan (Fatherland), a newly formed party loyal to Nazarbayev, won the single largest number of seats in the September 1999 parliamentary vote, which was the first multiparty election in Kazakhstan's history and in which four opposition deputies captured seats. Despite some improvement since the controversial presidential ballot in January, the parliamentary poll remained deeply flawed. In June 2000, parliament overwhelmingly approved giving Nazarbayev lifetime privileges after the end of his second term in office in 2006, including formal access to key government officials so that he may advise them on policy matters, as well as a permanent place on the country's Security Council.

Signs of a deepening split within the country's ruling elite became evident following the November 18, 2001, founding of a new political movement, the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DCK). Established by prominent business leaders, some of whom held positions in Nazarbayev's administration, the DCK proclaimed its commitment to democratization, rule of law, and anticorruption efforts. However, some observers questioned the sincerity of its stated goals and maintained that the group's primary purpose was to safeguard its members' substantial political and economic interests while countering those of the president's family and close associates.

Apparently sensing that the DCK posed a growing political threat to his regime, Nazarbayev cracked down increasingly on the group throughout 2002. In what critics charged were politically motivated cases, two of the DCK's co-founders—former minister of energy Mukhtar Ablyayzov and former Pavlodar governor Galymzhan Zhakiyanov—were subsequently arrested, convicted of abuse of power and corruption during their tenure in government, and sentenced to prison. Ablyayzov was freed from prison in 2003 after receiving an amnesty from Nazarbayev and was living in exile in Russia. Ablyayzov's announcement that he would cease political activity to concentrate on his business interests led to widespread speculation that his release was made conditional on his leaving politics. Zhakiyanov was transferred from prison to a minimum security settlement colony in northern Pavlodar in August 2004. Meanwhile, the DCK was formally registered as a political party in May 2004.

The September 19, 2004, election for the lower house of parliament was contested by 12 parties, of which 9 supported the president. Otan captured 42 of 77 total seats, while nominally independent candidates—most of whom were reportedly associated with one of the progovernment parties—won 18. The three opposition parties that had been able to register for the vote—the DCK, the Communist Party, and Ak Zhol—faced intense government pressure, including detentions of party activists, interference in campaign events, and unfair allocation of public space for advertising. The only opposition candidate to win a seat, Alikhan Baimenov of Ak Zhol, refused to take up his seat in protest over the conduct of the elections; none of the opposition parties recognized the outcome of the elections. Although international monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) concluded that there had been some improvements over previous polls, they noted other serious problems, including lack of political balance on election commissions, media bias in favor of propresidential candidates, the exclusion of certain

candidates for politically motivated reasons, and the presence of unauthorized personnel in polling stations.

The government intensified its harassment of the country's media and civil society sectors in the months leading up to the December 4, 2005, presidential election. The crackdown also appeared to be in response to the recent popular uprisings against repressive regimes in nearby Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan, in which civil society actors were involved to varying degrees. In February, Nazarbayev signed legislation on extremism that proposed creating a formal list of extremist groups and their members and would give law enforcement agencies and the prosecutor's office greater surveillance rights and the power to disband groups suspected of extremism. Human rights activists charged that the definition of "extremism" was vague and could be used against nearly any political party, religious group, or NGO.

In July, Nazarbayev signed amendments to national security legislation that changed and imposed new restrictions on the criminal and civil procedure codes and on laws regulating political parties, NGOs, religious groups, and the media. Although the amendments were ostensibly designed to strengthen the country's security, they served to further weaken Kazakhstan's political and civil liberties environment. Throughout the year, members of the opposition alliance For a Just Kazakhstan faced threats and physical assaults, including the death of one opposition leader and the apparent abduction of another member's daughter.

Five candidates were allowed to register to participate in the presidential poll: Nazarbayev (Otan party), Zharmakhan Tuyakbai (For a Just Kazakhstan opposition alliance), Yerassyl Abylkasymov (Communist People's Party), Alikhan Baimenov (Ak Zhol), and Mels Yeleussizov (independent). Given the dominant role played by Nazarbayev in Kazakhstan's political life, most analysts predicted an overwhelming victory for the incumbent. According to preliminary reports issued by monitors from the OSCE, Tuyakbai, Abylkasymov, and Baimenov complained of interference in their campaigns, intimidation of supporters, and the destruction of campaign materials. The OSCE also noted that several recent amendments to the country's election law, including one banning protests between the end of the election campaign and the official publication of election results, did not meet OSCE criteria for democratic elections.

On the international front, Kazakhstan's relations with the United States showed strain over perceived U.S. involvement in the so-called color revolutions in Ukraine, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan, as well as the continuing U.S. investigation into the Kazakhgate scandal involving kickbacks by Western energy firms to Kazakh officials. Meanwhile, Kazakhstan's ties with Russia, which had not been critical of Astana's domestic policies or government corruption, were strengthened; in 2004, bilateral trade between the two countries reach \$7 billion, a 21 percent increase since 2003.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Citizens of Kazakhstan cannot change their government democratically. The constitution grants the president considerable control over the legislature, the judiciary, and local governments, and President Nursultan Nazarbayev continues to enjoy sweeping executive powers. The constitution sets the presidential term of office at seven years and also stipulates that elections are to be held on the first Sunday in December. However, a 1998 parliamentary decision to move the December 2000 elections

back to January 1999 led to a discrepancy in these constitutional provisions. In August 2005, the Constitutional Council ruled that the date of the next presidential election would be December 2005—a year earlier than some had argued was legally mandated.

The bicameral parliament is composed of an upper house (Senate), whose 39 members are chosen by regional councils, whose members are directly elected; and a lower house (Mazhilis), whose 77 members are elected by popular vote (67 in single-mandate constituency contests and 10 from party lists on the basis of proportional representation). A second-round vote is held if no candidate in a single-mandate contest receives more than 50 percent of the vote. The country's presidential and parliamentary elections have been neither free nor fair.

The country's law on political parties prohibits parties based on ethnic origin, religion, or gender. A 2002 law raised from 3,000 to 50,000 the number of members that a party must have to register. Many observers believe that the purpose of Asar, a political party headed by Nazarbayev's daughter, Dariga, is to serve as her power base and possibly position her as an eventual successor to her father. In August 2005, the government formally registered the For a Just Kazakhstan opposition alliance, composed of Naghyz Ak Zhol (which splintered from the Ak Zhol opposition party in early 2005), the Communist Party, the Alga Party, and the Pokolenie pensioners' movement. National security legislation amendments signed by Nazarbayev in July prohibit the financing of political parties or candidates by foreign nationals during the electoral process.

Opposition parties, which have complained of harassment, surveillance, denial of access to the state-run media, and arbitrary bans on registering candidates, faced mounting pressures and attacks leading up to the December 2005 presidential election. In January, an Almaty court ordered the DCK shut down for allegedly inciting social tensions and posing a threat to national security. Prosecutors cited as evidence the DCK's second party congress in December, where it criticized Nazarbayev's policies, declared the government to be illegitimate, and urged the public to engage in acts of civil disobedience. Critics charged that the move was a politically motivated backlash in reaction to the recent popular revolt against the government in Ukraine.

The For a Just Kazakhstan opposition alliance suffered numerous attacks and incidents of harassment against its members throughout the year. In May, a group of men stormed a For a Just Kazakhstan meeting and threatened to kill the group's leader, Zharmakhan Tuyakbai, who escaped unharmed. Several people suffered minor injuries while police on the scene reportedly did not intervene to stop the violence. Arsonists attacked the group's campaign office in the town of Kostanai in September, destroying computers and other equipment. In October, police detained For a Just Kazakhstan member Tolen Tokhtasynov while he was on his way to the airport to meet with U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice; he was charged with arranging an earlier, unauthorized meeting in Almaty. Also in October, the daughter of an official with Tuyakbai's presidential campaign disappeared; the official stated that she had recently received several phone calls and visits from police asking her for information about the campaign office's activities, which she refused to divulge. In November, For a Just Kazakhstan member Zamanbek Nurkadilov was found shot dead in his home, and two nephews of Naghyz Ak Zhol leader Altynbek Sarsenbayev were beaten by off-duty police officers.

Corruption is widespread throughout all levels of government, and businesses

are forced to pay bribes in order to deal with the government bureaucracy. The U.S. Justice Department is continuing to investigate the so-called Kazakhgate scandal, in which Western oil companies allegedly paid millions of dollars to top Kazakh officials, including Nazarbayev, in exchange for lucrative contracts. Kazakhstan was ranked 107 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

While the constitution provides for freedom of the press, the government has repeatedly harassed or shut down many independent media outlets through measures including politicized lawsuits and confiscations of newspapers. Libel is a criminal offense, and the country's criminal code prohibits insulting the honor and dignity of the president; self-censorship is widespread. Amendments to national security legislation signed in July included prohibitions against publishing information deemed to be a state secret, advocating violence, or undermining the country's ethnic and social stability.

Most media outlets, including publishing houses, are controlled or otherwise influenced by members of the president's family, including Nazarbayev's daughter Dariga, and trusted government officials. Although Dariga resigned her position as head of the state-run Khabar television station before the 2004 parliamentary election campaign because of the involvement of her political party, Asar, in the election, many observers maintain that she continues to direct the station from behind the scenes. The content of websites has been subject to libel laws, and the government at times has moved to block access to websites critical of the regime.

Harassment of and attacks against journalists and media outlets critical of the regime continued in 2005. In January, access to the Ak Zhol opposition party's website was blocked after it reportedly published a statement on its site criticizing the government's recent banning of the DCK. In January, the National Security Committee (KNB) won a libel suit against the opposition newspaper *Soz*, which had published an article with allegations by opposition party leaders that the KNB had kept them under surveillance during the 2004 parliamentary election campaign. *Soz* was ordered to pay \$40,000 in damages and suspend publication. In April, Russian authorities released the exiled editor of the opposition *Respublika Delovoye Obozreniye*, Irina Petrushova, after having detained her for two days on a Kazakh extradition request for alleged tax evasion; Russian authorities concluded that she had been improperly detained. In May, the Ministry of Culture, Information, and Sport shut down *Respublika Delovoye Obozreniye* after the paper's parent company, Bestau, failed to pay damages following a lawsuit brought by the Kazakh government charging the paper with insulting the honor and dignity of the Kazakh nation. The legal action arose from the paper's publication of an interview with Russian parliamentary deputy Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, in which he allegedly made disparaging remarks about Kazakhstan. *Respublika Delovoye Obozreniye* resumed publication under the name *Set.kz*, which faced government harassment for alleged registration violations and had its license revoked in August.

The government's crackdown against opposition media intensified in the last few months leading up to the December 2005 presidential election. In September, the private printing house Vremya refused, without explanation, to print several opposition newspapers, which had been among the few media outlets to report positively on the presidential campaign of opposition candidate Tuyakbai. In early October,

the editor of the *Region Plus* newspaper, which publishes articles critical of local authorities, was attacked by an unknown assailant. Later that month, the opposition weekly *Junta Times* was found guilty of insulting the honor and dignity of the president in an article about the "Kazakhgate" affair. Shortly thereafter, the authorities seized the paper's entire print run. On October 19, police confiscated the print run of the opposition weekly *Svoboda Slova*, which printed an article in which CNN journalists asked Nazarbayev whether he was a dictator. Three days later, the paper's editor in chief was found guilty of printing false information and defaming the president and fined about \$360. Also in October, the government-controlled internet carrier, KazNIK, banned the opposition news website *Navigator* from using the web address navi.kz and forced it to use another domain.

The constitution guarantees freedom of worship, and many religious communities worship without government interference. However, local officials sometimes harass certain nontraditional groups, and there were legislative setbacks to religious freedom during the year. According to the 2005 amendments to national security legislation, all activities by unregistered religious groups are illegal. Previously, registration was required only if a religious group wished to receive legal status in order to engage in legal transactions, including buying or renting property and hiring employees. The 2005 extremism law gives the government wide scope in identifying and designating groups, including religious organizations, as extremist and in banning their activities.

The government reportedly generally permits academic freedom, except for criticisms of the president and his family. During the 2004 parliamentary elections, there were credible reports that teachers and professors were pressured by local officials to join certain parties and vote for particular candidates. Schoolchildren and university students are sometimes coerced into participating in staged official celebrations or face poor grades or other penalties. Corruption in the educational system is widespread, with students frequently paying bribes to professors to earn passing grades.

Despite constitutional guarantees, the government imposes restrictions on freedom of association and assembly. The government harasses NGOs that address sensitive issues through measures including investigations by tax police and surveillance by law enforcement and security agencies. As the December 2005 presidential election approached, the authorities took an increasingly hard line against both domestic and foreign-based NGOs. In June, parliament adopted two laws on NGOs that civil society activists charged would significantly restrict the activities of foreign and domestic groups, including through greater government oversight of their financial and other activities. In a positive step, the Constitutional Council subsequently struck down the laws as unconstitutional.

Amendments to national security legislation signed by Nazarbayev in July forbid participation in the activities or financing of unregistered NGOs. In September, Nazarbayev warned foreign NGOs not to interfere in Kazakhstan's internal politics, stressing what he called the negative role that he said such groups had played in the recent political upheavals in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan. Complicated procedures to obtain necessary permits for public demonstrations include a requirement that organizations must apply to local authorities 10 days in advance. In January, thousands of people protested the banning of the DCK opposition party; several DCK members were arrested and detained or fined.

Workers have the legal right to form and join trade unions and participate in collective bargaining, and a number of unions operate throughout the country. Workers have engaged in strikes, primarily over the nonpayment of wages. In August, hundreds of salt miners went on strike to support several colleagues jailed for staging a hunger strike over delayed salary increases. The government exercises considerable influence over organized labor, and the largest trade union association is affiliated with the state. Some union members have been dismissed, transferred to lower-paying jobs, or threatened for their union activities.

The constitution significantly constrains the independence of the judiciary, which is subservient to the executive branch. Judges are subject to bribery and political bias, and corruption is evident throughout the judicial system. Police at times abuse detainees during arrest and interrogation, often to obtain confessions, and arbitrary arrest and detention remain problems. Conditions in pretrial facilities and prisons are harsh. Following a moratorium on the death penalty ordered in December 2003, Nazarbayev issued a decree in January 2004 introducing life imprisonment as an alternative to the death penalty. A February 2005 law on extremism gives authorities considerable latitude in designating a group as extremist and banning the group's activities.

Since Kazakhstan's independence, much of the country's large ethnic Russian population has emigrated, in part because of the enhanced role granted to the Kazakh language. Many of the remaining Russians, most of whom do not speak Kazakh, have complained of discrimination in employment and education.

While the rights of entrepreneurship and private property are legally protected, bureaucratic hurdles and the control of large segments of the economy by clan elites and government officials loyal to Nazarbayev limit equality of opportunity and fair competition. A 2003 land code allows for private ownership of the country's vast tracts of agricultural land. However, critics have charged that the law will primarily benefit those wealthy individuals with close ties to government officials. Residents of Astana whose homes have been confiscated and demolished to make way for large-scale construction, including housing for the wealthy and elite, have complained of not receiving legally guaranteed financial compensation.

Traditional cultural practices and the country's economic problems limit professional opportunities for women. Nine women were elected to parliament in the 2004 election, an increase of one since the 1999 election. Domestic violence is a problem, with police often reluctant to intervene in what are regarded as internal family matters. Despite legal prohibitions, the trafficking of women for purposes of prostitution remains a serious problem, with Kazakhstan a place of origin, transit point, and destination country for victims of trafficking. According to the U.S. State Department's 2005 Trafficking in Persons Report, the country's National Working Group on Trafficking in Persons met regularly in 2005 and made progress in implementing the National Action Plan adopted in February 2004. While the government increased its convictions of traffickers, prosecution numbers remained low relative to the size of the problem.

Kenya

Population: 33,800,000 **Political Rights:** 3

GNI/capita: \$400 **Civil Liberties:** 3

Life Expectancy: 47 **Status:** Partly Free

Religious Groups: Protestant (45 percent), Roman Catholic (33 percent), Muslim (10 percent), indigenous beliefs (10 percent), other (2 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Kikuyu (22 percent), Luhya (14 percent), Luo (13 percent), Kalenjin (12 percent), Kamba (11 percent), Kisii (6 percent), Meru (6 percent), other African (15 percent), other [including Asian, European, and Arab] (1 percent)

Capital: Nairobi



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,6NF	6,6NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	4,4PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF

Overview:

The administration of President Mwai Kibaki came under increasing criticism in 2005 for its overall lack of progress in curbing corruption. In late November, Kenyan voters decisively rejected a new constitution. The final version of the draft constitution proved to be highly controversial, as the National Assembly and government, at the eleventh hour, decided to retain most powers in the presidency rather than transferring them to a new post of prime minister.

Britain conquered Kenya in the late eighteenth century in order to open and control a route to the Nile River headwaters in Uganda. Kenya achieved its independence in 1963. The nationalist leader Jomo Kenyatta was president until his death in 1978, when Daniel arap Moi succeeded him. Moi's ascent to the presidency kept the Kenyan African National Union (KANU) in power, but gradually diminished the power of the previously dominant Kikuyu ethnic group.

In 1992, after a lengthy period of de facto single-party rule, domestic unrest and pressure from international aid donors forced Moi to hold multiparty elections. Moi was reelected president in controversial polling. In December 1997, presidential and legislative elections took place, and Moi again won over a divided opposition.

KANU's election victories were cemented through political repression, massive use of state patronage, media control, and dubious electoral procedures. Physical violence, an often-docile judiciary, police powers, and executive decrees were used against political opponents and in efforts to undermine the wider civil society. Moi's rule was associated with poor governance, and limits on political and civil rights were common, as was corruption in the ruling party and government. In the 1990s, the government sponsored ethnic violence, which heightened political polarization. Despite these problems, political space continued to open up, and many of the core elements necessary for the growth of a democratic political system developed.

In 2002, the opposition succeeded in uniting behind Mwai Kibaki in national elections. He was elected president, defeating Uhuru Kenyatta, the son of Kenya's

first president and Moi's chosen successor. In addition, the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), which supported Kibaki, won the majority of seats in the National Assembly. These elections raised the prospect of a major shift in Kenyan politics: the new leadership's ambitious reform program included tackling corruption and economic and social issues, as well as undertaking institutional reforms designed to promote democracy.

To date, reform efforts have been complicated by a number of factors, including the fragility of the governing NARC coalition, the complex and controversial constitutional reform process, significant resource constraints, the threat of terrorism, and ambiguous attitudes on the part of major donor countries. An independent anticorruption commission has been investigating more than 3,000 cases of alleged corruption since its inception in 2003, but its track record of initiating successful prosecutions has been very modest. One of President Kibaki's early appointments was John Githongo, the widely respected head of the Kenya chapter of Transparency International, in charge of the government's Office of Governance and Ethics. Githongo resigned in early 2005, frustrated by continued corruption and the Kibaki administration's failure to enact meaningful reforms.

A lively press and public investigative commissions have increasingly critiqued both the substance and slow pace of the Kibaki administration's political, economic, and social reforms. In 2003, a presidential task force solicited views from the public and recommended that a truth commission be established to probe injustices perpetrated since 1963, but such a commission has yet to be constituted. A number of commissions are investigating particular scandals, such as the Goldenberg and Euro Bank affairs.

A drawn-out constitutional review process included the participation of a wide range of civic groups and associations. A penultimate draft included the creation of a senate and an executive prime minister to be elected by the National Assembly and changes designed to limit the power of the presidency, including facilitating the ability of the National Assembly to impeach the president. In July 2005, however, the NARC majority in the National Assembly, supported by the government, watered down a number of these reforms. The National Assembly voted to amend the final draft version to reduce the powers of the prime minister and reinforce those of the president. It also opted to maintain a single legislative chamber, rather than a bicameral legislature as originally envisaged. The revised constitution draft also made it more difficult for the National Assembly to impeach a president, and raised the possibility that presidential elections could be decided by district gerrymandering by the government. These changes sparked considerable popular unrest, and the revised draft was rejected by voters in a constitutional referendum on November 21, 2005. Political tensions, entrenched corruption, lack of specific reform results, and questions regarding the depth of the government's commitment to reform continue to raise serious concerns about the pace and direction of Kenya's democratic opening.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Kenya can change their government democratically. The 2002 elections, widely viewed as legitimate and reflective of the will of the people, resulted in the alternation of power—with KANU losing, and the NARC coalition, led by president-elect Mwai Kibaki's Democratic Party, gaining power. A wide variety of political par-

ties representing a range of ideological, regional, and ethnic interests exists, and there are no significant impediments to party formation. However, the country is far from consolidating its nascent and fragile democracy, including its electoral processes.

The president is elected for a five-year term. The single chamber National Assembly contains 210 members elected for five years, with an additional 12 members appointed by the president. A wide range of political parties are active and vocal. The National Assembly is the setting for much of the nation's political discourse, and a varied and energetic civil society plays an important role in public policy debates.

Corruption remains a serious problem. Political parties, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the press, as well as some official bodies, have unearthed examples of government corruption and malfeasance. Several major scandals were made public in 2005, including serious allegations of fraud in the procurement of naval vessels, in a new system of issuing passports, and in the printing of the national currency. The resignation of John Githongo, the head of the Office of Governance and Ethics, was also seen as a blow to the government's credibility in fighting corruption. The Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission (KACC) has recommended prosecution of a number of government officials, although none from the government's senior ranks.

Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index suggests that corruption has continued to be a serious problem; Kenya was ranked 144 out of 159 countries surveyed. The 2005 Kenya Bribery Index states that while the overall incidence of corruption has dropped compared with that of 2002, the average size of bribes has increased significantly. In 2004, the government raised police salaries to reduce incentives for corruption; according to the Bribery Index, police are still the most frequently bribed public officials. The meager results to date from investigations such as the Goldenberg inquiry emphasize the magnitude of the challenge to reduce corruption in Kenya. In addition, President Kibaki's increasing reliance on the "Mount Kenya Mafia"—powerful businessmen from the president's majority Kikuyu ethnic group—has raised increasing concerns. In early 2005, the British High Commissioner made public a list of 20 cases alleging official corruption, 18 of which remain under investigation by the KACC.

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and a free press. These rights are generally respected in practice, and Kenya enjoys one of the liveliest press environments on the continent. A 2005 audit by the independent Chambers of Justice, while critical of the Kibaki Administration in many respects, gave the government generally high marks for accommodating criticism and respecting civil liberties, human rights, and press freedom. The Kenya Union of Journalists, however, has at times criticized the government for failing to expand media freedom in the country. Currently, 22 FM stations broadcast to many parts of Kenya. The government does not restrict access to the internet.

In general, the government has a good track record of respecting freedom of religion. According to the 2005 U.S. State Department's Report on International Religious Freedom, "there is generally a great level of tolerance among religious groups." The report concludes that Kenya is one of the least repressive African states in this regard. However, disputes occur between Muslims and Christians, and Muslim leaders often criticize the government. Religious-based tension has risen

in recent years, as terrorist acts associated with Islamic fundamentalism have been committed on Kenyan soil.

Religious-based tension also arose over the draft constitution. The Federation of Churches in Kenya, which represents 41 conservative Christian congregations across the country, spearheaded opposition to constitutional provisions concerning both the potential easing of abortion restrictions and allowing gay marriage, and the role of Islamic "Kadhi" courts. In the draft constitution, religious courts were defined in an open-ended manner that allows for the reintroduction of customary courts to mediate matters of family and personal law.

Reflecting Kenya's generally positive record on freedom of thought issues, academic freedom is the norm. However, President Kibaki has been accused of appointing university heads, such as the vice chancellor of the University of Nairobi, based on favoritism.

The constitution explicitly permits freedom of assembly, and the Kibaki government, unlike its predecessor, has generally respected this right, although there have been cases of unnecessary use of force. One of the core strengths of Kenya's political culture is its energetic and robust civil society. The success of the 2002 elections was due in large part to the ability of NGOs in Kenya to pry open political space and gain greater freedom. In recent years, public policy NGOs have achieved significant transparency in government, especially in comparison to many other countries wrestling with the legacy of decades of authoritarian rule. The role of civil society in mobilizing public opinion on constitutional reform and the ability of NGOs to undertake voter education and election monitoring are examples of this progress.

All workers other than the police are legally free to join unions of their choice. The Trade Union Act provides for a Registrar of Trade Unions, who is appointed by the minister of labor. The government may deregister a union, but the Registrar of Trade Unions must give the union 60 days to challenge the deregistration notice. Historically, much of the trade union movement has been subservient to the governing authorities, but this dominance has lessened somewhat under the Kibaki administration.

Although Kenya's judicial system is based on the British model, for much of the independence period its actions reflected the primacy of the executive branch. In 2002, a panel of Commonwealth judicial experts from Africa and Canada examined the court system. It concluded that Kenya's court system was among the most incompetent and inefficient in Africa, with judges subject to political pressure and often accepting bribes to influence their decisions. A 2005 report by the International Commission of Jurists concluded that corruption in the administration of justice as well as in the judiciary remains a serious impediment to the rule of law in Kenya.

The Kibaki government came into power promising that the rule of law would be upheld, and judicial independence strengthened. Kibaki has criticized the extent of corruption in the judiciary and instructed the minister of justice to establish a process to identify corrupt judges. In late 2003, Kibaki appointed new judges to replace those tainted by corruption. These actions, however, raised concerns about the criteria used and the lack of transparency in the appointment process.

The courts are understaffed and underfinanced, and Kenyans awaiting trial face long delays that violate their right to due process. The country has officially recog-

nized Kadhi courts, which administer Sharia (Islamic law) for such issues as marriage and inheritance disputes, located in areas with a predominantly Muslim population. In mid-2005, the Kenya Human Rights Commission raised concerns over the government's failure to establish a truth, justice, and reconciliation commission.

While checks against arbitrary arrest exist in the legal system, they are not uniformly respected. In 2003, the Kibaki government introduced into the National Assembly the Suppression of Terrorism Bill, a controversial draft legislation aimed at combating terrorism. The bill was redrafted following protests from a wide range of advocacy and human rights organizations, but concerns remain over the extent to which the final bill may restrict civil liberties. Amnesty International, for example, critiqued its "vague and broad definition" of terrorism and terrorist acts and the wide-ranging powers it gives authorities to search and detain persons in connection with terrorist activities. In 2005, the government found itself under considerable international pressure to pass the revised legislation.

The government has initiated measures to increase the police-to-population ratio, which had dropped over the years from 1 police officer for every 711 Kenyans in 1991 to the current 1 for every 1,150 persons. The government announced plans in 2005 to double the number of police officers recruited annually and to increase the number of female recruits from 13 percent to 20 percent. While prisons are congested, the government has taken steps to try to reduce this problem. Police still use force to extract information from suspects and deny them an opportunity to get legal representation. In 2005, Amnesty International reported violations, including police torture, use of violence against public demonstrations, and harsh prison conditions resulting in as many as 45 prisoner deaths under suspicious conditions at a prison in Meru (eastern Kenya) in 2004.

Kenya's population is divided into more than 40 ethnic groups, among which there were frequent allegations of discrimination and occasional violence. In a 2005 report, the Minority Rights Group states that government budget allocations are making the problems of minority and indigenous peoples intolerable. The report identifies the Endorois, Maasai, Nubia, and Turkana ethnic groups as the most marginalized groups in the country in the areas of land, resources, job opportunities, and government services, notably health care.

Land disputes frequently form the basis of ethnic tension and violence. Members of the Nubian community, most of whom are Muslim, claimed that the government discriminated against them by trying to eliminate their ethnic identity. The continued presence and, at times, criminal activities of Somali refugees have exacerbated the problems faced by that minority. Factors contributing to this tension include widespread firearms possession, the commercialization of traditional cattle rustling, poor economic conditions, drought, and ineffective security forces.

Women in Kenya continue to face serious obstacles in the exercise of their freedom. According to a report issued by Human Rights Watch, women in Kenya are denied equal property rights, which puts them at greater risk of poverty, disease (including HIV/AIDS), violence, and homelessness.

In 2002, a draft gender equity bill created considerable public controversy, with some Muslims protesting that it was too sweeping in scope. The government announced in 2004 that a revised bill would be introduced in the National Assembly. It subsequently promised that gender units would be established in all government ministries.

There is evidence of widespread violence against women; one report determined that more than 50 percent of women had been victims of domestic violence. Traditional attitudes limit the role of women in politics, although there are no legal restrictions and some change is occurring. The 2002 elections increased the number of women in the National Assembly to eight elected and seven nominated, along with three cabinet ministers. The Kibaki administration has explicitly targeted improving women's rights as a key policy goal. This issue is also the focus of considerable attention and discussion in the constitutional review process.

Kiribati

Population: 100,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$970 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 63 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (52 percent),
Protestant (40 percent), other (8 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Micronesian, some Polynesian
Capital: Tarawa



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

Embarrassed by stories about government abuses in the popular free monthly political pamphlet, *Boutokaan Te Koaua* (BTK), Kiribati's parliament announced plans in 2005 to close the opposition-linked publication in August through passage of the Newspaper Registration Act.

Kiribati, a constitutional republic, gained independence from Britain in 1979. Kiribati consists of 33 atolls scattered across nearly 1.5 million miles of the central Pacific Ocean and Banaba island in the western Pacific. Twenty atolls are inhabited, and most are very low-lying and at risk from rising sea levels. The selling of fishing licenses to foreign countries, foreign aid, and remittances from workers abroad, as well as a trust fund established with revenues from phosphate mining on Banaba Island, provide most of the government's revenue.

A Chinese satellite-tracking facility on the capital atoll of Tarawa and competing offers of development assistance from China and Taiwan become major issues driving Kiribati politics in recent years. While Beijing claims that the facility supports its civilian space program, others allege that it is used to monitor U.S. missile tests in the Pacific. President Teburoro Tito's refusal to release details about the lease in 2003 led to a no-confidence vote against his government in March 2003. Fresh general elections in July 2003 brought opposition candidate Anote Tong to power. Tong kept his campaign promise to review the 15-year lease to China and decided in November 2003 to cut ties with China and restore relations with Taiwan. China closed its embassy and dismantled the satellite facility in December of that year.

In 2005, embarrassed by accounts of government abuses, parliament sought to close the free monthly political pamphlet, *Boutokaan Te Koaua* (BTK), through passage of the Newspaper Registration Act, which will give the state power to close newspapers said not to have met a series of standards. The BTK pamphlet is owned by Ieremia Tabai, publisher of the weekly *Kiribati Newstar* and owner of Newair FM 101, as well as a former president and member of parliament from the Boutokaan Te Koaua Party.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Kiribati can change their government democratically. The 2003 presidential and parliamentary elections were considered free and fair. The president is popularly elected in a two-step process. Forty of the representatives to the 42-member parliament (Maneaba ni Maungatabu) are chosen by universal adult suffrage, one is nominated by the Rabi Island Council in Fiji, and the attorney general holds a parliament position ex officio. (Rabi Island is a part of Fiji, but many residents there are of Kiribati origin. They were forced to move there from Banaba island by the British when phosphate mining made Banaba uninhabitable.) Parliament then selects three or four candidates for the presidential round. The president, vested with executive authority by the constitution, is limited to serving three 4-year terms.

The major parties are the Boutokaan Te Koaua (BTK) and the Maneahan Te Mauri, which won 17 and 16 seats, respectively, in the last election in December 2002. The other two parties are Maurin Kiribati Pati and the National Progressive Party. While these groups might be treated as political parties, they more closely resemble factions or interest groups because they have no party headquarters, formal platforms, or party structures.

Official corruption is a considerable problem, and the government has yet to take real steps to improve transparency and provide a more competitive environment for big and small businesses. In 2004, the government decided to stop issuing investor passports in response to pressure from donor countries to improve immigration control following reports of fake passports and illegal passport sales. Kiribati was not ranked in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech is generally respected. However, the government has powers to shut down any newspaper that is subject to complaint and bar publication of any article that offends good taste or decency, or is likely to incite crime or disorder. The government owns *Te Uekera*, one of the country's two newspapers. Churches also put out several newsletters and other periodicals. The *Kiribati Newstar*, the only private newspaper, is owned by Ieremia Tabai, a former president and member of parliament. Tabai launched the newspaper after the government blocked his efforts to set up a radio station, Newair FM 101, in 1999. The government closed the station and fined Tabai and other directors of the station for attempting to import broadcasting equipment without a license. In December 2002, the government granted Newair FM 101 a license to broadcast, and the station went into operation in January 2003. Until then, the government had owned the only radio station in Kiribati. There is one television station.

Opposition candidates have criticized the Newspaper Registration Act for its vaguely worded restrictions on the printing of offensive materials. The law allows officials to censor articles that could incite or encourage crime or disorder and to

shut down any publication against which a complaint has been filed. A single internet service provider supports about 1,000 users. The main constraints to broader internet access are costs and limited bandwidth.

There were no reports of religious suppression or restrictions on academic freedom. Expanding access to and quality of education at all levels, however, is seriously restricted by lack of resources. For example, secondary education is not available on all islands, and there is a shortage of qualified teachers.

Freedom of association and the right to organize and bargain collectively are generally respected. A number of nongovernmental groups are involved in development assistance, education, health, and advocacy for women and children. Only about 10 percent of the labor force belongs to unions, the largest of which is the Kiribati Trade Union Congress with about 2,500 members. The law provides for the right to strike, but strikes are rare; the last strike took place in 1980.

The judicial system is modeled on English common law and provides adequate due process rights. It consists of the high court, a court of appeal, and magistrates' courts; appeals may go to the Privy Council in London. The president makes all judicial appointments. Internal security is maintained by a police force of about 260 sworn officers that perform law enforcement and paramilitary functions under the leadership of a civilian commissioner, who reports directly to the office of the president. The country has no armed forces. Australia and New Zealand provide defense assistance under bilateral security agreements. Traditional customs permit corporal punishment, and island councils on some outer islands occasionally order such punishment for petty theft and other minor offenses.

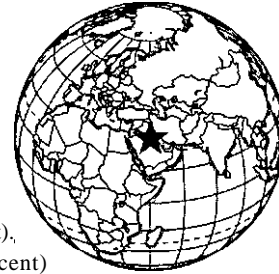
Citizens enjoy freedom of movement. The government does not use forced exile, but village councils have used this punishment.

The government is the main employer in this largely subsistence agricultural economy. The economy also depends considerably on foreign assistance and generates a small sum from selling fishing licenses to foreign fishing fleets. The main exports are copra (dried coconut meat) and fish. Interest from a well-managed trust fund built from royalties from phosphate sales have balanced the national budget and kept the country debt free.

Economic opportunities for women are limited. Discrimination against women is common in the traditional, male-dominant culture. Spousal abuse and other forms of violence against women and children are often associated with alcohol abuse. Prostitution and sexual harassment are illegal, but neither was reported as widespread. Of concern is the growing number of HIV/AIDS cases, which reached 42 by the beginning of 2004.

Kuwait

Population: 2,600,000 **Political Rights:** 4
GNI/capita: \$17,960 **Civil Liberties:** 5
Life Expectancy: 78 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Muslim (85 percent) [Sunni 70 percent, Shia 30 percent], other (15 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Kuwaiti (45 percent), other Arab (35 percent), South Asian (9 percent), Iranian (4 percent), other (7 percent)
Capital: Kuwait City



Trend Arrow: Kuwait received an upward trend arrow due to the extension to women of the rights to vote and hold public office.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF

Overview:

In 2005, for the first time in its history, Kuwait granted women the right to vote and to run as candidates for municipal office and for seats in the National Assembly. In June, the prime minister appointed Masouma al-Mubarak as minister of planning and administrative development, making her the first woman to serve as a cabinet minister in the history of Kuwait. These reforms open the door to a more inclusive election for the National Assembly in 2007.

For more than 200 years, the Al-Sabah family has played a role in ruling Kuwait. A year after Kuwait gained its independence in 1961 from Britain, a new constitution gave broad powers to the emir and created the National Assembly. In August 1990, Iraq attacked and invaded Kuwait. A coalition force mandated by the United Nations and led by the United States liberated Kuwait using military force in February 1991.

The emir has suspended the National Assembly twice, from 1976 to 1981 and from 1986 to 1992. After its restoration in 1992, the parliament played an active role in monitoring the emir and the government, forcing government ministers out of office and blocking legislation proposed by the royal family. The parliament, however, has also served as an impediment to progressive political change, rejecting measures that would have granted women the right to vote or accelerated economic reforms.

The 2003 legislative elections did not meet minimal international standards, tainted by the exclusion of women from voting and allegations of widespread, government-subsidized vote buying. Following the elections, Sabah al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, half-brother of the emir, Sheikh Jaber al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, became prime minister, taking over for ailing Saad al-Abdallah Al-Sabah, who remains the crown prince. Sabah al-Ahmad Al-Sabah's appointment as prime minister marked the first time in decades that the prime minister has not been the crown prince. The Al-Sabah ruling dynasty is currently led by aging family members.

In June 2005, Kuwait held elections for 10 separate municipal councils in Kuwait, with voters choosing 10 members for each council and the emir appointing 6 other members to each council. Women did not vote or run for office in these municipi-

pal elections, but the Kuwaiti government appointed two women to serve on municipal councils.

Kuwait, which has about 10 percent of the world's proven oil reserves, continued to enjoy strong economic growth as a result of high global oil prices. Oil dominates the economy, accounting for nearly 90 percent of public revenues. The National Assembly continued to delay action on Project Kuwait, a proposed \$8 billion investment by foreign oil companies to develop the country's oil fields close to the Iraqi border.

In January 2005, a number of gun battles between Kuwaiti security forces and suspected Islamist extremists led the Kuwaiti parliament to pass a new law giving authorities wide-ranging powers to seize unlicensed weapons.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Kuwaitis cannot change their government democratically, Freely elected representatives do not determine the government's policies. The royal family of Kuwait, which is a hereditary emirate, largely sets the policy agenda, dominates political life, and controls meaningful power. The emir has overriding power in the political system and appoints the prime minister and cabinet. Members of the ruling Al-Sabah family hold key cabinet posts, such as those for defense, the interior, foreign affairs, and oil.

Under the constitution, the emir shares legislative power with the 50-member National Assembly (parliament), which is elected by a limited popular vote involving only about 15 percent of the country's 900,000 citizens. The emir has the power to dissolve the National Assembly at will, but must call elections within 60 days. The parliament is granted powers to overturn decrees from the emir issued when it is not in session, and it has exercised this power in a number of cases. It can veto the appointment of the country's prime minister, but then it must choose from three alternates put forward by the emir. It also has the power to remove government ministers with a majority vote of elected members.

The National Assembly continued to challenge the government, asserting its power to question ministers. In early January, Minister of Information Muhammad Abu Al-Hassan resigned under pressure from the National Assembly, which had called him for questioning over issuing licenses to hold musical evenings in Kuwait. Some conservative members of the National Assembly considered evening concerts contrary to Kuwait's social traditions.

Formal political parties are banned, but political groupings, such as parliamentary blocs, have been allowed to emerge. In January, a group of Kuwaiti Islamists announced the formation of the Umma Party, but like other political groupings, it was not granted a permit by the government. After the Umma Party announced its formation, the government imposed a travel ban on 15 leading members of the party and interrogated several of the party's leaders. In October, Kuwait's prime minister said that there were no plans to legalize political parties.

In March, several National Assembly members demanded the resignation of Muhammad Deif Allah Shara, deputy prime minister and minister of state for cabinet affairs, for corruption and mismanagement. In April, Minister of Health Muhammad al-Jarallah resigned after being questioned by the National Assembly for alleged corruption. Kuwait was ranked 45 out of 158 countries in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The government allows some open criticism and debate on politics in the press. In May, the Kuwaiti government decided to permit the regional Arab satellite television channel Al-Jazeera to transmit again from Kuwait, after a ban of more than two and a half years. However, in June, Kuwait's Supreme Court upheld a two-year sentence against Islamic scholar Hamid al-Ali for delivering, in a mosque, sermons deemed insulting to the emir. Kuwaitis have access to the internet, though internet service providers have blocked access to certain sites.

Islam is the state religion; nevertheless, religious minorities are generally permitted to practice their religion freely in private. The Roman Catholic, Anglican, National Evangelical, Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox, and Greek Catholic churches operate freely. Kuwaiti law bans missionaries from proselytizing among Muslims. Academic freedom is generally respected, though some academics exercise self-censorship. Kuwait has a tradition of allowing relatively open and free private discussions, often conducted in traditional gatherings and usually including only men, called *diwaynyas*.

The government has restricted freedom of assembly, with public gatherings requiring government approval. However, the year saw an increase in public demonstrations, many related to women's political rights. In the spring of 2005, hundreds of women's rights activists demonstrated in front of the National Assembly demanding the right to vote and run for office.

Workers have the right to join labor unions, but the government restricts freedom of association by mandating that there be only one union per occupational trade. In August 2004, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor officially recognized the existence of the Kuwait Human Rights Society, which was founded 10 years ago but previously operated without legal standing.

Kuwait lacks a truly independent judiciary. The emir appoints all judges, and the executive branch of government approves judicial promotions and renewals of judicial appointments. According to Kuwaiti law, authorities may detain suspects for four days without charge. The Ministry of the Interior supervises the main internal security forces, including the national police, the Criminal Investigation Division, and Kuwait State Security. Four Kuwaiti Islamists accused government authorities of torturing them to extract confessions in a case in which they were accused of conspiring to attack foreign forces in Kuwait and Iraq. The government permitted visits to prisons by human rights activists, who report adherence to international standards, though with some concern about overcrowding.

Stateless residents, known as *bidoon*, are estimated to number more than 80,000. They are considered illegal residents and do not have full citizenship rights. Kuwait is a destination country for human trafficking, with many people coming from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka.

Both male and female citizens have the right to own property and establish businesses.

The 1962 constitution provides men and women with equal rights. Nevertheless, women face discrimination in several areas of society and remain underrepresented in the workforce, although they have made recent gains. In 2005, women won the right to vote in elections and run for office; the next elections for the National Assembly are slated for 2007, and municipal elections are scheduled for 2009. A new election law, approved by Kuwait's all-male parliament in May, also stipu-

lated that women participating in politics must abide by Islamic law. In June, the prime minister appointed Masouma al-Mubarak as minister of planning and administrative development; she became the first woman to serve as a cabinet minister in the history of Kuwait. Women constitute more than 60 percent of the student body at several leading universities in Kuwait.

Kyrgyzstan

Population: 5,200,000 **Political Rights:** 5*

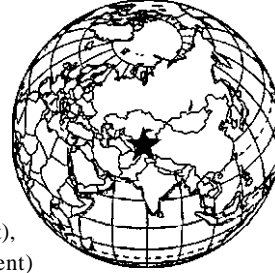
GNI/capita: \$340 **Civil Liberties:** 4*

Life Expectancy: 68 **Status:** Partly Free

Religious Groups: Muslim (75 percent), Russian Orthodox (20 percent), other (5 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Kyrgyz (64.9 percent), Russian (12.5 percent), Uzbek (13.8 percent), Ukrainian (1 percent), other (8 percent)

Capital: Bishkek



Ratings Change: Kyrgyzstan's political rights rating improved from 6 to 5, its civil liberties rating from 5 to 4, and its status from Not Free to Partly Free, due to the holding of reasonably free and competitive presidential elections in July, and to modest improvements in freedom of the media, assembly, and association.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
4,4PF	4,4PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	5,4PF

Overview:

President Askar Akayev's increasingly authoritarian 14-year rule came to a dramatic end in 2005, as a popular uprising following seriously flawed parliamentary elections in February and March led to the ouster and resignation of Kyrgyzstan's head of state. Presidential elections held in July, in which opposition leader Kurmanbek Bakiyev secured an easy victory, were described by international monitors as marking tangible progress toward standards for democratic elections. While the so-called Tulip Revolution brought improvements in media and civil society freedoms, the country's stability was compromised throughout the year by divisions within the new leadership, a worsening security situation, and questions about whether the new government represented a genuine break from the previous administration. On the international front, Kyrgyzstan continued to balance its relations with Russia and the United States, while its relations with neighboring Uzbekistan worsened over conflicts regarding the status of Uzbek refugees in Kyrgyzstan.

Populated by nomadic herders and ruled by tribal leaders for centuries, Kyrgyzstan was conquered by Russia in the mid-1800s and incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1924. The country declared independence from the USSR in August 1991. After Askar Akayev, a respected physicist, was elected president in the country's first direct presidential vote two months later, he introduced multiparty elections

and pursued economic reforms. In the 1995 parliamentary elections, no single party won a clear majority, with a mix of governing officials, intellectuals, and clan leaders capturing most of the seats in the legislature. Later that year, Akayev was reelected president in early elections with more than 70 percent of the vote. In a February 1996 referendum, 94 percent of voters endorsed constitutional amendments that substantially increased the powers of the presidency.

Opposition parties, including the Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan, El Beibechora, and Ar-Namys were barred from competing in the February 2000 parliamentary elections over minor technicalities in rulings that were widely regarded as politically motivated. According to official election results, the Communist Party received the largest percentage of votes, followed by the progovernment Union of Democratic Forces. Six candidates contested the October 2000 presidential poll, which the heavily favored incumbent won with nearly 75 percent of the vote. Ar-Namys chairman Felix Kulov, who was widely regarded as Akayev's main challenger, was denied registration as a candidate for refusing to take a mandatory Kyrgyz language exam, a move that he charged violated election laws and the constitution (Kulov's native language is Russian). International election observers, including representatives from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), noted serious irregularities in both the presidential and parliamentary polls, such as biased state media coverage, violations in vote tabulations, and the exclusion of candidates for political purposes.

Years of simmering frustrations in the economically depressed and politically marginalized south culminated in an unprecedented series of public protests in 2002. The demonstrations were sparked by the January arrest of parliament member Azimbek Beknazarov on abuse-of-power charges, although critics maintained that he had been detained because of his public criticism of a controversial 1999 border agreement ceding land to China. On March 17 and 18, a few days after his trial began, thousands of pro-Beknazarov demonstrators marched in the southern district of Aksy. In the first outbreak of deadly political violence since Kyrgyzstan's independence, several protestors were killed and more than a dozen were wounded when police fired into the crowd. In an apparent effort to quell the protests, the authorities released Beknazarov from prison the following day. However, on May 24, he was convicted of abuse of office, given a one-year suspended sentence, and stripped of his seat in parliament.

Thousands of Beknazarov supporters continued to hold rallies, demanding that the charges against him be dismissed and that those responsible for the killings in Aksy be punished. The demonstrators adopted additional demands, including Akayev's resignation and the overturning of a May 8 conviction of Kulov for embezzlement; Kulov was already serving a seven-year prison term, which he had received in January 2001, for abuse of power while national security minister in 1997 and 1998. Many analysts maintained that the cases against him were politically motivated and were intended to exclude him from further activities in politics. The crisis eased somewhat after an appeals court annulled Beknazarov's sentence on June 28, 2002, allowing him to retain his seat in the legislature. Four former regional prosecutors and police officials were sentenced to prison in December in connection with the Aksy shootings, although critics charged that senior officials who had authorized the use of force had not been brought to justice. The government subse-

quently made certain conciliatory gestures toward the southern regions of the country by designating the city of Osh the "southern capital" and awarding it special budgetary privileges.

Several opposition political blocs and coalitions were established throughout 2004 in an attempt to improve their chances of successfully challenging progovernment candidates in the following year's parliamentary and presidential polls. With prominent opposition figure Kulov incarcerated and ineligible for parole until November 2005—and recent electoral code amendments denying people with a criminal record the right to contest elections—a number of opposition groups declared their support for former prime minister Kurmanbek Bakiyev, who announced his candidacy for president in June. Speculation continued over whether Akayev would seek another term in office. Although he was constitutionally barred from running again—and despite his repeated pledges that he would step down after the end of his current term—some analysts believed that the country's constitution would be reinterpreted to allow Akayev to become a candidate. Meanwhile, growing discord in parliament was evident throughout 2004, as a scandal over listening devices discovered in the offices of several opposition deputies erupted early in the year, and Prime Minister Nikolai Tanayev, who had the declared support of the president, narrowly survived a no-confidence vote prompted by allegations of corruption.

In the February 27, 2005, parliamentary election, nearly 400 candidates contested the 75 seats in the unicameral legislature, with voter turnout reported at 60 percent. Fewer than half of the constituencies saw outright victories in which a candidate received the required 50 percent of the vote, which triggered the need for a second round of voting two weeks later for the remaining seats. According to an OSCE assessment, the first-round poll, "while more competitive than previous elections, fell short of OSCE commitments and other international standards in a number of important areas." Irregularities that the election observers noted included multiple voting, voter intimidation, inaccurate voter lists, media bias in favor of progovernment candidates, and the presence of unauthorized persons in polling stations.

During the following week, thousands of demonstrators took to the streets across the country to protest election irregularities, support defeated candidates, and ultimately call for Akayev's resignation. In a number of cities, demonstrators occupied government buildings and blocked roads. Mass protests continued through the March 13 second-round runoff election, in which opposition leaders charged numerous electoral violations and questioned the legitimacy of the vote. Although OSCE monitors noted that the "right to assembly was more fully respected in the period between the two rounds of elections," they concluded that numerous flaws observed in the first round were repeated during the runoff vote. Preliminary results from the second-round vote, which indicated that the opposition had captured less than 10 percent of the seats in the legislature, sparked additional protests and seizures of government buildings around the country. By March 20, demonstrators had assumed control of cities including Jalalabad and Osh, with most protests and takeovers of buildings having happened without significant violence.

On March 24, 2005, Akayev's 14-year rule was brought to an end in what became known as the Tulip Revolution, as protestors and opposition supporters stormed the presidential headquarters in Bishkek, taking over the seat of government; police generally did not respond with violence to suppress the demonstra-

tors. Akayev had lost not only popular support, but also the backing of former loyal allies, including key national and regional elites opposed to his family's control of the economy and other prominent institutions. Looting was reported in the capital city, with businesses thought to be controlled by the Akayev family particular targets. After Kulov was released from prison the same day, he took control of the security forces; however, he stepped down after order had been restored several days later. Kulov was subsequently cleared of all charges by the Supreme Court, which made him eligible to contest future presidential elections. The outgoing parliament was dissolved, with the new legislature appointing opposition leader and former prime minister Bakiyev as acting president and prime minister. Akayev, who had fled the country for Russia on March 24, formally resigned as president on April 4; the date of the next presidential election was moved up to July 2005 in accordance with the constitution, which requires an election within three months of the president's resignation.

The months following the collapse of the Akayev regime were marked by greater instability and a deterioration in the security situation in the country. In April, thousands of people—many of whom had joined the protests in March and looked to improvements in their livelihoods following the uprising—seized land around Bishkek. Tensions gradually began to ease as the government, concerned that using force to remove the squatters would lead to further unrest, promised to construct affordable housing. On April 10, Usen Kudaibergenov, an ally of Kulov's who had helped organize citizens' defense groups against looters in late March and more recent land seizures, was murdered in Bishkek. Parliament deputy Bayaman Erkinbayev was wounded slightly in an apparent assassination attempt on April 28, which he claimed was politically motivated. In October and November, more than 20 people were killed, including parliament member Tynychbek Akhmatbayev, when prison riots erupted over poor living conditions in the country's penal colonies.

In the July 10 presidential poll, Bakiyev captured 89 percent of the vote, while his closest challenger, Erkin Kyrgyzstan party leader Tursunbay Bakir Uulu, received just 4 percent. Bakiyev's victory was regarded as largely inevitable after he and Kulov, his most serious potential rival, formed a political alliance in May: Kulov withdrew his candidacy in exchange for a guaranteed position as prime minister if Bakiyev were to become president. The alliance was also regarded as an important step toward ensuring stability; many observers were concerned that a contest between Kulov, whose support base was mostly northern and urban, and Bakiyev, whose backers were primarily southern and rural, could be sufficiently intense to trigger an outbreak of violence. In contrast to the earlier parliamentary vote, OSCE observers concluded that the presidential election "marked tangible progress ... towards meeting OSCE commitments, as well as other international standards for democratic elections," although they noted that the "process deteriorated somewhat during the counting of votes." According to the OSCE mission report, the participation of six candidates offered voters a degree of choice, and basic rights, including freedom of expression and assembly, were generally respected.

After Kulov was officially appointed prime minister in September, rumors of tensions between Kulov and Bakiyev and certain officials close to the president began to circulate, although by late in the year their alliance appeared to be holding. Meanwhile, Bakiyev struggled with parliament over the structure and composition of

government ministries and other political appointments, with concerns that key posts were being filled with former administration officials or close allies and relatives.

On September 19, Beknazarov, a prominent political figure and supporter of Bakiyev during the March popular revolt, was dismissed as prosecutor-general shortly after persuading parliament to strip Akayev's son, Aydar, of his parliamentary immunity from prosecution. Beknazarov, who had actively pursued corruption investigations into Akayev administration officials, charged that his dismissal was politically motivated and that his anticorruption drive had alarmed members of the current political elite. Bakiyev countered that Beknazarov's dismissal was related to his alleged negligence in his handling of a dispute over control of a major wholesale market in the town of Karasuu, which culminated in the murders of Abdalim Junusov, the market's director, and Bayaman Erkinbayev, a parliamentary deputy and an owner of the market; some viewed the murders as politically motivated, while others regarded them as examples of violent campaigns to control lucrative economic assets. Roza Otunbayeva, another key player in the uprising and a vocal critic of the current legislature, was removed from her post as foreign minister in September when parliament failed to formally approve her position. Both Beknazarov and Otunbayeva ran in two parliamentary by-elections held in November, which Beknazarov won decisively, while Otunbayeva was defeated.

One of the earliest promises of the leaders of the new government was to review and propose revisions to the country's constitution, including transferring more authority from the president to the prime minister in order to prevent the excessive concentration of power in one individual or group that had marked the Akayev era. Among the specific proposed changes were limiting the president to two 5-year terms in office and banning the holding of referendums on additional terms; changing the system of parliamentary elections from one in which deputies are elected in single-mandate constituencies to a combination of single-mandate constituencies and party lists; and abolishing the death penalty. However, the process was plagued with problems from the start, including Bakiyev's seeming reluctance to move forward. In addition, the draft was criticized for not granting enough power to the prime minister and for having been developed by a constitutional council headed by Bakiyev himself. On November 10, Bakiyev's office presented a draft constitution and called for public debate until December 15.

Long-standing tensions between Kyrgyzstan and its neighbor Uzbekistan escalated in 2005, when hundreds of Uzbeks fled to Kyrgyzstan after Uzbek forces reportedly killed some 800 largely unarmed civilian protestors in the Uzbek city of Andijon. Tashkent successfully persuaded Kyrgyzstan to extradite four refugees in June, although Bishkek subsequently bowed to international pressure not to return any additional refugees. Shortly after the United Nations transferred more than 400 Uzbeks from Kyrgyzstan to Romania, Uzbekistan cancelled a July agreement to supply natural gas to Kyrgyzstan. In addition to the few hundred refugees who were evacuated, several thousand more were thought to be in hiding throughout the country. Meanwhile, Tashkent charged that the instigators of the unrest in Andijon had been trained in Kyrgyzstan, allegations that Bishkek denied.

Kyrgyzstan continued to balance its strategic and economic relations with Russia and the United States throughout the year. Following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Kyrgyzstan of-

ferred its support for the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan, including the use of its air bases. For the cash-strapped Kyrgyz economy, U.S. troop deployments promised to be a valuable source of income. In October 2005, Washington secured an agreement to allow the U.S. military's continued presence at the Manas air base, although there were indications that Washington might be required to make larger payments for the use of the base. Meanwhile, Russia announced that it would invest in the development of a military base in the town of Kant near Bishkek, which was established in 2003 under the auspices of the Commonwealth of Independent States Collective Security Treaty Organization; the Kant air base has been widely seen as an attempt by Moscow to counter U.S. influence in the region.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Kyrgyzstan cannot change their government democratically. International election observers described the 2000 parliamentary and presidential elections and 2005 parliamentary elections as neither free nor competitive. However, the 2005 presidential elections, which followed the March popular uprising that toppled the Akayev regime, were described by the OSCE as having demonstrated "marked tangible progress ... towards meeting OSCE commitments, as well as other international standards for democratic elections." The constitution codifies strong presidential rule and a weak parliament. Although the constitution limits the president to only two terms in office, President Askar Akayev was allowed to run in 2000 after the Constitutional Court ruled that his first term had begun in 1995, after the country's first post-Soviet constitution was adopted (in 1993), rather than in 1991, when he was first elected.

Constitutional amendments adopted in a February 2003 referendum replaced the previous bicameral legislature (consisting of a 45-member upper house and 60-seat lower house) with a unicameral body with 75 deputies following the 2005 parliamentary poll. Other amendments adopted during the referendum further strengthened the authority of the president at the expense of parliament and included the abolition of party-list voting in parliamentary elections in favor of the single-mandate constituency system (which could further weaken political parties) and the granting of immunity to former presidents and their families. Voters also approved a proposal that Akayev should serve out the remainder of his term until December 2005. Election observers noted various irregularities during the referendum, including multiple voting, forged voting results, and polling officials hampering independent observers from monitoring the vote. Following the March 2005 collapse of the Akayev government, parliament began to assert its independence to a greater degree, including in the handling of the president's cabinet nominees, many of whom the legislature rejected.

Most political parties continue to be weak, poorly organized, and centered around a specific leading figure.

Corruption is widespread throughout Kyrgyz society, and bribes are frequently required to obtain lucrative government positions. As part of the country's anticorruption campaign, parliament in 2004 adopted a law on income declarations for high-level officials. An anticorruption drive espoused by President Kurmanbek Bakiyev in 2005 was directed largely against members and associates of former president Akayev's family. Until his dismissal as prosecutor-general in September 2005, Azimbek

Beknazarov had been leading the government's anticorruption campaign against members of the previous regime, including former prime minister Nikolai Tanayev, the chairman of the national bank, and Akayev's son, Aydar. Kyrgyzstan was ranked 130 out of 159 countries in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

During Akayev's presidency, the government restricted freedom of the press. Both state and private media were vulnerable to government pressure, which caused many journalists to practice self-censorship. In the run-up to the February 2005 parliamentary elections, authorities cut off electricity to the country's only independent printing press, the Media Support Center (operated by Freedom House), which prints independent and opposition newspapers. During the same period, a state broadcast regulator suspended broadcasts of the Kyrgyz-language service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, allegedly because of an upcoming auction for the station's frequency. Reporters from the station, which criticizes government officials, charged that the move was politically motivated. The authorities prevented journalists from the state-run Kyrgyz National Television and Radio Corporation (KTR) from reporting on the March demonstrations. The head of the independent Journalists Trade Union, Azamat Kalman, suffered two broken legs when he was beaten by police and then pushed off a 10-foot-high wall by Akayev supporters during one of the March protests.

The media became more open and tolerant of diverse points of view following the March 2005 popular uprisings and subsequent change in regime. According to a May report by the International Crisis Group, "For the first time in years, television news began showing real events and different opinions." The new government established media reform commissions to plan reforms for KTR, draft a new media law, and propose options for privatizing some of the country's state media outlets. Nevertheless, journalists continued to face political pressures; in October, KOORT public radio and television went off the air when its staff struck for a week to protest alleged management pressure to endorse the Bakiyev government. Journalists and media outlets experienced occasional harassment, and even violence, during the year amid the lingering lawlessness and instability in the country. In September, journalist Makhmud Kazakbayev of the newspaper *Demos Taimz* was beaten following threats from a politician reportedly angered by his articles.

The government generally respects freedom of religion in this predominantly Muslim country. To obtain legal status, all religious organizations must register with the Ministry of Justice, a process that is often cumbersome. The government monitors and restricts Islamic groups that it regards as extremist and a threat to national security, particularly Hizb ut-Tahrir, an international movement calling for the creation of an Islamic caliphate throughout the Muslim world. There have been reports of some alleged Hizb ut-Tahrir members being tortured while in police custody.

Teachers reportedly have been forced to subscribe to government newspapers, and municipal authorities in some cities require schoolchildren to perform during national holidays and visits by government officials. Corruption is widespread throughout the educational system, with bribes often required to obtain admission to schools or universities.

Freedom of assembly was respected in 2005, with numerous large-scale demonstrations taking place throughout the year, most without direct interference from the

authorities or police. The fraudulent February parliamentary elections prompted thousands to stage protests across the country, which eventually led to the overthrow of the Akayev regime. An estimated 12,000 people demonstrated in Aksy to protest the dismissal of prosecutor-general Beknazarov for reasons that he and his supporters maintained were the result of his investigations into corruption among the political elite. Law enforcement officials were reportedly reluctant to use force or take other steps to restore order during demonstrations out of support for the protestors or fear of the possible consequences from the public, the legal system, and powerful elites.

Freedom of association is generally respected, although nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) faced harassment and intimidation during Akayev's presidency. On November 16, 2004, Tursunbek Akunov, head of the Human Rights Movement of Kyrgyzstan, disappeared. On the day he went missing, he was gathering signatures for a petition calling for the president's resignation and was in the process of organizing a large protest, to be held the next morning, calling for Akayev to step down. He reappeared in a Bishkek hospital on December 1, saying that men believed to be security service agents had held him captive for two weeks.

Despite accusations by the Akayev government regarding the role played by foreign-funded NGOs in the March demonstrations, a May report by the International Crisis Group concluded that only a small proportion of the protestors were connected to Western-oriented NGOs. Following the March events, human rights activists reported an improvement in their general operating environment without concerns that the security forces were monitoring their activities, as occurred under the previous administration. However, legislative changes to support these new freedoms were not fully implemented by November 30.

The law provides for the formation of trade unions, and unions generally are able to conduct their activities without obstruction. Although the right to strike is not specifically codified in law, it is not prohibited. The Federation of Trade Unions is the only union umbrella organization in the country, but unions are not required to join it.

Despite various legislative reforms in the court system, the judiciary is not independent and remains dominated by the executive branch. Corruption among judges, who are underpaid, is reportedly widespread. Defendants' rights, including the presumption of innocence until proven guilty, are not always respected. Police at times use violence against suspects during arrest and interrogation and to extract confessions.

After the fall of the Akayev regime, with which some criminal elements had developed strong connections over the years, various crime groups struggled to assert greater control and influence within the law enforcement system, as well as in the political sphere. In April, the head of the regional police department responsible for fighting organized crime was shot and killed in the city of Osh. In October and November, prison riots over poor living conditions led to the murder of parliamentary deputy Tynychbek Akhmatbayev while he was trying to negotiate with prisoners in a penal institution near Bishkek. The murder appeared to stem from a rivalry between Akhmatbayev's brother, Ryspek, and Aziz Batukayev, a prominent criminal leader in the prison where Tynychbek was killed. Ryspek himself was awaiting trial on charges of murder and other serious crimes. When Ryspek subsequently led

hundreds of demonstrators, including prominent figures in the criminal world, to demand the resignation of Kulov, whom he accused of orchestrating his brother's death, a number of senior officials formally expressed their condolences to him. These events reinforced the widely held perception that certain members of the political establishment had close ties to, or were afraid to challenge, powerful crime figures. The riots also highlighted persistent reports of poor prison conditions, such as severe overcrowding and inadequate nutrition, as well as the extent of corruption in the penal system in which important criminal leaders enjoy considerable privileges and more comfortable living conditions.

Ethnic minority groups, including Uzbeks, Russians, and Uighurs, have complained of discrimination in employment and housing. Members of the country's sizable ethnic Uzbek minority have been demanding more political and cultural rights, including greater representation in government and more Uzbek language schools. In 2004, Akayev signed a new language law requiring that students applying to universities and state and local government officials be proficient in Kyrgyz and stipulating that at least one-third of news broadcasts and advertisements be in Kyrgyz. Some critics charged that the law would lead to further discrimination against the country's large minority population, particularly Uzbeks, and exclude them from political participation. In the looting that followed the March 2005 storming of the presidential administration building, businesses owned by ethnic minorities reportedly suffered disproportionate losses.

The government of Kyrgyzstan, which abolished the Soviet-era exit-visa system in 1999, generally respects the right of free travel to and from the country. However, certain policies complicate internal migration, including a requirement for citizens to obtain official permits to work and settle in particular areas of the country. Personal connections, corruption, organized crime, and widespread poverty limit business competition and equality of opportunity. Conscripted soldiers have reportedly been rented out to civilian employers under illegal arrangements, with some forced to work for no pay.

Cultural traditions and apathy by law enforcement officials discourage victims of domestic violence and rape from seeking legal help. The trafficking of women and girls into forced prostitution abroad is a serious problem, and some victims report that the authorities are involved in trafficking. In response, the criminal code was amended in 2003 to punish trafficking with up to 20 years in prison, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs opened an anti-trafficking police unit in 2004. The practice of bride kidnapping persists despite being illegal, and few are prosecuted for the crime. Although women are well represented in the workforce and in institutions of higher learning, declining economic conditions in the country have had a negative impact on women's professional and educational opportunities.

Laos

Population: 5,900,000 **Political Rights:** 7
GNI/capita: \$340 **Civil Liberties:** 6
Life Expectancy: 54 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Buddhist (60 percent), other [including animist] (40 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Lao Loum [lowland] (68 percent), Lao Theung [upland] (22 percent), Lao Soung [highland] including the Hmong and the Yao (9 percent), ethnic Vietnamese/Chinese (1 percent)



Capital: Vientiane

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF

Overview:

In May 2005, the World Bank approved \$270 million in loans and risk guarantees for the \$1.25 billion expansion of the Nam Theun hydroelectric dam, the most high-profile and controversial industrial project in Laos. Four foreign nationals were arrested for "illegally liaising" with the ethnic Hmong minority, and three of them were deported in June. Meanwhile, the Thai government forced thousands of Hmong refugees to return to Laos.

Laos, a landlocked and mountainous country, won independence in 1953 after six decades of French rule and Japanese occupation during World War II. The new constitutional monarchy soon entered into a civil war with the Communist Pathet Lao (Land of Lao) guerrillas that were backed by the Vietnamese Communist Party. As the civil war raged on, Laos was drawn into the Vietnam War in 1964, when the United States began bombing North Vietnamese forces operating inside Laos. The Pathet Lao seized power in 1975 and set up a one-party Communist state under Prime Minister Kaysone Phomvihane's Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP).

By the 1980s, the Laotian economy was in tatters after years of civil war and the inept economic policies of the LPRP. Seeing the success of China's economic opening, the LPRP began to relax controls on prices, encouraged foreign investment, and privatized farms and some state-owned firms. These actions spurred much needed economic growth, but the government has rejected deeper economic reform for fear of losing its power. The government suppresses all calls for political reform.

Laos remains one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world. More than three-quarters of Laos's 5.3 million people live on less than \$2 a day, and about four-fifths of Laotians are subsistence farmers contributing about 53 percent of the country's gross domestic product. Trade, tourism, and sales of hydroelectric power to neighboring Thailand are key sources of foreign revenue. Expansion of the Nam Theun hydroelectric dam in southern Laos will produce more electricity for export and revenue for the government. Thailand will buy 95 percent of the 1,070 megawatts of power the dam will generate beginning in 2010. The World Bank has

agreed to provide \$270 million in funding and risk guarantees for the project, which critics say will threaten wildlife and displace thousands of subsistence farmers and persons belonging to hill tribes. These two groups—who rely heavily on the illegal growth and sale of opium poppy for their economic livelihood—have also suffered recently from the government's antidrug campaign, conducted with rigor in order to secure assistance from Europe and America. Pushed into extreme poverty, some are forced to leave their land to find legitimate work elsewhere or to go deeper into the mountain to continue their illegal trade.

In June, four U.S. nationals were detained and three were deported by the government for "illegally liaising" with members of the ethnic Hmong minority. All were members of a U.S. nonprofit organization, the Fact Finding Commission, investigating whether 170 relatives of Hmong rebels surrendering to the government were safe.

Thousands of Hmong refugees in Thailand were forced to return to Laos by the Thai government in 2005, despite international warnings that they could face political persecution. The Hmong had allied with U.S. forces during the Vietnam War. Laotian government actions to destroy alleged rebel elements have created significant hardships for these mountain people. Many fear for their lives, and thousands have been forced off their land to allow for the exploitation of timber and other natural resources.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Laotians cannot change their government democratically. The 1991 constitution makes the LPRP the sole legal political party and grants it a leading role at all levels of government. The LPRP vets all candidates for election to the rubber-stamp National Assembly; elections are held once every five years. General Khamtay Siphandone succeeded Kaysone Phomvihane in 1992 as both head of the LPRP and chief executive. The National Assembly reelected Siphandone to a third term as president in March 2001.

Corruption and abuses by government officials are widespread. Official announcements and new laws to curb corruption are rarely enforced. Government regulation of virtually every facet of life provides corrupt officials with many opportunities to demand bribes. High-level officials in government and the military are also frequently involved in commercial logging and mining, as well as other enterprises aimed at exploiting Laotian natural resources. The country ranks 77 out of 159 nations surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perception Index.

Freedom of the press is denied in Laos. The state owns three newspapers and circulation is extremely low. Lao National TV is government owned and Laos Television 3 is a joint venture with a Thai company. There is only one radio station, and internet access is heavily restricted and censored by the government. However, residents within frequency range of Radio Free Asia and other foreign broadcasts from Thailand have access to these alternative media sources. Any journalist who criticizes the government or discusses controversial political topics faces legal punishment.

Religious freedom is tightly restricted. Dozens of Christians have been detained on religious grounds, and several have been jailed for proselytizing or for other religious activities. National campaigns and overzealous local officials harass Chris-

tians. The government forces Christians to renounce their faith, deprives them of their property, and bars them from celebrating Christian holidays. The majority Buddhist population is restricted by LPRP control of clergy training and oversight of temples and other religious sites.

Academic freedom is highly restricted. University professors cannot teach or write about democracy, human rights, or other politically sensitive topics. A small number of young people have been allowed to travel overseas, including to the United States, for university and graduate-level training. However, they are carefully screened by the government and are generally children of officials and military leaders.

Laos has some nongovernmental welfare and professional groups, but they are prohibited from having political agendas and are subjected to strict state control. All unions must belong to the official Federation of Lao Trade Unions. Strikes are not expressly prohibited, but workers rarely stage walkouts, and workers do not have the right to bargain collectively.

The courts are corrupt and are controlled by the LPRP. Long delays in court hearings are common, particularly for cases dealing with public grievances and complaints against government abuses. Security forces often illegally detain suspects, and some Laotians have allegedly spent more than a decade in jail without trial. Hundreds of political activists have also been held for months or years without trial. Prisoners are often tortured and must bribe prison officials to obtain better food, medicine, visits from family, and more humane treatment.

Many subsistence farmers and fishermen work for themselves, and some Laotians run small private businesses. Government surveillance of the population has been scaled back in recent years, but searches without warrants still occur. Discrimination against members of minority tribes is common at many levels.

Although women are guaranteed many of the same rights as men under Laotian laws, discrimination and abuse against women are widespread. Tradition and religious practice have considerable influence in dictating an inferior position for women in everything from access to education to equal employment and benefits. Poverty exacerbates these hardships and puts many women at greater risk of exploitation and abuse by the state and society at large. Domestic violence is a major cause of divorce. Abortion is allowed only to save the life of the mother. An estimated 15,000 to 20,000 Laotian women and girls, mainly highland ethnic minorities, are trafficked each year for prostitution.

Latvia

Population: 2,300,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GN/capita: \$4,400 **Civil Liberties:** 1*
Life Expectancy: 72 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Lutheran, Roman Catholic,
 Russian Orthodox



Ethnic Groups: Latvian (57 percent), Russian (30 percent),
 Byelorussian (4 percent), Ukrainian (3 percent), Polish (3 percent),
 other (3 percent)

Capital: Riga

Ratings Change: Latvia's civil liberties rating improved from 2 to 1 due to an increase in the activity and visibility of the nongovernmental sector.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
2,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F

Overview:

Aigars Kalvitis of the People's Party became the new prime minister of Latvia in December 2004. Right-wing parties won the most seats in local elections held in March 2005.

On the international front, the long-awaited border treaty with Russia remained unsigned after the Latvian government insisted on leaving open the possibility for future compensation for 46 years under Soviet occupation. Meanwhile, increased state support for the nongovernmental sector mirrored a general strengthening of Latvian civil society.

After having been ruled for centuries by Germany, Poland, Sweden, and Russia, Latvia gained its independence in 1918, only to be annexed by the USSR during World War II. More than 50 years of Soviet occupation saw a massive influx of Russians and the deportation, execution, and emigration of tens of thousands of ethnic Latvians. In 1991, Latvia regained its independence in the wake of the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

Almost 73 percent of Latvian voters participated in a September 2003 referendum on European Union (EU) accession, with 67 percent voting to join the body. Prime Minister Einars Repse hailed the vote as one of the three most important events in the country's history; the others were the brief period of independence between the two world wars and the collapse of the USSR. Latvia became a member of NATO in April 2004 and of the EU the following month.

Political tensions festered throughout 2004. In February, Repse and his ruling coalition resigned after the Latvia First Party (LPP) withdrew its support of the government. Repse had sacked LPP leader and deputy prime minister Ainars Slesers a week earlier, after Slesers backed the establishment of a parliamentary committee to probe Repse's allegedly corrupt real estate purchases. In March, parliament voted in a new coalition government led by Latvian Green Party (ZZS) head Indulis Emsis, who became Europe's first ever Green prime minister. The coalition included the LPP, the People's Party, and one New Era (JL) deputy. However, Emsis's government was

forced to resign in October following parliament's rejection of its draft 2005 budget, regarded as a no-confidence vote by parliamentary rules.

In December 2004, Aigars Kalvitis of the People's Party (TP) was approved as the new prime minister of Latvia. His government received more support than any coalition government in the country's past, obtaining the votes of 75 of the 100 members of parliament. The governing coalition is composed of the four largest right-wing parties—JL, TP, LPP, and the Latvian Alliance of the Green Party and Farmers Union.

Latvia's usual solidarity with its Baltic neighbors cooled down in January 2005 after President Vaira Vike-Freiberga broke an agreement with Estonia and Lithuania and decided to attend the sixtieth anniversary of the Soviet defeat over Nazi Germany. Some analysts perceived this unilateral move as a sign that the three countries—which must now compete for everything from farm subsidies to diplomacy within the EU context—are developing different interests.

Tensions surrounding the events celebrating the end of World War II escalated on the local level on March 16, when Latvian nationalist groups clashed with pro-Russian and anti-fascist crowds during marches to commemorate Latvians who served in the German Waffen-SS brigades. Some 35 people were detained for disorderly conduct. Approximately 146,000 Latvians fought in Nazi German ranks during World War II, and another 130,000 Latvians fought in the Soviet army.

The nongovernmental (NGO) sector in Latvia continued to grow and diversify during the year. In February, the state introduced a comprehensive proposal supporting the expansion of NGO activities. In June, the government signed a memorandum of cooperation with 50 NGOs, while allowing other groups an option to join in. A growing number of Latvians appears willing to join civic groups in order to lobby for various issues of interest. Moreover, the prospect of new EU funding has inspired many NGOs to better identify their goals and seek cooperation with other regional groups.

In elections for city, district, and *pagasts* (smallest rural units) councils held in mid-March, the ruling right-of-center parties captured more than 80 percent of votes. Voter turnout was close to 53 percent. More than 450,000 Russians, many of whom have lived in Latvia for their entire lives, were not allowed to vote because they failed to pass the Latvian language and history test, which became a pre-requisite for Latvian citizenship in 1995.

Latvian relations with Russia in 2005 remained tense. In May, the two countries were expected to sign a border treaty; however, these plans were abandoned in late April after Latvia insisted on maintaining the right to sue for losses incurred during Soviet rule. The treatment of Latvia's sizable Russian minority remained one of the most contentious bilateral issues, with Russian officials criticizing Latvia for preventing ethnic Russians from voting in Latvia's elections.

In June, Latvia ratified the European Constitution; members of parliament supported the constitution by an overwhelming 71 votes to 5.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Latvia can change their government democratically. The constitution provides for a unicameral, 100-seat parliament (Saeima), whose members are elected for four-year terms by proportional representation, and who in turn select the country's president. The prime minister is nominated by the president and must be approved by an

absolute parliamentary majority. According to international observers, the most recent national legislative elections in 2002 and the March 2005 local elections were both free and fair. Residents of Latvia who are citizens of any country of the EU are now permitted to vote in Latvia's local elections.

Eight political parties are currently represented in the parliament: the JL (24 seats), the TP (20 seats), the LPP (14 seats), the ZZS (12 seats), the People's Harmony Party (8 seats), the For Fatherland and Freedom/Latvian National Independence Movement (7 seats), the For Human Rights in United Latvia (6 seats), and the Latvian Socialist Party (5 seats).

Transparency International (TI) regularly cites Latvia as the most corrupt of the Baltic states. Latvia was ranked 51 out of 159 countries surveyed in TI's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index. In recent years, however, the government has adopted various anticorruption measures. In September 2005, the government approved personal income declarations for all citizens and residents.

The government generally respects freedom of speech and of the press. Private television and radio stations broadcast programs in both Latvian and Russian, and newspapers publish a wide range of political viewpoints. In March 2005, however, the government brought a criminal legal action against the influential Russian-language newspaper *Chas* for allegedly inciting ethnic hatred by publishing articles of Waffen-SS crimes and for calling for a halt to the annual SS veteran marches. Several sources suggested that this proceeding might be part of a government harassment campaign against *Chas*, whose publishing house, *Petits*, faced more than 20 tax and financial inspections in a 10-month period. The government does not restrict access to the internet.

Freedom of worship and academic freedom are generally respected. In May, the constitutional court upheld the controversial Education Law mandating that at least 60 percent of public school classes be taught in Latvian, even in schools that cater mainly to the approximately 120,000 ethnic Russian students. The court's opinion was that the education law does not violate an individual's right to education and does not diminish the rights of ethnic minorities to preserve their identity and culture. The law was strongly criticized by Moscow, as well as by the Russian community and some left-wing parties within Latvia.

Freedom of assembly is protected by law, and gatherings occur without governmental interference. The government does not restrict the activities of NGOs organizations and has recently supported the expansion of the nongovernmental sector. Workers have the right to establish trade unions, strike, and engage in collective bargaining. However, only 17 percent of the workforce is unionized.

While the government generally respects constitutional provisions for an independent judiciary, some judges continue to be inadequately trained and prone to corruption. However, the government has taken steps to address these problems. According to the U.S. State Department's 2004 human rights report, a majority of criminal cases were adjudicated within three months, and 80.5 percent were adjudicated within six months. Prison remain severely overcrowded, and there have been reports of security officials using excessive force.

Nearly one-fifth of Latvia's residents are noncitizens. Latvia's citizenship laws have been criticized for disenfranchising those who immigrated to Latvia during the Soviet period and who must now apply for citizenship, the majority of whom are

ethnic Russians. Most noncitizens are barred from participating in state and local elections, from holding some civil service jobs, and from holding some private sector jobs (including as lawyers, notaries, and commercial pilots). Alleged political, social, and economic discrimination suffered by the Russian-speaking community is a subject of much debate both in Latvia and in the wider region. In May, the Latvian parliament passed the Council of Europe's framework convention for the protection of national minorities in a slightly modified version: the parliament defined the term "ethnic minority" as persons of different culture, religion, or language who have lived in Latvia for generations, thereby excluding ethnic Russians, who settled in the country following World War II, from the special status.

Women possess the same legal rights as men, but they often face hiring and pay discrimination. Although the president of Latvia and the speaker of the parliament are women, there are only 21 women in the 100-member parliament and 4 women in the 18-member cabinet. Violence against women is widespread and often goes unreported. Trafficking in persons, mostly of women for the purposes of prostitution, is a problem, which the government has made efforts to address.

Lebanon

Population: 3,800,000 **Political Rights:** 5*
GNI/capita: \$4,040 **Civil Liberties:** 4*
Life Expectancy: 74 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Muslim [Mostly Shia] (60 percent),
 Christian (39 percent), other (1 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Arab (95 percent), Armenian (4 percent),
 other (1 percent)
Capital: Beirut



Ratings Change: Lebanon's political rights rating improved from 6 to 5, its civil liberties rating from 5 to 4, and its status from Not Free to Partly Free, due to the removal of direct foreign influence over government decision making, internationally monitored legislative elections, and a reduction in government restrictions on public freedoms.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	5,4PF

Overview:

The departure of Syrian military forces in April 2005 removed the single most powerful obstacle to freedom in Lebanon. Although politicians who rose to power during the occupation continued to dominate the Lebanese government, they quickly shed their loyalties to Syria and committed themselves to ending egregious violations of political and civil liberties. The virtually complete suspension—if not abolition—of government restrictions on public freedoms was tempered by a precarious security climate that witnessed a dozen major terrorist bombings, assassinations, and assassination attempts.

For more than a thousand years, the rough terrain of Mount Lebanon attracted Christian and heterodox Muslim minorities fleeing persecution in the predominantly Sunni Muslim Arab world. Following centuries of European protection and relative autonomy under Turkish rule, Mount Lebanon and its surrounding areas were established as a French mandate in 1920. After winning its independence in 1943, the new state of Lebanon maintained a precarious democratic system based on the division of parliamentary seats, high political offices, and senior administrative positions among the country's 17 officially recognized sectarian communities. As emigration transformed Lebanon's slight Christian majority into a minority, Muslim leaders demanded amendments to the fixed 6-to-5 ratio of Christian-to-Muslim parliamentary seats and to exclusive Maronite Christian control of the presidency. In 1975, war erupted between a coalition of Lebanese Muslim and leftist militias aligned with Palestinian guerrilla groups on one side and an array of Christian militias bent on preserving Christian political privileges on the other.

After the first few years of fighting, a loose consensus emerged among Lebanese politicians regarding a new power-sharing arrangement. However, following the entry of Syrian and Israeli troops into Lebanon in 1976 and 1978, the various militias and their foreign backers had little interest in disarming. The civil war lost much of its sectarian character over the next decade, with the bloodiest outbreaks of fighting taking place mainly within the Shiite, Christian, and Palestinian communities, or between local and foreign forces.

In 1989, the surviving members of Lebanon's 1972 parliament convened in Taif, Saudi Arabia, and agreed to a plan put forward by the Arab League that weakened the presidency, established equality in Christian and Muslim parliamentary representation, and mandated close security cooperation with occupying Syrian troops. After the ouster of General Michel Aoun from east Beirut by Syrian forces in October 1990, a new Syrian-backed government extended its writ throughout most of the country.

In the years that followed, Syria consolidated its control over Lebanese state institutions, particularly the presidency, the judiciary, and the security forces. In return for tacit Western acceptance of its control of Lebanon, Damascus permitted a degree of political and civil liberties in Lebanon that exceeded those in most other Arab countries. While those who openly condemned the occupation risked arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, criticism of the government was largely tolerated. Various militia chiefs, traditional elites, and nouveaux riches who held civilian political positions in postwar Lebanon were persuaded to accept continued Syrian hegemony, primarily through a system of institutionalized corruption fueled by massive deficit spending on reconstruction during the 1990s. By the end of the decade, Lebanon's government debt far exceeded its gross domestic product, and the economy was in deep recession. Public disaffection with the postwar political establishment rose to an all-time high, and demonstrations against the occupation, primarily by secular nationalist university students, grew steadily in size and frequency.

In 2003, as Syrian-American relations rapidly deteriorated amid allegations of Syrian meddling in Iraq, the U.S. government began openly criticizing the Syrian occupation of Lebanon, a policy reversal that inspired the opposition movement in Lebanon to reassert itself. By early 2004, France had also ended its official silence on the occupation, and both Western powers were openly calling for a Syrian with-

drawal, leading most other European governments to follow suit. Defying these calls, Damascus moved to consolidate its control by pressing the Lebanese parliament to approve a constitutional amendment extending (on dubious legal ground) the tenure of President Emile Lahoud, a staunch Syrian ally and rival of Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, beyond his six-year term. In September 2004, on the eve of the parliamentary vote, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1559, calling for a constitutional presidential election, the withdrawal of all foreign forces, and the disarmament of militias. Syria's decision to push ahead with the amendment provoked an unprecedented international outcry and veiled threats by Western governments to take "further measures."

In the face of this international pressure, Hariri and many other politicians who had long been loyal to Syria began defecting to the opposition, in spite of what were alleged to be heavy-handed reprisals by Syria. In October 2004, Marwan Hamadeh, a government minister who had resigned in protest over Lahoud's term extension, was severely wounded by a car bomb. In February 2005, four months after resigning as prime minister, Hariri was killed, along with 22 others, in a massive car-bomb explosion in Beirut.

Widespread suspicions of Syrian involvement in Hariri's assassination led to overwhelming international pressure for an immediate Syrian withdrawal and to extensive anti-Syrian demonstrations in Beirut. Prime Minister Omar Karami submitted his cabinet's resignation in late February 2005, which led to the formation of an interim government that included Hariri's allies and parliamentary opposition figures and was charged with providing for free and fair legislative elections in May and June.

Although Syrian troops withdrew from Lebanon in April, the governing coalition left in place a key pillar of the occupation—a heavily gerrymandered electoral law that embeds most Christian regions in majority Muslim districts. Consequently, while Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) won a strong majority of Christian votes in every district, it captured only a third of the 64 Christian seats in parliament. This enabled allies of the late Hariri—calling themselves the "March 14 Coalition"—to expand their parliamentary bloc to 72 seats and form Lebanon's first postoccupation government, but at the expense of alienating Lebanese Christians.

Although the March 14 Coalition aligned itself squarely with the West and expressed commitment to major political and economic reforms, it lacked the two-thirds parliamentary majority needed to overturn Lahoud's extension and elect a new president (and was unwilling to accept Aoun as a successor in return for FPM votes), which left the ardently pro-Syrian Lahoud in office. This division paralyzed government decision making and impeded reform of the security establishment and judiciary. The refusal of the Shiite Islamist Hezbollah movement to disarm, as called for by Resolution 1559, remained intractable under these conditions.

Several assassinations and assassination attempts against prominent political and media figures, as well as a series of explosions in Christian areas, took place in the months after Syria's withdrawal, none of which were effectively investigated. This climate of fear brought economic growth to a dead halt for the year and led many politicians either to leave the country for months or confine themselves to heavily guarded compounds. Nevertheless, the new government presided over a new climate of freedom throughout Lebanese civil society, from the media to the universities, and a vigorous public debate over the country's future.

In October, the UN International Independent Investigation Commission (UNIIC) charged with investigating Hariri's murder concluded in an interim report that there is "converging evidence pointing at both Lebanese and Syrian involvement." However, one of the key witnesses in the report, a defector from Syrian military intelligence, recanted his testimony several weeks later.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Lebanon cannot change their government democratically. The president is formally selected every six years by the 128-member National Assembly (parliament). The president and the parliament nominate the prime minister, who chooses the cabinet, which is subject to parliamentary approval. The unwritten National Pact of 1943 stipulates that the president be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, and the Speaker of the Parliament a Shiite Muslim. Parliamentary seats are divided among major sects under a constitutional formula that does not reflect their current demographic weight. Shias comprise at least a third of the population, but are allotted only 21 percent of parliamentary seats.

Electoral districts are blatantly gerrymandered to ensure the election of incumbent deputies. In contrast to the last three electoral cycles, the 2005 parliamentary elections were monitored by international observers, who judged them to be relatively free of interference by the authorities. Vote buying was reported to be rampant, however. The FPM challenged the electoral results in districts containing 10 seats, but the Constitutional Council had only begun to adjudicate the matter by year's end. Although the Lebanese parliament's vote in 2004 to extend President Emile Lahoud's term by three years was made under duress, lack of consensus over a prospective successor has precluded a reversal of the decision.

Political corruption in Lebanon is widely considered to be the most egregious in the Arab world. Lebanon was ranked 83 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is limited but far more substantial than elsewhere in the Arab world. Lebanon has a long tradition of press freedom, though nearly all media outlets are owned by prominent political and commercial elites. Five independent television stations and more than 30 independent radio stations operate in Lebanon, as well as dozens of independent print publications, reflecting a diverse range of views. Internet access is not restricted.

A number of vaguely worded laws criminalize critical reporting on Syria, the Lebanese military, the security forces, the judiciary, and the presidency. Three journalists were charged with defaming Lahoud in April and July, though none were arrested and all three cases remained pending at year's end. The General Security Directorate has the authority to censor all foreign magazines and nonperiodical media, though no major cases of censorship were reported in 2005. In August, parliament reversed the government's controversial closure of Murr Television (MTV), a station sympathetic to the opposition, though the station had not resumed broadcasting by year's end. Although journalists faced little or no harassment by the authorities, the assassination of journalist Samir Kassir in June and the attempted assassination of anchorwoman May Chidiac in September created a climate of fear among journalists and led some to practice self-censorship on matters pertaining to Syria.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed in the Lebanese constitution and protected

in practice, though the constitution and current electoral law respectively weaken the political representation of Shias and Christians. Academic freedom is long-standing and firmly entrenched. The country's universities are the Arab world's most open and vibrant.

Rights to freedom of association and assembly are relatively unrestricted. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including human rights groups, are permitted to operate openly, though the authorities have occasionally imposed ad hoc restrictions in the past. In August, the government ended the requirement that NGOs be licensed. Public demonstrations are not permitted without prior approval from the Interior Ministry, but only one unlicensed demonstration was forcibly dispersed by police during the year, and none after the Syrian withdrawal. All workers except those in government may establish unions, and all have the right to strike and to bargain collectively. In contrast to previous years, the General Confederation of Labor did not organize any strikes in 2005.

The judiciary, consisting of civilian courts, a military court, the Judicial Council, and a Constitutional Council, is ostensibly independent, but in practice is subject to heavy political influence. Aside from the Judicial Council, the courts remained dominated by judges carefully vetted by Syria over the past 15 years (in part because divisions within the government precluded replacing them) and continued to issue indictments against journalists critical of the president, though none were brought to trial. Four former senior security officials were arrested in September in connection with Hariri's assassination and remained in detention at year's end, though their lawyers claim that prosecutors have presented no direct evidence of their involvement.

International standards of criminal procedure are generally observed in the regular judiciary, but not in the military court, which consists largely of military officers with no legal training and which tries most cases in a matter of minutes. In late 2005, the military court was preparing to try lawyer Muhamad Muqraby on charges of slandering the military in his 2003 testimony before the European Parliament.

Arbitrary arrest and detention by Lebanese security forces are commonplace, and the use of torture to extract confessions is widespread in security-related cases. During the Syrian occupation, Lebanese security agencies routinely monitored the telephones of cabinet ministers and political dissidents alike, though the practice appeared to have ended after the Syrian withdrawal. Prison conditions are poor; overcrowding and pre-trial detention are major problems.

Lebanon remained plagued by politically inspired violence in 2005. In June, prominent journalist Samir Kassir and former Communist Party leader George Hawi were killed by bombs placed in their cars. A similar device seriously injured journalist May Chidiac in September. In July, a car bomb injured Defense Minister Elias Murr and killed one bystander. Several other bombings took place during the year, the bloodiest being an explosion in Beirut that killed one person and injured 23 others.

Nearly 350,000 Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon are denied citizenship rights and face restrictions on working, building homes, and purchasing property—restrictions that reflect Lebanese sensitivities about the impact of mostly Muslim Palestinian assimilation on the country's precarious sectarian balance. According to Amnesty International, tens of Syrian workers in Lebanon were killed and scores injured in attacks by local residents.

Women enjoy many of the same rights as men, but suffer social and some legal

discrimination. Since family and personal status matters are adjudicated by the religious authorities of each sectarian community, Muslim women are subject to discriminatory laws governing marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody. Women are underrepresented in politics, holding only six parliamentary seats (and, until the appointment of two female ministers in October, no cabinet positions), and do not receive equal social security provisions. Men convicted of so-called honor crimes against women usually receive lenient sentences. Foreign domestic workers are routinely exploited and physically abused by employers.

Lesotho

Population: 1,800,000 **Political Rights:** 2
GNI/capita: \$610 **Civil Liberties:** 3
Life Expectancy: 35 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Christian (80 percent), indigenous beliefs (20 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Sotho (99.7 percent), other [including European and Asian] (0.3 percent)
Capital: Maseru



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F

Overview:

The tiny mountain kingdom of Lesotho faced yet another year of drought and poor harvests in 2005. The country's first-ever nationwide municipal elections in May were marked by low voter turnout and a lack of clarity concerning the functions and powers of the 129 new village councils.

Lesotho's status as a British protectorate saved it from incorporation into South Africa. Gaining independence in 1966, the country was ruled by King Moshoeshoe II and Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan of the Basotho National Party (BNP). Jonathan annulled the first postindependence election in 1970, and the BNP ruled by decree until a 1986 military coup, after which Moshoeshoe II was given executive powers. Another coup in 1990 saw Moshoeshoe II sent into exile and replaced by his son King Letsie III. Democratic elections in 1993, which resulted in an overwhelming victory for the Basotholand Congress Party (BCP), did not lead to stability. After violent military infighting, assassinations, and the suspension of constitutional rule in 1994, King Letsie III abdicated to allow his father's reinstatement in 1995. He resumed the throne following the accidental death of his father in January 1996. Prime Minister Ntsu Mokhehle left the BCP in 1997 and started a new party, the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD).

Elections for the National Assembly in 1998 touched off yet another crisis of government. Although international observers described the voting as free and fair, the appearance of irregularities and the absence of opposition voices in govern-

ment prompted demonstrators to reject results that gave the ruling LCD 79 out of 80 constituency seats in parliament with 60.5 percent of the vote. After opposition supporters burned down Maseru's business district and junior military officers staged a mutiny, troops from South Africa and Botswana—under the mandate of the 14-country Southern African Development Community (SADC)—were sent to Lesotho at the request of Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili. An Interim Political Authority reached an agreement in 1998 that allowed the elected (but highly unpopular) government to retain power, but it stipulated that new elections must be supervised by an independent election commission and include competition for 40 additional, proportionally determined seats in the National Assembly.

Elections under this new system were held in 2002 and saw a turnout of 68 percent of eligible voters. The ruling LCD captured 57.7 percent of votes cast, winning 77 of 80 constituency seats; the Lesotho People's Congress (LPC) won 1 seat; and 2 constituency elections failed. The BNP won 21 of the 40 seats chosen by proportional representation, while the National Independent Party (NIP) and the LPC garnered 5 each. Smaller parties won the remainder. The BNP assumed its seats but has refused to formally accept the election results, filing numerous legal challenges and boycotting several by-elections.

In May 2005, Lesotho held its first-ever nationwide municipal elections. Less than 40 percent of voters cast ballots, a low turnout that opposition parties and civic groups attributed to inadequate voter education and preparation for the polls. While the Independent Electoral Commission did not make the final vote tally available, it revealed a victory for the LCD, followed by independent candidates, the BNP, and the LPC. The precise functions and mandates of the 129 new Village Development Councils were not yet clear, which fueled opposition, and civic leaders voiced concerns that the councils would be powerless and unable to enforce their authority.

Drought has plagued the country since 2001. Lesotho's 2003 winter harvest failed, and rains in early 2004 came too late to save the maize crop, estimated at 68 percent below average. In February 2004, the government declared a state of emergency in the face of the food security crisis and a dramatic rise in HIV/AIDS cases. Citing similar causes, a June 2005 joint World Food Program/Food and Agriculture Organization report found that about 548,000 people would suffer a significant food deficit between June 2005 and March 2006.

Landlocked within South Africa, Lesotho is highly dependent on its powerful neighbor. Its economy is sustained by remittances from its many citizens who work in South African mines. Retrenchments at the mines, however, have contributed to high unemployment in Lesotho. Increased growth in the textile industry, facilitated by preferential access granted to the United States market via the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), has partly offset these losses; however, the end of World Trade Organization textile quotas in January led to the exit of six foreign-owned textile factories from Lesotho. In May 2004, Lesotho successfully lobbied the United States to extend AGOA until 2015. According to the United Nations, some 40 percent of the population remains in absolute poverty. Lesotho's economic problems are compounded by one of the world's highest HIV/AIDS rates, which has lowered average life expectancy to less than 38 years. In November 2005, the government announced a plan to offer free HIV testing to all citizens, the first such program in the world.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Lesotho can change their government democratically. Lesotho is a constitutional monarchy in which King Letsie II serves as a ceremonial head of state and is proscribed from political activities. A mixed-member, proportional electoral system—introduced in the May 2002 parliamentary elections—determines the makeup of the 120-seat National Assembly: 80 seats by first-past-the-post constituencies and 40 seats by proportional representation. Under the constitution, the leader of the majority party in the National Assembly automatically becomes prime minister. Elections to the National Assembly take place every five years. The Senate, the upper house of the bicameral legislature, consists of 11 royal appointees and Lesotho's 22 principal traditional chiefs, who still wield considerable authority in rural areas. Any elected government's exercise of its constitutional authority remains limited by the military, the royal family, and traditional clan structures.

Lesotho's major political parties include the LCD, the LPC, the BNP, and the NIP.

The government has aggressively pursued criminal charges against state officials and multinational corporations engaged in corrupt practices. The Canadian construction conglomerate Acres International was convicted in September 2002 in Lesotho's high court of corrupt practices associated with the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, a multibillion-dollar dam and watershed project; the World Bank later banned the company from new contracts for a three-year period. Lesotho was ranked 70 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The government generally respects freedom of speech and of the press. Several independent newspapers operate freely and routinely criticize the government, while state-owned print and broadcast media tend to reflect the views of the ruling party. There are four private radio stations, and extensive South African radio and television broadcasts reach Lesotho. However, government critics in the media are subject to extremely high libel penalties, and several libel and defamation proceedings occurred in 2005. Journalists are occasionally harassed or attacked, which leads to some self-censorship. The government does not restrict internet access.

Freedom of religion in this predominantly Christian country is generally respected. The government does not restrict academic freedom.

Freedom of assembly and association is generally respected. Several nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate openly, including the Lesotho Council of NGOs (LECONGO), an umbrella body of civic organizations. While labor rights are constitutionally guaranteed, the labor and trade union movement is weak and fragmented; many employers in the textile sector do not allow trade union activity. Many mineworkers are members of the powerful South African National Union of Mineworkers.

Courts are nominally independent, but higher courts are especially subject to outside influence. The large backlog of cases often leads to lengthy delays in trials and lengthy pretrial detention. Mistreatment of civilians by security forces reportedly continues. Prisons are dilapidated, severely overcrowded, and lack essential health services; instances of torture and excessive force were reported. From 2001 to 2003, 90 prisoners died at Lesotho's largest prison, according to a government commission of inquiry. Citizens are protected against government infringements on their rights by an independent ombudsman office.

Tensions between the Basotho and the small Chinese business community have led to instances of minor violence.

The constitution bars gender-based discrimination, but customary practice and law still restrict women's rights in several areas, including property rights and inheritance. Lesotho's constitution perpetuates the minority status of Basotho women married under customary law; such women are considered legal minors while their husbands are alive, may not enter into binding contracts, and have no standing in civil courts. Domestic violence is reportedly widespread, but is becoming increasingly socially unacceptable. Women's rights organizations have highlighted the importance of women's participation in the democratic process as part of a broader effort to educate women about their rights under customary and common law. Out of 120 parliamentary seats, just 13 are held by women. A constitutional amendment reserves a third of the total seats in the new municipal councils for women.

A study released in April 2005 and commissioned by UNICEF and the Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sport and Recreation found abuse of child domestic laborers—including sexual abuse—to be a significant problem. In June, members of parliament began debate on a new bill that seeks to address issues concerning AIDS orphans and vulnerable children, including protecting family property, facilitating adoption, and monitoring child and substance abuse. A 2002 study found Lesotho to be home to more than 70,000 AIDS orphans.

Liberia

Population: 3,300,000 **Political Rights:** 4*
GNI/capita: \$110 **Civil Liberties:** 4
Life Expectancy: 42 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Indigenous beliefs (40 percent),
 Christian (40 percent), Muslim (20 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Indigenous tribes (95 percent), other
 [including Americo-Liberians] (5 percent)
Capital: Monrovia



Ratings Change: Liberia's political rights rating improved from 5 to 4 due to the holding of fair and competitive elections for the presidency and legislature.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,6NF	4,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	5,6PF	6,5PF	6,6NF	6,6NF	5,4PF	4,4PF

Overview:

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf defeated former international soccer star George Weah in November 2005 to become Africa's first elected female president. Weah challenged the results of the election, triggering fears that former fighters who voted for him would resort to violence. International observers judged the concurrent polls for the presidency and National Assembly to be free and fair.

Liberia was settled in 1821 by freed slaves from the United States and became

an independent republic in 1847. Americo-Liberians, descendants of the freed slaves, dominated the country until 1980, when army sergeant Samuel Doe led a bloody coup and murdered President William Tolbert. Doe's regime concentrated power among members of his Krahn ethnic group and suppressed other groups. Forces led by former government minister Charles Taylor and backed by the Gio and Mano ethnic groups—which had been subjected to severe repression—launched a guerrilla war from neighboring Cote d'Ivoire against the Doe regime on Christmas Eve 1989. In 1990, Nigeria, under the aegis of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), led an armed intervention force, preventing Taylor from seizing the capital but failing to protect Doe from being captured and tortured to death by a splinter rebel group.

A peace accord in 1996 led to elections in 1997, which Taylor won. However, his victory was more reflective of a vote for peace than for a particular ideology, as many people believed that the only way to stop the war was to elect Taylor president. Fourteen years of intermittent civil war in Liberia brought fighting to three neighboring countries and claimed 200,000 lives in Liberia alone.

The peace accord, however, was not entirely effective. Long-standing grievances were not resolved, and Taylor made little effort to seek genuine reconciliation. Many of his rivals were forced to flee the country. Some formed the rebel Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and used neighboring Guinea as a staging ground from which to launch their rebellion against Taylor. With rebels poised to overrun the capital and the United States calling for him to step down, Taylor resigned in August 2003 and accepted Nigeria's offer of asylum.

Taylor's departure from Liberia stopped the war almost immediately. ECOWAS helped negotiate an end to the fighting between Taylor's forces, the LURD, and the rebel Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL). West African peacekeepers became part of a 15,000-strong UN-led force that oversaw disarmament and demobilization. Human rights abuses abated considerably following the ceasefire, but some violations have continued, especially in the countryside.

Delegates to the peace talks in 2003 chose businessman Gyude Bryant as Liberia's interim president. He and a transitional National Assembly ruled the country until the 2005 elections.

Twenty-two candidates contested the presidency in the first round of voting in October 2005. Unity Party (UP) candidate George Weah, who had risen from the slums of Monrovia to become a local hero as an international soccer player, won 28.3 percent, followed by Harvard-educated economist and Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) candidate Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf with 19.8 percent. Lawyer Charles Brumskine came in third with 13.9 percent, and Winston Tubman, a former UN special envoy, finished fourth with 9.4 percent. Turnout was nearly 75 percent, including a substantial number of women. In the November runoff, Johnson-Sirleaf captured 59.4 percent of the vote, compared with 40.6 percent for Weah. Weah registered a challenge with the National Electoral Commission over the fairness of the vote, and there were fears that some of the former fighters who supported him would resort to widespread violence. Chanting "No Weah, no peace," militant Weah supporters clashed with UN peacekeepers in Monrovia.

Dozens of parties contested the concurrent legislative polls. Twelve parties, including those of former warlords, were voted into office, as well as a handful of

independents. Weah's CDC won 18 seats—the highest number for one party; Sirleaf's UP captured 11 seats.

A report by the London-based research group Global Witness in June 2005 accused Taylor of controlling or helping to finance several of the political parties contesting the 2005 elections. He has been charged with war crimes by the UN- and U.S.-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone for allegedly helping arm Sierra Leonean rebels in exchange for diamonds. Efforts by international human rights groups to convince Nigeria to hand him over to the court have been unsuccessful. Johnson-Sirleaf, who backed Taylor during his initial invasion of Liberia in 1990, spent time in prison under Doe and lived in exile in Cote d'Ivoire during much of the 1990s.

In September, the Brussels-based International Crisis Group said that Liberia could slide back into war by the end of the decade unless the international community made a long-term commitment to help rebuild the country and serious efforts were made to fight corruption. The group maintained that "anything less than full commitment to reintegration and reconstruction in Liberia will most likely contribute to a new, wider conflict" that could envelop neighboring countries. Indeed, Liberia's stability is not guaranteed. The nation faces daunting challenges under its new government, including changing a culture of impunity, rehabilitating the justice system, and rebuilding the country's infrastructure. The nation lacks electricity, running water, a functioning educational system, and proper medical facilities.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Liberia can change their government democratically. Presidential and legislative elections were held in October 2005. In the first round of voting for the presidency, 22 candidates participated. Hundreds of international observers determined that the vote was free and fair. The country's legislature consists of the 30-member Senate and 64-member House of Representatives; senators serve nine-year terms, and representatives, six.

Johnson-Sirleaf has said that fighting corruption, which has been at the root of many of the country's problems, will be a main goal of her administration. In June, the UN Security Council extended a ban on the export of diamonds and timber by Liberia for another six months on the grounds that the transitional government had failed to improve transparency. A three-year antigraft plan—the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Plan (GEMAP)—was drawn up for the new government by international donors. It aims to install foreign experts in key revenue-generating institutions, such as the port, airport, customs office, and forestry commission, for an initial term of three years. Western governments have warned Liberia that funding for reconstruction will be withheld if corruption is not addressed. Liberia was ranked 137 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Liberia's independent media have survived despite extensive self-censorship during the civil war. Employees suffered from constant surveillance, harassment, threats, detentions, and beatings. The country's independent media are now thriving. Several private newspapers are published, and there are at least five FM radio stations, including Radio Veritas, the shortwave station of the Roman Catholic Church. Star Radio, which is backed by the Swiss-based Hironnelle Foundation, began broadcasting again in 2005 after Taylor shut it down five years earlier; it has

both local and shortwave broadcasts. Nearly two-dozen newspapers publish in Monrovia with varying degrees of regularity. Call-in radio talk shows are popular and frequently feature both government and opposition viewpoints. There are three local television stations.

Religious freedom is respected in practice. Muslims have been targeted in the past because many Mandingos, who were a key ethnic component of the LURD, follow Islam. The government does not restrict academic freedom.

Freedom of assembly is guaranteed and respected, although authorities in 2005 banned demonstrations ahead of the elections to thwart potential violence. The transitional government in January imposed a dusk-to-dawn curfew in the port town of Harper following two days of riots related to a suspected outbreak of ritual killings. Numerous civil society groups, including human rights organizations, operate in the country.

The right to strike, organize, and bargain collectively is permitted by law, but there is little union activity because of the lack of economic activity. Forced labor exists in rural areas, and child labor is widespread. Civil servants in July went on a three-day strike to demand 18 months of salary arrears. Some of the money that was to be used to pay them went instead to buy Jeep vehicles for politicians in the transitional National Assembly, according to the country's budget director.

The judiciary is subject to executive influence, corruption, and intimidation by security forces, which operate with impunity. New York-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) in September said corruption and the absence of functioning courtrooms, prosecutors, and public defenders were fostering impunity in Liberia. The rights group stated that if a return to armed conflict is to be avoided, the new government must ensure that those responsible for past atrocities are brought to justice and that human rights abusers are kept out of the police, army, and civil service. In some rural areas where the judiciary has not been reestablished, clan chieftains administer criminal justice through the traditional practice of trial-by-ordeal.

Authorities in the Netherlands in March arrested and charged a Dutch businessman with war crimes and smuggling weapons. Guus van Kouwenhoven, a close Taylor associate, managed a timber company and five-star hotel in Liberia. International human rights groups had campaigned against his activities, saying he was a key player in the instability in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Human rights workers have been allowed access to prisons, where conditions are harsh and sometimes life-threatening. Arbitrary detention and brutality by the police are problems. The police force is being restructured under the 2003 peace accord. New recruits have been trained by the United Nations, but HRW said there were problems in the vetting and removal of rights abusers from the force. As part of the peace accord, a new national army is being formed. However, it will have only 2,000 soldiers—half as many as originally planned—because of funding shortages. In June 2005, soldiers looted their barracks in Monrovia to protest salary arrears. HRW said in April that West African mercenaries, including Liberians, would continue to fuel regional conflicts unless they were provided an alternative livelihood.

Societal ethnic discrimination is rife. Ethnic groups fought one another during the civil war. Tensions exist between the Krahn, Gio, Mano, and Mandingo ethnic groups. The government in 2005 ordered Gios and Manos to abandon Mandingo homes in the northwest that they occupied during the civil war; they refused, and a court case ensued.

Police, mainly at checkpoints, occasionally extort money and goods from citizens.

The treatment of women varies by ethnic group, religion, and social status. Many women continue to suffer from physical abuse and traditional societal discrimination, despite constitutionally guaranteed equality. During the civil war, women and girls were often abducted as laborers and sex slaves, while others joined rebel groups or militias to protect themselves. The UN Development Program said about two out of three Liberians—mostly women and children—had suffered some form of sexual violence during the war. Women have the right to inherit land and property. The former transitional government strengthened existing rape laws.

Libya

Population: 5,600,000 **Political Rights:** 7
GNI/capita: \$5,944 **Civil Liberties:** 7
Life Expectancy: 76 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim (97 percent), other (3 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Arab-Berber (97 percent), other [including Greek, Italian, Egyptian, Pakistani, Turkish, Indian] (3 percent)

Capital: Tripoli



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF

Overview:

Libyan leader Colonel Mu'ammr al-Qadhafi continued his bid in 2005 to change Libya's long-standing international image as a rogue state. Although he succeeded to a large degree in ending his country's diplomatic isolation, the changes have as yet meant little in terms of political rights or civil liberties for the population.

Formerly ruled by the Ottomans and colonized by Italy, Libya gained independence in 1951 and was ruled by a pro-Western monarch, King Idris, until he was ousted from power in 1969 in a military coup led by Mu'ammr al-Qadhafi, then only 25.

Embittered by Western control of Libyan oil resources, Qadhafi adopted a political platform that was aggressively anti-Western. He has ruled Libya since, and although he holds no official title, he is the undisputed leader of the country, surrounded by a cult of personality. Qadhafi published a three-volume treatise, *The Green Book*, which explains his political ideology—a mix of socialism, pan-Arabism, and Islam.

Over the next two decades of Qadhafi's rule, Libya became a leading state sponsor of terrorism and provided financial assistance to various insurgent and terrorist groups around the world. The United States imposed sanctions against Libya in 1981 and bombed targets in the country in 1986, including Qadhafi's home. Three years after the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103, the UN Security Council imposed an air embargo and banned Libya from importing arms and oil production equipment.

After the country went through several years of political isolation and economic decline, Qadhafi decided to move Libya in a different direction in 1999; he sought to make amends with the international community by accepting responsibility for, and compensating victims of, the acts of terrorism Libya had directed or financed. The United Nations suspended sanctions against Libya the same year. Members of the European Union (EU) slowly began reestablishing diplomatic and trade relations with Libya in subsequent years.

In early 2001, one of the two suspected perpetrators of the Pan Am bombing was found guilty of murder and sentenced to life in prison by the International Court of Justice in The Hague, while the other suspect was acquitted and freed. Over two years later, the Libyan government offered to pay about \$10 million to each of the families of the 270 victims of the attack, prompting the United Nations to permanently lift its sanctions against Libya. Qadhafi also agreed to compensate both the families of victims of the 1989 bombing of a French airliner over Niger and the victims of the 1986 Berlin nightclub bombing.

In 2004, Qadhafi made his first trip to Europe in more than 15 years, and several European leaders traveled to Libya as well. The EU also lifted its arms embargo against Libya, the final hurdle to building fully functioning diplomatic relations.

The past few years have seen a dramatic shift in Libya's relationship with the United States, with relations beginning to improve after Libya renounced weapons of mass destruction in late 2003. The United States established a liaison office in Tripoli in June 2004, and that year the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs, William Burns, was the first U.S. government official to visit Libya in three decades. In 2005, U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman Senator Richard Lugar visited Libya at President George Bush's request and referred to Libya as an important partner in the war on terrorism. No longer seeing Libya as a pariah, U.S. president George Bush announced his government's intention to establish full diplomatic relations with Libya. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice reaffirmed this intention in August, saying that Libya could expect full diplomatic relations if it improved its human rights record and reformed democratically. Americans can now travel to Libya freely, and U.S. oil companies can do business in the oil-rich nation. At the same time, there have been media reports that Libya attempted to orchestrate the assassination of Saudi king Prince Abdullah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud in 2003 (when he was Crown Prince), which Libya denies.

Much of Libya's image reconstruction appears to be directed by Saif al-Islam, Qadhafi's son, who runs a charity foundation in Libya. According to press reports, the group has listed telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, and fax numbers for people to report past and current human rights abuses. While his organization, the Gaddafi International Foundation for Charity Associations, is part of the revamping of Libya's image, it is thus far unclear what real impact the group can have on civil rights and political liberties for Libya's population. In July, the group called for the release of Islamist opposition individuals who had not been involved in violence.

Although Libya boasts a high literacy rate and vast oil wealth, years of sanctions, cronyism, and poor economic policies have resulted in a weak economy. Libya's reintegration into the international community and its economic reforms of the past three years should signal some improvement.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Citizens of Libya cannot change their government democratically. While in theory a state of the masses with direct popular rule, Libya in reality is a dictatorship governed by Colonel Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi and a few of his close associates. Qadhafi's *Green Book*, a political treatise published in three volumes beginning in the late 1970s, lays out his theories on government and politics, combining Islamic and socialist elements. In theory, the so-called people's committees and revolutionary committees are elements of direct popular rule. A unicameral General People's Congress is also a government tool employed to keep the population in check.

Legal opposition political parties do not exist in Libya, and authorities maintain tight control over any political activity through the security apparatus. The main Libyan opposition groups function in London but have established little presence inside the country.

Libya was rated 117 out of 159 countries in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index, due to widespread corruption in government and business.

Journalists in Libya function in an atmosphere of fear and censorship. Media outlets are state controlled, and they reflect the opinions of the state. In early June 2005, Dayfal-Ghazal al-Shuhaibi, a former journalist for the government-owned daily *Azahfal-Akhdar* and contributor to critical Libya-focused websites based in London, was found dead in Benghazi after going missing a couple of weeks earlier. The journalist, who was shot in the head, had been critical of the authorities in articles published shortly before his death, accusing the government of repression and financial corruption. Another Libyan journalist, Abd al-Raziq al-Mansuri, who also wrote critical articles for a London-based website, has been in detention since January on charges of illegal possession of a weapon. However, al-Mansuri was apparently detained before the weapon was found in his home, and he was held incommunicado without access to a lawyer or his family for the first several months after his detention. The journalist was also apparently questioned during his initial detention about his critical writing. Libyan authorities are responding to the internet's proliferation by cracking down on dissent on the web.

The government closely monitors mosque activity, as it fears militant Islamist influences. According to the U.S. State Department's 2004 International Religious Freedom Report, the small minority of non-Muslims in Libya, largely composed of foreigners, are able to practice their faith in public places of worship. Academic freedom remains restricted, with teachers and professors avoiding public debates or discussions of politically sensitive topics.

Authorities limit free assembly, public debates, and demonstrations, and independent civil society groups are weak. There are no independently functioning unions or professional associations besides the National Trade Unions federation, which has ties to the government.

The People's Court, which had for years been used to imprison political opponents, was closed last year, but the remainder of the judiciary is not independent. Arbitrary arrest and imprisonment are still practiced. In May 2004, five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor were sentenced to death after being found guilty of deliberately contaminating some 400 hospitalized children with HTV. The case was on appeal and awaiting judgment as of November 2005, while the defendants re-»

mained in detention, where they have been since 1999. The group claim they were tortured in order to extract a confession, and two of the nurses claim they were raped. This year, the Libyan government called on the Bulgarian government to negotiate with the families of the infected children to pay them financial reparations in order to secure the release of the nurses. In June 2005, a Libyan court found nine police officers not guilty of torturing the Bulgarian nurses and the Palestinian doctor.

In May 2005, a team from the New York-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) conducted a three-week mission to Libya for the first time. It was the second major visit to Libya by an international human rights group in as many years, following Amnesty International's trip in 2004. HRW concluded that Libya was taking steps to improve its human rights record but said that Libya continued to repress and imprison political opponents. The group also highlighted the fact that detainee confessions are sometimes obtained through physical and psychological abuse. During the mission, the HRW group met with high-level government officials and several prisoners, and visited prisons, detention centers, and police stations. The group did speak to prisoners in private but were required to travel with government guides. They also raised the case of Fathi al-Jahmi, a member of the General People's Congress, who is in prison after calling for democratic reform in Libya.

The Berber (Amazigh) population in Libya face discrimination, as they do in most North African states. The status of women in Libya is better than in many other Arab countries, but women still face legal and social hurdles. Libyan girls enjoy more access to education than girls in other neighboring countries, but traditional Islamic practices that favor males in areas such as divorce and inheritance are the norm. While Libya is a signatory to the 2003 Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, which protects women from harmful traditions like female genital mutilation, there are reports that it is still practiced on a small scale in some of the more rural areas of the country.

Liechtenstein

Population: 40,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: NA **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 80 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (76.2 percent),
Protestant (7 percent), other (16.8 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Alemannic (86 percent), other
[including Italian and Turkish] (14 percent)
Capital: Vaduz



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In 2005, legislative elections in Liechtenstein failed to produce a majority for either of the two main political parties, which resulted in their forming a grand coalition. In

July, an agreement with the European Union (EU) entered into effect a polity that taxes the interest on the savings of EU citizens in Liechtenstein, a measure meant to curb Liechtenstein's use as a tax shelter.

Liechtenstein was established in its present form in 1719 after being purchased by Austria's Liechtenstein family. Native residents of the state are primarily descendants of the Germanic Alemanni tribe, and the local language is a German dialect. From 1938 to 1997, the principality was governed by a coalition of the Progressive Citizens' Party (FBP) and the Fatherland Union, now the Patriotic Union (VU). The FBP was the senior coalition partner for most of this period. Otmar Hasler became leader of the FBP and prime minister after the FBP won a majority of seats in parliament in the February 2001 elections.

In 2000, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Financial Action Task Force labeled the principality "noncooperative" on money laundering because of Liechtenstein's traditional banking secrecy laws. After Liechtenstein passed a law ending anonymity for account holders, the country was removed from the list of noncooperative states in June 2001. However, after the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001, concerns reemerged that Islamic terrorists could be laundering money there. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) reported in September 2003 that Liechtenstein had made progress in updating its banking regulations, but it expressed concern that the government and banks might not have enough staff to fully enforce regulations.

In a March 2003 referendum, an amendment legislating major constitutional reform was passed that concentrates significantly more power in the hands of the monarch, currently Prince Hans-Adam II. The prince had threatened to leave Liechtenstein for Austria if the measure failed to pass. The amendment, which makes Liechtenstein's monarchy the most powerful in Europe, gives the prince the power to dismiss the government, veto legislation, and appoint judges. However, it removes the prince's right to rule by emergency decree. The Council of Europe, which monitors democracy among its member countries, expressed concern and considered placing the democratic standards of Liechtenstein's political system under formal monitoring. It decided against doing so, instead merely entering into formal dialogue with Liechtenstein's parliament.

On August 15, 2004, Prince Hans-Adam handed his constitutional powers to his son, Crown Prince Alois, though Hans-Adam retained his title as head of state. Alois, 36, studied at Britain's Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst and has training in law and accounting. He is expected to be somewhat less confrontational with Liechtenstein's other political institutions than his father.

In two-stage elections in March 2005, the two main parties—the VU and the FBP—split most of the vote, winning 10 and 12 of the parliament's 25 seats respectively. However, with the small third party, the Free List, capturing three seats, the two larger parties were forced to join a grand coalition. Otmar Hasler remained prime minister, and his FBP took three of the five cabinet seats.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Citizens of Liechtenstein can change their government democratically. However, the unelected monarchy won greater powers in 2003, and Liechtenstein's ruling family is

now perhaps the most politically powerful in Europe. The unicameral legislature (Landtag) consists of 25 deputies chosen by proportional representation every four years. These freely elected representatives determine the policies of the government, but the monarch, currently Crown Prince Alois, has the power to veto legislation, dismiss the government, and appoint judges.

Political parties are able to freely organize. Two parties—the VU and the FBP—have dominated Liechtenstein's politics over the last half-century; however, the small Free List won three seats in the 2005 election. Switzerland and Austria, the two countries that surround Liechtenstein, have a good measure of influence on the tiny principality.

Liechtenstein's politics and society are largely free of corruption, and the country continues to work to build sufficient capacity to fight money laundering in its banking system. Although Liechtenstein has a reputation as a tax haven, the principality signed an agreement with the European Union (EU) in 2005 promising to impose withholding taxes on savings income earned by foreigners in Liechtenstein. Liechtenstein was not ranked by Transparency International in its 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution guarantees freedom of expression and of the media. One private television station competes with the state broadcaster, and the only radio station is in private hands. The two daily newspapers are aligned roughly with the two major political parties. Broadcasts from Austria and Switzerland are available and popular in the country, as are foreign newspapers and magazines. Internet access is unfettered.

The constitution establishes Roman Catholicism as the state religion but protects freedom of belief. Catholic or Protestant religious education is mandatory, but exceptions are routinely granted. All religious groups are tax-exempt. The government respects academic freedom.

The right to assemble freely is not infringed. The right of association is protected, and the principality has one small trade union.

Judges are appointed by the prince. Due process is respected, and conditions in prisons are acceptable. Following the controversy over the monarch's new powers, the Council of Europe's secretary-general sought to reassure those concerned about democracy that "Liechtenstein's status as a law-based state is unarguable." The IMF has rated the financial services regulators, important to a country so reliant on banking, as capable but too few to fully police all banks and account holders. Crime is rare. Switzerland is responsible for Liechtenstein's defense.

A third of Liechtenstein's population is foreign-born. While the majority come from neighboring Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, a growing proportion are from more distant countries and do not speak German. Some native Liechtenstein citizens have expressed concern over the number of immigrants in the country. The government has responded by seeking to teach newcomers the language and culture of Liechtenstein in formal integration programs.

Liechtenstein is a member of the European Economic Area, a free-trade area of countries that are not members of the EU. Liechtenstein's currency is the Swiss franc. Living standards are high, with a large number of small businesses and a strong financial sector.

A restrictive abortion law allows the procedure only when the life or health (including mental health) of the woman is threatened, but this is not often enforced. A

2003 court decision upheld the principle of equal pay for equal work for women, but Liechtenstein's society remains socially conservative—women did not receive full voting rights until 1986—and practice lags behind principle. Women are underrepresented in upper levels of business and government, but have equal rights in family law.

Lithuania

Population: 3,400,000 **Political Rights:** 1*

GNI/capita: \$4,500 **Civil Liberties:** 1*

Life Expectancy: 72 **Status:** Free

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Russian Orthodox, other

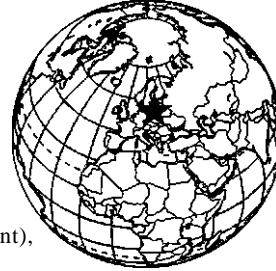
Ethnic Groups: Lithuanian (83 percent), Russian (6 percent), Polish (7 percent), other (4 percent)

Capital: Vilnius

Ratings Change: Latvia's political rights and civil liberties ratings improved from 2 to 1 due to an apparent decline in foreign and other influences over the country's policy making and the implementation of judicial reforms and an increase in judicial independence.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	2,2F	1,1F



Overview:

Political scandals, including those involving the foreign minister, economy minister, and finance minister, marred the Lithuanian landscape in 2005. The Lithuanian judiciary continued to reform in line with requirements set by the European Union (EU); regulations on enforcement of judicial decisions were revised and the human rights ombudsman was given extended powers. On the international front, relations with Russia improved slightly during the year.

Lithuania merged with Poland in the sixteenth century and was subsequently absorbed by Russia in the eighteenth century. After gaining its independence at the end of World War I, Lithuania was annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940 under a secret protocol of the 1939 Hitler-Stalin pact. The country regained its independence with the collapse of the USSR in 1991.

Lithuania became a member of the European Union (EU) on May 1, 2004, having joined NATO a month earlier. However, these accomplishments were marred by a series of high-profile political corruption scandals, including the impeachment of President Rolandas Paksas. In March, the Constitutional Court ruled that Paksas was guilty of unlawfully granting citizenship, leaking classified information, and meddling in private business affairs. Arturas Paulauskas, the parliamentary chairman, took over as acting president following Paksas' impeachment.

Elections to select a new president were held simultaneously with the vote for

the European Parliament. In a tight runoff contest, Valdas Adamkus defeated Kazimiera Prunskiene, the leader of the Union of Farmers and New Democracy (VNDPS), and was sworn in as president in July 2004.

Parliamentary elections held over two rounds in October 2004 resulted in a right-wing coalition of the Homeland Union/Lithuanian Conservatives (TS) and the Liberal and Center Union capturing 43 seats (25 for TS and 18 for the Liberal and Center Union). The Labor Party won 39 seats; the ruling leftist coalition of Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (LSDP) and New Union (Social Liberals), 31 seats (20 seats and 11 seats, respectively); the VNDPS, 10 seats; and the Electoral Action of Lithuanian Poles, 2 seats. After negotiations between left- and right-wing parties broke down, a ruling center-left coalition emerged in November, with the Labor Party joining the LSDP and New Union (Social Liberals).

Political instability continued to plague Lithuania in 2005. In January, foreign minister Antanas Valionis admitted to once having served in the Soviet KGB reserves. Consequently, parliament set up an ad hoc commission to investigate his past and look into similar allegations about two other senior officials. The commission, which was also charged with determining whether any laws were violated when the officials were appointed to their present posts, ascertained that the former reservists are exempt from a Lithuanian law requiring former KGB agents to disclose their past to the public.

In April, Finance Minister Algirdas Butkevicius resigned following a disagreement with the government over proposed tax reforms introduced to shift the balance of taxation from labor to capital. Butkevicius's divergence stemmed from his different views on how the government should compensate for the anticipated revenue loss due to the reduction in personal income taxes, which will occur gradually between 2006 and 2008. The leaders of four main coalition parties agreed to introduce a new tax on corporate turnovers; Butkevicius quit in protest, arguing that such a tax is against EU law. He was replaced by Zigmantas Balcytis, who became finance minister on May 14.

In June, Labor Party leader Viktor Uspaskich was forced to resign as economy minister over allegations that his business dealings had breached ethics rules. He was accused of using his position to gain advantages in Moscow for several companies in which he holds a stake, as well as of making false claims about his level of education. Uspaskich was replaced by Kestutis Dauksys of the Labor Party.

Relations with Russia improved marginally in 2005. Lithuanian and Russian delegations discussed plans for the demarcation of their border, which has not yet been marked according to EU standards. The two countries also signed a deal on a joint development of two sea ports—Russian Kaliningrad and Lithuanian Klaipeda. However, Lithuanian president Adamkus declined an invitation to attend celebrations in Moscow marking the end of World War II. Tensions between the two countries were temporarily raised in September, after a Russian fighter jet violated Lithuanian airspace and crashed into a field. Despite some initial suspicions that the jet's mission was to collect intelligence, an investigation revealed that the plane was in route to Kaliningrad, and that the crash occurred due to technical difficulties and human error. Subsequently, Lithuanian authorities agreed to drop the charges against the pilot and facilitate his return to Russia.

Political Rights**and Civil Liberties:**

Lithuanians can change their government democratically. The 1992 constitution established a unicameral, 141-member parliament (Seimas), in which 71 seats are selected in single-mandate constituencies and 70 seats are chosen by proportional representation, all for four-year terms. The president is directly elected for a five-year term. All permanent residents are allowed to run for office and vote in local government elections, while only citizens can participate in national elections. In 2004, the national legislative election, presidential election, and election to the European Parliament were largely free and fair. However, in March 2005, three deputies were found guilty by local courts of electoral fraud, including bribing voters, using pre-marked voting slips, and selling votes. During the previous year, serious questions had been raised about foreign and organized crime influence over the country's president and policy making, which appeared to have been resolved in the wake of the impeachment and replacement of President Rolandas Paksas.

Corruption scandals continue to haunt Lithuanian politics, the most recent being the misuse of office by the economy minister, Viktor Uspaskich. According to several public opinion surveys, about 80 percent of Lithuanians believe that a majority of public servants are corrupt. Lithuania was ranked 44 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The government generally respects freedom of speech and of the press. There is a wide variety of privately owned newspapers, and several independent, as well as state-run, television and radio stations broadcast throughout the country. Libel remains a criminal offense, and judicial authorities may order a journalist to reveal confidential sources if such disclosure is necessary to protect other constitutional values. Any form of speech that promotes national or religious hatred is prohibited. In 2005, the independent daily *Republika* was fined for publishing an anti-Semitic cartoon.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed by law and largely enjoyed in practice in this predominantly Roman Catholic country. Academic freedom is respected.

Freedom of assembly and association is generally respected. There are no serious obstacles to the registration of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The nongovernmental sector has grown steadily within the past decade and has lately shown a more active stance on issues of public concern. For example, NGOs have been progressively more involved in public hearings and various government-sponsored task forces. Workers have the right to form and join trade unions, to strike, and to engage in collective bargaining. According to the U.S. State Department's 2005 human rights report, approximately 10 percent of the workforce is unionized.

Lithuania's judiciary has continued to demonstrate growing maturity and independence. The Constitutional Court serves as a powerful and independent body, and its rulings have become central arguments in political debates. However, the lack of qualified judges and lawyers often undermines the right to a fair trial. In 2005, the Ministry of Justice revised the rules on enforcement of court rulings in attempts to resolve the inefficiencies of the bailiff system.

There have been credible reports of police abuse of suspects and detainees. Prison overcrowding and prolonged pretrial detention remain serious problems. Recent legislation, including a Criminal Procedures Code and the Program for the Renovation and Humanization of Prisons, has led to an improvement in prison conditions. In February 2005, Lithuania lost a case in the European Court for Human

Rights brought by a prison inmate suing over censorship of private letters. The court concluded that prison personnel had illegally censored more than 360 letters to and from convicts, breaching privacy rights.

The rights of the country's ethnic minorities are protected in practice. In 1992, Lithuania extended citizenship to all those born within its borders, and more than 90 percent of nonethnic Lithuanians, mostly Russians and Poles, became citizens. In October 2003, the Seimas ratified Protocol 13 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, abolishing capital punishment in all cases. In January 2005, the Law on Equal Opportunity entered into force, prohibiting discrimination in employment, education, provision of goods and services, and education, based on various grounds, including gender, race, ethnic background and religion. The law also enabled the ombudsman's office to investigate allegations of discrimination. The state prosecutes offenders under laws that prohibit intolerant acts against any national, racial, ethnic, or other group. For example, Mindaugas Murza, leader of the extremist National Democratic Party, is currently under pretrial investigation for making anti-Semitic remarks.

Although men and women in Lithuania have equal access to education, women remain underrepresented in upper-level management positions and earn lower average wages than men for the same work. While trafficking in persons, particularly women and girls for the purpose of prostitution, remains a problem, the government has taken steps to address it. In June, parliament adopted an amendment to the Criminal Code stipulating stricter penalties for human trafficking, and it also launched a program to help reintegrate victims of trafficking into society. However, societal prejudices are an impediment: according to a recent survey, about 50 percent of employers would prefer not to hire trafficking victims.

Luxembourg

Population: 500,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$56,230 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 78 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (87 percent),
 Protestant (13 percent), other [including Jewish and Muslim]
 (10 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Celtic, Portuguese, Italian, Slavs, other
Capital: Luxembourg



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

For the first half of 2005, Luxembourg held the rotating presidency of the European Union (EU), which faced the failure of a proposed new constitution in two referendums, and disagreements on the EU's budget (which Luxembourg tried without success to overcome).

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg was established in 1815, after the Napoleonic wars. Following a brief merger with Belgium, it reemerged with its current borders in 1839. The country has always faced the possibility of domination by its neighbors—it was occupied by Germany during both world wars—and it abandoned neutrality in favor of joining NATO in 1949. After joining in an economic union with Belgium and the Netherlands in 1948, Luxembourg became one of the six founding members of the European Community (now the EU) in 1957. Because it has a small, open economy, Luxembourg's relationship with the EU is highly important to its politics; it adopted the euro as its currency in 1999. A former prime minister, Jacques Santer, served as president of the EU's commission from 1995 to 1999.

Over the course of 2003, the opinion-poll ratings of the center-right Democratic Party (PD) fell, while the opposition Socialist Worker's Party of Luxembourg (POSL) rose. It was therefore not surprising when the PD did poorly in the general election of June 2004, losing 5 of its 15 seats in parliament. The POSL gained a seat, holding 14 seats in the new parliament, and joined Jean-Claude Juncker's Christian Social Party (CS) in government as a junior partner.

Luxembourg is a strong proponent of greater European integration through the EU. In 2004, the 25 member states of the EU finalized a new draft constitution for the EU and simultaneously chose a new president for the European Commission, which serves as the EU's executive and civil service. The president is chosen unanimously by the heads of government of the EU's 25 members; Juncker's name was often mentioned as a candidate for this job. However, he kept his promise to remain prime minister if his party won the 2004 election.

For the first six months of 2005, Luxembourg held the EU's rotating presidency, which is responsible for chairing meetings and guiding new policy initiatives. Those six months were extremely difficult for pro-European countries such as Luxembourg, however. The draft constitution failed decisively in referendums in both France and the Netherlands, two founding EU members. Juncker, as the EU's president, attempted to continue to push the referendum process, saying that other countries should continue to ratify while some way was found to seek French and Dutch approval in later referendums. However, though Luxembourg itself voted yes on the constitution in a July 10 referendum, many other countries delayed the ratification process indefinitely, leaving the constitution effectively dead. In addition, the EU's regular summit meeting in Luxembourg in June was marred by a bitter argument about the EU's multiyear budgetary framework, with Luxembourg trying and failing to bridge the gap between France and Britain.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Luxembourg can change their government democratically. The head of state is the unelected Grand Duke Henri, whose powers are largely ceremonial. The unicameral legislature consists of 60 deputies elected by proportional representation. The legislature chooses the prime minister. Voting is compulsory for all who are registered. Residents from EU countries may vote after six years' residency but are not obliged to do so. Non-EU residents may not vote, and foreigners constitute a third of Luxembourg's population.

The political party system is open to the rise of new parties, as seen by the growth of the Action Committee for Democracy and Pension Justice (ADR), origi-

nally a one-issue party focusing on higher pensions, which first had deputies elected in 1989 and is now a significant party. There are three traditionally strong parties in Luxembourg's politics: the CS, traditionally aligned with the Catholic Church; the PD, which favors free-market economic policies and a smaller welfare state; and the POSL, a formerly radical but now center-left party representing the working class. The current government, elected in 2004, is a coalition of the PCS, which has taken part in almost all governments in Luxembourg's modern history, and the POSL.

The government is largely free from corruption. Luxembourg was ranked 13 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is guaranteed by the constitution, and Luxembourg has a vibrant media environment. A single media conglomerate, RTL, dominates the broadcast radio and television market, and its broadcasts are popular in Luxembourg's neighboring countries. Newspapers represent a broad range of opinion. Internet access is unrestricted.

Roman Catholicism is the dominant religion, but there is no state religion, and the state pays the salaries of ministers from a variety of religions. Students may choose to study either the Roman Catholic religion or ethics; most choose the former. Protestant education is available on demand. Academic freedom is respected.

Freedom of assembly and association is protected. Civic groups and nongovernmental organizations may operate freely, and Luxembourgers may organize in trade unions. The right to strike is constitutionally guaranteed.

The judiciary is independent, but judges are appointed by the grand duke. Prisoners are humanely treated in police stations and prisons.

Luxembourg's Muslim minority, mainly of Bosnian origin, faces no official hostility but does experience some mild social racism.

In part because of Luxembourg's conservative social mores, women comprise just under 40 percent of the labor force, and there remains a significant gap between men's and women's wages. Though abortion law does not technically provide for abortion on demand, a woman who has had an abortion while under "distress" is considered not to have violated the law, and "distress" is interpreted liberally. Women are underrepresented in the highest levels of government and business.

Macedonia

Population: 2,000,000 **Political Rights:** 3
GNI/capita: \$1,980 **Civil Liberties:** 3
Life Expectancy: 73.73 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Macedonian Orthodox (32.4 percent),
Muslim (16.9 percent), other (50.7 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Macedonian (64 percent),
Albanian (25 percent), Turkish (4 percent), Roma (3 percent),
Serb (2 percent), other (2 percent)
Capital: Skopje



Trend Arrow: Macedonia received a downward trend arrow due to the holding of local municipal elections criticized by international observers as not fulfilling international standards and for the country's imprisonment of a senior Orthodox cleric.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
4,3PF	4,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	4,3PF	4,4PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF

Overview:

Macedonia's 2005 municipal elections were criticized by international observers as not having fulfilled international standards. In November, the European Commission recommended to the European Union (EU) Council of Ministers that the country be granted candidate member status. Meanwhile, Macedonia received harsh criticism from international and domestic observers for its imprisonment of an Orthodox cleric.

Macedonia, a republic in the former Yugoslav Communist federation, was recognized as an independent state in 1992. Since gaining independence, Macedonia has suffered from disputes with most of its neighbors over a number of issues: the very name of "Macedonia" with Greece; the status of the Macedonian language, with Bulgaria; and Macedonia's northern border, with Serbia and Montenegro. Most of these external disputes have been successfully resolved, and the most serious threat to Macedonia's existence is now internal—the poor relations between the Macedonian Slav majority and the ethnic Albanian minority.

Parliamentary elections in 1998 resulted in the country's first peaceful transfer of power; the left-of-center governmental coalition that had ruled Macedonia since independence was defeated by a grouping of right-of-center parties led by the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization-Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE).

In 2000, ethnic Albanians in Macedonia launched an insurrection, often using NATO-occupied Kosovo as their base. Among the guerrillas' political demands were changes to the Macedonian constitution endorsing greater use of the Albanian language in official institutions, an increase in the number of ethnic Albanians in the civil services, and a decentralization of governmental powers to local municipalities. After the country veered dangerously close to the brink of all-out civil war, an agreement reached in the town of Ohrid in August 2001 produced a temporary lull in the

conflict, which was estimated to have cost the fragile Macedonian economy more than \$800 million. Three of the five signatories to the agreement repudiated it in 2003, and two have called for an outright partition of the country.

Macedonia's latest parliamentary elections were held in September 2002. The elections returned to power the left-of-center Social Democratic Alliance of Macedonia (SDSM), led by Branko Crvenkovski, which succeeded in ousting former prime minister Ljubco Georgievski's right-of-center coalition. As in previous governments, ethnic Albanian parties were included in the governing coalition. After the 2002 elections, the Democratic Union for Integration (BDI), led by Ali Ahmeti, the leader of the ethnic Albanians' armed uprising, became Crvenkovski's main coalition partner.

In February 2004, the man most associated with the Ohrid accords, President Boris Trajkovski, died in a plane crash while on an official state visit to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Presidential elections called after Trajkovski's death in April 2004 resulted in a victory for incumbent prime minister Crvenkovski after two rounds of voting. Crvenkovski was replaced as prime minister by Hari Kostov, an economic expert with no party affiliation.

The last remaining major reform legislation required by the Ohrid accords—a decentralization plan devolving powers from the central government in Skopje to local municipalities, along with a redrawing of the capital's boundaries to increase the number of ethnic Albanians living in the city—proved to be the most controversial. Macedonian Slavs reacted to the proposed changes by calling for a referendum on the issue. In November 2004, just days before the tension-filled referendum on the government's decentralization plans, the United States announced that it would recognize Macedonia under its constitutional name to bolster confidence in the country and reassure Macedonian voters that the international community would continue to support its existence. Although the referendum did not pass (only 26 percent of a required 50 percent of the electorate turned out), ethnic tensions in the country increased significantly during the political debates preceding the referendum. Given these heightened political tensions, local elections scheduled for October 2004 had to be postponed until 2005, and Kostov resigned as prime minister, throwing Macedonia into another period of political uncertainty.

Macedonia held local municipal elections over several rounds during March and April 2005. The voting was marred by irregularities in several districts, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) claimed that the votes did not live up to OSCE and Council of Europe standards in some 35-40 percent of the electoral districts. Electoral conditions were considered "bad" or "extremely bad" in up to 10 percent of polling places. Among the complaints lodged were ballot-box stuffing, theft of ballot papers, intimidation of polling staff, multiple voting, and group voting by family patriarchs. The OSCE especially criticized the government for not rectifying these problems in the second round of voting when they had been so apparent during the first round. Further problems involved a boycott of the second round of elections by some Albanian opposition parties. Low turnout was also noticeable in these elections; by the third round of voting in Skopje on April 10, only 28 percent of the electorate participated.

The international community has tried in a number of ways to support Macedonia's fragile existence, most notably when the EU signed a Stabilization and

Association Agreement (considered the first step towards full EU membership) with Skopje in April 2002. In November 2005, the European Commission recommended to the EU Council of Ministers that Macedonia be granted candidate status in the EU, though no definite date was given for Macedonia's accession. At the same time, there is concern that the Macedonian government's weak administrative capacity will inhibit the country's ability to implement reforms needed for EU accession, or even to properly manage any funding it may receive as a result of getting a green light from the EU. A report released by the Macedonian Helsinki Committee in January claimed that in the aftermath of the Ohrid accords, decision making in Macedonia is shifting away from legislative bodies and increasingly being made through private bargaining by the leaders of governing political parties, leading to a reduction in the democratic legitimacy of many governmental decisions.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Macedonia can choose their government democratically. The last elections to the 120-seat, unicameral Sобрание (Assembly), held in September 2002, were deemed by international organizations to be "largely in accordance with ... international standards for democratic elections." Voter turnout was approximately 70 percent of the electorate. Legislators are elected to four-year terms. The president of the republic is elected to a five-year term through direct elections. In the two rounds of presidential elections held in April 2004, international organizations again deemed the elections "generally consistent" with international standards. However, both domestic opposition parties and some international organizations, such as the OSCE, reported significant irregularities with the elections.

There are 64 registered political parties in Macedonia, although only a handful have been serious players in Macedonian politics. These parties include President Crvenkovski's SDSM; VMRO-DPMNE, led by Nikola Gruevski; and the primarily ethnic-Albanian Democratic Union for Integration (BDI), led by Ali Ahmeti.

As throughout the region, corruption remains a serious problem, hampering economic growth and political transparency. Macedonia was ranked 103 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Although the constitution provides for freedom of the press, the media are often aligned with particular political interests that render them less than independent. Political appointees, rather than professional journalists, are frequently named to senior positions in state-owned media, from which the majority of the population gets its information. The media in Macedonia are frequently criticized for their lack of professionalism and unwillingness to uphold recognized journalistic standards. Libel, defamation, and slander remain criminal offenses punishable by fines and imprisonment.

Macedonia has been fairly open about providing ethnic minorities in the country with media in their own languages. Macedonian Radio Television (MRTV) provides broadcasts in Albanian, Turkish, Vlach, Romany, and Serbian. However, media outlets are strongly divided along ethnic lines, significantly impacting how important political issues are covered. Albanian print media have had difficulties turning a profit in recent years; in February, two Albanian periodicals announced that they were suspending operation for the foreseeable future. Since 2001, four Al-

banian periodicals have ceased publication, leaving only one Albanian language newspaper still publishing in 2005. There were no reports of restrictions of access to the internet during the year.

The constitution guarantees freedom of religious belief and practice. A number of religious sites were destroyed or damaged during the fighting in 2001, although vandalism against religious sites has decreased significantly since then. In 2002, a serious rift developed within the Orthodox Church in Macedonia, when part of the church split off from the so-called Macedonian Orthodox Church, which remains unrecognized by any other church in the Orthodox world, and agreed to come under the jurisdiction of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The leader of the pro-Serbian branch, Bishop Jovan Vraniskovski, began serving an 18-month sentence in July 2005 for allegedly inciting "ethnic or religious intolerance." The "evidence" used to charge Vraniskovski with "inciting ethnic hatred" was the fact that he had performed a baptism and held church services in his apartment. Amnesty International has declared him a prisoner of conscience. Bishop Vraniskovski and his followers were also physically attacked on a number of occasions during the year, and churches they have built or used have been destroyed. Considerable tensions exist in Macedonia's Islamic community, primarily involving allegations that some Muslim clerics are becoming increasingly fundamentalist in their view and receive financial support from extremists in the Middle East. There were no reports of restrictions on academic freedom.

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly and association, and there were no reports that the government infringed on these rights in 2005. There are more than 4,000 domestic and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operating in Macedonia, and there were no reports of the government restricting their work or activities during the year. The constitution recognizes the right of workers to organize and to bargain collectively, although workers generally have little leverage given the poor state of the Macedonian economy. Nevertheless, strikes and work stoppages are frequent occurrences. More than 50 percent of the legal workforce is unionized. A new labor law passed in 2005 legalized temporary and part-time workers.

The judicial system is widely seen as being composed of corrupt and incompetent officials. During the course of the year, a governmental judicial oversight agency recommended to parliament that 10 judges be fired because of corruption or incompetence; six were eventually dismissed. There is also a large backlog of cases in the judicial system, currently estimated at 1.2 million cases, and some critics have suggested that petty offenses be dealt with by administrative officials rather than by criminal courts. Among the reforms that the EU is demanding for further progress in Macedonia's accession bid include strengthening the independence of judges and reducing the backlog of cases pending before Macedonian courts. A number of international watchdog groups have charged Macedonian police forces with ill-treatment and torture of prisoners, although observers noted a decrease in charges of police abuse and corruption in 2005. Prison conditions in Macedonia generally conform to international standards.

Macedonia's most important political and social problem is satisfying the demands of the ethnic Albanian minority for a more privileged status within the country. In fulfillment of the Ohrid accords, references in the constitution to Macedonia as the "land of the Macedonian people" have been eliminated, and the Albanian language has been made an "official" language in municipalities where ethnic Alba-

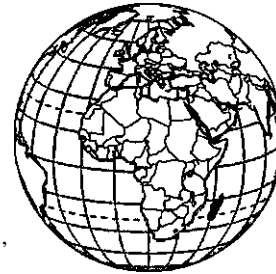
nians constitute at least 20 percent of the population. The Ohrid accords grant more self-government to local municipalities, increase the number of ethnic Albanians in the police force, devolve some central governmental powers from Skopje to local municipalities, and grant amnesty to ethnic Albanian insurgents. Over the past four years, the government has adopted and implemented 15 constitutional amendments and 70 new or revised laws to fulfill the various requirements of the Ohrid agreement. In March 2005, former defense minister Ljube Boskovski was indicted for war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in connection with the killing of 10 Albanian civilians in the village of Ljuboten in August 2001.

Many Albanian rebel groups remain active in the country; one such group, led by Agim Krasniqi and based in the village of Kondovo outside of Skopje, has repeatedly threatened to shell the capital over the past two years. The Krasniqi group has been accused by Macedonian officials of having ties to Islamist groups in other parts of the world. The majority of Macedonia's Albanian community are Muslim.

Women in Macedonia enjoy the same legal rights as men, although social attitudes limit women's participation in nontraditional social roles, in the economy, and in government. Twenty-four of the 120 members of parliament are women, and 3 of the 19 members of the Council of Ministers (cabinet) are women. Violence against women is considered a particular problem within the ethnic Albanian and Roma (Gypsy) communities. Domestic violence and trafficking of women from former Soviet republics remain serious problems. In Albanian Muslim areas, many women are effectively disenfranchised because proxy voting by male relatives is common, and women in these areas are also frequently denied access to education.

Madagascar

Population: 17,300,000 **Political Rights:** 3
GNI/capita: \$290 **Civil Liberties:** 3
Life Expectancy: 55 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Indigenous beliefs (52 percent),
 Christian (41 percent), Muslim (7 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Malayo-Indonesian tribes, Arab, African,
 Indian, French
Capital: Antananarivo



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
2,4PF	2,4PF	2,4PF	2,4PF	2,4PF	2,4PF	3,4PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF

Overview:

Madagascar enjoyed a relatively peaceful year in 2005, especially compared with the tumultuous years of political uncertainty and protest following contested presidential elections in 2001. Positive economic reform policies and governance resulted in increased support from international financial institutions and bilateral donor countries.

Madagascar, the world's fourth-largest island, lies 220 miles off Africa's southeastern coast. A political cleavage has traditionally existed between the coastal *cotier* and the highland *merina* peoples, of continental African and Southeast Asian origins, respectively. After 70 years of French colonial rule and episodes of severe repression, Madagascar gained independence in 1960. A leftist military junta seized power from President Philibert Tsiranana in 1972. A member of the junta, Admiral Didier Ratsiraka, emerged as leader in 1975 and maintained power until his increasingly authoritarian regime bowed to social unrest and nonviolent mass demonstrations in 1991.

Under a new constitution, opposition leader Albert Zafy won the 1992 presidential elections with more than 65 percent of the vote. Zafy failed to win reelection after being impeached by the Supreme Court in 1996. Ratsiraka won a narrow victory in a December 1996 presidential runoff election that was deemed generally legitimate by international and domestic observers.

Legislative elections in May 1998 were viewed as more problematic than preceding polls since 1992. The Malagasy Council of Christian Churches and several political groups noted that the elections were marred by fraud and other abuses. The ruling Association for the Rebirth of Madagascar (AREMA) party won 63 of 150 parliamentary seats and emerged as the leading force in a coalition government.

A decentralization plan was narrowly approved in a 1998 referendum boycotted by the country's increasingly fractious opposition. November 1999 municipal polls resulted in overall success for independent candidates. Elections were held in December 2000 for provincial councils, as the next step in the government's decentralization policy. In 2001, the first-ever Senate elections, part of a policy to extend democratic governance, finally took place after a long delay.

In the December 2001 presidential election, opposition candidate Marc Ravalomanana claimed that he had been denied an outright victory by polling irregularities. He declared himself president in February 2002 after refusing to take part in a postponed second-round runoff vote. After considerable violence between supporters of the two rival candidates, the High Constitutional Court announced in April that Ravalomanana had indeed won the election in the first round, and he was sworn into office in May. Incumbent President Ratsiraka refused to acknowledge the result. Sporadic clashes continued until July 2002, when Ratsiraka left the country and the last of his forces surrendered. The extended crisis had a seriously negative effect on the Malagasy economy.

Parliamentary elections took place in December 2002. Ravalomanana's I Love Madagascar party (TIM) won a large majority, gaining 131 out of 160 seats. Observers from the European Union said the conduct of the poll was "generally positive" despite a few reported "lapses," while the International Francophone Organization said it was "credible and transparent." Local elections held in 2003 further strengthened Ravalomanana's position.

In 2004, army reservists demanded better compensation for their efforts during the country's political crisis in 2002. A series of grenade attacks that resulted in numerous injuries and arrests were believed to be linked to growing frustration over continued economic problems. A heated debate continued on a proposed amnesty law for people who were detained following the 2002 political unrest, and an attempt by opposition parties to have the law adopted failed in late 2003.

A leading opposition figure, former deputy prime minister Pierrot Rajaonarivelo, who had been convicted of corruption in absentia and sentenced to five years in jail in 2003, had his sentence reduced to three years in 2005. His supporters claim that the legal proceedings were politically motivated.

In recent years, Madagascar has experienced overall economic growth, although the World Bank estimates that per capita income is still only around \$300. Poverty and the competition for agricultural land have put pressure on the island's dwindling forests, home to much of Madagascar's unique wildlife and key to its nascent tourist industry. Multilateral and bilateral donors, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), are active in Madagascar. In late 2005, the IMF announced that it would extend 100 percent debt relief to Madagascar, under its Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative, once the IMF determines that the country is making progress in poverty reduction and public expenditure management.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Madagascar can change their government democratically. However, the most recent presidential election, in 2001, demonstrates that this right is not yet fully enshrined in the country's political culture. The head of state is the president, who is directly elected to a five-year term by universal adult suffrage. The National Assembly, the lower chamber of the bicameral legislature, has 150 members directly elected to five-year terms. The upper chamber, the Senate, has 90 members serving six-year terms. Two-thirds of the senators are elected by an electoral college, and the remainder are nominated by the president. The president has the power to appoint or dismiss the prime minister, who may come from a party that has a minority of seats in the Assembly.

Approximately 150 parties are registered amid a welter of shifting political alliances, although only a few have a national presence. Parties tend to suffer from internal divisions and a lack of clear ideology and resources. The largest parties represented in the National Assembly are TIM, with 103 seats, and the opposition National Front (SPDUN), with 22 seats.

Madagascar was ranked 97 out of 159 countries in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

While there are constitutional provisions for press freedom, the government has limited these in practice. Some government officials reportedly have sought to limit critical media coverage of alleged government malfeasance. National state radio and TV came under the control of President Marc Ravalomanana in March 2002 during his contested electoral victory over incumbent Didier Ratsiraka. Ravalomanana also owns the private Malagasy Broadcasting System, which operates the MBS TV and Radio MBS networks. Many private radio stations in the capital are owned by pro-Ravalomanana politicians. A boom in privately owned FM radio stations and more critical political reporting by the print media followed the 1990 Law on Press Freedom.

Madagascar has six daily newspapers and a number of weeklies and monthlies. Because of the low literacy rate, the print media are mostly aimed at the French-speaking urban elite. Some formerly pro-Ratsiraka radio stations, which operated like "hate radio" during the most recent presidential election crisis, subsequently switched to more mainstream forms of broadcasting. Internet use, although not widespread, is becoming more popular.

In 2005, Reporters Without Borders expressed concern about several actions infringing on freedom of the press. These included prison sentences handed down in separate libel cases against the publisher of the independent daily *La Gazette de la Grande Ile*, the closure of three privately owned radio stations in the port city of Toamasina after the broadcasting of statements by opposition figures, and the forced departure from the country of the Radio France Internationale correspondent.

While the Malagasy people have traditionally enjoyed religious freedom, in late 2005, Madagascar's government shut down a popular Protestant charismatic church that was winning followers from the more traditional Protestant movement, of which Ravalomanana is an adherent. The law strongly recommends, but does not require, religious organizations to register with the Ministry of Interior. More than half of the population belong to traditional Malagasy religions, which coexist with Christians and Muslims. There are no limitations on academic freedom.

The right to freedom of assembly is generally respected, and hundreds of non-governmental organizations, including legal and human rights groups, are active. As has been evidenced by various interest group advocacy efforts over a wide variety of issues, political and civic organizations do exercise their right to affect the public policy process; these activities are usually permitted by the government.

Workers' rights to join unions and to strike are exercised without interference. In 2005, the judges' union went on strike. The Ravalomanana administration has endured a series of demonstrations and strikes, mainly over the high rate of inflation. Some of the country's labor organizations are affiliated with political groups. More than 80 percent of workers are employed in agriculture, fishing, and forestry at subsistence wages.

A lack of training, resources, and personnel hampers judicial effectiveness, and case backlogs are prodigious. The judiciary is inefficient and remains susceptible to corruption and executive influence. Most of the 20,000 people held in the country's prisons are pretrial detainees, who suffer extremely harsh and sometimes life-threatening conditions. In many rural areas, customary law courts that follow neither due process nor standardized judicial procedure often issue summary and severe punishments.

Race and ethnicity are important factors in Madagascar's politics. Through military conquest and political dominance, the status of the *merina* (highland people) tends to be higher than that of the *codier* (coastal people). The former tend to be more of Asian descent than the latter, whose origins are more African-based. This disparity has formed the basis of tension between the two groups. As a result, ethnicity, caste, and regional solidarity often are factors that lead to discrimination.

Approximately 45 percent of the workforce is female. Malagasy women hold significantly more government and managerial positions than women in continental African countries. At the same time, they still face societal discrimination and enjoy fewer opportunities than men for higher education and employment.

Malawi

Population: 12,300,000 **Political Rights:** 4
GNI/capita: \$160 **Civil Liberties:** 4
Life Expectancy: 44 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Christian (79.9 percent),
 Muslim (12.8 percent), other (7.3 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Chewa, Nyanja, Lomwe, Ngonde, Tumbuku,
 Yao, Sena, Tonga, Ngoni, Asian, European
Capital: Lilongwe



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	3,3PF	3,3PF	4,3PF	4,4PF	3,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF

Overview:

In Malawi, 2005 was marked by political instability and brinkmanship, including the resignation of the recently elected President Bingu wa Mutharika from the ruling United Democratic Front (UDF) party, his formation of a new alliance, and a chaotic attempt to impeach him. The government's anticorruption drive continued to provoke controversy during the year. Meanwhile, Malawi faced significant food shortages and the prospect of large-scale hunger after the worst harvest in a decade.

After the country gained independence from Britain in 1963, President (later President-for-Life) Hastings Kamuzu Banda ruled Malawi for nearly three decades. Banda exercised dictatorial and often eccentric rule through the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) and its paramilitary youth wing, the Malawi Young Pioneers. Facing an economic crisis and strong domestic and international pressure, Banda accepted a popular referendum approving multiparty rule in 1993. Bakili Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF) won the presidency in a 1994 election beset by irregularities but seen as largely free and fair. The army's violent dispersal of the Young Pioneers in December 1993 had helped to clear the way for the polls.

In the June 1999 presidential poll, Muluzi won 51 percent of the vote, compared with 44 percent for leading opposition candidate Gwanda Chakuamba of the MCP and the Alliance for Democracy (MCP-AFORD). Three presidential contenders—including Chakuamba—sued the electoral commission, contending that Muluzi failed to win votes from more than half of the eligible electorate; the Supreme Court upheld the results of the election. In polls for the National Assembly in 1999, the ruling UDF managed to retain a narrow majority. Violence erupted in the opposition strongholds of northern Malawi after the 1999 election results indicated wins for the UDF; supporters of MCP-AFORD attacked mosques, shops, and homes of suspected UDF supporters.

An unpopular campaign to amend the constitution to allow Muluzi to run for a third term was effectively ended when Muluzi handpicked Bingu wa Mutharika, a relative political outsider, as his successor for the May 2004 elections. Mutharika went on to win the presidency on an anticorruption platform with 35 percent of the

vote; his closest rival, John Tembo of the MCP, won 27 percent. Contrary to expectations, the MCP won the most seats—59—in the 193-seat parliament, while the UDF finished second with 49. A seven-party coalition (Mgwirizano) and independent candidates won the remaining seats. Observers said the polls were tainted by registration problems, inappropriate use of state resources, and biased campaign coverage by the state-run broadcast media. A parliamentary inquiry into voting irregularities led to the resignation in August of the chairman of the Malawi Electoral Commission, Justice James Kalaile. In July, the UDF regained its majority status in parliament when 23 independent legislators defected to the ruling party; the UDF had previously merged with one of its fiercest rivals, the National Democratic Alliance, which agreed to drop legal challenges to the vote.

Political maneuvering was even more pronounced in 2005, exacerbated by a bitter and very public dispute between Mutharika and Muluzi, who remains the UDF chairman. The main cause of the dispute has been the investigation and arrest of several powerful UDF figures—including Muluzi—in Mutharika's aggressive anticorruption campaign. In January, four senior UDF politicians allied with Muluzi were arrested on charges of treason after Mutharika accused them of plotting to kill him—they had brought guns and knives to an ostensibly conciliatory meeting. The four were released a few days later. The following month, Mutharika resigned from the UDF and formed a new political party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), widening the rift with Muluzi and depriving the UDF of a parliamentary majority.

In June, the UDF lodged a motion in the National Assembly to impeach Mutharika for violating the constitution and misusing government funds; the motion provoked protests in Malawi's major cities and towns. During a debate on the issue, the parliament's Speaker suffered a severe stroke and died four days later in South Africa; his death led to an adjournment. The political impasse threatened the passage of the national budget crucial to the distribution of foreign aid, sparking widespread concern among civil society groups and international donors. Mediation by the Public Affairs Committee (PAC), an alliance of religious groups, and former Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda facilitated the passage of the budget in July.

A cabinet reshuffle in August and the September arrest of Mutharika's former agricultural minister and opposition leader, Gwanda Chakuamba, re-ignited the impeachment effort in parliament. In October, 80 members of the National Assembly, led by the UDF, officially accused Mutharika of violating the constitution and misusing state resources in creating the DPP and ordered him to appear before the body. The motion was delayed by both the High Court and the Constitutional Court later in October. Almost simultaneously, Muluzi was summoned before Malawi's Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) to answer questions about the fate of millions of dollars of aid money received during his presidency. The High Court later ruled that Muluzi did not have to appear before the ACB. Nevertheless, police and ACB agents raided Muluzi's homes in Blantyre and Kapoloma, prompting accusations of political harassment from the former president.

Approximately 80 percent of Malawi's labor force is employed in the agricultural sector, and the economy is dependent on tobacco, which accounts for more than half of export revenues. Wealth is concentrated in the hands of a small elite. In 2005, persistent drought caused Malawi its worst harvest in a decade, including a 24

percent drop in maize production. According to the United Nations, at least 4.2 million Malawians were to be in urgent need of food aid during the region's dry season, from November 2005 through February 2006. In October, the impending food shortages moved President Mutharika to declare a national disaster. By the end of November, a UN appeal for \$88 million in food aid had received only \$28 million, a condition that prompted dire warnings from the U.K.-based aid group Oxfam.

Foreign donors account for 80 percent of Malawi's development budget. While past accusations of corruption and mismanagement had dried up donor support and led the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to freeze fund distributions in 2000, Malawi has recently been lauded for its efforts to curtail corruption and public spending. In 2005, the IMF praised the country's performance under the fund's staff-monitored program and agreed to help with impending food shortages. In May and June, Scottish First Minister Jack McConnell launched an ambitious campaign to raise aid money for Malawi among his constituents, and in July, the British government released 20 million pounds (about US\$35 million) in budget support for Malawi, citing its economic progress.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Malawi can change their government democratically. However, there were significant irregularities in the 2004 presidential elections. The president is directly elected to a five-year term and exercises considerable executive authority. The unicameral National Assembly is composed of 193 seats; members are elected by popular vote to five-year terms. Suffrage is universal except for serving members of the military.

The country's electoral commission has on several occasions shown bias in favor of the ruling UDF party, and there have been consistent problems with voter registration. Opposition parties are allowed to function freely, though political violence does occur, and the opposition has repeatedly charged that the government uses bribery and intimidation to exploit opposition party divisions and encourage defections. The major opposition party is the MCP. There are few ideological differences among the major political parties. For the most part, Malawian politics are based on personality rather than policy, leading to frequently shifting alliances and parliamentary floor crossings.

Vowing "zero tolerance" of corruption, President Bingu wa Mutharika has moved to fulfill campaign promises to crack down on state corruption, and the ACB made several arrests and indictments of former high-level government officials during the year. In December 2004, the mayor of Blantyre, the commercial capital of the country, was arrested in connection with the disappearance of about \$3,800 in city funds. In May 2005, Education Minister Yusuf Mwawa was detained for allegedly using public funds for his wedding reception. And in September, agriculture minister and leading opposition presidential candidate Gwanda Chakuamba was sacked as a result of allegations that he purchased a luxury car with World Bank funds.

At least 11 senior members of the Muluzi administration are being investigated by the Office of Public Prosecutions concerning \$93 million that reportedly vanished during Muluzi's decade-long tenure. In November, Vice-President Cassim Chilumpha was accused of corruption during his time as a minister in the Muluzi government, and Muluzi himself was the subject of a corruption investigation the previous month. Given Mutharika's defection from the UDF and the ongoing effort

to impeach him, many UDF loyalists have accused the president of conducting a political witch-hunt. Nonetheless, Mutharika himself has come under fire for wasting state resources on luxury items, including a \$545,000 limousine and—allegedly—\$800,000 worth of official portraiture. Mutharika's decision to move into the opulent presidential palace originally built by former president Hastings Kamuzu Banda also provoked outrage. In September, the president announced his intention to distribute loans to the country's poor from the Malawi Rural Development Fund, despite parliament's earlier suspension of the program stemming from allegations of political favoritism. Malawi was ranked 97 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech and of the press is legally guaranteed and generally respected in practice. Despite occasional restrictions and harassment, a broad spectrum of opinion is presented in Malawi's two dozen newspapers. Nevertheless, the state controls the majority of broadcast media. Television Malawi is the country's only television station, while the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation's two radio stations dominate the market. The government and the ruling UDF restrict opposition access to state-controlled media and became increasingly intolerant of coverage of opposition activities during Muluzi's bid for a third term and the run-up to the May 2004 elections. However, the situation improved afterward, with the new information minister calling for dissenting views in state-controlled media. Journalists are still subject to harassment and detentions. In January 2005, *Daily Times* reporter Collins Mitka was beaten by AFORD supporters while covering an AFORD press conference. In March, two journalists—*The Nation's* Mabvuto Banda and Raphael Tenthani of the BBC—were arrested after writing articles reporting that Mutharika was not sleeping at the presidential State House because it was haunted by ghosts; both were released on bail shortly afterward. There are no restrictions on access to the internet, although it is not widely used.

Religious freedom is usually respected, and the government does not restrict academic freedom.

The government generally respects freedom of association and assembly. Many human rights organizations—including the constitutionally mandated Malawi Human Rights Commission (MHRC)—and other nongovernmental organizations operate openly and without interference. The right to organize and to strike is legally protected, with notice and mediation requirements for workers in essential services. Unions are active but face harassment and occasional violence during strikes. As only a small percentage of the workforce is employed in the formal sector, union membership is low; however, collective bargaining is practiced.

The judiciary has demonstrated independence in its decisions, but due process is not always respected by an overburdened court system that lacks resources, personnel, and training. Resource mismanagement is also a problem. Police brutality and use of excessive force is reportedly common, as are arbitrary arrests and detentions. However, the government has enlisted civil society and foreign donors in helping to combat human rights abuses and corruption among police. Appalling prison conditions lead to many deaths every year, mostly from HIV/AIDS. Overcrowding and poor health conditions are serious problems; in March, a government decision to reopen the notorious Mikuyu prison (where political prisoners were held during the brutal Banda regime) in order to relieve prison crowding sparked sub-

stantial controversy. Lengthy pretrial detention is a serious problem and contributes to overcrowding.

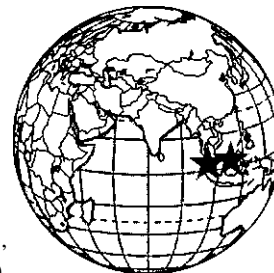
There are no laws limiting the participation of ethnic minorities in the political process. The constitution prohibits discrimination based on language or culture, and such discrimination is not a major problem.

In August, authorities ordered residents of informal settlements in Lilongwe to vacate their homes or risk forceful removal. The government contended that the homes were built illegally on land earmarked for industrial development and ruled that affected residents would not be compensated. Some residents claimed to have received permission to occupy the land from local chiefs and/or officials of the city or the Malawi Housing Corporation.

Despite constitutional guarantees of equal protection, customary practices maintain de facto discrimination against women in education, employment, and business. Traditional rural structures deny women inheritance and property rights, and violence against women is common, though recent years have seen greater media attention on, and criminal penalties for, abuse and rape. In 2003, the MHRC issued a report documenting the revival of the customary practice *oikupimbira*, where young girls are sold by their parents or grandparents to pay off debts or secure loans of cattle or money. Women employees recently won the right to maternity leave. In March 2005, Mary Nangwale was appointed the first woman to serve as inspector-general of the police; however, her appointment was rejected by parliament on political grounds. Trafficking in women and children is a problem, and government penalties for traffickers have been criticized as far too lenient.

Malaysia

Population: 26,100,000 **Political Rights:** 4
GNI/capita: \$3,880 **Civil Liberties:** 4
Life Expectancy: 73 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Muslim, Buddhist, Daoist, Hindu, Christian, Sikh, other
Ethnic Groups: Malay and other indigenous (61 percent), Chinese (24 percent), Indian (7 percent), other (8 percent)
Capital: Kuala Lumpur



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
4,5PF	4,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF

Overview:

After initial hopes that Malaysia's prime minister, Abdullah bin Ahmad Badawi, would move forward with democratic reforms, progress slowed in 2005. Abdullah did pursue vote-buying charges against Isa Samad of the ruling United Malays National Organization (UMNO) and other anti-corruption measures, as well as reform of the Royal Police force. However, by the end of 2005, the recommendations of the police report had not been carried out.

Malaysia gained independence from Britain in 1957 and, in 1963, merged with the British colonies of Sarawak, Sabah, and Singapore (Singapore left in 1965). The ruling Barisan Nasional (National Front, or BN) coalition (known as the Alliance before 1969) has won at least a two-thirds majority in all 11 general elections since 1957. The BN consists of 14 mainly ethnic-based parties, dominated by the conservative, Malay-based United Malays National Organization (UMNO).

Modern Malaysia has been shaped by Dr. Mahathir Mohamed, who became Malaysia's fourth prime minister in 1981. During his tenure, he transformed Malaysia from a sleepy backwater, dependent on tin, rubber, and palm oil exports, to a hub for multinational corporations and local firms exporting high-tech goods. However, he also stunted democratic institutions, weakened the rule of law by curtailing the press and political opponents, and fostered allegations of cronyism with his state-led industrial development. In addition, he was a polarizing figure at home and abroad, criticizing Malaysia's conservative Muslim leaders for failing to promote a more modern brand of Islam while rankling outsiders with his anti-Western and anti-Semitic views.

In October 2003, Mahathir stepped down as the nation's leader after more than two decades in office, paving the way for the political ascent of his deputy, Abdullah bin Ahmad Badawi, who sought early on to establish his own leadership style. Many countries and international organizations with hopes of reform regarded the appointment of Abdullah as prime minister with enthusiasm.

In the March 2004 legislative election, the BN, led by Abdullah, won 198 of the 219 available seats in the parliament (Parliaman) in generally transparent elections. However, the three main opposition parties—the Democratic Action Party (DAP), the Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS), and the People's Justice Party (PKR)—challenged the results on the grounds that the BN had engaged in vote rigging and other irregularities. Most specific challenges were rejected in court or withdrawn, although at least some allegations of vote buying were substantiated. Despite a strong popular mandate, reform efforts slowed in 2004, as Abdullah faced resistance within UMNO. Abdullah's softer approach, however, has opened up the regime and is helping to strengthen political institutions.

By late 2005, there were signs that Abdullah might be on the verge of recapturing reformist momentum, particularly in areas related to reducing corruption and reforming the police. Talks of a cabinet revamp toward these ends received some initial attention in mid-2005, but eventually yielded very little substantive improvement. The preliminary report of the Royal Commission to Enhance the Operation and Management of the Royal Malaysia Police was released in the spring to substantial approval. Anticorruption proposals, however, have not been thoroughly implemented.

On the economic front, Malaysia faces the challenge of finding new economic niches now that low-cost manufacturers in China are increasingly attracting the foreign investment that helped fuel Malaysia's electronics-led economic growth in the 1980s and 1990s. Malaysia retains good relations with China and has even taken measures to constrain public debate that might be perceived as offensive to China. Abdullah has followed Mahathir's recent policies of emphasizing the role of small firms in economic growth and reducing the country's need for external demand and foreign direct investment. He has also continued to push for reform in government-

linked companies by pressing for new standards of performance and placing new people on management boards.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Malaysia cannot choose their government democratically. Malaysia has a parliamentary government within a federal system. The party that wins a plurality of seats in legislative elections names its leader prime minister. Executive power is vested in a prime minister and cabinet. Mahathir's 22-year tenure was marked by a steady concentration of power in the prime minister's hands. The parliament's role as a deliberative body has deteriorated over the years, as legislation proposed by opposition parties tends not to be given serious consideration. Opposition parties face serious obstacles, such as unequal access to the media and restrictions on campaigning and on freedom of assembly that leave them unable to compete on equal terms with the BN.

The Malaysian parliament is divided into two houses. The non-elected members of the upper house are composed of the hereditary rulers of nine of Malaysia's states. The paramount ruler is the titular head of government, and is elected from the ranks of this upper house for a five-year term. The current paramount ruler, elected in 2001, is Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin ibni Almarhum Tuanku Syed Putra Jamalullail. New elections for paramount ruler will take place in December 2006. The lower house is elected every five years. In general, powers of parliamentary oversight have increased under Prime Minister Abdullah bin Ahmad Badawi.

Malaysia's ruling BN is a coalition of some 15 parties, most with an ethnic or regional foundation, and featuring the prominent UMNO, the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC). Prominent opposition parties include the DAP, the PAS, and the PKR.

Malaysia was ranked 39 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index; this relatively high ranking is due to the fact that Malaysian corruption is relatively isolated to elite circles. Corruption is marked in the police force; political corruption, particularly bribery and cronyism, is common in the ruling BN coalition. From the start of Abdullah's tenure as prime minister, there were signs, although sometimes fitful, that Abdullah would make serious efforts to reform corrupt practices. In 2004, the government established a National Institute for Ethics and unveiled a National Integrity Plan to combat corruption. In 2005, Federal Territories Minister Mohamed Isa Abdul Samad resigned after he was found guilty of buying votes in UMNO's party elections in 2004. This move recalled measures in which several UMNO members were suspended for vote buying in those same elections. Nevertheless, until Samad's resignation, little had been done to follow up on these measures.

The constitution provides for freedom of expression, but the government restricts this right, particularly in cases where security concerns are said to exist. In practice, such restrictions frequently serve partisan, as opposed to national, interests. Publications and printers must obtain annual operating permits from the government, causing most print media outlets to practice self-censorship and downplay investigative journalism. For example, a string of prodemocracy rallies in May and June 2005, presided over by former deputy prime minister Anwar Ibrahim, received virtually no coverage in any Malaysian media, despite attracting substantial crowds

in several cities. Internet editions of newspapers are not required to obtain permits, but some incidents of government harassment of online newspapers still occur.

Privately owned television stations have close ties to the BN, a situation illustrating a larger pattern of media manipulation that often takes place via the production of biased news rather than through outright censorship. Nevertheless, the government directly censors books and films for profanity, nudity, and violence, as well as for certain political and religious material; television stations censor programming according to government guidelines. In June, the Indonesian newspaper *The Epoch Times* was banned because authorities feared its anti-Chinese perspectives would rankle Beijing.

Abdullah has attempted to promote a more tolerant Islam under the rubric of "Islam Hadhari," or civilizational Islam. Still, despite constitutional guarantees of religious freedom and the fact that non-Muslims can largely worship freely in Malaysia, actual practices often fall short of these ideals. Muslim worship is restricted by Sharia (Islamic law); practicing a version of Islam other than Sunni Islam is prohibited. Muslim children are required to receive religious education that conforms to a government-approved curriculum, and Muslim civil servants must take Islamic classes taught by government-approved teachers. In January 2005, religious police officers raided the Zouk nightclub in Kuala Lumpur, arresting Muslims who were inside but letting non-Muslims go free. Civil courts have not ruled on the constitutional basis of the anti-apostate policies of the Sharia courts. Proselytizing by other religious groups to Muslims is prohibited, and non-Muslims are not able to build houses of worship as easily as Muslims. In July, security forces dismantled a camp and tore down statues erected by the Sky Kingdom religious cult.

The government restricts academic freedom to the extent that teachers or students espousing overtly antigovernment views may be subject to disciplinary action. In 2005, two academics that raised critical concerns of poor governance faced retribution: Edmund Gomez's secondment to the Geneva-based United Nations Research Institute for Social Development was not initially renewed, and P. Ramasamy's contract was not extended at the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

Freedom of assembly and association is limited on the grounds of maintaining security—particularly reducing ethnic conflict—and public order. A police permit is required for all public assemblies except for picket lines, and the granting of permits is sometimes politically influenced. The Societies Act of 1996 defines a society as any club, company, partnership, or association of seven or more people (excluding schools, businesses, and trade unions). Societies must be approved and registered by the government, and the government can and periodically has refused to register organizations or revoked the registration of existing societies, generally for political reasons. Nonetheless, numerous nongovernmental organizations operate in Malaysia, but some international human rights organizations are not allowed to form Malaysian branches.

Most Malaysian workers can join trade unions, but Malaysian law contravenes International Labor Organization (ILO) guidelines by restricting trade unions to representing workers in a single, or similar, trade, industry, or occupation, thus preventing the formation of broad-based unions. Unions may organize in workplaces and associate with national federations, of which there are currently two. Collective bargaining is widespread in sectors with organized labor. Labor laws restrict strikes by

requiring that unions in "essential" services—the government's list of such services includes several not deemed "essential" by the ILO—give advance notice of planned strikes and by imposing measures so stringent that strikes are in practice impossible.

Judicial independence has been severely compromised over the past two decades in line with the increasing influence of the executive over the judiciary. Many instances of arbitrary or politically motivated verdicts, selective prosecution, and preferential treatment of lawyers and litigants have occurred. The most prominent of these was the conviction of Anwar Ibrahim in 1999 and 2000 for corruption and sodomy. Anwar was arrested in 1998, beaten while in custody, held under the Internal Security Act (ISA), and sentenced in two trials to consecutive prison terms of six and nine years. The move was widely regarded as having been politically motivated, as Anwar, then the deputy prime minister, had been having political differences with then-prime minister Mahathir Mohamed; both trials, as well as Anwar's appeals, exhibited serious violations of due process.

In a landmark step in September 2004, however, Malaysia's high court accepted an appeal of Anwar's sodomy conviction and released him from prison. The corruption charge was upheld, but since he had completed the sentence in 2003 (it was reduced to four years for good behavior), he was released. Human Rights Watch called the occasion "an historic moment for the rule of law in Malaysia" and expressed the hope that the acquittal might signal "a renewed commitment to judicial independence." Since that release, Anwar has become a central figure in the movement to promote democracy in Malaysia, although in the last half of 2005, his advocacy has taken place largely from overseas positions in U.S. universities and public forums. Anwar won a libel case in August-September against the former police chief who beat him the previous year.

Malaysia's secular legal system is based on English common law. However, Muslims are subject to Sharia, which varies from state to state. Efforts in December 2004 to standardize practices in family law raised serious concerns regarding the rights of Muslim women, particularly their rights to divorce. Law enforcement is the responsibility of the Royal Malaysia Police, which is under the jurisdiction of the Home Ministry. Individuals may be arrested without a warrant for some offenses, and they may be held for 24 hours without being charged. There is no constitutional provision specifically banning torture, and the police have been known to torture prisoners and abuse detainees. The creation of a Police Commission to review the force in 2004 has led to improvements in detention centers. Nevertheless, in November 2004, hundreds of prison inmates went on a hunger strike to protest poor prison conditions.

The ISA, in force since 1960, gives the police sweeping powers to hold any person acting "in a manner prejudicial to the security of Malaysia" for up to 60 days (extendable to two years). It has been used in recent years to jail mainstream politicians, alleged Islamic militants, trade unionists, suspected Communist activists, ordinary criminal suspects, and members of "deviant" Muslim sects, among others. Human Rights Watch has decried the denial of due process and systematic abuse of detainees held under the ISA at the Kamunting Detention Center. In March 2005, following the release of six ISA detainees, the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam) urged the government to release all remaining prisoners held under

that act. The government has also initiated measures to reform the state's internal security apparatus. Human rights groups around the world praised the frank and critical report issued by the Royal Commission to Enhance the Operation and Management of the Royal Malaysia Police in April. Despite initial enthusiasm for the document's rhetoric, many remain skeptical about its likely impact on policy.

Although the constitution provides for equal treatment of all citizens, Malaysia maintains an official affirmative action policy intended to boost the economic status of ethnic Malays and other indigenous people (*bumiputeras*). Bumiputeras receive preferential treatment in many areas, including property ownership, higher education, civil service jobs, and business affairs. Calls to strengthen such measures in the July UMNO general assembly (and subsequently) have raised concerns among non-Malays.

Foreign domestic workers are not covered by the Workmen's Compensation Act and so are subject to economic exploitation and abuse by their employers. Malaysians officially employ about 240,000 domestic workers, 90 percent of whom are from Indonesia. There are an estimated two million illegal workers in Malaysia. In part because these people are often blamed for crime in Malaysia, the government initiated a series of programs to expel migrant workers in 2004, although it offered an amnesty for Indonesian workers.

Despite government initiatives and continued gains, women are still underrepresented in politics, the professions, and the civil service. Violence against women remains a serious problem. Muslim women, whose grievances on family matters are heard in Sharia courts, receive unequal treatment because Islamic law favors men in matters such as inheritance and divorce, and does not give equal weight to the testimony of women.

Maldives

Population: 300,000 **Political Rights:** 6
GNI/capita: \$2,510 **Civil Liberties:** 5
Life Expectancy: 72 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim
Ethnic Groups: South Indian, Sinhalese, Arab
Capital: Male



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
6,6NF	6,6NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview:

While the Maldives made some progress toward constitutional and judicial reform in 2005, it also continued to be plagued by political unrest as the government, headed by President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, faced sustained pressure from the proreform Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) and its supporters. Although Gayoom has promised to undertake extensive political reforms, his government continued to restrict

freedom of speech and assembly and to commit various human rights violations. Elections held in January produced a parliament in which candidates affiliated with the MDP won a record number of seats, and in June, the right to form political parties was officially legalized. However, MDP officers and supporters continued to face harassment throughout the year, including mass arrests and the conviction of several officeholders on terrorism charges.

Consisting of a 500-mile-long string of nearly 1,200 islands in the Indian Ocean, the Maldives achieved independence in 1965, after 78 years as a British protectorate. A 1968 referendum set up a republican government, ending 815 years of rule by the Ad-Din sultanate. The Maldives's first president, Amir Ibrahim Nasir, introduced a number of changes to the political system, abolishing the post of prime minister in 1975.

President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom has held power since 1978, when he won his first five-year term under the country's tightly controlled presidential referendum process. The most serious threat to Gayoom's survival came in 1988, when Indian commandos crushed a coup attempt by a disgruntled businessman reportedly backed by Sri Lankan mercenaries. In the aftermath, the autocratic Gayoom strengthened the National Security Service (NSS) and named several relatives to top governmental posts.

Unrest erupted in September 2003 at Maafushi prison following an altercation in which prison guards beat an inmate to death. Security forces opened fire on other prisoners, killing three more and wounding over a dozen. Meanwhile, protestors attacked government buildings in the capital, setting several on fire. In response, Gayoom ordered an inquiry into the circumstances of the initial killing, which led to charges being brought against a number of NSS staff, as well as a reorganization of the jail system and the establishment of a prison oversight committee.

Gayoom's reelection to a sixth presidential term was approved in an October 2003 referendum by just over 90 percent of participating voters. In May 2004, elections were held for a People's Special Majlis (PSM)—composed of the 50 parliamentary members, 50 members elected or appointed specifically to the PSM, and the cabinet—that was tasked with amending the current constitution. The following month, Gayoom presented wide-ranging proposals for constitutional and judicial reform to the parliament, including instituting a directly elected presidency subject to term limits, abolishing appointed members of parliament, allowing political parties, establishing a Supreme Court and human rights commission, and separating the judiciary from the executive.

However, in August 2004, several thousand people demonstrated in support of demands by the opposition Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) that the process of democratic reform be expedited. In the violent unrest that followed, four police officers were stabbed and hundreds of protestors, including several reformist former members of parliament and government officials, were arrested, detained, and mistreated while in custody. Gayoom declared a state of emergency, during which a number of civil liberties were suspended, and imposed a curfew on the capital city of Male. Some of these rights were restored in October, and the majority of the detainees were released by year's end. Criminal charges, including treason, were filed against at least 17 people who took part in the August demonstrations but these were also "suspended" at the end of 2004.

On December 26, the Indian Ocean tsunami killed at least 82 Maldivians, as well as devastating many low-lying island atolls. As a result, legislative elections originally scheduled for December 31, 2004, were postponed until January 2005. In total, 149 candidates stood for the 42 available seats. In an indication of the opposition MDP's growing popularity, candidates affiliated with the MDP won 18 seats, while government-backed candidates won 22 and independents won 2. In addition, three top-level government officials—the ministers of fisheries, labor, and tourism—were defeated.

In June 2005, the Maldivian parliament unanimously voted to back plans to give the nation its first multiparty democracy, passing a law allowing political parties to register and stand in elections. However, around the anniversary of the August 2004 disturbances, hundreds of people, including journalists and MDP politicians and supporters, were again arrested, and more than 150 activists remain incarcerated. Mohammed Nasheed, the chairman of the MDP, was detained in jail and charged with terrorism and sedition. In October, Jennifer Latheef, councilor and human rights coordinator of the MDP, was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment on terrorism charges under the Prevention of Terrorism Act for her alleged involvement in the September 2003 civil unrest. Four others were also given lengthy sentences.

The year was characterized by several positive steps toward greater openness interspersed with crackdowns on opposition politics as well as freedom of expression. In such a tense political atmosphere, many Maldivians remain skeptical that the government is committed to enacting meaningful and far-reaching reform.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of the Maldives cannot change their government democratically. Under the 1968 constitution, the People's Majlis (parliament) chooses a single presidential nominee from among a list of candidates. The nominee is then approved or rejected by a national referendum held every five years. A 1998 constitutional amendment allowed citizens to declare their candidacies but not campaign for the presidential nomination. Forty-two members of the Majlis are directly elected for five-year terms; of these, two are elected from Male and two from each atoll. The constitution grants the president broad executive powers and allows him to appoint the atoll chiefs, responsible for local government matters; 8 of the Majlis's 50 members; and the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Majlis. Nevertheless, in recent years, the Majlis has rejected some governmental legislation and has held livelier policy debates.

The January 2005 elections to the Majlis were relatively free of violence, with the exception of one clash between police and angry voters outside a polling booth in Male after the close of voting (no serious injuries were reported). However, a number of MDP activists were arrested prior to and on election day. Reformist candidates alleged that the government intimidated voters by threatening to withhold reconstruction aid to islands that did not vote for progovernment candidates. In addition, there were some reports of corruption and irregularities, including bribery, intimidation, and the stuffing of ballot boxes, mostly from the more remote islands. The report of the Commonwealth Expert Team that observed the elections noted that the state-controlled media did not provide equal coverage to reformist candidates.

Political parties have traditionally been officially discouraged; candidates for the Majlis run as individuals, and the proreform MDP, formed in 2001, had until 2005

operated in exile from Sri Lanka after it was denied permission to register. In June 2005, the Majlis voted to legalize political parties as part of the reform process. However, MDP leader Mohamed Nasheed, who returned to the Maldives in June, was arrested in August under allegations of "terrorism and antigovernment actions" after he made an antigovernment speech, and he remained under house arrest throughout 2005. In addition, MDP activists and supporters have regularly been subjected to arrest prior to planned protest rallies.

Governmental accountability is limited by the fact that the executive exercises almost complete control over both the legislative and judicial branches. In such an atmosphere, nepotism and corruption are reportedly rampant, with many prominent official positions being filled by President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom's relatives and friends, according to a report by the New Delhi-based South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre. The Maldives was not ranked by Transparency International in its 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The penal code bans speech or actions that could "arouse people against the government," while a 1968 law prohibits speech considered libelous, inimical to Islam, or a threat to national security. The law also allows authorities to shut newspapers and sanction journalists for articles containing unfounded criticism of the government. Moreover, regulations make editors responsible for the content of material they publish. Of the four employees of the internet magazine *Sandhaanu* who were arrested in 2002 and sentenced to lengthy prison terms, one escaped from prison and remains in exile, two were released into house arrest, and one was pardoned and released in May 2005. A number of journalists were arrested and imprisoned during and after the August protests.

In this environment, many journalists practice self-censorship and do not scrutinize official policies. All broadcast media are government owned and operated, while relatives or close associates of the president control the main daily newspapers; these media outlets provide progovernment views. An online opposition publication, *Minivan News*, was allowed to begin publishing a print version in the Maldives in July, but after the August protests, the printing house refused to continue publishing it under pressure from the authorities, and its employees have faced repeated harassment. Groups of Maldivian exiles run independent news outlets in the United Kingdom and Sri Lanka and attempt to transmit news into the Maldives via short-wave radio stations and websites. However, the websites of the MDP and other antigovernment groups have been blocked by the government and are inaccessible from internet cafes in Male; internet connectivity has occasionally been suspended.

Freedom of religion is severely restricted by the government's requirement that all citizens be Sunni Muslims, a legal ban against the practice of other religions, and a constitutional provision making Islam the state religion. Non-Muslim foreigners are allowed to practice their religion privately, according to the U.S. State Department's 2005 International Religious Freedom Report. There were no reported restrictions on academic freedom, but general restrictions on freedom of speech limit academics' ability to express themselves freely without fear of reprisal.

The government limits freedom of assembly and association. In recent years, authorities have imprisoned political dissidents under broadly drawn laws, and police occasionally use excessive force to break up demonstrations. According to the Asian Centre for Human Rights, local nongovernmental organizations have thus far

not been allowed to register. Some international human rights groups have been barred from entering the Maldives, but Amnesty International conducted a visit to the country at the government's request in November 2004.

Workers lack the legal right to form trade unions, stage strikes, or bargain collectively. In practice, no unions exist, although some workers have established informal associations that address labor issues. The Maldives has about 32,000 foreign workers out of a total workforce of 88,000. Most workers are in the informal (unorganized) sector, although some work in the country's high-end tourism industry, which provides 70 percent of foreign exchange revenues.

Because President Gayoom can review high court decisions and appoint and dismiss judges, "the judiciary is subject to executive influence," according to the U.S. State Department's 2004 human rights report. Civil law is generally used in civil and criminal cases, although it is subordinate to Sharia (Islamic law), which is used in matters not covered by civil law as well, as in cases involving divorce or adultery. Punishments such as flogging and banishment to a remote island, which are provided for under the country's interpretation of Sharia, are occasionally carried out. With international donor assistance, a new criminal code has been drafted and was submitted to the attorney general's office in January 2005.

Human rights groups allege that the NSS, which encompasses both the security and intelligence services, acts with virtual impunity. However, the police service, which had previously functioned under NSS direction, was formally separated from the NSS in September 2004. Incidents of torture or other forms of ill-treatment of detainees held at police stations or prison facilities continue to be reported.

Arbitrary arrest and prolonged detention, particularly of opposition supporters, remain a concern, although judges must authorize the continued detention of suspects on a monthly basis, and detainees are now allowed access to a lawyer at all stages of their detention and trial. After the September 2003 and August 2004 civil protests, authorities arrested hundreds of people. The government has in recent years detained or kept a number of political prisoners under house arrest for months at a time, and some have been sentenced to long prison terms. Authorities have also carried out preventive arrests prior to planned MDP-sponsored rallies.

In response to the September 2003 disturbances, the government established, in December of that year, the Maldives Human Rights Commission (MHRC), whose members are appointed by the president and report directly to him. According to Amnesty International, the MHRC was able to investigate and publicly raise concerns about the condition of detainees arrested in August 2004. However, in July 2005, the passage of a government-sponsored bill removed the security forces from the purview of the MHRC and otherwise limited its investigative powers.

The government exercises pervasive influence over access to health care and to employment and educational opportunities for most Maldivians, and it dominates both the public sector, as well as many civil society groups, particularly in the outer atolls. As noted in a December 2004 report by the National Democratic Institute, government dominance over these widespread networks of patronage has also been used to influence voting behavior and control political activity.

More women are entering the civil service, increasingly receiving equal pay to that of men for equal work. Women enjoy a 98 percent literacy rate, compared with 96 percent for men. However, traditional norms that oppose letting women lead inde-

pendent lives outside their homes continue to limit educational and career opportunities for many women. Moreover, the testimony of two women in a Sharia court is equal to that of one man, and men are favored in divorce and inheritance matters. Nevertheless, the government has in recent years sponsored programs to help make women aware of their rights. Children's rights are incorporated into law, and government policy provides for equal access to educational and health programs for both male and female children.

Mali

Population: 13,500,000 **Political Rights:** 2

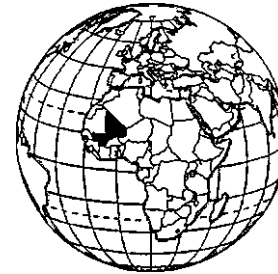
GNI/capita: \$290 **Civil Liberties:** 2

Life Expectancy: 48 **Status:** Free

Religious Groups: Muslim (90 percent), indigenous beliefs (9 percent), Christian (1 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Mande (50 percent), Peul (17 percent), Voltaic (12 percent), Tuareg and Moor (10 percent), Songhai (6 percent), other (5 percent)

Capital: Bamako



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
2,2F	3,3F	3,3F	3,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F

Overview:

Rioting in Bamako after a soccer match in March 2005 shook public confidence in President Amadou Toumani Toure's government. Alone in a crowded field, one opposition party—Alliance of Alternatives for African Renewal (BARA)—has declared its intent to counter the quiescence of Mali's political parties, nearly all of which have, since Toure's election in 2002, offered unqualified support for his government. Mali's economy faltered in 2005, with projected gross domestic product (GDP) expected to be significantly lower than in 2004. The country's largest union held a one-day strike in September to press the government for a minimum wage increase.

Following independence from France in 1960, Mali was ruled by military or one-party dictators for more than 30 years. After soldiers killed more than 100 demonstrators demanding a multiparty system in 1991, President Moussa Traore was overthrown by his own military. Traore and his wife, Mariam, were sentenced to death in January 1999 for embezzlement. Traore had also received the death sentence in 1993 for ordering troops to fire on demonstrators in 1991. The sentences for the couple were commuted to life imprisonment.

After the 1991 coup, a national conference organized open elections that most observers judged to be credible, with Alpha Oumar Konare of the Alliance for Democracy in Mali (ADEMA) winning the presidency in 1992. In 1997, a little more than a quarter of registered voters participated in Konare's reelection against a weak candidate who alone had broken an opposition boycott of the presidential contest.

Konare pledged his support for constitutionally mandated term limits and declared his intent to leave office at the end of his second term, despite his supporters' efforts to build backing for a potential third term. In the May 2002 presidential election, Amadou Toumani Toure, the popular former general who had led Mali during the transition period to multiparty politics in the early 1990s, ran with the backing of numerous civic organizations and smaller political parties as an independent against 23 other candidates. Toure and ADEMA candidate Soumaila Cisse went to a second round of voting, with Toure securing 64 percent of the vote compared with 36 percent for Cisse. Despite irregularities that resulted in the voiding of more than 500,000 ballots after the first round and the petitions of several presidential candidates to annul the final results, international observers reported that the polls were well managed and conducted in a spirit of transparency.

The coalition "Espoir 2002" gained 66 seats in the July 2002 National Assembly elections, while an ADEMA-led coalition won 51 seats. Smaller parties captured the remainder of the seats. Communal elections in May 2004 were orderly and transparent, with ADEMA winning nearly 30 percent of seats in the more than 700 communes.

Public confidence in the government, normally strong, was shaken by rioting across Bamako that broke out in March 2005 following Mali's loss in an African Cup of Nations soccer match. Numerous injuries, hundreds of arrests, and widespread damage to commercial interests shocked residents, many of whom viewed the riot as a sign of growing frustration over the lack of progress on poverty-reduction initiatives and political reform.

Despite significant political and economic reforms undertaken since the early 1990s, Mali is the fourth poorest country in the world, according to the 2005 UN Development Program's Human Development Report. Approximately 65 percent of the country is desert or semi-desert, and approximately 80 percent of the labor force is engaged in farming or fishing. Hundreds of thousands of Malians are economic migrants across Africa and Europe, and many have been disadvantaged by the ongoing conflict in Cote d'Ivoire. The combined impact of low rainfall, devastating locust invasions, lower cotton prices, falling gold production, and the increased costs of imported staples forced the government to revise its GDP forecast down from 4.7 percent in 2004 to 2.2 percent for 2005.

Toure earned international praise for his efforts to promote regional peace and development as a UN envoy before standing for office in 2002, while Konare's service since 2003 as chairman of the African Union is a source of national pride. Since 2004, Mali has worked closely with the United States on programs intended to stem the growth of terrorist organizations across the vast desert region. Ties to South Africa were strengthened during the year with the signing of an agreement for South Africa to provide military training and support for Mali's peacekeeping efforts. South African companies control 90 percent of Mali's gold production, which amounts to 50 percent of exports.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Mali can change their government democratically. Despite irregularities noted by international observers, the most recent 2002 presidential elections were regarded as credible, as were legislative elections. The president is elected by popular vote and limited to two 5-year terms. Members of the 147-member, unicameral Na-

tional Assembly also serve 5-year terms, with 13 seats reserved for Malians living abroad. The next general election is scheduled for 2007.

A figure of both national and international stature, President Amadou Toumani Toure has continued to portray himself as politically independent. This strategy has weakened Mali's nascent multiparty system, as many parties are reticent to criticize Toure's administration or offer opposing points of view. In March 2005, an opposition party, the Alliance of Alternatives for African Renewal (BARA), declared its intent to counter what it described as the prevailing climate of "political unanimity."

The government has established a special commission to help eradicate corruption. Mali was ranked 88 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press, and these rights are generally respected in practice. Although libel is considered a criminal offense and press laws include punitive presumption-of-guilt standards, these laws are rarely invoked. The case of three reporters arrested in October 2003 on charges of defaming an attorney is still pending, though the journalists were freed while awaiting trial. Approximately 15 different newspapers are regularly published in Bamako, some appearing daily or weekly. The government controls the only television station and one of more than 125 radio stations. However, all broadcasting media present a wide range of views, including those critical of the government. In addition to commercial radio stations, private or community radio outlets provide a critical link for rural and isolated populations. The government does not restrict academic freedom or access to the internet.

Mali's population is predominantly Muslim, though the state is secular, and minority and religious rights are protected by law. Religious associations must register with the government, though this requirement is not burdensome or intrusive. Sectarian violence occasionally flares between Muslim groups.

Freedom of assembly and association is guaranteed and respected. Many civic groups and nongovernmental organizations, including human rights groups, operate without interference. Workers are guaranteed the right to join unions, and nearly all salaried employees are unionized. The National Union of Malian Workers, the country's largest union, held a 24-hour strike in September after negotiations with the government failed to reach an agreement on union demands for an increase in the minimum wage.

Although the judiciary is not independent of the executive, it has shown considerable autonomy in rendering antiadministration decisions that have been respected by the government. Local chiefs decide the majority of disputes in rural areas. Detainees are not always charged within the 48-hour period set by law, and there are lengthy delays in bringing persons to trial. In 2004, local lawyers estimated that approximately half of prison inmates were pretrial detainees.

Mali's human rights record is generally good, although there are reports of police brutality. The government permits visits by human rights monitors to prisons, though at least one group has complained that cumbersome administrative procedures make investigating and reporting on possible human rights abuses difficult. Prison conditions are harsh.

No ethnic group predominates in the government or the security forces, and political parties are not based on ethnicity. Long-standing tensions between the

marginalized Moor and Tuareg pastoralist groups on the one hand and the more populous nonpastoralist groups on the other were a main cause of political instability and violence in the past, including during the Tuareg rebellions of the early 1990s. Tensions have largely subsided, in part due to government efforts to integrate minority groups into the government and security forces.

Although the constitution prohibits forced labor, Mali is a source, transit, and destination country for women and children trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced domestic, agricultural, and commercial labor. Mali now requires children under 18 to carry travel documents. A law that made child trafficking punishable by up to 20 years in prison was enacted in 2001, though there have been no prosecutions under this law. In 2005, the government signed a multilateral agreement with other countries in the region to combat child trafficking.

Domestic violence against women, including spousal abuse, is tolerated and common. Women have limited access to legal services, and family law favors men, leaving women at a disadvantage in cases involving divorce, child custody, and inheritance rights. Despite legislation giving women equal property rights, traditional practice and ignorance of the law prevent women from benefiting from this reform. Female genital mutilation is common though banned by government decree in government-financed health centers. The practice has been carried out on an estimated 95 percent of adult women but is reportedly declining in urban areas. The government is pursuing measures, such as a countrywide educational campaign, to eliminate the practice by 2008. Abortion is prohibited except in cases of rape or incest. A number of women's rights groups are active in highlighting and advocating solutions for the legal and socioeconomic problems facing women in Malian society.

Malta

Population: 400,000

Political Rights: 1

GNI/capita: \$12,250

Civil Liberties: 1

Life Expectancy: 78

Status: Free

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (98 percent), other [including Muslim, Jewish, and Protestant] (2 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Maltese [mixed Arab, Norman, Spanish, Italian, and English]

Capital: Valletta



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In January 2005, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) issued a sharp criticism of Malta's treatment of asylum seekers. In July, the parliament ratified the proposed European Union (EU) constitution.

Malta is a small island nation with ties to both the European and Arab worlds.

After gaining independence from the British in 1964, the country joined the Commonwealth and became a republic in 1974. From 1964 to 1971, Malta was ruled by the Nationalist Party (PN), which pursued a pro-Western alliance. In 1971, the European alliance broke down when the Labor Party (MLP) took power and moved the country toward nonalignment and a special friendship with leftist governments in Libya and Algeria. The PN returned to power in 1987, and in 1990, the country submitted its application for full membership in the EU (then the European Community).

After a brief interlude with the return to power of the MLP from 1996 to 1998, Malta continued in a pro-European direction that culminated on March 8, 2003, in a national referendum on EU accession. Malta was the first among the 10 current candidate countries to hold a referendum on the issue of EU membership, which was approved by a vote of 54 percent. The country formally joined the EU in May 2004, in the organization's largest expansion since its founding in the early years after World War II. In July 2005, the parliament ratified the proposed EU constitution.

National elections in 2003 returned the incumbent PN into power with around 52 percent of the vote and 35 seats. The MLP came in second with around 48 percent of the vote and 30 seats. The smaller Alternativa Demokratika (AD) lost support compared with the elections in 1998.

On March 29, 2004, the House of Representatives elected a new president of the republic, Edward Fenech Adami, the former prime minister and veteran leader of the ruling PN. Lawrence Gonzi, the former deputy prime minister, took over the post of prime minister.

In January 2005, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) issued a sharp criticism of Malta's treatment of asylum seekers. The UN agency was critical of the use of excessive force by Maltese soldiers during a peaceful demonstration by asylum seekers, as well as the government's policies and actions towards asylum seekers; Malta detains asylum seekers for 18 months in often appalling conditions. The BBC reported that local newspapers published photos clearly depicting soldiers kicking asylum seekers at the protest and hitting them with batons while the victims were being held to the ground.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Malta can change their government democratically. The country has a unicameral legislature—the House of Representatives—of 65 seats that are decided by a national system of proportional representation with an additional single-transferable-vote (STV) arrangement. STV is different from the traditional "list" proportional representation systems because it allows the voter not only to choose a party but also to rank-order the candidates running for office. Parliament is elected for a five-year term, and members of parliament, in turn, elect the president to serve five years. The prime minister is selected by a vote of party delegates.

The EU, in its 2003 monitoring report, which seeks to determine whether candidate countries are adopting its body of law, criticized Malta for lacking a specific anticorruption program. The issue of corruption emerged in the country after a chief justice in 2003 was forced to resign because of a bribery scandal over a prison sentence appeal. Malta was ranked 25 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution guarantees freedom of speech and of the press. There are

several newspapers and weeklies in Maltese and English, as well as radio and television stations. The island also has access to Italian television, which many Maltese watch. The government does not block internet access.

The constitution establishes Roman Catholicism as the state religion, and the state grants subsidies only to Catholic schools. However, although the population is overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, other religious groups are tolerated and respected. There are small communities of Muslims, Jews, and Protestants, the latter being mostly British retirees. There is one Muslim private school in the country. Construction on a government-approved Muslim cemetery is expected to begin soon.

Academic freedom is respected, and there is generally free and open discussion in the country. However, an amendment to the criminal code makes incitement to racial hatred a crime punishable by a prison term of six to eight months.

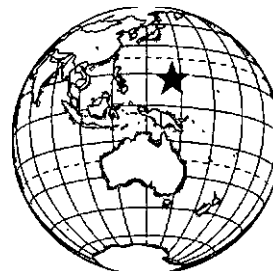
The constitution provides for freedom of assembly and association, and the government generally respects these rights. International and domestic nongovernmental organizations investigating human rights issues were able to operate without government interference. The law recognizes the right to form and join trade unions, and limits on the right to strike were eased in 2002. However, the country's compulsory arbitration clause in its Employment and Industrial Relations Act allows the government to force a settlement on striking workers. This clause, which permits compulsory arbitration to be held even if it is requested by only one of the parties involved, contravenes the International Labor Organization's Convention 87. According to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the government insists that it rarely invokes this clause, which is used only when all other channels for arbitration have been exhausted.

The judiciary is independent, and the rule of law prevails in civil and criminal matters. The Police Ordinance Act, which took effect in 2003, provides a number of reform measures related to policing and criminal justice, including the establishment of a witness protection program and a mechanism for handling both internal and external complaints directed toward the police. Prison conditions generally meet international standards. A magisterial inquiry commenced in May 2004 to investigate the deportation of 220 Eritrean citizens in 2002, who subsequently disappeared and are believed to have been killed. According to the U.S. State Department's 2004 human rights report, the inquiry concluded that officials did not use irregular or illegal practices and had "exercised due discretion and diligence throughout the entire deportation process and had provided the Eritrean nationals full information about their rights."

The government respects personal autonomy and freedom. However, divorce is illegal and violence against women continues to be a problem on the island. Malta prohibits all abortions, even if the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest; in November 2004, a UN committee urged Malta to reconsider this strict policy. Women occupy only 6 of the 65 seats in parliament. Progress, though, has been made. Women now occupy two government posts: minister of Gozo (the second island in the archipelago) and minister for Family and Solidarity. These women are the first to occupy government positions of such high standing.

Marshall Islands

Population: 100,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$2,370 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 68 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Christian (mostly Protestant)
Ethnic Groups: Micronesian
Capital: Majuro



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

Landowners in Kwajalein Island, the U.S.'s most important missile-testing site in the Marshall Islands, continued in 2005 to demand higher rent under a U.S.-proposed agreement to extend the American military presence to 2066. Residents of the Bikini and Enewetak atolls who were affected by U.S. nuclear weapons tests sought more compensation for health and environmental damage.

The atolls and islands that constitute the present-day Republic of the Marshall Islands were under Spanish and German rule before being occupied by Japan during World War II. In 1947, they were placed under U.S. trusteeship. In 1986, the island republic gained full independence.

Kessai Note was chosen president by parliament in January 2000 after his United Democratic Party (UDP) won general elections in December 1999. The first commoner to hold the post, Note succeeded Imata Kabua, whom opponents accused of misusing government funds and running an administration that lacked openness and accountability. Many also criticized Kabua's proposal to rent remote, uninhabited islands to foreign countries as nuclear waste dumps. In the November 2003 parliamentary elections—the seventh national election since independence—the UDP won a majority in the 33-seat House of Representatives. Note was elected to a second term in the subsequent presidential elections held in the same month.

The country maintains close relations with the United States under the Compact of Free Association, which provides nearly half of the country's national budget. Under this agreement, the Marshall Islands grants the United States the right to establish military facilities in exchange for U.S. defense protection and development assistance. An amended Compact, which entered into force on May 1, 2004, promises the transfer of \$57 million from the United States to the Marshall Islands over the next 10 years and another \$62 million over the following 10 years. Marshallese will also retain visa-free entry to the United States to live, work, and study, as well as access to education and medical programs and services in the United States during this 20-year period. A Joint Economic Management and Financial Accountability Committee (JEMFAC) with representatives of both governments ensures that funds are spent effectively. As part of the amended compact, the Marshallese government agreed to crack down on illegal passport sales, which have been a problem since the mid-1990s.

The United States is interested in negotiating a new Compact to extend U.S. use of the Kwajalein missile-testing range through 2066, in exchange for \$2.3 billion and the establishment of an \$800 million trust fund to replace direct U.S. assistance after the amended compact expires in 2024. Landowners in Kwajalein Island—which has been the primary U.S. testing ground for long-range nuclear missiles and anti-missile defense since 1964—want \$19 million in annual rent payment, \$4 million more than what the U.S. proposes.

In December 2004, more new claims seeking compensation for nuclear test damage 50 years ago were filed with the nuclear claims tribunal, just before the year-end deadline; between 1946 and 1958, 67 nuclear weapons tests were conducted in the Bikini and Enewetak atolls. Under the current Compact, a tribunal adjudicates claims for health and environmental damage and a \$75-million trust fund provides restitution. The tribunal is headed by a U.S. national who had previously spent many years in the Marshall Islands. However, personal injury awards alone exceeded the fund by more than \$10 million. In January 2005, the White House announced that no additional funds for compensation will be made available, sparking a public protest in the Marshall Islands and calls to end the use of using Kwajalein as a U.S. missile-test site.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of the Marshall Islands can change their government democratically. The president is the head of state and chief executive, and is chosen for a four-year term by the House of Representatives (Nitijela) from among its members. The members of the 33-seat Nitijela are directly elected to four-year terms. An advisory body, the Council of Chiefs (Iroji), consists of 12 traditional leaders who advise on customary law. The other major political party is the Kabua Party, which counts among its members more traditional leaders.

Corruption is a considerable problem. Public dissatisfaction with political corruption and official abuses has led to calls for change, but international watch groups and domestic critics reported little progress on reform and improved transparency. The country is on the European Union's watch list money laundering. The Marshall Islands was not surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech is respected. A privately owned newspaper, the *Marshall Islands Journal*, publishes articles in English and Marshallese. The government's *Marshall Islands Gazette* contains official news but avoids political coverage. Two radio stations, one government owned and one church owned, carry news broadcasts from overseas and offer diverse views. The government station carries public service announcements and live broadcasts of legislative sessions, and cable television offers foreign news, entertainment, and occasional reports on local events. U.S. armed forces radio and television broadcasts can be received in some areas. The government does not restrict internet access, but penetration rates are low owing to cost and technical access issues outside the capital.

Freedom of religion and academic freedom is respected in practice. College education is rare among Marshall Islanders. Of its 55,000 people, fewer than 130 currently attend four-year colleges in the country and elsewhere in the Pacific region and the United States. Recent surveys found the country's education system in

serious trouble: 64 percent of its 900 school teachers failed both the reading and writing sections of the high school English test and only 18 percent passed both parts of the test. Between 80 and 90 percent of all high school graduates only have elementary school level math proficiency and 30 to 40 percent have elementary school level English proficiency. The government wants to introduce reforms, but resources are limited, and some of the most talented individuals do not return after going overseas for higher training.

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate freely in the country. NGOs sponsored by or affiliated with Christian church organizations provide social services. The government broadly interprets constitutional guarantees of freedom of assembly and association to cover trade unions. There is no formal right to strike or engage in collective bargaining, but there are no formal prohibitions against such activities.

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, although past governments have tried to influence the judiciary. The government raised judges' salaries in recent years to better attract and retain more qualified judges. Three former chief justices either resigned or were fired by the government in the late 1990s. Nearly all judges, prosecutors, and public defenders are foreigners because few Marshallese have law degrees. There were no reports of police abuse of suspects or prisoners. Detention centers and prisons provide a basic level of comfort.

Social and economic discrimination against women is widespread despite the fact that the country is a matrilineal society, where traditional rank and property are passed through female bloodlines. Domestic violence against women is often alcohol-related. The Marshall Islands has the highest teenage pregnancy rate in the Pacific region. Two new HIV/AIDS cases were confirmed in 2005, bringing to three the total number of documented cases in the island republic.

Mauritania

Population: 3,100,000 **Political Rights:** 6
GN/capita: \$400 **Civil Liberties:** 4*
Life Expectancy: 52 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Muslim (100 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Mixed Maur and black (40 percent),
 Maur (30 percent), black (30 percent)
Capital: Nouakchott



Ratings Change: Mauritania's civil liberties rating improved from 5 to 4 and the country's status improved from Not Free to Partly Free due to an enhancement of the civil liberties environment following the overthrow of President Taya.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
6,6NF	6,6NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	5,5PF	5,5PF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,4PF

Overview:

On August 3, 2005, army officers overthrew President Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya and announced the formation of a military council. Although the international com-

munity initially criticized the coup, many Mauritians welcomed the end of Taya's two-decade-long grip on power. Led by Colonel Ely Ould Mohamed Vail, the Military Council for Justice and Democracy (MCJD) has, since taking power, freed political prisoners, encouraged the return of political exiles, opened public debate on an electoral calendar, and planned political reforms, all of which have enhanced the country's civil liberties environment.

Mauritania became an independent country in 1960 after nearly six decades of French colonial rule. A 1978 military coup ended Moktaar Ould Daddah's one-party state and was followed in 1984 by then Colonel Maaouya Ould Sid' Ahmed Taya's ouster of President Mohamed Khouna Ould Haidallah. Taya introduced a multiparty system in the early 1990s, but the absence of an independent election commission, harassment of independent print media, and the use of state resources to promote his candidacy devalued his presidential victories in 1992 and 1997. The main opposition parties boycotted National Assembly elections in 1992 and 1996.

More than a dozen political parties participated in the 2001 municipal and National Assembly elections. The ruling Democratic and Social Republican Party (PRDS) was the only party to present candidates in every constituency for the National Assembly's 81 seats, and the electoral law was modified to ban independent candidates. The PRDS won 64 assembly seats, while opposition parties won 17.

In June 2003, a failed coup attempt triggered two days of fighting in the capital. Escaped leaders of the uprising later announced the formation in exile of an armed rebellion.

Though the November 2003 presidential election included the issuance of more tamper-proof voter cards, the publication of a list of registered voters, and the use of transparent ballot boxes, numerous irregularities characterized the electoral period. Media coverage favored Taya, even though the six candidates—including the country's first female candidate and the first candidate descended from slaves—were each allocated equal time on state-run broadcast media. Civil society groups were barred from monitoring the polls, and most foreign observers declined to participate after Taya's main challenger, former president Haidallah, was briefly detained on the eve of the election. Taya was declared the winner with 67 percent of the vote.

In September 2004, the government accused Burkina Faso and Libya of backing disgruntled soldiers in another foiled coup attempt. Three opposition leaders, including Haidallah, were detained in November. Accused of plotting a coup, they were put on trial with approximately 170 military personnel in late 2004. Although most, including Haidallah, were acquitted in February 2005, four soldiers received life sentences. One of the defense lawyers dismissed the case as a political farce intended to silence the opposition and accused the government of torturing the defendants.

On August 3, 2005, Colonel Ely Ould Mohamed Vail and fellow military officers took over the government while Taya was out of the country. Although the action was initially condemned by the international community, public support for the coup was strong within the country, including from the ruling PRDS. Soon after taking power, the Military Council for Justice and Democracy (MCJD) issued a sweeping amnesty for those charged with political crimes. Approximately 100 political prisoners, including a number of Islamists, were issued pardons and released from prison,

while dozens of political activists returned from exile. In October, the MCJD published a series of reports intended to lead the country to elections within a two-year period and held a five-day public debate with representatives from political parties and civil society.

Under Taya, Mauritania had cultivated closer ties with the United States. In addition, Mauritania established diplomatic relations with Israel in 1999, which the MCJD has said it intends to maintain. The MCJD government has continued to work closely with the U.S. government on programs intended to promote security and stem the growth of terrorist organizations across the region.

An incident over land rights ignited a border dispute between Mauritania and Senegal in 1989, which led to widespread ethnic violence and the exodus of approximately 65,000 black Africans to Senegal and Mali. Tensions between Mauritania and Senegal persist, though the transitional government has indicated interest in resolving the status of the approximately 27,000 refugees remaining outside the country.

Mauritania is one of the world's poorest countries, and more than half of the country depends on subsistence agriculture and livestock production. Much of the country's wealth is concentrated in the hands of the light-skinned Maur elite, who control iron ore exports and fishing. The rural population is suffering the effects of drought and locust invasions that destroyed much of the country's agricultural output, and instances of chronic malnutrition have risen in the southeastern part of the country.

Significant deposits offshore oil were discovered in 2001, and production is set to begin in 2006. This discovery is believed to have been a factor in the 2005 coup, as well as in past coup attempts.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Mauritania cannot choose their government democratically. However, the military-led MCJD, which overthrew President Maaouya Ould Sid' Ahmed Taya in 2005, has promised to complete the transition to an elected government in 2007. Since seizing power, Colonel Ely Ould Mohamed Vall's transitional government has taken important steps to encourage a freer and more open political environment. Under the present constitution, the president is elected for a six-year term and appoints the prime minister. The bicameral legislature—dissolved by the coup—includes a 56-seat Senate and an 81-seat National Assembly. Members of the National Assembly are elected by popular vote every five years. Polls for some of the Senate seats are held every two years; the remainder of the senators are elected by municipal leaders to serve six-year terms.

There were approximately 21 registered political parties at the time of the coup; since that time, additional parties have registered. The transitional government refused to register the Party for Democratic Convergence, which Taya's government had banned for allegedly harboring Islamic radicals and fugitives. The party was formed from the broad coalition of opposition forces that backed Mohamed Khouna Ould Haidallah for the 2003 presidential election. The MCJD has outlawed meetings characterized by religious, regional, or ethnic affiliations.

There are fears that future proceeds from oil production will benefit Mauritania's traditional elites if measures are not put in place to enforce transparency and ac-

countability. Mauritania was not ranked by Transparency International in its 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Under Taya, prepublication censorship, arrests of journalists, and seizures and bans of newspapers devalued constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression. The transitional government has promised to implement sweeping press reforms, including relaxing censorship rules and allowing for the resumption of Radio France Internationale broadcasts, which have been banned since 2000. The government does not impede internet access.

Mauritania is an Islamic state, and its citizens may not possess other religious texts or enter non-Muslim households. Among foreigners, however, non-Muslims are permitted to worship privately, and some churches operate openly. As president, Taya targeted Muslim extremism, though his critics saw attacks as politically motivated. Academic freedom is not restricted, although security forces have cracked down violently on student demonstrations in the past.

Under Taya, freedom of association was restricted and infrequent demonstrations were often violently suppressed. Since the coup, nongovernmental organizations have operated under freer circumstances. In July 2005, before the coup, the government registered the country's leading anti-slavery organization, SOS Esclaves, as well as the Mauritanian Association for Human Rights.

The constitution provides for the right of citizens to unionize and bargain for wages. All workers except members of the military and police are free to join unions. Approximately one-fourth of Mauritania's workers serve in the small formal (business) sector. The right to strike is limited by arbitration.

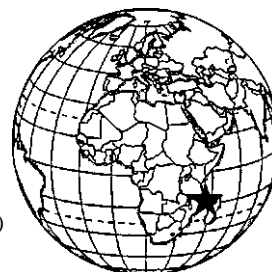
Mauritania's judicial system is heavily influenced by the government. Many decisions are shaped by Sharia (Islamic law), especially in family and civil matters. Prison conditions in Mauritania are harsh, and security forces suspected of human rights violations operate with impunity.

Mauritania's citizens are divided principally between three groups: the politically dominant, light-skinned Maurs of Arab and Berber extraction; black descendants of slaves, also known as Haratines or black Maurs, who have adopted the language and cultural practices of the light-skinned Maurs; and black Africans closer in cultural and linguistic practice to the peoples of neighboring Senegal and Mali. Slavery has been practiced in Mauritania for centuries, and despite passage in 2003 of a law prohibiting the practice, several thousand black Mauritians are believed to still live in conditions of servitude. Racial and ethnic discrimination persists in all spheres of political and economic life, generally to the disadvantage of members of both the Haratine and black African classes.

Societal discrimination against women is widespread. In 2003, a female candidate competed in the presidential election for the first time, and afterward the first Haratine female was appointed to the cabinet. Under Sharia, a woman's testimony is given only half the weight of a man's. Legal protections regarding property and equality of pay are usually respected only in urban areas among the educated elite. At least one-quarter of girls undergo female genital mutilation; the government has produced intensive media and education campaigns against this practice.

Mauritius

Population: 1,200,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$4,100 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 72 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Hindu (48 percent), Christian (32.2 percent), Muslim (16.6 percent), other (3.2 percent) (16.6 percent), other (3.1 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Indo-Mauritian (68 percent), Creole (27 percent), Sino-Mauritian (3 percent), Franco-Mauritian (2 percent)
Capital: Port Louis



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F

Overview:

Parliamentary elections in 2005 resulted in the defeat of Prime Minister Paul Berenger and a victory by the opposition Social Alliance, led by former prime minister Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam. Key issues that apparently led to Berenger's loss included growing frustration with rising unemployment and inflation in the wake of the loss of preferential trade deals with the United States and the European Union.

Mauritius's ethnically mixed population is primarily descended from immigrants from the Indian subcontinent who were brought to the island as laborers during its 360 years of Dutch, French, and British colonial administration. Since gaining independence from Britain in 1968, Mauritius has maintained one of the developing world's most successful democracies. In 1992, the island became a republic within the Commonwealth, with a president as head of state.

In August 2000, President Cassam Uteem dissolved the National Assembly and called early elections, in large part because of a series of corruption scandals that had led to the resignation of several cabinet ministers. Some 80 percent of eligible voters went to the polls. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, the outgoing prime minister, had served since 1995. The opposition alliance, led by the Mauritian Militant Movement (MSM), won the elections. Its leader, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, returned to the prime minister's office, a position he had previously held between 1982 and 1995. The MSM is allied with the Mauritian Militant Movement (MMM).

In a planned power shift, Paul Berenger, leader of the MMM, assumed the prime minister's position in September 2003, becoming the first person from outside of the island's Indian-origin majority to hold the post. As part of the same pact, former prime minister Jugnauth moved to the largely symbolic presidency.

Although Mauritius was generally peaceful throughout 2004, hundreds of civil servants stormed a government building in August to protest a decision to set up a body to oversee revenue collection. The demonstrators feared that this oversight action would lead to the retrenchment of 2,000 civil servants. The country's economy continued to grow steadily throughout the year. On the international front, Berenger

threatened to pull the country out of the Commonwealth because of a dispute with Britain over the sovereignty of the Chagos Islands, which include the strategically important island of Diego Garcia.

In the July 2005 parliamentary elections, Ramgoolam's Social Alliance coalition defeated the incumbent MMM-MSM, and Ramgoolam became prime minister. International and local observers judged the vote to have been free and fair. The newly elected Social Alliance coalition, which includes the Labor Party and the Mauritian Party, draws most of its support from the majority ethnic Indians. Municipal elections in October 2005 further cemented the Social Alliance's hold on power.

Mauritius has achieved a level of political development enjoyed by few other African states. For years, the country's political stability was underpinned by generally steady economic growth and improvements in the island's infrastructure and standard of living, while the country's integrated, multinational population has provided a capable and reliable workforce. However, the loss of preferential European and U.S. market access for sugar and garment exports has recently begun to adversely affect the country's economy and to result in rising inflation and unemployment. The World Bank estimates that gross domestic product growth in 2005 will slow to 3.8 from 4.2 percent in 2004. Ramgoolam has stated that he wants to resurrect the trade agreements that gave preference to Mauritian exports.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Mauritius can change their government democratically. The head of state is a president elected by the National Assembly for a five-year term. Executive power resides in the prime minister, who is appointed by the president from the party or coalition with the highest number of seats in parliament. The political party or alliance that has the second largest majority forms the official opposition. The National Assembly is unicameral; it has 62 members who are directly elected by universal adult suffrage and a maximum of 8 (currently 4) members appointed from unsuccessful parliamentary candidates who gained the largest number of votes. National Assembly members serve for a five-year term, and the next elections are due in 2010.

Since independence, Mauritius has regularly chosen its representatives in free, fair, and competitive elections. In 2002, the National Assembly appointed two separate committees to examine recommendations submitted by a constitutional and electoral reform commission. In 2003, constitutional amendments that modestly strengthened presidential powers were adopted; these deal with the duties of the president, the appointment of the president and members of the electoral commission, the dissolution of the National Assembly, and the exercise of the prerogative of clemency. Decentralized structures govern the country's island dependencies. The largest of these is Rodrigues Island, which has its own government, local councils, and two seats in the National Assembly.

In recent years, there have been a number of corruption cases, and recent efforts to market Mauritius as an international financial center have been impeded by a number of domestic banking market scandals. Mauritius was ranked 51 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution guarantees freedom of expression, and several private daily and weekly publications are often highly critical of both government and opposi-

tion politicians and their policies. The state-owned Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) operates radio and television services and generally reflects government viewpoints. A small number of private radio stations have been authorized, but the state-run media enjoy a monopoly in broadcasting local news. A special committee chaired by Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam has been set up to review the Independent Broadcasting Act. After the prime minister criticized private radio stations, stating that they should be more responsible, the government asked the Independent Broadcasting Authority to implement measures to control the radio stations.

Freedom of religion is respected, as is academic freedom.

The rights to freedom of assembly and association are respected, although police occasionally refuse to issue permits for demonstrations. Numerous nongovernmental organizations operate. Nine labor federations include 300 unions.

The generally independent judiciary, headed by the Supreme Court, administers a legal system that is an amalgam of French and British traditions. Civil rights are generally well respected, although cases of police brutality have been reported. There are no known political prisoners, reports of political or extrajudicial killings, or significant criticisms of prison conditions.

Various cultures and traditions flourish in peace, and there is general respect for constitutional prohibitions against discrimination. However, Mauritian Creoles, descendents of African slaves who comprise approximately a third of the population, live in poverty and complain of discrimination. In addition, tensions between the Hindu majority and Muslim minority persist, constituting one of the country's few potential political flashpoints.

Women constitute approximately 20 percent of the paid labor force and generally occupy a subordinate role in society. Domestic violence against women, particularly spousal abuse, has continued to be a major problem. In 1997, Mauritius became the first country in the region to pass a Protection from Domestic Violence Act. Mauritius has succeeded in increasing the percentage of women in the National Assembly, from 5.5 percent in 2000 to 17 percent in the current parliament. Only 5 percent of women occupy senior positions in the 100 top companies.

Mexico

Population: 107,000,000 **Political Rights:** 2
GNI/capita: \$6,230 **Civil Liberties:** 2
Life Expectancy: 75 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (89 percent),
 Protestant (6 percent), other (5 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Mestizo (60 percent), Amerindian
 (30 percent), white (9 percent), other (1 percent)
Capital: Mexico City



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
4,3PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	2,3F	2,3F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F

Overview:

Although he made government more honest and transparent and championed democracy, in 2005 Mexican president Vicente Fox Quesada's failure to persuade the United States to move on immigration reform and a dramatic upsurge in drug-related violence in Mexico's northern states tarnished Fox's administration. Meanwhile, most political attention was focused on the upcoming presidential elections, scheduled for July 2006, in which Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, the mayor of Mexico City, had already emerged as a front-runner.

Mexico achieved independence from Spain in 1810 and established itself as a republic in 1822. Seven years after the Revolution of 1910, a new constitution was promulgated under which the United Mexican States became a federal republic consisting of 31 states and a federal district (Mexico City). From its founding in 1929 until 2000, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) dominated the country by means of its corporatist authoritarian structure, which was maintained through patronage, corruption, and repression. The formal business of government often took place in secret, and the rule of law was frequently compromised by arbitrary power.

In 1999, the PRI nominated, in first-ever open-party competition, former interior minister Francisco Labastida to run for president; the nomination was hailed by some as signaling the politicians' return to the helm of a party ruled during the three previous administrations by technocrats. In September, the National Action Party (PAN) nominated Vicente Fox Quesada, governor of Guanajuato. Cuauhtemoc Cardenas resigned the Mexico City mayoralty and announced he would again lead the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) national ticket. In July 2000, Fox won Mexico's presidency with 42.5 percent of the vote, with Labastida capturing 36 percent, and Cardenas, just 16.6 percent. The PAN also almost became the largest party in the lower house of Congress and increased the number of state governorships it held.

After his election, Fox selected an eclectic cabinet that included businessmen and leftist intellectuals. Fox announced plans to overhaul the notoriously corrupt and inefficient law enforcement agencies, breaking political ties between the police and the presidency. In his inaugural address, Fox pledged to make Mexico an international leader in human rights.

By 2003, Fox's greatest achievements remained having bested the long-ruling PRI in the 2000 presidential contest, providing for more open and accountable government, and decapitating the country's vicious drug cartels. The most popular decision of his presidency—to oppose the U.S.-led Iraq war—contributed to his own popularity but did little to enhance his party's standing with the electorate. Washington's refusal to engage Fox on migration issues, despite early assurances that it would, deprived the president of a policy win on the most important issue in U.S.-Mexico bilateral relations.

Solutions to the problems of poverty, corruption, crime, and unemployment that the charismatic rancher-politician had promised to fix remained elusive. Elections held in July 2003, in which the PAN lost the governorship in the prosperous industrial state of Nuevo Leon, long a party stronghold, reaffirmed the dominant roles of opposition parties in both houses of Congress and increased the PRI's representation in many state legislatures and governorships. The PAN's congressional vote dropped from 38 percent in 2000 to 30.5 percent, while the PRI won 38 percent and the PRD received 18 percent. The PRD, headed by Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, not only increased its own congressional representation, but also consolidated its hold on Mexico City, the Western Hemisphere's largest urban area, winning the presidency of 14 of the city's 16 boroughs.

The year 2004 marked a resurgence of hard-line sectors of the PRI as the party swept to power in the states of Oaxaca, Veracruz, and Baja California and took the mayoralty in Tijuana by running as its candidate a highly controversial gambling tycoon linked in the press to drug lords. In 14 state-level elections, including 10 gubernatorial races, a major surprise came in the near-loss by the PRI of the governorship of Veracruz, long a party stronghold. Legal challenges to the outcome of gubernatorial contests in Oaxaca and Veracruz and the mayoral election in Tijuana were issued and subsequently denied, with the three victors taking their posts on December 1. The PAN continued to fight, mostly unsuccessfully, an electoral and congressional rearguard action, hampered by public discontent with poverty, corruption, and organized and street crime, as well as a perceived power vacuum brought about in part by a long-standing partisan logjam in congress.

Meanwhile, attention focused increasingly on the 2006 presidential elections, with Lopez Obrador, the mayor of Mexico City, emerging as the apparent front-runner after having overcome several corruption scandals involving top aides. In 2005, Fox had to fend off charges that he was behind efforts to impeach Lopez Obrador in a legal dispute involving an obscure land case that the leftist opposition party called "a technical coup d'etat." The spat energized Lopez Obrador's political base and the prosecution was dropped. Fox's perceived political weakness led the PAN to select Felipe Calderun, a candidate whom he did not favor, to succeed him in the July 2006 elections. After a bitter internal struggle, Roberto Madrazo, the president of the PRI, imposed himself as the candidate of Mexico's formerly dominant party.

In June 2005, half a million people protested in Mexico City against rampant kidnappings and crime in general. In November, anger over the seemingly unstoppable crime wave gripping much of the country appeared to have been at least partly responsible for the lynching by an angry mob of three federal police officers in Mexico City. Meanwhile, *El Universal* newspaper unofficially counted more than 1,000 drug-related killings in a nine-month period during the year, part of a violent power struggle

reflecting the weakening extraterritorial control of Colombia drug cartels. As a result, a climate of insecurity gripped various areas in the country, particularly along the U.S. border.

In September, a unanimous 2004 decision by the Supreme Court to review a case seeking to charge former president Luis Echeverria (1970-1976) and 13 other former government officials with genocide for a 1971 student massacre—the first time a former president of Mexico had been charged with any crime—was functionally reversed when a judge refused to issue an arrest warrant. Although the earlier decision was hailed by rights and legal experts as a significant step toward accountability for a "dirty war" against leftist dissidents in which no public officials were ever convicted, the magistrate said that the charges against Echeverria did not amount to genocide.

Although Mexico took strong issue with the United States on Iraq, it sided with the United States in criticisms of Cuba and Venezuela, leading to an open rift with both countries in 2004 and 2005, respectively. Mexico failed to have Foreign Minister Luis Ernesto Derbez elected as Secretary General of the Organization of American States in May 2005, losing out to Chile and its candidate, Jose Miguel Insulza. In a triumph for Mexican diplomacy, however, former Finance and Foreign Minister Jose Angel Gurria was elected Secretary General of the OECD in November.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Mexicans can choose their government democratically. The president is elected to a six-year term and cannot be re-elected. A bicameral Congress consists of the 128-member Senate elected for six years, with at least one minority senator from each state, and the 500-member Chamber of Deputies elected for three years, 300 directly and 200 through proportional representation. Members of Congress are also barred from reelection. Each state has an elected governor and legislature. In July 2005, the Congress gave final approval to an initiative that would allow many Mexicans living overseas to cast absentee mail ballots for the 2006 election. Mexico's Federal Electoral Institute (IFE), which supervises elections and enforces political party laws, has come to be viewed as a model for other countries.

Mexico has a multiparty system, though three parties—the center-right PAN, the center left PRD, and the PRI—garner the lion's share of the vote.

A series of high-profile cases in 2004 of prominent politicians caught on videotape while taking illegal cash led the political parties to pledge support for an overhaul of election rules in order to limit corruption. However, there continued to be credible reports of misuse of power and resources by incumbent parties to favor their candidates in the 2004-2005 elections, with numerous complaints lodged with Mexico's Special Prosecutor for Electoral Crimes. The IFE fined both the PRI and the PAN millions of dollars for electoral irregularities.

Official corruption remains a serious problem. Corruption at the state-owned petroleum giant Pemex alone is estimated to cost the company more than \$1 billion a year. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration estimates that between \$25 billion and \$30 billion of illegal drug money is laundered each year in Mexico, and says that the country's financial, political, military, and judicial institutions facilitate those crimes. Mexico's ranking on the global index of competitiveness published annually by the World Economic Forum fell from 48 in 2004 to 55 in 2005. Mexico was ranked

65 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

With the opening of the Mexican political system, the media has become much more vigorous and competitive. No longer dependent on the government for advertising and subsidies, it has taken the lead in denouncing official corruption and irregularities, although serious investigative reporting remains wanting. Violence against journalists continues, with reporters probing police issues, narcotics trafficking, and public corruption at particular risk. In 2005, three journalists were killed and another was feared dead after his abduction in April; in 2004, five journalists were killed. These incidents, together with hundreds of narcotics-related murders, made the 18-month period the "the single most deadly period in Mexican history," according to the Inter American Press Association (IAPA). "Threats directed against editors and reporters have resulted in an unwillingness to report on drug trafficking, even where the information is from official sources," the IAPA reported. "The west coast state of Sinaloa has seen the highest number of drug-related killings. Like the border region, there are numerous reports of journalists abandoning their profession and even fleeing the city in fear for their and their families' lives."

In 2002, Mexico enacted its first freedom of information law, considered a "gold standard" worldwide, which expressly prohibits the government from withholding for any reason information about crimes against humanity or gross human rights violations; the law went into effect in June 2003. Mexicans can request government documents through a centralized website, overseen by an independent agency, and public offices have 20 days to respond or face possible sanctions. In addition, the Mexican Congress has used the expanded access to public information in its oversight of the executive branch. The government does not restrict internet access, which is widely available across the nation. In 2005, in a blow to free expression, the Supreme Court ruled that any statement considered an insult to Mexico is subject to punishment.

The constitution provides for religious freedom and the government generally respects this right in practice. However, the free practice of religion is limited in some areas of the country's south, particularly in Chiapas state, and there are frequent reports of harassment of Jehovah's Witnesses. In order to operate legally, religious associations must register with the Under Secretariat of Religious Affairs of the Federal Secretariat, although the registration process is routine. The constitution was amended in 1992 to restore the legal status of the Roman Catholic Church and other religious institutions. Priests and nuns were allowed to vote for the first time in nearly 80 years. In 2005, a Fox spokesman warned that no one could accept illegal funds, responding to a Catholic bishop's statement that the church has no obligation to probe whether donations come from the illegal narcotics trade. Isolated acts of discrimination against non-Catholic Christian groups and at least one anti-Semitic incident were reported in 2005. The government does not restrict academic freedom.

Constitutional guarantees regarding political and civic organizations are generally respected in the urbanized northern and central parts of the country. Political and civic expression, however, is restricted in some parts of rural Mexico, in poor urban areas, and in poor southern states. Civil society participation has grown in recent years; human rights, prodemocracy, women's, and environmental groups are active. Dozens of labor and peasant leaders have been killed in recent years in ongo-

ing land disputes, particularly in the southern states, where Indians constitute close to half the population.

The justice system is based on the cumbersome nineteenth-century Napoleonic code, in which judges decide cases by reading documentary evidence. There is virtually no body of law governing juvenile justice. In rural areas, respect for laws by official agencies remains tenuous. Lower courts and law enforcement in general are undermined by widespread bribery, despite efforts at reform by the Fox administration. Torture, arbitrary arrest, and abuse of prisoners persist in many areas, although somewhat less so in recent years. In November 2003, the Supreme Court ruled that the "disappearances" of leftist activists in the 1960s and 1970s were kidnappings not subject to the statute of limitations. The decision paved the way for the arrest of former senior officials implicated in those crimes.

In Mexico City, approximately 80 percent of crimes go unreported because the notoriously underpaid police are viewed as either inept or in league with criminals; only about 6 percent of reported crimes are solved. Ten percent of all extortive kidnappings in Mexico are believed to be carried out by former or serving police officers, and in the first six months of 2005, Mexico recorded the most kidnappings in Latin America. In early 2001, Fox announced a crusade to clean up the law enforcement system, urging Mexicans to report common crimes and announcing a citizen program to make the police more accountable by making their files more accessible to the public.

Of some 200,000 police officers in Mexico, only 4 percent belong to the federal police, with the rest, belonging to as many as 2,300 different forces, outside central government control—a result of constitutional clauses governing states' sovereignty. Many local police are given a uniform and a weapon without having to face any serious background checks. On a positive note, in late November 2005, Mexico changed its constitution to allow state and local police to pursue drug traffickers, removing a major stumbling block in antidrug efforts that had long been the exclusive realm of federal officers. The measure, part of a package of bills that includes the possibility of using millions of dollars in seized drug money to fund rewards for the capture of traffickers and the registration of bulletproof cars frequently used by drug traffickers, was approved by a majority of Mexico's 31 state legislatures—not including Mexico City—and by a majority in both houses of the country's Congress.

Although civilian-military relations are in a state of flux, presidential authority over the armed forces is extensive. Because Mexico has no foreign enemies, the military, which operates largely beyond public scrutiny, serves mainly as an auxiliary police force and acts as the country's main antinarcotics force. In places such as the states of Chiapas and Guerrero, army counterinsurgency units, moving through local civilian populations like an occupying force, continue to cause numerous rights violations. Human rights groups say more than 100 people have "disappeared," and hundreds more have been tortured by the Mexican army, in the conflict-ridden state of Guerrero in the past decade. The military justice system allows for soldiers accused of rights violations to be tried in secret, and the outcomes of their trials are only occasionally made public. In 2004-2005, the role of a vicious northern Mexico gang known as the Zetas—former Mexican army commandos in league with the drug traffickers they were trained to capture—received much media attention; by the end

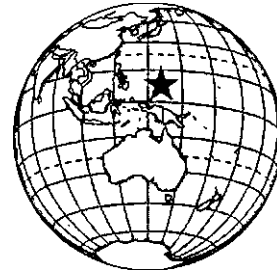
of 2005, the Zetas were reported to be recruiting deserting members of Guatemala's counterinsurgency forces.

In June 2003, Fox signed legislation that banned all forms of discrimination, including those based on ethnic origin, gender, age, or religion. Nevertheless, Mexico's indigenous peoples remain largely outside the political and economic mainstream due to social and economic discrimination. Their ability to participate in decisions affecting their lands, cultural traditions, and allocation of natural resources is usually negligible, and most Native Americans are relegated to extreme poverty in rural villages lacking roads, running water, schools, and telephones. During 2005, the government maintained troops in selected areas of Chiapas and Guerrero, and those states and others were the site of numerous allegations of excessive force and the violation of international humanitarian law.

The *maquiladoras* (export-processing zones) have fostered substantial abuses of workers' rights. Most maquiladora workers are young, uneducated women who accept lower pay more readily, with annual labor turnover averaging between 200 and 300 percent. Workers have no medical insurance, paid holidays, or profit sharing, and female employees are frequently the targets of sexual harassment and abuse. Domestic violence and sexual abuse remain serious problems, although the Fox government has pledged to fight these problems, which some experts say affect 50 to 70 percent of women. Mexico is a source country for trafficked persons to the United States, Canada, and Japan, and a transit country for persons from various places, especially Central America and China. Internal trafficking is also a problem. In 2004, Amalia Garcia of the PRD won the governorship of Zacatecas, becoming the first democratically elected female governor in Mexican history.

Micronesia

Population: 100,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$1,990 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 67 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (50 percent),
Protestant (47 percent), other (3 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Micronesian, Polynesian
Capital: Palikir



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,1F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

Legislative elections held in March 2005 saw most incumbents reelected. Meanwhile, Faichuk island's representative to congress proposed a bill to admit Faichuk as the fifth state of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM).

The United States administered Micronesia, which included the Marshall Islands and other Pacific Island territories, between 1947 and 1979 as a UN Trustee-

ship Territory. In 1970, the Northern Marianas, Marshall Islands, and Palau demanded separate status from Kosrae, Pohnpei, Chuuk, and Yap; these latter four territories, representing 607 islands, became the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). The FSM adopted a constitution in 1979 and became independent in 1984.

In 1986, the first Compact of Free Association was signed between the United States and FSM. Under the agreement, the United States provides economic assistance and external defense in exchange for the right to establish military bases in the islands. A new compact with the same core commitment came into effect in December 2003 to cover the next 20 years. In the first three years, the FSM will receive a total of \$76 million in economic assistance grants for education, health, capacity building, private sector development, the environment, and infrastructure. Another \$16 million will go to a trust fund that will be overseen by a joint board of U.S. and FSM trustees to ensure good fund management. Beginning in the fourth year, an annual decrement of \$800,000 from sectoral grants will be re-allocated to the trust fund until 2023. FSM citizens will continue to enjoy visa-free entry to the United States, access to health services and education, and the ability to work without employment visas in the United States.

Compact funds represent one-third of the country's national income, and the division of those funds has been a source of serious tension in federal-state relations. In 2003, the people of Faichuk island in the state of Chuuk threatened to leave the federation and proposed a separate bilateral treaty with the United States unless Chuuk received a larger share of the compact funds; Faichuk has 30 percent of Chuuk's population. Other states soon followed with similar demands. In response, the federal government agreed to increase the share of compact funds provided to the four states.

In congressional elections held in March 2005, most incumbents were reelected. Proposed constitutional amendments to allow direct election of the president and vice president obtained support from more than half of the voters but fell short of the three-quarters majority required by the constitution.

Faichuk, which has the largest landmass in FSM, continued to seek separate status from Chuuk during the year. If congress approves the proposed bill to make Faichuk a separate state in FSM, Faichuk could become the fifth state by January 1, 2006.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: The citizens of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) can change their government democratically. A unicameral, 14-member legislature has one representative each from the four constituent states directly elected for four-year terms, and 10 representatives from single-member districts directly elected for two-year terms. Holding nearly half the country's population, Chuuk has the largest number of congressional seats, which has been a source of resentment with the three smaller states. The president and vice president are chosen from among the four state representatives in the legislature to serve four-year terms. By informal agreement, these two top offices are rotated among the representatives of the four states. President Joseph Urusemal, a former governor of Yap, was elected to the post in May 2003. Each state has its own constitution, elected legislature, and governor. State governments have considerable power, particularly in budgetary matters. Traditional leaders and institutions

exercise significant influence in society, especially at the village level. There are no formal political parties, although there are no restrictions against their formation.

Political corruption and official abuse are serious problems and a source of voter discontent. Micronesia was not ranked by Transparency International in its 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The media operate freely. In addition to government-published newsletters, there are several small private weekly and monthly newspapers; television stations operate in three of the four states. Each state government runs its own radio station, and the Baptist church runs a fifth station. Cable television is available in Pohnpei and Chuuk. Satellite television is increasingly common. While internet use is small but growing, a small population and limited income makes it difficult for internet service providers to expand coverage and bandwidth (a problem shared by most other Pacific Island countries).

Religious freedom is respected in this mainly Christian country. There were no reports of restrictions of academic freedom.

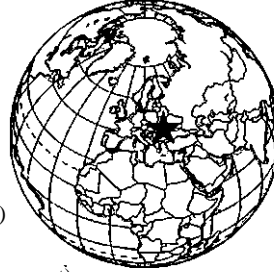
Citizens are free to organize civic groups, and there are a few student and women's groups. No labor unions exist, but there are no laws against their formation. The economy is dependent on fishing, tourism, assistance from the United States, and subsistence agriculture. No specific laws regulate work hours, recognize the right to strike or bargain collectively, or set workplace health and safety standards.

The judiciary is independent, but lack of funds hinders improvements in the functioning of the courts. Cultural resistance to using the courts, particularly for sex crimes, results in many offenders not being brought to justice.

Women hold equal rights under the law, including regarding property ownership and employment. Women generally receive equal pay for equal work and are well represented in the lower and middle ranks of the state and federal government. However, social and economic discrimination against women does exist in the male-dominated culture of these islands. Domestic violence is common, and cases often go unreported because of family pressure, fear of further assault, or an expectation of inaction by the authorities. Offenders rarely go to trial, and those found guilty usually receive light sentences.

Moldova

Population: 4,200,000 **Political Rights:** 3
GNI/capita: \$590 **Civil Liberties:** 4
Life Expectancy: 68 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Eastern Orthodox (98 percent),
 Jewish (1.5 percent), other [including Baptist] (0.5 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Moldovan/Romanian (78.2 percent),
 Ukrainian (8.4 percent), Russian (5.8 percent), Bulgarian (1.9 percent),
 other [including Gagauz] (5.7 percent)
Capital: Chisinau



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
3,4PF	3,4PF	2,4PF	2,4PF	2,4PF	2,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF

Overview:

The Communist Party of Moldova (PCR) maintained its majority in March 2005 parliamentary elections, while President Vladimir Voronin was easily reelected by the parliament in April. Meanwhile, the European Union (EU) and Moldova signed an action plan in February to strengthen economic and political cooperation.

The Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. The country's first free and fair popular election took place in 1994. While the Communist Party of Moldova (PCR) won a plurality of votes in the 1998 parliamentary elections, three centrist parties united to form a majority coalition. Subsequently, Moldova undertook much-needed economic reforms and drafted a new constitution. In 2000, constitutional changes made Moldova a parliamentary republic, with the president chosen by parliament instead of by popular vote. In the 2001 parliamentary elections, the PCR won a landslide victory on the promise of a return to Soviet-era living standards, and Vladimir Voronin was elected president.

Two alliances and nine parties competed in the March 2005 parliamentary election. A 6 percent threshold for a party to enter parliament favored large parties; this requirement was changed to 4 percent after the election. The only parties that captured seats were the PCR, the opposition Democratic Moldova Bloc (BMD), and the Christian Democratic Popular Party (PPCD). The PCR gained 56 seats, a majority but short of the 61 votes required to elect the president. The resulting negotiations caused a split in the BMD, with the Democratic Party breaking off and voting for PCR candidate Voronin along with the PPCD, which was rewarded with government posts after Voronin was reelected in April; the BMD no longer forms a unified bloc.

Monitoring groups highlighted a number of flaws during the election campaign, including police searches of opposition offices and harassment of opposition representatives. The PCR was also accused of manipulating state-controlled media and using state funds to support its electoral prospects. Voter lists were not all accurate

and campaign finance rules were not respected. Moldova deported many Russian nationals accused of interfering in Moldova's internal affairs before the election. Residents of Transnistria had to cross into government-controlled territory in order to vote, and approximately 8,200 did so with minimal problems.

While the PCRM's victory was a testament to its continuing popularity—in large part due to high spending on social programs—it unquestionably repositioned itself leading up to the vote. Previously aligned with Russian interests and promising to make Russian an official language, the PCRM subsequently rejected Russia in favor of the European Union (EU). This switch has been evident in conflicting policies over Moldova's breakaway region of Transnistria, from which Voronin has demanded Russia's unconditional withdrawal. The BMD, meanwhile, called for closer ties with Russia.

Moldova has not made the kind of substantial progress toward being a stable democracy that is seen in some of its Western neighbors. Unemployment rates in Moldova, one of Europe's most impoverished countries, are very high. Moldova has had strong economic growth since 2000, reaching 7.2 percent in 2004. However, according to the International Monetary Fund, the growth is mostly the result of remittances, while money is not being invested in the country; as much as a quarter of the country's population may be working abroad.

Separatist elements have declared a "Dniester Republic" in Transnistria—situated between the Dniester River and Ukraine—in which Russian troops continue to maintain a presence. Five-party talks that include Russia, Ukraine, the authorities of Moldova and of Transnistria, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) welcomed the United States and the EU as observers in 2005. A new peace plan was launched by Ukraine, and talks have continued but produced minimal results.

The Moldova Action Plan with the EU was signed in February. The first of its kind between the EU and a neighbor, the plan is designed to increase economic integration and deepen political cooperation between the two sides. EU membership is very popular in Moldova and was supported by nearly all parties in the 2005 election.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Moldova can change their government democratically. In 2000, Moldova ended direct presidential elections. Voters elect members to the 101-seat unicameral parliament by proportional representation for four-year terms; parliament then elects the prime minister and president. The president was traditionally an honorary post held for four-year terms, but under Vladimir Voronin's leadership, it took on significant power. The electoral code is generally considered to provide a sound framework, but some regulations favor the incumbent.

The electoral law in practice discourages the formation of ethnic or regional parties. The Roma (Gypsies) are particularly underrepresented.

Corruption is a major concern in Moldova, and anticorruption efforts have been used against political opponents. Despite laws to promote governmental transparency, access to information remains limited. The trial of former defense minister Valeriu Pasat—who is accused of defrauding the Moldovan government in the sale of Soviet-era fighter planes to the United States in 1997—began in June. The charges are viewed as politically motivated due to Pasat's ties to the previous Moldovan admin-

istration. Moldova was ranked 88 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Print media present a range of opinions. However, there is little access to newspapers in rural areas, and only the public service broadcasters have national reach. Prison sentences for libel were abolished in 2004, but journalists can be subject to crippling fines, and self-censorship is common. Despite the legal transformation of the state-owned broadcasters into public service stations, the government continued to exercise tight control in the run-up to the 2005 election. Other broadcasters stopped producing political programs at that time in the face of ambiguous and inhibiting regulations. Police raided the offices of an opposition newspaper close to election day. Although media coverage became more balanced after the presidential election, the public broadcaster continued to be criticized for bias and a lack of professionalism.

Although Moldova's constitution guarantees religious freedom, there have been some legal impediments to the functioning of various religious groups. All religious groups are required to register with the government, and unregistered groups are not allowed to buy property or obtain construction permits. No Muslim groups have been granted registration. The Moldovan Orthodox Church receives some favored treatment from the government. The government does not restrict academic freedom.

Citizens may participate freely in nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). However, private organizations must register with the state, and some NGOs have complained of government interference. NGOs are generally poorly funded, unless they receive support from outside the country. Demonstrations require permits from local authorities. Freedom of assembly was obstructed during the 2005 election campaign; the authorities prevented or interfered with the holding of meetings, and employees were pressured to attend ruling party campaign events. Authorities exert pressure on unions and their members, and employers violate trade union rights.

Moldova's constitution provides for an independent judiciary. However, there is evidence that some prosecutors, judges, and law enforcement officials accept bribes and are subject to official pressure from governmental figures. Some courts are inefficient and unprofessional, and many court rulings are never carried out. Torture and ill-treatment in police custody are widespread and are often used to extract forced confessions. Torture is not defined in law, and perpetrators generally are not punished. Prison and detention facility conditions are exceptionally poor. The government has reportedly handed Moldovan citizens over for trial to the authorities in Transnistria, where human rights are not respected.

Members of the Roma community suffer the harshest treatment of the minority groups in Moldova. Roma face discrimination in housing and employment and are targets of police violence. In July, police raided a Roma community and, according to Amnesty International, beat and detained residents.

Women are underrepresented in public life, though the 21 women elected to parliament in the 2005 elections mark a substantial increase over previous polls. Moldova remains a major source for women and girls trafficked to other countries for the purpose of forced prostitution. Despite government attempts to address the problem, a 2005 report commissioned by the UN and OSCE cited an increase in the number of Moldovan children being trafficked into Russia for forced labor and prostitution.

Monaco

Population: 30,000
GNI/capita: \$26,900
Life Expectancy: na
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (90 percent), other (10 percent)

Ethnic Groups: French (47 percent), Italian (16 percent), Monegasque (16 percent), other (21 percent)

Capital: Monaco

Political Rights: 2

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	19978	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
2,1F	2,1F	2,1F	2,1F	2,1F	2,1F	2,1F	2,1F	2,1F	2,1F

Overview:

In April 2005, Prince Rainier III, the longest-reigning monarch in Europe, died of heart, kidney, and lung problems and was succeeded by his only son, Prince Albert II.

The Principality of Monaco is an independent and sovereign state, although it remains closely associated with neighboring France. The royal Grimaldi family has ruled the principality for the past 700 years, except for a brief period of French colonial rule from 1789 to 1814. Under a treaty ratified in 1919, France pledged to protect the territorial integrity, sovereignty, and independence of the principality in return for a guarantee that Monegasque policy would conform to French political, military, and economic interests.

Prince Rainier, who led the country from 1949 to 2005, is often credited with achieving the country's impressive economic growth. During his reign, Monaco ended its dependence on gambling and increased other sources of revenue—principally tourism, financial services, and banking. In February 2002, Monaco adopted the euro despite the fact that it is not a member of the European Union (EU).

Legislative elections in February 2003 led to a major upset for the National and Democratic Union (UND), which lost after dominating national politics in the country for the past several decades. The opposition Union for Monaco (UPM) received 58.5 percent of the vote and 21 of the 24 seats in the Conseil National, while the UND received 41.5 percent of the vote.

On April 6, 2005, Prince Rainier III, the longest-reigning monarch in Europe, died at the age of 81. He had been suffering from heart and lung problems since at least 2003. Prince Albert, who succeeded his father, is unmarried. Often dubbed the "play-boy prince," Albert caused a stir when he confirmed rumors that he fathered a child out of wedlock with a Togolese flight attendant. The child, who was born in 2003, is not in line for the throne.

The country is one of five uncooperative tax havens listed by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The EU Savings Taxation Directive, which provides a way to tax revenue from savings accounts held by European citizens in a member state other than their own country of residence or in certain non-EU countries, came into effect July 1, 2005. Monaco agreed to participate in the directive, which is intended to prevent harmful tax practices.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Citizens of Monaco can change their government democratically. However, the prince has the sole authority to initiate laws and change the government. The 24 members of the Conseil National are elected every five years: 16 are elected by a majority electoral system and 8 by proportional representation.

The head of state is not elected but inherits the position. Prince Rainier III, who died in April 2005, ruled the country for the past 55 years and was succeeded by his son, Prince Albert II. Prince Rainier changed the constitution in 2002 to allow for Princess Caroline and Princess Stephanie, Albert's sisters, to follow their brother if he remains "childless." Previously, the law stated that the principality would have become a part of France in the absence of a male heir.

The head of government—the minister of state—is traditionally appointed by the monarch from a list of three candidates who are French nationals presented by the French government. The current minister of state, Jean-Paul Proust, has held the post since June 2005. In addition to the minister of state, the prince also appoints three other ministers (counselors) who collectively make up the government. All legislation and the budget, however, require the assent of the Conseil National.

Because of a lack of available financial information, the country's level of corruption is difficult to measure. Monaco was not ranked by Transparency International in its 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index. Monaco remains on the OECD's list of uncooperative tax havens. However, the country is one of five non-EU tax havens that have agreed to adopt measures to combat harmful tax competition. Starting in July 2005, the government will apply a withholding tax to accounts in Monaco held by European citizens from EU member states. Most of the revenue from this tax will go back to the EU member state where the saver resides.

The media in Monaco are free and independent. The constitution provides for freedom of speech and the press, although the penal code prohibits denunciations of the ruling family. Internet access is not restricted.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion. However, Roman Catholicism is the state religion and Catholic ritual plays a role in state festivities. There are no laws against proselytizing by formally registered religious organizations, although to do so is strongly discouraged. There are no restrictions on academic freedom. The country has only one institution of higher education, the University of Monaco, a private university that offers degrees in business administration only. Monégasque students are eligible to enter French and other postsecondary educational institutions on the basis of specific agreements. The government provides grants for higher education students to study foreign languages abroad.

The constitution provides for the freedom of assembly, and the government respects this right. No restrictions are imposed on the formation of civic and human rights groups. Although outdoor meetings require police authorizations, there were no reports that the government withheld authorization for political reasons. Workers have the legal right to organize and bargain collectively, although they rarely do so. Only 10 percent of the workforce is unionized. All workers except those in the government have the right to strike.

The legal right to a fair public trial and an independent judiciary is generally respected. The judicial system is based on French legal code. The constitution requires that the head of state delegate his judicial powers to the judiciary. The prince

names the five full members and two judicial assistants to the Supreme Court on the basis of nominations by the National Council and other government bodies. Prisons generally meet international standards. Once prisoners receive definitive sentences, they are transferred to a French prison.

The constitution differentiates between the rights of nationals and those of noncitizens. Of the estimated 32,000 residents in the principality, only about 7,000 are actual Monegasques, who alone may participate in the election of the Conseil National. Monegasques also benefit from free education, unemployment assistance, and the right to hold elective office. As long as they secure a residence permit, non-citizens are free to purchase real estate and open a business in Monaco.

A woman can lodge criminal charges against a husband for domestic violence, and women generally receive equal pay for equal work. Although naturalized male citizens in Monaco can transfer citizenship, naturalized female citizens cannot. Also, women who become naturalized citizens by marriage cannot run as candidates in elections until five years after the marriage. There were no reports of trafficking in persons into, from, or within Monaco during the year.

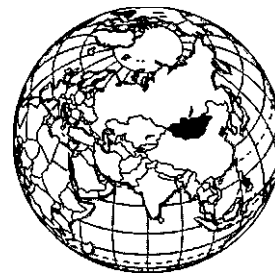
Mongolia

Population: 2,600,000 **Political Rights:** 2
GN/capita: \$480 **Civil Liberties:** 2
Life Expectancy: 64 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Buddhist Lamaist (50 percent),
 other [including Shamanist and Christian (46 percent),
 Muslim (4 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Mongol (94.9 percent), Turkic (5 percent),
 other (0.1 percent)

Capital: Ulaanbaatar

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F



Overview:

In May 2005, Mongolians voted in their country's fourth presidential election since the fall of the Communist government in 1990. The victory of incumbent president Nambaryn Enkhbayar came despite protests in March and April by an estimated 5,000 in Ulaanbaatar who demanded the removal of corrupt officials. Meanwhile, the government continued its pursuit of increased foreign trade relations with both Russia and China.

Once the center of Genghis Khan's sprawling empire, Mongolia experienced three centuries of external domination under its neighbors, China and the Soviet Union. China controlled Mongolia for two centuries until the early 1920s. In 1924, a Soviet-backed Marxist revolt led to the creation of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) and the world's second single-party Communist state.

Beginning in 1990, however, Mongolia undertook a relatively rapid transition from a Soviet satellite state to a democratic republic. In response to persistent anti-government protests, the ruling MPRP legalized opposition parties and held the country's first multiparty elections. Facing a poorly prepared and underfunded opposition, the MPRP easily won parliamentary elections that year and again in 1992. However, the 1996 elections demonstrated the progress of Mongolian democracy when, after 72 years, the MPRP was swept out of parliament, and power was transferred peacefully to the Democratic Union Coalition (DUC). The core policies of the DUC coalition, which consisted of the Democratic Party and the Social Democratic Party, were the implementation of political and economic reforms in the post-Communist period. After an economic downturn the following year, however, the MPRP regained power with victories in both the 1997 election for the largely ceremonial presidency and in the 2000 parliamentary vote.

General elections held in June 2004 resulted in a political impasse, as neither the ruling MPRP nor the opposing Motherland Democratic Coalition (MDC)—a coalition of the Democratic Party and the Motherland-Mongolian New Socialist Democratic Party (M-MNSDP)—secured the 39 seats required to form a government. In August of that year, despite unresolved allegations of corruption and election rigging from both sides in the parliamentary poll, the MPRP finally agreed to form what has been called an "awkward coalition government" with the MDC. The coalition was formed only after the parties reached a compromise that resulted in the nomination of Tsakhilganiin Elbegdoij (MDC) to a second term as prime minister and the continuation of Natsagiin Bagabandi (MPRP) as president.

In March 2005, an estimated 5,000 people, calling themselves the Just Society Civic Movement, pushed past police in Ulaanbaatar to demonstrate outside the parliament building. The protesters, who included teachers, shopkeepers, unemployed workers, and homeless people, accused the MPRP's Nambaryn Enkhbayar, then Speaker of Parliament and a former prime minister, of embezzlement and blamed the country's chronic poverty on his corruption. They demanded an investigation into allegations that Enkhbayar had diverted \$2.9 million from public funds and had manipulated the media in his favor during the previous year's parliamentary elections and called for the government to hold new elections. Elbegdoij, aware that general presidential elections were just months away, appealed to protest leaders, saying, "It's impossible to dissolve parliament, but you can work with us." In an address to parliament, he assuaged concerns about the mass protest by pointing out that "Criticism of government is not necessarily bad.... The very fact that people can voice their opinions is an important achievement of democracy in this country."

Despite the popular protests against Enkhbayar, he secured 53 percent of the vote against Mendsaikhhan Enkhsaikhan of the Democratic Party, who took just over 19 percent of the vote, to win the May presidential election. Some experts attributed his victory to pervasive nostalgia for the "stability" provided by Communist Party rule in the past.

The protests were representative of what has become Mongolia's primary political issue since the country's transition to democracy—the pace and extent of economic reform. Market reform began in the early 1990s with the establishment of a fledgling private sector through the privatization of small businesses and the end of collectivized herding. However, these reforms have been ineffective in compen-

sating the economy for the loss of heavy Soviet subsidies; the result has been high unemployment and rampant poverty. In 2005, Mongolia experienced a 7 percent economic growth rate (a 3 percent drop from the 10 percent growth rate in 2004), primarily as a result of higher-than-expected prices for copper, gold, and cashmere—Mongolia's main exports. Although economic growth is helping to raise living standards for some Mongolians, poverty remains the reality for the majority of the population in both rural and urban areas; 36 percent of the population lives on less than 75 cents a day.

Building on the efforts it made last year by signing agreements on cooperation in trade and banking with China, Mongolia sought in 2005 to boost trade with Russia. Elbegdoij said new economic opportunities have emerged following the settlement of Mongolian debts to the former Soviet Union in 2004, including the expansion and modernization of Mongolia's railways, the development of a gas network in the country, the construction of an electricity power line from Russia to China through Mongolia, and the creation of new mining and processing plants. The prime minister stressed that "the development of good-neighborly cooperative relations with Russia is a priority for Mongolia."

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Mongolia can change their government democratically. However, election rules are not firmly established and have often been changed. While the 1992 constitution created a hybrid presidential-parliamentary system, several of Mongolia's past parliamentary elections have been conducted under different electoral systems, varying between multimember districts to single-member districts. There is concern that rewriting the rules before each election makes it difficult to stabilize the expectations of political elites or enhance popular confidence in democratic government. Most executive powers are vested in a prime minister, who is chosen by the party or coalition with the most seats in parliament. The president, however, must approve parliament's choice of prime minister and can veto legislation, subject to a two-thirds parliamentary override. Both the president and the 76-seat parliament, known as the Great Hural, are directly elected for four-year terms.

Corruption is a problem in Mongolia. The U.S. State and Commerce departments both have identified "corruption in the [state] bureaucracy" as one of the typical problems affecting economic and political development in Mongolia. Mongolia ranked 85 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

While the government generally respects freedom of speech and of the press, it has been slow to implement a 1999 law requiring the transformation of state broadcast media into public corporations. While independent print media outlets are common and popular in cities, the main source of news in the vast countryside is the state-owned Radio Mongolia. Although most national radio and television stations remain state owned, they are generally free of political control. In October 2005, the coalition government announced plans to convert Mongol TV and Radio into a public broadcasting entity. In addition to state broadcast services, Mongolians have access to local, privately owned television, English-language broadcasts of the BBC and Voice of America on private FM stations, and, in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar, foreign television programming via cable and commercial satellite systems.

The government monitors all media for compliance with antiviolenace, anti-pornography, and anti-alcohol-content restrictions, as well as compliance with tax laws. The government has at times filed libel suits against media or launched tax audits against publications in the wake of critical articles. Libel charges are hard to defend against, because Mongolian law places the burden on the defendant to prove the truth of the statement at issue. To avoid being sued for libel, many independent publications practice a degree of self-censorship. The State Secrets Law inhibits freedom of information to a degree, as many archived historical records have been given a classified status.

Since the fall of communism in 1990, freedom of religion has been guaranteed by the constitution. The new openness has sparked a growth in Christian, Mormon, and Russian Orthodox faiths, as well as a revival of Mongolia's traditional religions—Buddhism and a native shamanism. Academic freedom is respected. Mongolian professors and other teachers generally can write and lecture freely, and access to higher education is relatively indiscriminant.

Freedom of assembly and association is respected both in law and in practice. A number of domestic and international environmental, human rights, and social welfare groups, although largely reliant on foreign donors, operate without government restriction. Mongolian trade unions are independent and active, though the government's downsizing or sale of many state factories has contributed to a sharp drop in union membership. Collective bargaining is legal, but with Mongolia's poor economy, employers enjoy considerable power and often set wages unilaterally. The government prohibits strikes in the utilities, transportation, and legal sectors.

The judiciary is independent, but corruption among judges persists, according to the U.S. State Department's 2005 human rights report. In a holdover from the country's Communist past, defendants are not presumed innocent. Although the constitution prohibits unlawful arrest and detention, Mongolia's police force, under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs, has been known to make arbitrary arrests, keep detainees for long periods of time, and beat prisoners and detainees; such actions were more prevalent in rural areas. Corruption in the police force remains a problem. The military, which has been downsized because of budgetary constraints, is under the aegis of the Ministry of Defense. Prisons have in recent years been outfitted with video monitoring systems, decreasing the incidence of beatings by guards. Nevertheless, deaths in prisons continue to be reported; these are due largely to disease—often tuberculosis—exacerbated by poor conditions like insufficient food, heat, and medical care. A prison reform program centering on training guards and upgrading facilities is ongoing.

The constitution prohibits arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home, or correspondence, and these provisions are generally respected. In addition, the government respects all citizens' rights to travel freely within the country and abroad.

Mongolia has what the United Nations in 2005 called a "reverse gender gap," as women now make up 60 percent of all students at Mongolian universities. This trend, noted by *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, has been largely attributed to the fact that "[in] this predominantly agricultural country, parents often pull their sons out of school so that they can help with herding duty, long considered a male responsibility." Although this trend has not carried over into politics (of the 76 parliamentary seats in Mongolia, only five are occupied by women), it does indicate "a

large pool of highly educated and motivated women," according to the Alliance for International Women's Rights. The emphasis on education for Mongolian women represents the improving opportunities available in a country that, under Communist Party rule, largely excluded women from public life.

Domestic violence has been a serious concern in Mongolia. Although there are no reliable statistics regarding the extent of domestic abuse, the U.S. State Department's 2005 human rights report noted that as much as one-third of the female population may be affected, a situation largely attributable to a high rate of alcohol abuse. Since January 2005, a sweeping new law outlaws spousal abuse defined as "any intentional act or failure to act by a person. . .with respect to another person that infringes upon the latter's human rights, freedom, or any act that causes threat or contains a threat to cause harm." The law empowers central and local government to investigate complaints and impose a variety of sanctions on offenders, including prohibitions on meeting victims, training aimed at behavioral changes, and treatment for alcoholism.

Morocco

Population: 30,700,000 **Political Rights:** 5
GNI/capita: \$1,310 **Civil Liberties:** 4
Life Expectancy: 70 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Muslim (98.7 percent),
 Christian (1.1 percent), Jewish (0.2 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Arab-Berber (99.1 percent),
 other (0.9 percent)
Capital: Rabat



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
5,5PF	5,5PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,4PF	5,4PF

Overview:

In May and June 2005, the Moroccan government used force to suppress what came to be known as the Sahrawi "intifada," or uprising, involving scores of nationalist demonstrators in Western Sahara protesting the continued occupation of the territory by Moroccan forces.

Morocco was a French colony from 1912 until it gained independence in 1956. King Mohamed V died after ruling for five years, and the crown was inherited by his son, King Hassan II. The first three decades of Hassan's rule were marked by autocratic repression, which worsened following the two back-to-back failed attacks on the king's life by renegade army officers in 1971 and 1972 as part of their broader effort to overthrow the monarchy and establish a republic. Political opponents of the king were "disappeared," and torture and summary detention were routine. Hassan also oversaw Morocco's development as a modern nation, and it was under his reign that Morocco occupied the Western Sahara in 1975, soon after Spanish

troops left the territory; the status of the territory remains in dispute and is a source of tension in the country. Near the end of his rule, Hassan made moves toward political reform; independent newspapers began publishing, and a bicameral legislature was established in 1997.

After Hassan's death in 1999, his oldest son, Mohammed VI, inherited the throne. While hopes were high that the young king would continue on his father's later path to political liberalization, King Mohammed inherited a country with serious social and economic problems. A high unemployment rate, weak economic growth, and a large gap between the majority of the population and the small upper class threatened the stability of the country. Islamist charitable networks quickly filled the gap, providing services and gaining support at the grassroots level.

Within months of assuming the throne, Mohammed dismissed Interior Minister Driss Basri, considered one of the most powerful men in the country and the embodiment of corruption under Hassan. Thousands of political prisoners were released, and exiled opposition figures were allowed to return home.

In 2002, Morocco held parliamentary elections that were lauded as the most representative since independence. The polls led to a legislature with a significant Islamist presence, as well as a few women members of parliament. Meanwhile, independent journalists continued to be harassed, and there were still reports of torture and summary detention of political opponents of the king.

The reform process was delivered a serious blow in May 2003, when a series of suicide bombings rocked Casablanca, killing 45 people and injuring scores of others. The victims of the attack were mostly Moroccans, and the targets included visible symbols of Morocco's Jewish community. The perpetrators were local Islamists linked to al-Qaeda, the terrorist network. The authorities responded by adopting a harsh antiterror law, and thousands were immediately imprisoned and sentenced.

In late 2003, the king created the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (IER)—headed by Driss Benzikri, a former political prisoner—to document human rights abuses perpetrated under the previous regime and to compensate victims. The IER's work included public hearings where victims were able to speak publicly for the first time about the abuses that they had suffered. Critics of the IER have complained that the commission's work will not result in punishment for past violators. In October 2005, the IER announced that it had identified the burial place and remains of 50 former detainees. The IER's final report was scheduled to be released at the end of 2005.

In addition to addressing past abuses, Moroccan authorities have also turned their attention to addressing the rights of women, who have long been the victims of legal and social discrimination. In 2004, Morocco reformed its personal status law (*Mudawana*), raising the age of marriage to 18 and placing women in a better position in seeking a divorce. Previous attempts to amend the personal status law were thwarted by mass protests led by Islamists, who, since the 2003 suicide bomb attacks, have kept a lower profile.

The status of Western Sahara continued to be a major hurdle in Morocco's transition to a more democratic state. In international legal terms, the status of the former Spanish territory that Morocco occupied in two successive stages in 1975 and 1979 remains undetermined. Rabat's annexation and governance over the disputed territory is challenged by an independence-minded nationalist movement headquartered

in Tindouf, Algeria. In May and June 2005, Sahrawis living in the territory began to protest publicly against Moroccan occupation, leading to an excessive use of force by the authorities that human rights organizations sharply criticized.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Morocco cannot change their government democratically. Although the 2002 parliamentary elections and the 2003 municipal elections were judged to be the most democratic since independence, King Mohammed VI and his close advisers, known collectively as the *makhzen*, still retain much of the power in Morocco. The king can issue decrees, dissolve parliament, and dismiss and appoint cabinet members. The lower house of the legislative branch is directly elected and, along with the king, can pass legislation.

Morocco adopted its fourth postindependence constitution in 1996 in which the country is described as a "democratic monarchy" with Islam as the state religion and Arabic as the official national language. Despite its democratic self-definition, de facto as well as de jure power is held by the monarch. The constitution declares the king as the "commander of the faithful," thus bestowing upon him ultimate religious authority in the country. He also has the right to appoint the prime minister and the ministers of interior, foreign affairs, justice, and Islamic affairs. The monarch has the authority to dismiss the government, dissolve parliament, impose martial law, and rule by decree. He presides over the cabinet and judiciary, sets the overall direction of national policy, appoints ambassadors, ratifies treaties, serves as the nation's commander in chief of the armed forces, and selects all *walis* (regional governors). Given this multiplicity of constitutional powers, reinforced by the loyalty of the military and support of the Moroccan ruling establishment in the cities and countryside, the king reigns as well as rules in a highly centralized, uncontested fashion.

The new constitution reintroduced a bicameral legislature, which had existed briefly after independence before being replaced by a single parliamentary chamber until 1996. The 325-member lower house (House of Representatives) is directly elected by universal suffrage for a five-year term, while the 270-seat upper house (House of Advisers) is chosen by an electoral college for a nine-year period. Both houses serve as "debating" forums, rather than as autonomous legislative bodies intended as a check on monarchical authority.

Morocco has several opposition parties, but they are mostly weak. The strongest opposition forces in the country are Islamist groups, with the Justice and Development Party (PJD) being the best organized. The PJD and Moroccan authorities have been involved in a low-profile power contest over the years, with the PJD trying to position itself as a moderate Islamist alternative to the monarchy. No political party that is given legal status can challenge the ultimate authority of the monarchy. The Justice and Charity Association—considered the country's largest, most popular, and most antimonarchical organization—has never been allowed to participate legally in the political process.

Transparency Morocco, a network of civil society organizations dedicated to ridding Morocco of bribery, proposed in 2005 the formulation of a national independent body that would combat bribery in the kingdom. Morocco was ranked 78 out of 159 countries surveyed in the 2005 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index.

Moroccan journalists have been pioneers of an independent press in the Arab world. However, in 2005, a criminal court found independent journalist Ali Lmrabet guilty of defamation and in April sentenced him to a 10-year ban on practicing journalism. The case stemmed from an article Lmrabet had written for the Spanish daily *El Mundo* that challenged the official government line on issues related to the Western Sahara. Lmrabet, who was imprisoned in 2003 after his two satirical weeklies published cartoons that mocked the monarchy and ran an interview with an opponent of the king who called for self-determination of the Sahrawi people, had been free since January 2004 after a royal pardon. Several other cases of criminal defamation were lodged against journalists, even though the minister of communications announced in March that the press law would be amended to remove the punishment of imprisonment for press cases; as of late November 2005, the law had not been changed. Foreign and local journalists who want to cover the Western Sahara are often harassed by Moroccan authorities or prevented from traveling to the region. Television and radio are dominated by the state and reflect the official government line. According to government figures, there are 3 million internet users in the country. Although there have been cases of internet sites being blocked by the authorities, there is currently no specific regulation of the internet in Morocco. Even pro-Polisario Front websites advocating independence for the Western Sahara are accessible.

Morocco is almost 99 percent Muslim, with the remaining portion of the population is composed of tiny Christian and Jewish communities. Morocco's religious minorities are able to practice their religions free of government interference.

There are some restrictions on academic freedom. The official line on the status of the Western Sahara is followed, and criticism of the monarchy and Islam are avoided. Government informers monitor the activities of Islamist groups on campuses.

Freedom of association is also somewhat limited. Morocco has a healthy number of independently functioning nongovernmental organizations, but they need government permission to operate. Protests in the Western Sahara are suppressed, and in May, Moroccan authorities detained several Sahrawis who were involved in demonstrations that turned violent in Laayoune, the main city in the Western Sahara. Many of those detained declared hunger strikes to protest their treatment.

The law allows workers to establish and join trade unions. A new labor law enforced in June 2004 prohibits antiunion discrimination and prescribes the government's authority to intervene in strikes, which are allowed by the constitution but subject to a subsequent law requiring compulsory arbitration of disputes.

Morocco's judiciary operates in a climate of corruption and pressure from above. According to groups including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, torture is still practiced in Morocco, and since the Casablanca terror attacks of 2003, authorities act in an atmosphere of impunity and lack of accountability. Trials of those arrested following the 2003 terror attacks were not conducted fairly, according to local and international human rights groups. The antiterrorism law has broadened the definition of what constitutes terrorism, gives authorities the right to hold a person for up to 12 days without charge, and increases the number of crimes that can result in the death penalty.

Although overwhelmingly Arabic-speaking and Muslim, Morocco is one of the Arab world's most open-minded societies regarding different ethnic and religious

groups. The small native Jewish community feels relatively secure despite having been the target of a terrorist attack in Casablanca in May 2003. The country's large Berber population is concentrated in the mountainous northern regions in the Rif and in the Atlas. Most Berber cultural and linguistic rights and aspirations have been recognized by the government.

Moroccan women are guaranteed equal rights under the constitution. While many legal and societal limitations on the advancement of women remain, changes to the family code in 2004 gave women greater rights in the area of marriage and divorce. Physical abuse of women remains a problem. Although child labor has traditionally been a problem in Morocco, it is also now illegal to employ anybody under age 15.

Mozambique

Population: 19,400,000 **Political Rights:** 3
GNI/capita: \$210 **Civil Liberties:** 4
Life Expectancy: 42 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Catholic (23.8 percent), Zionist Christian (17.5 percent), Muslim (17.8 percent), other 40.9 (percent)
Ethnic Groups: Makhuwa, Tsonga, Lomwe, Sena (more than 99 percent)



Capital: Maputo

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF

Overview:

The December 2004 presidential and legislative elections resulted in a clear victory for the ruling Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) party and its new leader Armando Guebuza. The elections were marred by significant irregularities and low voter turnout but were considered generally free and fair and reflective of the people's will by a number of international observers. Guebuza—who succeeded long-time FRELIMO leader and Mozambique president Joaquim Chissano—has pledged to tackle the country's enduring problems of corruption, crime, and poverty. Meanwhile, significant political divisions between FRELIMO and the opposition Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO) party remained, exemplified by RENAMO's aggressive legal challenge of the election results and by clashes between supporters of both parties that resulted in 12 dead and 47 wounded.

Portuguese traders and settlers arrived in Mozambique in the late fifteenth century, and full-scale colonization began in the seventeenth century. The Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO), established in 1962, launched a guerrilla campaign to oust the Portuguese. Following a 1974 coup in Portugal, Mozambique gained independence in 1975. FRELIMO was installed as the sole legal party, and its leader,

Samora Machel, as president. Independence was followed by 16 years of civil war pitting the Soviet-allied government against the Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO), which was supported first by Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and later by South Africa.

In 1986, Machel died in an airplane crash and Joachim Chissano became president. In 1989, FRELIMO formally abandoned Marxism-Leninism for democratic socialism and a market economy. In 1992, a ceasefire was signed, followed by a full peace agreement. RENAMO agreed to operate as an opposition political party.

The first multiparty elections, held in 1994, brought 90 percent of voters to the polls. The elections were judged a resounding success by the international community, despite a brief preelection boycott called by RENAMO, which accused FRELIMO of fraud. Chissano captured 53.3 percent of the presidential vote, versus 33.7 percent for RENAMO leader Alphonse Dhlakama. FRELIMO won a narrow, but workable, majority in the Assembly of the Republic in concurrent legislative polls.

Chissano and FRELIMO were reelected in general elections in 1999, despite a strong showing by the opposition. The polls were marred by logistical and administrative difficulties, and RENAMO complained of fraud. However, many Mozambicans and the international community viewed the elections as expressing the people's will. In protest over alleged fraud, RENAMO deputies repeatedly walked out of the Assembly or interrupted proceedings in 2000 and 2001. At one point, RENAMO threatened to form its own government in six northern and central provinces.

Widespread corruption damaged the standing of Chissano's government. In January 2003, six men were found guilty of murdering prominent journalist Carlos Cardoso, who was gunned down in 2000 while investigating a corruption scandal at the state-controlled Commercial Bank of Mozambique. While the convictions were a triumph of judicial independence, no charges were lodged against the president's son, Nyimpine Chissano, who was alleged by some of the accused to have ordered the assassination. Suspicions of high-level complicity flared in May 2004 with the second escape from prison of Anibal Antonio dos Santos, sentenced to 28 years in prison for the murder; he had previously escaped in 2002. Dos Santos, captured later that month at Toronto's Pearson International Airport, sought asylum in Canada. He was deported to Mozambique in January 2005, where he faces a retrial for the murder.

Only 36 percent of eligible voters turned out to cast ballots in the December 2004 presidential and legislative elections, which saw an overwhelming victory for Armando Guebuza and FRELIMO. Guebuza, pledging to tackle Mozambique's enduring problems of corruption, crime, and poverty, took 63.7 percent of the presidential vote, as opposed to 31.7 percent for RENAMO's Dhlakama; FRELIMO won 160 seats, and RENAMO 90 seats, in the 250-seat Assembly. While declaring the election generally free and fair and reflective of the people's will, independent monitors cited serious flaws in the voting and tabulation processes, most explicitly the lack of observer access to the final stages of the vote tabulation process by the National Electoral Commission (CNE). In addition, flawed voter rolls, a lack of voting materials and accessible polling centers in rural areas, incidents of ballot stuffing, an excessive delay in announcing results, and technical problems with the tabulation software undermined the validity of the election. Nevertheless, monitors agreed that none of these irregularities would have significantly altered the election results, concluding that 85 percent of polling stations functioned correctly.

RENAMO—citing evidence of "massive fraud"—initially rejected the election results, called for the election to be rerun, and filed a formal complaint with the CNE. While the CNE rejected RENAMO's complaint on technical grounds, it did admit that 1,400 vote summary sheets (*editais*) favorable to RENAMO had been stolen, accounting for 5 percent of the total. As a result, the CNE shifted an Assembly seat from FRELIMO to RENAMO in the Zambezia Province. RENAMO subsequently announced a boycott of the incoming Assembly and appealed to the Constitutional Court to further correct the election's irregularities. Although the court rejected RENAMO's appeal, it called for observer access to the final stage of the vote count in future elections; RENAMO later withdrew its legislative boycott.

Further evidence of the country's deep political divisions was revealed in September 2005, when a Constitutional Court ruling upholding a disputed local by-election led to clashes between supporters of FRELIMO and those of RENAMO in the northern province of Cabo Delgado. As a result, 12 people were killed and 47 injured.

Mozambique boasts one of Africa's best-performing economies, thanks partly to extensive foreign aid. In January, the United Kingdom cancelled Mozambique's £80 million (US\$146 million) debt and agreed to pay 10 percent of the country's debt to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund; the latter body released an additional \$2.4 million to Mozambique the next month. Nevertheless, the country remains among the world's poorest. With some 14 percent of Mozambicans stricken with HIV/AIDS, the economy faces challenges ahead, including a contracting agricultural labor force in subsistence farming. In October, the government announced that over 800,000 people will require food aid in 2006; officials cited rising maize prices, a failed winter crop, and a lack of donor funds as contributing to food shortages.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Mozambique can change their government democratically. However, this freedom is constrained by the political and economic legacies of war, including political violence. Presidential and legislative elections in December 2004—despite some serious irregularities—were generally free and fair and reflected the will of the people. The president, who is elected to a five-year term by popular vote, appoints the prime minister. The unicameral Assembly of the Republic, which has 250 seats, plays an important role in the political process, although the executive branch overshadows its power. The influence of smaller opposition parties is negligible, which leaves RENAMO as the only viable electoral challenge to the status quo. The next legislative and presidential elections are scheduled for December 2009.

The Assembly agreed in 2002 to change electoral law provisions regarding settling disputes, deploying observers, and naming members to the electoral commission. In the Assembly, procedural changes undertaken in 2001 have resulted in that body's increased effectiveness, although partisan tensions sometimes impede work. Amendments to the Electoral Act ratified in June 2004 prohibit the use of government resources for political campaigning. In addition, the Assembly recently approved a constitutional amendment that allows for elected provincial assemblies starting in 2008.

Corruption in government is pervasive. In a 2002 report to the Assembly, Mozambique's attorney general conceded that corruption plagued the legal system. He cited incompetence and abuse of power at all levels of the administration of jus-

tice, including police, attorneys, judges, lawyers, and prison personnel. He also blamed prosecuting attorneys for failing to press charges against suspects despite sufficient evidence. However, the government is taking steps to combat the problem: in 2003, the Assembly passed a law that compels high-ranking civil servants to declare their incomes upon assuming their posts, and the Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) in the attorney general's office was investigating several public figures. In August 2005, the director of the National Social Security Institute and several staff members were dismissed due to allegations of corruption. Newly elected President Armando Guebuza has made tackling corruption a top priority, and journalists and civic actors have reported a marked increase in government attention to the daily activities of civil servants. In May, media reports about a government plan to spend \$2.5 million on a retirement beach house for former president Joachim Chissano provoked widespread outrage; the government later decided to cut this budget by 60 percent. In September, a new Central Office for Combating Corruption replaced the ACU. In a related and more surprising move, the ACU head Isabel Rupia—widely considered to be a successful steward of the government's anticorruption campaign—was not chosen to head the new agency. Mozambique was ranked 97 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution provides for press freedom, but the state controls nearly all broadcast media and owns or influences the largest newspapers. While independent print media have enjoyed moderate growth in recent years, publications in the capital of Maputo have little influence among the largely illiterate rural population. Criminal libel laws promote self-censorship. In addition, journalists are subject to threats and intimidation at the hands of officials and nonstate actors. Most notably, in February 2005, Jeremias Langa, news director of the privately owned station Soico TV, was threatened with suffering the same fate as murdered journalist Carlos Cardoso if he continued to "talk too much." In April, media were barred from attending the libel case of one of the six men convicted of Cardoso's murder. However, in November 2004, the Assembly approved a constitutional amendment that guarantees a diversity of views in state-run media, and government media have displayed greater independence in recent years. In particular, state-owned Radio Mozambique is thought to broadcast unbiased news coverage. While coverage of the general elections in December 2004 was more evenhanded than previously, the opposition received inadequate coverage in state-run media, especially radio and television. In August, agreement on a draft Freedom of Information Bill was reached at a media seminar in Maputo. Only a fraction of the population has access to the internet because of a scarcity of electricity and computers.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the government respects this right in practice. Academic freedom is generally respected. However, according to the 2005 U.S. State Department's human rights report, teachers at all levels of schooling felt compelled to participate in FRELIMO campaign activities and teach children the FRELIMO campaign song instead of the national anthem. In addition, political affiliation has been reported to be a factor in the hiring of some teachers.

Freedom of assembly is broadly guaranteed but limited by notification and timing restrictions, and authorities used force to break up several demonstrations in 2005. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including the Mozambican Human Rights League, operate openly, as do international human rights and humanitarian

groups; all NGOs must register with the government. FRELIMO's grip on the labor movement is loosening. The Organization of Mozambican Workers, the major trade confederation, is now nominally independent. The Organization of Free and Independent Unions, a more independent group, was formed in 1994. All workers in non-essential services have the right to strike. The right to bargain collectively is legally protected; however, only 2 percent of the workforce is in collective bargaining contracts.

The executive branch dominates the judiciary. The judicial system is hobbled by a dire shortage of judges, magistrates, and defense lawyers. A December 2004 study conducted by the University of Eduardo Mondlane revealed that 90 percent of 2,700 prisoners in the Machava Prison in Maputo did not have access to legal counsel. Bribery of judges by lawyers is alleged to be common. Detainees often wait months, sometimes years, before appearing in court without any formal defense. They are tried only in Portuguese, which many Mozambicans speak poorly. The Constitutional Council, entrusted with deciding whether laws and governmental decisions are constitutional, made its debut in late 2003.

Human rights abuses by security forces—including extrajudicial killings, torture, beatings, extortion, and arbitrary detention—are serious problems. Prisons are severely overcrowded with appalling health conditions; prisoners generally receive one meal per day and are subject to beatings, extortion, and fatal disease. The government has begun to provide human rights training to police officers. The high incidence of violent crime in Mozambique is a major problem and has led to occasional mob and vigilante killings. Mozambique remains rife with small arms and unexploded land mines from the civil war.

Women occasionally pierce the male-dominated political arena. In February 2004, Luisa Dias Diogo was named the country's first female prime minister. However, women generally suffer from legal and societal discrimination. Domestic violence, including spousal rape, is common. In August 2004, a revised Family Law was adopted that raised the marriage age to 18, ended husbands' formal status as heads of families, and legalized civil, religious, and common-law marriages. However, as many women know little or nothing about the law, customary law continues to prevail in many parts of the country. Trafficking in women for purposes of prostitution is a problem. While the government has made children's welfare a priority, limited access to education, child abuse, child labor, child prostitution, trafficking in children, and the presence of street children in Maputo remain serious problems.

Namibia

Population: 2,000,000 **Political Rights:** 2
GNI/capita: \$1,930 **Civil Liberties:** 2*
Life Expectancy: 46 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Christian (80-90 percent),
indigenous beliefs (10-20 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Black (87.5 percent), white (6 percent),
mixed (6.5 percent)
Capital: Windhoek



Ratings Change: Namibia's civil liberties rating improved from 3 to 2 due to improvements in the rule of law, including the continued stabilization of the Caprivi region and the creation of a Ministry of Safety and Security.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,2F

Overview:

Following an extensive ballot recount in the November 2004 national elections, President Hifikepunye Pohamba was sworn into office in March 2005, replacing long-time president and liberation hero Sam Nujoma. In September, the government began expropriation proceedings on the first of 18 white-owned farms targeted for distribution under the country's accelerated land reform program. The situation in the formerly volatile Caprivi region remained stable; refugees from the 1998-1999 conflict continued to return, while the trials of suspected secessionists proceeded in 2005.

Namibia—formerly known as South West Africa—was claimed by German imperial forces in the late 1800s. Efforts to consolidate German colonial rule and expand white farming settlements resulted in the massacre of thousands of Herero, Nama, and Damara peoples during a series of wars with German troops in the early twentieth century. German forces were expelled during World War I, and the territory was made a South African protectorate by the League of Nations in 1920. South West Africa was ruled under the apartheid system after 1948. In 1966, South Africa's mandate was revoked by the United Nations, and the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) began a guerrilla campaign to secure the territory's independence. After 14 years of violent guerrilla war, a UN-supervised transition led to independence for Namibia in 1990, and SWAPO leader Sam Nujoma was chosen as president. The previous year, SWAPO had won 57 percent of a free and fair vote for the Constituent Assembly, which became the National Assembly on independence.

Nujoma was reelected in 1994 with more than 76 percent of the vote, the same year as a widespread SWAPO victory in the first legislative elections under the new constitution. However, Nujoma, the leader of the country's struggle against apartheid, adopted an increasingly authoritarian governing style. Before the 1999 presidential election, SWAPO succeeded in passing a bitterly contested constitutional amendment allowing Nujoma to seek an extra, third term. He was easily returned to

power with 77 percent of the vote; his closest rival, former trade union leader Ben Ulenga of the Congress of Democrats, won only 11 percent. In legislative polls in 1999, SWAPO retained its two-thirds majority in the 72-member National Assembly, increasing its number of seats from 53 to 55.

Secessionist fighting in Namibia's Caprivi region flared in October 1998 and continued into 1999. Caprivi, a strip of land extending eastward out of northern Namibia along its borders with Angola and Botswana, differs geographically, politically, and in its ethnic makeup from the rest of Namibia; it was formerly used by South Africa in that country's operations against SWAPO guerrillas. The government accused the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), an Angolan rebel group, of supporting the Caprivi insurgents, and in 1999, Namibia entered into a mutual defense pact with the Angolan government that allowed each country's security forces to pursue suspected rebels into the other's territory. Also in 1999, Nujoma declared a state of emergency in the Caprivi Province, giving security forces wider-ranging powers. The resulting violence led approximately 2,400 refugees to flee to Botswana. A mass trial of 120 defendants involved in the separatist rebellion in Caprivi opened in October 2003 and is ongoing. Another 12 alleged Caprivi secessionists were brought to trial in September 2005.

The November 2004 elections for the National Assembly saw SWAPO maintain its overwhelming majority in the parliament by winning 55 seats; the Congress of Democrats won 5 seats, the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance won 4, the United Democratic Front took 3, and other parties took the remaining 5 seats. In concurrent presidential elections, SWAPO's Hifikepunye Pohamba—the minister of Lands, Resettlement, and Rehabilitation in Nujoma's government and his chosen successor—easily defeated six other candidates, taking 76 percent of the vote in the election for head of state. Turnout was approximately 85 percent, compared with 61 percent in 1999.

Despite criticizing the vote tabulation system and the opposition's unequal access to media and campaign resources, observer missions—including the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa and monitors from the Southern African Development Community—deemed both elections as free and fair. After successfully petitioning the high court to allow a review of official election documentation in December 2004, the Congress of Democrats and the Republican Party (RP)—citing vote discrepancies at polling stations, evidence of destroyed ballots, and an allegedly inflated voter roll—secured a court-ordered recount of all 820,000 ballots in March 2005. That recount, observed by opposition parties and members of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), confirmed SWAPO's landslide victory and did not result in any changes in the allocation of seats in the National Assembly. Nevertheless, four opposition parties, led by the RP, petitioned the high court to declare the original election null and void in April 2005. The matter was pending at year's end.

Whites, who make up about 6 percent of the population, own just under half of Namibia's arable land. Since independence, the government has pursued a "willing-buyer, willing-seller" land reform program; it has purchased between 118 and 135 farms, on which it has resettled some 37,100 people. However, the program has come under increasing criticism for proceeding too slowly, and the government has taken steps to speed up land redistribution. Since 2003, the Ministry of Lands, Resettlement, and Rehabilitation has assessed the value of more than 12,000 commercial

farms and plans to implement a land tax that will help pay for the land reform program. (Farm owners who contest the valuations may appeal in court.)

In 2004, the government for the first time declared that all Namibian landholders—not just farms belonging to foreign, absentee, or "unproductive" landlords—were susceptible to expropriation under the accelerated land reform program. In September 2005, the government served expropriation orders on 18 white-owned commercial farmers; only one of these farm owners accepted the government's proposed price, while the rest are expected to challenge the orders at the Land Tribunal. A report that same month by the Legal Assistance Centre, a local NGO, stressed the need for adequate training and support for resettled farmers, echoing an April 2005 study commissioned by the Namibia Agricultural Union.

Capital-intensive extractive industries, such as diamond and uranium mining, have drawn significant foreign investment and are the centerpieces of Namibia's economy. Most Namibians, however, continue to live as subsistence farmers, and many lack basic services. As in other southern African countries, the expiration of the U.S. African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) in 2005 and the end of textile quotas mandated by the World Trade Organization significantly affected the competitiveness of Namibia's textile industry. The country is also a recipient of substantial foreign aid. In September, Namibia secured \$44.7 million in UN development support to assist government efforts to combat HIV/AIDS and food insecurity and to improve public service delivery. That same month, the African Development Bank gave the government a \$34 million loan to implement its "Green Scheme Project," a series of irrigation and crop development initiatives aimed at boosting the country's agricultural sector.

In November 2005, two mass graves—believed to be filled with members of SWAPO's armed wing killed in fighting with South African forces in 1989—were discovered at a former South African military base near the Angolan border.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Namibia can change their government democratically. Despite a court-mandated recount owing to opposition allegations of voting irregularities—including an inflated voter roll and destroyed and missing ballots—the 2004 presidential and legislative elections were judged to be largely free and fair. The bicameral legislature consists of the 26-seat National Council, whose members are appointed by regional councils for six-year terms, and the 72-seat National Assembly, whose members are elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms. National Assembly seats are allocated by proportional representation, based on a party-list system. The president is directly elected and serves as the head of state for a five-year term.

The ruling SWAPO party has dominated both the legislative and executive branches since independence. Significant opposition parties include the Congress of Democrats, the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance, and the United Democratic Front.

While Namibia has a legislative and institutional framework to combat corruption, corruption is a significant problem in government and parastatals. Upon entering office in March 2005, President Hifikepunye Pohamba declared tackling public corruption to be his top priority. Nevertheless, budgetary constraints continue to obstruct effective implementation of the 2003 Anti-Corruption Bill, and the country

is still without a promised anticorruption commission with strong enforcement powers. In August, Paulus Kapia, then deputy minister of Works, Transport and Communication, resigned after being implicated in a fraud scandal involving the misdirection of government monies and illegal payments to SWAPO members. That same month, Lazarus Kandara, a businessman also implicated in the scandal, allegedly shot himself while in police custody; the National Human Rights Society called for an independent investigation into the incident. Namibia was ranked 47 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution guarantees the right to free speech and a free press, and Namibia's press is considered one of the freest on the continent. Private radio stations and critical independent newspapers usually operate without official interference, but reporters for state-run media have been subjected to indirect and direct pressure to avoid reporting on controversial topics. While many journalists insist that the state-run Namibia Broadcasting Corporation enjoys complete freedom to criticize the government, others believe that it is biased toward the ruling party. There are at least eight private radio stations and two private television stations that broadcast in English and German, and international broadcasts are available to those who can afford access. Although then-president Sam Nujoma appointed himself minister of Information and Broadcasting for a period in 2004, no significant problems were experienced during his tenure. There are no government restrictions on the internet, and several publications have popular websites.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed and respected in practice. The government does not restrict academic freedom.

Freedom of assembly and association are guaranteed by law and permitted in practice, except in situations of national emergency. Local and international human rights groups operate freely without government interference, though some officials have verbally attacked NGOs that criticize the government.

Constitutionally guaranteed union rights are respected. Although collective bargaining is not practiced widely outside the mining and construction industries, informal collective bargaining is increasingly common. Essential public sector workers do not have the right to strike. Domestic and farm laborers remain the country's most heavily exploited workers, in part because many are illiterate and do not know their rights.

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, and the government respects this right in practice; judicial decisions concerning the recount of the November 2004 elections underscored this independence. Access to justice, however, is obstructed by economic and geographic barriers, a shortage of public defenders, and substantial trial delays caused by a lack of capacity in the justice system. In rural areas, traditional courts often ignore constitutional procedures.

Police and military forces are under civilian control. Pohamba's administration includes the newly created Ministry of Safety and Security, which supervises both the police and the national intelligence services. Allegations of police brutality persist, although the National Society for Human Rights (NSHR) reported only two such cases in its August report covering July 2004 through July 2005. Human rights groups have called for independent investigations into the 1999 arrest and detention of suspected Caprivi separatists, and the deaths of 13 suspects in police cus-

tody; authorities have dismissed allegations of torture. Conditions in prisons and military detention facilities are harsh but generally meet international standards.

After nearly four years of delays, the mass trial of 120 defendants accused of high treason and other crimes in relation to the separatist rebellion in Caprivi opened in October 2003. In February 2004, high court judge Elton Hoff acquitted 13 of the defendants; however, the men were immediately re-arrested and the Supreme Court later upheld their detention. Twenty-nine of the defendants effectively dismissed their state-appointed counsel in early 2005 by asking them to challenge Namibia's jurisdiction over Caprivi. The trial of another 12 alleged Caprivi separatists began in September 2005; these defendants argue—although unsuccessfully—that they have been denied due process by both the Namibian and Botswana governments.

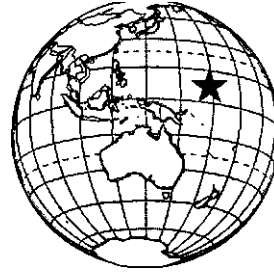
Respect for human rights in Namibia is good, and the NSHR said that the overall civil and political situation in Namibia "improved remarkably" in 2005. Nevertheless, several minority ethnic groups—including the Herero and Damara peoples—claim that the government favors the majority Ovambo in allocating development funding and providing local services. In May, a group representing the Khoisan people became the latest group to demand reparations from Germany for colonial-era atrocities; Herero leaders have already filed a \$2 billion lawsuit in the United States seeking reparations for similar abuses. In 2004, the German government had apologized for atrocities committed against the Herero people but had ruled out reparations, promising increased development aid instead. The Namibian government has made efforts to end discrimination against the indigenous San (Bushmen), although the NSHR says that the San remain marginalized and subject to rights abuses; in September 2005, the rights group stated that the government should compensate the San for "gross negligence."

Despite constitutional guarantees, women continue to face discrimination in customary law and other traditional societal practices. In July, the government announced plans to introduce an inheritance bill to protect the property rights of widows and orphans, who are often stripped of their land and livestock in rural areas. Violence against women is reportedly widespread, and despite the existence of progressive legislation—including a domestic violence act—rights groups have criticized the government for failing to prosecute the majority of cases or provide compensation to the victims. Women are increasingly involved in the political process but remain underrepresented in government and politics.

Abortion is illegal in Namibia except in cases of incest or rape. Homosexuals are discriminated against and have been accused by government officials of causing HIV/AIDS; in 2001, then-president Nujoma called on police to arrest, deport, and imprison homosexuals. In February, the government launched a national policy intended to assist orphans and vulnerable children by supporting community groups, NGOs, and faith-based institutions. In addition, the government has been praised for its programs providing antiretroviral drugs to Namibians infected with HIV/AIDS.

Nauru

Population: 10,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: na **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 61 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Christian (two-thirds Protestant, one-third Roman Catholic)
Ethnic Groups: Nauruan (58 percent), other Pacific Islander (26 percent), Chinese (8 percent), European (8 percent)
Capital: Yaren



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview: Nauru's new reformist government worked in 2005 to save a nearly bankrupt country and introduce reforms to promote political stability and curb official corruption. The country's removal in October from an international blacklist for noncooperation in stopping money laundering is expected to help bring in foreign investment and assistance.

Nauru, located 1,600 miles northeast of New Zealand, was a German protectorate from 1888 until it was seized by Australian troops during World War I. The League of Nations granted a joint mandate to Australia, Britain, and New Zealand to govern the island in 1919. The Japanese occupied Nauru during World War II. In 1947, the United Nations designated Nauru a trust territory under Australia. Nauru gained independence in 1968, became an associate Commonwealth member in 1969, and joined the United Nations in 1999. The threat of rising sea levels for this nation of 10,000 people is sufficiently real that the Australian government has considered offering Australian citizenship to Nauruans.

Phosphate, once plentiful and mined by Australia for use as fertilizer, is almost entirely exhausted, and the mining industry has left behind severe environmental problems. More than 80 percent of this 8-square-mile island republic is uninhabitable. At one time, phosphate mining made Nauru one of the richest countries in the world in per capita income, but financial mismanagement by the government squandered much of this wealth. A trust fund built on phosphate mining royalties is likely to be depleted in a few years. Nauru is highly dependent on foreign aid, and the country is also saddled with a large foreign debt relative to its size.

Recent administrations have tried different ways to generate income—including passport sales and offshore banking operations—but with varying results. Since 2001, Nauru has served as a refugee-processing and detention center for Australia in exchange for millions of dollars in financial aid; the country provides temporary housing for hundreds of mainly Middle Easterners seeking asylum in Australia. Nauru also obtained U.S. agreement for additional financial aid in exchange for the establishment of an intelligence listening post in the country. The country switches dip-

diplomatic recognition between China and Taiwan to secure the most financial aid from the two competitors. Nauru switched recognition from Taiwan to Beijing in July 2002. In May 2005, Nauru again broke ties with China and restored relations with Taiwan.

Intense political rivalry has toppled several governments and brought the government to a virtual standstill. In June 2004, a no-confidence vote ousted President Rene Harris and his cabinet, and parliament chose Ludwig Scotty as his successor. The legislature's deadlock over the budget caused Scotty to dissolve parliament in early October 2004, declare a state of emergency, and call for a new election. The October 23, 2004, vote produced a clear parliamentary majority for Scotty and gave his government a strong mandate for tough reforms to restore the island nation's economic health.

As part of the reform, all public servants must undergo a complete review of employment levels and pay scales. Rents paid to owners of land leased to the government were cut by three-quarters; a new 10 percent import duty was applied to most goods; import tariffs on beer, cigarettes, and luxuries were increased significantly; and almost all government fees and charges were raised. Government investigations also began to trace \$1.3 million of missing funds that is part of \$7.4 million generated from passport sales, as well as to ascertain the whereabouts of 151 missing passports. The government launched a constitutional review in January 2005 to assess whether amendments are needed to improve political stability, including stricter requirements for the use of no-confidence votes to dismiss governments.

Vassal Gadoengin, speaker of the parliament, died of a heart attack in December 2004. His sudden death raised public concern that political instability might return if the opposition called for another no-confidence vote. However, Gadoengin was replaced by Valdon Dowiyogo, a son of former president Bernard Dowiyogo.

Nauru was placed on an international blacklist for failing to stop money laundering activities. Removal from this list in October 2005 is expected to relax restrictions on the use of funds from donor countries and bolster the financial sector. Nauru has closed some 400 offshore banks that had only virtual operations in the island state.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Nauru can change their government democratically. The 18-member unicameral legislature is elected from 14 constituencies by popular vote for three-year terms. Members of parliament choose the president and vice president from among themselves. The president is the head of state and chief executive. Suffrage is universal and compulsory for all citizens 20 years and older.

As an offshore banking center, Nauru has been implicated in international money laundering. The country was also under international pressure, particularly from the United States, to crack down on passport sales when two alleged al-Qaeda operatives were arrested in Malaysia carrying Nauruan passports. In 2003, the government announced that it would close its offshore banking operation, suspend its investor passport program, and update its banking laws and financial sector legislation. Political rivalries, however, have kept the government from moving forward with any of these plans. Nauru was on the international Financial Action Task Force blacklist for money laundering until it was removed in October 2005. Nauru was not ranked by Transparency International in its 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

There have been no reports of government monitoring or censorship of the

media. The country has no daily news publication, but foreign publications, the majority in English, are freely admitted and widely available. The government publishes occasional bulletins, and the opposition publishes its own newsletters. The government owns and operates Radio Nauru, the only radio station, and Nauru TV. A private television station provides sports news coverage. Internet connection began in 1998, and the government is the sole provider of internet services. Internet use is constrained by cost and the lack of reliable infrastructure outside the capital. Nauru's communication system is fragile; television service was unavailable for nearly two months in 2003 when a frequency amplifier broke.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the government generally respects this right in practice. There were no reports of government suppression of academic freedom. There are two primary schools, a secondary school, and a technical school. The government provides scholarships for education overseas.

The government respects the rights of assembly and association in practice. There are a few advocacy groups for women, development-focused groups, and religious organizations. No trade unions or labor protection laws exist in this largely agriculture-based, subsistence economy.

The judiciary is independent, and defendants generally receive fair trials and representation. The Supreme Court is the highest authority on constitutional issues, and the parliament cannot overturn court decisions. Appeals in civil and criminal cases can be lodged with the high court of Australia. Traditional reconciliation mechanisms rather than the formal legal process are used in many cases, usually by choice but sometimes under communal pressure. A civilian head controls the 100-person police force. Police abuse is rare; however, foreign workers complain that the police are slow to act on cases filed against native employers. Nauru has no armed forces; Australia provides defense protection under an informal agreement.

Strict immigration rules govern foreign workers. Those who leave Nauru without their employer's permission cannot reenter, and immigrant workers must leave Nauru within 60 days of termination of employment.

The law provides equal freedom and protection for men and women, but societal pressures limit the ability of women to exercise these rights. Sexual harassment is a crime, though spousal rape is not. Domestic violence is frequently associated with alcohol abuse. Most incidents are reconciled informally within the family or by traditional leaders, although the police and judiciary generally respond to cases filed.

Nepal

Population: 25,400,000 **Political Rights:** 6*
GNI/capita: \$240 **Civil Liberties:** 5
Life Expectancy: 62 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Hindu (80.6 percent), Buddhist (10.7 percent), Muslim (4.2 percent), other (4.5 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Brahman, Chetri, Newar, Gurung, Sherpa, Magar, Tamang, Bhotia, Rai, Limbu
Capital: Kathmandu



Ratings Change: Nepal's political rights rating declined from 6 to 5, and its status from Partly Free to Not Free, as a result of a February 2005 "palace coup" in which King Gyanendra dissolved parliament, assumed direct rule, and declared a state of emergency.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	4,4PF	5,4PF	5,5PF	6,5NF

Overview:

Conditions in Nepal deteriorated dramatically in early 2005, when King Gyanendra engineered a "palace coup" in which he dismissed the interim prime minister and government, assumed executive powers, and declared a state of emergency. In the crackdown that followed, hundreds of political leaders and activists were arrested and detained, while rights to freedom of expression, movement, and assembly were severely curtailed. The ability of journalists, human rights defenders, and other civil society actors to work effectively was particularly compromised. Meanwhile, the ongoing Maoist insurgency continued to destabilize much of the country. Maoist strikes, blockades, and violence directed at key business targets caused hardship for civilians and further crippled the economy. The rate of extrajudicial murders, abductions, and other human rights violations by both sides remained high, although some respite was provided when the Maoists declared a unilateral ceasefire in September. The dynamics of the conflict shifted somewhat in November with the announcement that the Maoists and an alliance of the seven main political parties had reached an agreement by which they would jointly press for an end to the absolute monarchy. However, an end to the political impasse remained remote at year's end. '

King Prithvi Narayan Shah unified this Himalayan land in 1769. Following two centuries of palace rule, the left-leaning Nepali Congress (NC) party won Nepal's first elections in 1959. King Mahendra abruptly dissolved parliament and banned political parties in 1960, and in 1962 he began ruling through a repressive *panchayat* (village council) system. Many parties went underground until early 1990, when the NC and a coalition of Communist parties organized prodemocracy rallies that led King Birendra to re-legalize political parties. An interim government introduced a constitution that vested executive power in the prime minister and cabinet and turned Nepal into a constitutional monarchy.

In Nepal's first multiparty elections in 32 years, Giraja Prasad Koirala, a veteran

dissident, led the NC to victory and formed a government in 1991. Riven by intraparty conflicts, the NC was forced in 1994 to call early elections, which it lost to the Communist Party of Nepal/United Marxist-Leninist, or CPN-UML. The Communists, however, failed to win a majority in parliament. Hopes for a more stable government rose after the NC won a majority in elections held in 1999. The campaign centered on the problems of rampant official corruption, stagnant economic growth, and the Maoist insurgency. Led by Baburam Bhattarai and Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Comrade Prachanda), the Communist Party of Nepal/Maoist (CPN-M, or Maoists) insurgent group has said that it wants an end to the constitutional monarchy and the feudal structure that persists in many parts of the country.

In June 2001, Gyanendra ascended the throne after a bizarre palace incident in which the crown prince apparently shot to death the king and nine other members of the royal family before killing himself. After Sher Bahadur Deuba became interim prime minister in July, the rebels agreed to a ceasefire, but when they broke the ceasefire in November, King Gyanendra declared a state of emergency. The government's subsequent decision to use the army to fight the Maoists marked a sharp escalation in the conflict; an estimated 5,000 people were killed in 2002, and Nepal's infrastructure and economy were severely damaged.

Political instability increased in May 2002, when Deuba dissolved parliament and called for fresh elections to be held in November. After Deuba, then acting as caretaker prime minister, asked the king in October to postpone the elections because of the worsening security situation, Gyanendra dismissed Deuba and assumed executive powers himself. While postponing elections indefinitely, he also installed an interim administration headed by Lokendra Bahadur Chand, a former prime minister and the leader of a small royalist party. Mainstream parties termed his decision undemocratic and organized antigovernment protests calling for a return to the democratic process. The subsequent June 2003 installation of Surya Bahadur Thapa, a member of a right-wing royalist party, as prime minister also lacked legitimacy, and in June 2004, Deuba, who enjoys somewhat more support than his predecessors, was reappointed as prime minister with a mandate to hold elections and reestablish peace. However, the NC and three other parties refused to join the government and parliament remained dissolved.

Peace with the Maoists proved elusive; after the collapse of a ceasefire between the rebels and government forces in August 2003, the rate of killings on both sides once again escalated dramatically. The Maoists continued their policy of bombing, assassinating government officials, particularly at the local level, and attacking key economic targets. Periodic strikes and blockades crippled the economy and caused further hardship for Nepali civilians and business interests. The cabinet formally invited the Maoists to negotiate in September 2004, but they appear unwilling to engage in sustained and serious negotiations with the palace unless the king agrees to their primary demand of convening a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution.

The equation changed dramatically on February 1, 2005, when King Gyanendra dissolved the parliament, assumed executive powers, and imposed a state of emergency, which included detaining politicians, arresting thousands of party activists, outlawing demonstrations, and shutting down numerous media outlets and other means of communication, such as telephone and internet services. Although the state of emergency was lifted in April, restrictions on travel, assembly, and media

remained in place, and many politicians and others continued to be held in detention or under house arrest. Bowing to international pressure, Gyanendra agreed in April to give the United Nations a mandate to establish offices in Kathmandu and regional centers in order to monitor the human rights situation, which has dramatically deteriorated and remains extremely poor.

Civil society groups continued to protest against the restrictions placed on their activities, while the parties themselves struggled to overcome their divisions and form a united front against the palace. The seven main parties banded together in support of a "road map" for a return to democracy that included as a first step the restoration of parliament. Antigovernment protests and agitation became a regular feature of life in Kathmandu during 2005. In response, official pressure on civil society and the media was stepped up; the government amended six media laws in October to increase controls on both content and ownership, and a 15-point code to regulate nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) was introduced in November.

The Maoist leadership was shaken by an internal dispute between leaders Bhattarai and Prachanda during the first half of 2005, though this did not excessively weaken the movement as a whole. There was some decline in the overall level of violence following the Maoists' declaration of a unilateral ceasefire in September, but instances of killing, torture, abduction, and extralegal arrest and detention continue to be perpetrated by both sides. The expansion of government-backed civilian militias that engage in vigilante justice added a new dimension to the already polarized situation in many villages. Despite the king's justification that a royal takeover of the government was needed to crush the Maoist insurgency and improve the security situation, there is little evidence that either occurred during the latter half of 2005.

Instead, the focus of the royal government has been on weakening political parties, civil society, and constitutional bodies and processes, which suggests that its long-term goal is a return to the partyless panchayat system and absolutist monarchy of the 1960s. Realizing that their attempts to engage the king were unlikely to bear fruit, the political parties entered into talks with the Maoists in October. Their efforts culminated in a 12-point agreement, reached between the two sides in November, that called for an end to absolute monarchy and the restoration of democracy; in addition, the parties agreed to boycott municipal elections scheduled for February 2006, while the Maoists expressed a willingness to participate in internationally monitored multiparty elections in the future. This new alliance changed the political equation and squarely allied both the parties and Maoists against the palace.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Citizens of Nepal cannot change their government democratically. The 1990 constitution provides for a 205-seat lower house of parliament that is directly elected for a five-year term and a 60-seat upper house whose members are either elected by national or local government bodies or appointed by the king. Royal influence has always been entrenched by the king's authority to wield emergency powers and suspend many basic freedoms, as well as his role as commander in chief of the army. Parliamentary elections were last held in 1999, and polls that would have elected a new parliament in 2002 have been repeatedly postponed. King Gyanendra ruled from 2002 to 2005 through interim puppet prime ministers and cabinets that have had limited powers

and little legitimacy; in February 2005, he dispensed with this facade when he dissolved parliament and personally assumed command over the government. As head of a new ten-member "Council of Ministers" that has absolute power, is not bound by the constitution, and can rule by decree, Gyanendra is supported by a coterie of hand-picked royalist administrators and politicians who were active in the politically repressive panchayat era.

A wide range of political parties has been allowed to operate since 1990, although the constitution bans parties that are formed along religious, caste, ethnic, tribal, or regional lines. Representation of ethnic minorities, lower castes, and women in state institutions remains inadequate. Since the royal takeover, leaders of the main parties have been subject to arrest, detention, and harassment, including politically motivated court cases, by authorities. Mass arrests of party activists have become the norm prior to and during planned protest actions.

As a result of the escalation in the insurgency, government institutions have all but fallen apart in much of rural Nepal. In the wake of the palace coup, decision making at all levels of government has come increasingly under the control of the royal family and its supporters, as well as the army, all of whom operate without oversight by any elected body. Local army officers act as *de facto* governors of districts, while higher-ranking officers and retired generals have been appointed to a number of influential posts.

Elected governments have made few reforms to Nepal's bloated, inefficient civil service, and ministries continue to operate with little openness or accountability. Corruption is perceived to be endemic in politics and government administration. Legislation passed in 2002 disqualifies those convicted on corruption charges from running in political elections for five years and places the burden of proof in corruption cases on the accused. However, compliance with anticorruption regulations remains weak, and the prosecution of high-level officials is rare, which contributes to a climate of impunity. Nepal was ranked 117 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

After the palace takeover, the king attempted to use the corruption issue as a tool to harass his political opponents. A powerful Royal Commission for Corruption Control was established in February 2005 with the mandate to prosecute corruption cases, and action was initiated against several politicians, including former prime minister Deuba. In July, Deuba was sentenced to two years in prison in a verdict that many observers noted was blatantly politicized.

Conditions for the media, which were already poor as a result of the escalation of the insurgency in 2001, deteriorated sharply after the palace coup. As part of the state of emergency, censorship was imposed (including the posting of army personnel in media premises and the prepublication vetting of news articles), private radio stations were banned outright from broadcasting any news, and other media were banned from reporting critically on government activities or on the insurgency. In addition, a number of prominent editors were arrested and detained during the crack-down. A restrictive press ordinance announced in October gave the government the power to revoke journalists' press accreditation and to impose high fines for publishing banned items. The ordinance also permanently barred private radio stations from broadcasting news, criminalized criticism of the royal family, and restricted media cross-ownership.

The ability of the Nepali press to operate freely remains seriously constrained by both government forces and the Maoists. Journalists who are suspected of pro-Maoist leanings or who produce material critical of the government are regularly arrested and detained by police and security forces, and a number have reportedly been tortured. Those reporters trying to cover events such as antigovernment demonstrations have also been subject to beatings or other harassment by the police. Media professionals are under constant pressure from the Maoists; reporters are regularly abducted and threatened as well as expelled from rebel-held areas. In November 2004, the Maoists imposed a reporting ban in five western districts and put into place provisions that required journalists to obtain permission from local Maoist leaders before reporting from each area.

The government owns both the influential Radio Nepal, whose political coverage is supportive of official policies, and Nepal's main television station. Private radio stations, which flourished prior to the coup, have come under severe strain, as has the privately owned print press. Although access to the internet is generally unrestricted, after the February coup internet access, as well as other forms of communications including telephone lines, were temporarily shut down across Nepal, and access to satellite TV and foreign broadcasts was restricted or censored.

While self-censorship is a growing concern, journalists and local press freedom organizations and workers' groups have been at the forefront of resisting the assault on freedom of expression and other democratic rights. These groups have organized a number of demonstrations demanding the restitution of their rights, as well as pressing the Supreme Court to uphold media freedom in several legal challenges to official ordinances and threats against journalists and specific media outlets, such as Kantipur FM.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and although it describes Nepal as a Hindu kingdom, it does not establish Hinduism as the state religion, and religious tolerance is broadly practiced. However, proselytizing is prohibited, and members of some religious minorities occasionally complain of official harassment, according to the U.S. State Department's 2005 Report on International Religious Freedom. Christian groups have considerable difficulty registering as religious organizations and thus are unable to own land on which to build churches or cemeteries. The government does not restrict academic freedom. However, more than 100 teachers have been killed both by security forces and by Maoists, and Maoists regularly target private schools in rural areas. Schools are regularly forced to close in response to Maoist threats, and thousands of schoolchildren were abducted by Maoists during the year.

Freedom of assembly was banned as part of the February 2005 emergency declaration, and some restrictions remained in place after the emergency was lifted in May. Despite these formal regulations, the year saw a huge increase in antigovernment agitation, including attempts to hold protest marches and demonstrations. In the majority of cases, the demonstrations were broken up by police while hundreds of protestors were arrested in each instance. According to the UN monitoring office, police are using increasingly harsh tactics, which amount to excessive force, against peaceful protestors, including the indiscriminate use of tear gas to dispel protests.

The activities of many NGOs and their staffs were severely restricted following the February takeover, which compromised the ability of human rights defenders

and others to perform their monitoring jobs effectively. Activists have been subjected to arrest and detention, as well as orders preventing them from leaving the Kathmandu Valley, either to travel elsewhere in Nepal or abroad. NGO staffs also continue to face harassment from both police and Maoist guerrillas, including threats, torture and detention, and occasional violence. The insurgency has forced a number of NGOs working in rural Nepal to curb their activities substantially, as the Maoists require NGOs to seek their permission to function in many districts and have expressed hostility towards international development organizations. Watchdog groups expressed concern in November about a proposed code of conduct containing vague provisions that they alleged could place undue restrictions on the operations of NGOs.

As part of the February emergency declaration, union rights were suspended and meetings were banned. Unions have attempted to hold demonstrations demanding a resumption of labor rights, but their leaders are under constant threat of arrest, according to the International Labor Organization. By law, workers in certain essential services cannot stage strikes, and 60 percent of a union's membership must vote in favor of a strike for it to be legal. In 2004, the government expanded the list of "essential industries" to cover entire sectors, such as the transport, tourism, telecommunications, and public utilities sectors; in 2005, it banned trade unions within the civil service. Although bonded labor was outlawed in 2000, it persists in rural areas, and the incidence of child labor has increased as a result of conditions created by the insurgency.

Until the February coup, the Supreme Court had been viewed as largely independent of the executive, but this independence was increasingly threatened during 2005, as court orders were routinely flouted by the government and the court itself repeatedly delayed issuing habeas corpus writs. Lower-level courts remain subject to political pressure and endemic corruption, and effective access to justice for many Nepalese remains limited. Because of heavy case backlogs and a slow appeals process, suspects are often kept in pretrial detention longer than if they had been convicted of the crimes for which they stand accused. Prison conditions are poor, with overcrowding common and detainees sometimes handcuffed or otherwise fettered.

In ordinary criminal cases, police at times commit extrajudicial killings and cause the disappearance of suspects in custody. They also occasionally torture and beat suspects to punish them or to extract confessions. The government generally has refused to conduct thorough investigations and take serious disciplinary measures against officers accused of brutality. Set up in 2000, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has a mandate to investigate alleged human rights violations and provide redress for victims. However, following the February takeover, the NHRC's ability to conduct its work was further hampered by the government, which prevented it from undertaking several important fact-finding missions. In May, King Gyanendra modified the appointments process to the NHRC, stacking the nominating committee with his political allies. Later in the month, four new members (out of a total of five) were appointed, which brought the NHRC wholly under the king's control, in a move that was criticized by the United Nations and NGOs.

Both the government and the Maoists have been accused of increased human rights violations in the context of the insurgency, which now affects the entire country and has claimed nearly 13,000 lives since 1996. The army and poorly equipped

police force are regularly implicated in extrajudicial killings, "disappearances," arbitrary arrests and detentions, rapes, and the torture of suspected Maoists and alleged supporters. The NHRC has recorded several thousand extrajudicial executions since 2001 and several hundred disappearances in each of the last few years, a situation that confers on Nepal the dubious honor of having the highest number of recorded disappearances worldwide. A March 2005 Human Rights Watch report detailing the phenomenon noted, however, that these numbers may actually be underreported.

Several NGOs noted an apparent increase in the number of extrajudicial executions in 2005, as well as growing sophistication by the army in concealing the deaths. Armed civilian vigilante groups called Village Defence Forces (VDFs), who are backed by the army and who intimidate or kill suspected Maoists and their supporters, have also added to the climate of fear and instability that exists in many villages. In late February 2005, violence orchestrated by such groups in the Kapilvastu district resulted in the deaths of at least 31 people and the destruction of more than 700 homes, according to Amnesty International. Police, security forces, and VDFs operate in an atmosphere of almost complete impunity, and instances of perpetrators being punished for these abuses remain rare. However, in a historic decision announced in January, a Royal Nepalese Army officer was sentenced to two years in prison for his role in the 2003 Doramba massacre.

Domestic human rights groups accuse the government of using tough security laws, such as the Public Security Act and the Terrorism and Disruptive Activities Ordinance (TADO), to deter civilians from supporting the Maoists. The government has detained dozens of civilians under TADO, including journalists, teachers, lawyers, and political activists. In 2004, the government amended TADO, extending the period during which suspects could be detained without trial to one year. TADO was further strengthened in 2005; the onus was placed on suspects to prove that they are innocent of accusations, and members of the public are now banned from attending trials or from having access to any case documents. According to a UN report made public in September 2005, 1,200 people were being held under TADO.

The Maoists have killed, tortured, or kidnapped civilians, including suspected informers, landowners, local officials, teachers, and members of mainstream political parties. The rebels—estimated at 5,000 well-trained guerrillas supported by some 15,000 fighters who control perhaps 75 percent of Nepal's territory—have also set up "people's courts" in some districts that hand down summary justice and "people's governments" that levy taxes on inhabitants' income and landholdings. Villagers are regularly coerced into providing food and lodging for traveling Maoist cadres and have been forced to attend political programs in which they are indoctrinated in Maoist ideology.

Adding to civilian hardship, the guerrillas fund themselves in part through extortion and looting, and they ordered a number of strikes and blockades throughout the year that paralyzed major urban centers. The Maoists have closed schools and imposed restrictions on health care facilities and also use forcibly recruited children as soldiers, human shields, and couriers. In 2005, the Maoists introduced a policy in many rural areas requiring each family to provide one able-bodied family member (usually a child) to the cause. Questions have also been raised about the ability of central leadership to control and discipline local cadres.

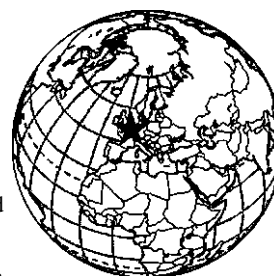
Members of the Hindu upper castes dominate government and business, and

low-caste Hindus, ethnic minorities, and Christians face discrimination in the civil service, courts, and government offices. Despite constitutional provisions that ban caste-based discrimination, *dalits* (untouchables) continue to be subjected to particularly severe exploitation, violence, and social exclusion. Some 2,000 to 3,000 Tibetans escape into exile via Nepal each year, with most ending up in India. In a bid to improve relations with China, the government closed all offices related to the Tibetan refugees in January 2005, according to Agence France-Presse. Nepal also provides asylum to more than 100,000 Bhutanese refugees. International organizations estimate that several hundred thousand Nepalese have been internally displaced as a result of the Maoist insurgency.

Women rarely receive the same educational and employment opportunities as men, and there are relatively few women in government and civil service. Although a 2002 law legalized abortion and broadened women's property rights, many other laws relating to property, divorce, marriage, and citizenship discriminate against women. Domestic violence and rape continue to be serious problems. The government has taken few steps to curb violence against women or to assist victims, and authorities generally do not prosecute domestic violence cases. Amnesty International and others have documented a number of cases of custodial rape of women and girls by both security forces and members of VDFs. Thousands of women and girls are trafficked annually, many to Indian brothels; while the majority are lured by false promises of work or sold by a family member, some are abducted by organized gangs. Because the majority of prostitutes who return to Nepal are HIV-positive, nearly all returnees are shunned and find it difficult to rebuild their lives. The factors that lead to trafficking have worsened as a result of the insurgency, as has children's access to education and other basic services.

Netherlands

Population: 16,300,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$26,230 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 79 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (31 percent), Protestant (21 percent), Muslim (4.4 percent), unaffiliated (43.6 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Dutch (83 percent), other [including Turks, Moroccans, Antilleans, Surinamese and Indonesians] (17 percent)
Capital: Amsterdam



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

A solid majority of Dutch voters rejected the European Constitution in a national referendum in June 2005. The Dutch government agreed to a plan by the integration min-

ister to expel from the Netherlands jobless immigrants who come from the Netherlands Antilles. In July, the radical Islamist who killed the controversial filmmaker Theo van Gogh was sentenced to life in prison for murder.

After the Dutch won their independence from Spain in the sixteenth century, the House of Orange assumed sovereignty over the United Provinces of the Netherlands. A constitutional monarchy emerged in the 1800s with a representative government. The Netherlands remained neutral in both world wars, but was invaded by Nazi Germany in 1940. The occupation ended in 1945, after five years of harsh rule during which Dutch Jews were deported to concentration camps and Dutch workers were forced to work in German factories. The Netherlands ended its neutrality when it joined NATO in 1949; it then became, in 1952, one of the founding members of the European Coal and Steel Community, the precursor to the European Union (EU).

Following the shooting death of right-wing politician Pim Fortuyn in May 2002, his newly formed party, the Pim Fortuyn List (LPF), won second place on an anti-immigrant platform in national elections that same month. The fortunes of the LPF were short lived, however, when party infighting led to a collapse of the new government in October and new elections were called for 2003. In November 2004, Dutch television viewers voted Fortuyn the greatest Dutchman of all times, ahead of William of Orange, the seventeenth-century founder of the modern Dutch state, and Anne Frank, the diarist.

During the January 2003 election, 80 percent of those registered voted, and nine parties won seats in parliament. The Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) received more than 28 percent of the vote and 44 seats, just above the Labor Party (PvdA), which captured around 27 percent and 42 seats, and the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VD), which secured 18 percent and 28 seats. The LPF dropped to fifth place with only around 6 percent of the vote and 8 seats. Following four months of talks and a failed attempt to form a broad, center-left coalition with the PvdA, the CDA brought the VD and Democrats-66 (D66) into a center-right coalition with a slim majority of only 6 seats. Jan Peter Balkenende was named prime minister for a second term. In April 2003, an animal rights activist, Volkert van der Graaf, was sentenced to 18 years in prison for the murder of Pim Fortuyn.

In December 2004, Prince Bernhard, the father of Queen Beatrix, died of cancer at the age of 93. The BBC reported that the German-born prince had won the admiration of his adopted country by serving with the Allied forces fighting against Germany during World War II and by helping to rebuild the country after the Nazi occupation.

Sixty-two percent of Dutch voters rejected the European Constitution in a national referendum in June 2005, following a similar response by voters in France in May. The BBC reported that the no-vote was spurred by a number of factors, including anger toward the bureaucracy in Brussels and fears about the loss of national identity, as well as a general disapproval of the current Dutch government in power.

During the year, the Dutch government agreed to a plan put forth by the integration minister to expel from the Netherlands jobless immigrants who were born in the Netherlands Antilles. Antilleans, who are Dutch passport holders, will be re-

turned to the Netherlands Antilles if they are aged 18 to 24, are not working, and are not studying in the country.

In October, 11 illegal immigrants were burned to death in a fire at the detention center at Schiphol airport in Amsterdam. The immigrants were awaiting deportation to their home countries. The country is still in the process of implementing its highly controversial plan to expel 26,000 failed asylum seekers. In April, 200,000 people in the Netherlands signed a petition asking Queen Beatrix to royally pardon the failed asylum seekers.

Mohammed Bouyeri, the radical Islamist who killed the controversial filmmaker Theo van Gogh, was sentenced in July to life imprisonment for murder. The October decision by a Dutch court to make Bouyeri stand trial a second time on terrorism charges was criticized by some as further escalating ethnic tensions in the country. In November, hundreds of people gathered on the street in Amsterdam where Van Gogh was killed to pay tribute to his life.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of the Netherlands can change their government democratically. The 150-member lower house, or Second Chamber, is elected every four years by proportional representation and passes bills on to the 75-member upper house, or First Chamber, for approval. Foreigners resident in the country for five years or more are legally eligible to vote in local elections.

The leader of the majority party or leader of a majority coalition is usually appointed prime minister by the monarch, currently Queen Beatrix. The vice prime ministers are also appointed by the monarch. Mayors are not elected in the Netherlands but appointed from a list of candidates submitted by the municipal councils. The monarch appoints the Council of Ministers (cabinet) and the governor of each province on the recommendation of the majority in parliament.

The country has few issues with political corruption. The Netherlands was ranked 11 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The country's media are free and independent. Restrictions against insulting the monarch and royal family exist but are rarely enforced. Despite a high concentration of newspaper ownership, a wide variety of opinion is expressed in the print media. Internet access is not restricted.

The Dutch constitution provides for freedom of religion, and religious organizations that provide educational facilities can receive subsidies from the government. Members of the country's Muslim population have encountered an increase in racist incidents in the recent past, including vandalism, arson, defacing of mosques or other Islamic institutions, harassment, and verbal abuse. The LPF won significant support in 2002 running on a platform that characterized Islam as a backward and intolerant culture that oppresses women and homosexuals. Membership is decreasing among all religious denominations, except Islam.

In order to counter undesired foreign influence in the affairs of Dutch Muslim groups, the government has decided to require all imams and other spiritual leaders recruited in Islamic countries to take a one-year integration course before practicing in the country. An all-party parliamentary report issued in January 2004 concluded that the country had failed to create an integrated, multiethnic society. The report

suggested a reversal of the country's 30-year-old policy of multiculturalism, arguing that Muslims resident in the Netherlands should "become Dutch." The government does not restrict academic freedom.

People have the right to assemble, demonstrate, and generally express their opinions. National and international human rights organizations operated freely without government intervention during the year. Workers have the right to organize, bargain collectively, and strike.

The judiciary is independent, and the rule of law prevails in civil and criminal matters. The police are under civilian control, and prison conditions meet international standards.

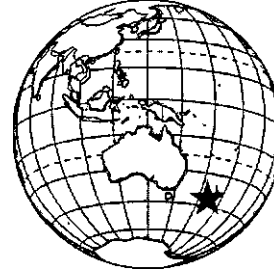
The population is generally treated equally under the law, although human rights groups have criticized the country's recent asylum policies for being unduly harsh and violating international standards. Early in 2004, the parliament approved a bill that will lead to the deportation of as many as 26,000 failed asylum seekers. In May 2005, Human Rights Watch accused the Netherlands, along with several other European countries and the United States, of undermining the global ban on torture by transferring alleged terrorism suspects to countries known for routinely torturing prisoners.

The Dutch are known for their liberal values and laws; among these are tolerant attitudes toward so-called soft drugs, such as marijuana, and the legalization of euthanasia and same-sex marriage. The country passed a law in June 2004 that abolished anonymity in sperm donations so that the children of artificially inseminated women can trace their fathers.

The country is a destination and transit point for trafficking in persons, particularly women and girls for sexual exploitation. New legislation came into effect in January that expands the legal definition of trafficking to include forced labor and increased the maximum penalty for traffickers to 12 years in cases of serious physical injury and 15 years in cases of death. The government also increased its funding for shelters assisting victims and, in April, expanded assistance and eased work visa regulations for victims. In early 2005, the government increased prevention efforts, aimed particularly at preventing youth involvement in prostitution. In April, Dutch police broke up a gang accused of smuggling Chinese asylum seekers and selling them as cheap labor. During the country's 2003 elections, 37 percent of parliamentary seats were won by women. The Dutch government moved in 2005 to prohibit women's wearing of the burqa—full body and face covering—in public.

New Zealand

Population: 4,100,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$15,530 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 79 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Anglican (14.9 percent),
 Roman Catholic (12.4 percent), Presbyterian (10.9 percent),
 Methodist (2.9 percent), other (58.9 percent)
Ethnic Groups: New Zealand European (74.5 percent),
 Maori (9.7 percent), other European (4.6 percent),
 Pacific Islander (3.8 percent), other [including Asian] (7.4 percent)
Capital: Wellington



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

The New Zealand Labour Party won a narrow victory in the September 2005 general elections and formed a new coalition government in October. A new law legalizing same-sex partnerships took effect in April.

New Zealand became self-governing before World War II and gained full independence from Britain in 1947, establishing itself as a parliamentary democracy. The Labour Party has been in office since 1999.

General elections held on September 18, 2005, gave Labour a slim majority (40.7 percent of the vote and 50 parliamentary seats) over the National Party (39.6 percent of the vote and 49 parliamentary seats). A 66-seat majority is necessary for a party to form its own government in the 121-seat parliament. The Green Party, part of the existing Labour-led coalition, secured 5.1 percent of the vote. The Maori Party—the country's first ethnic party, formed in 2004—won almost 2 percent of the vote, ahead of many other small parties. Both the Greens and the Maori Party pledged to support a Labour-led coalition government.

One of the main electoral issues was the country's 20-year-old ban on nuclear-powered vessels from visiting New Zealand's ports—a major sore point in the country's ties with the United States. While the Labour-led government vowed to continue the ban, the opposition National Party wanted to lift it. The National Party also proposed a cut in personal income tax, abolishing special parliamentary seats for Maori, and strictly curbing the application of the Treaty of Waitangi—the country's founding document—which recognizes special rights for the native Maori people. Although the National Party lost, its campaign platform appeared to be increasingly popular among voters; its 49 seats in parliament represented a significant improvement over the 27 seats it captured in the 2002 general election.

In recent years, the government has tightened immigration requirements. A new law requires residents to live for five years in New Zealand before they can apply for citizenship. Another measure to restrict automatic citizenship for persons born in Samoa from 1924 to 1948 spurred 50,000 people to protest before the New Zealand

Embassy in Samoa; New Zealand took Samoa from Germany in 1914 and ruled until 1962. British immigrants represent about one-third of all new residents in New Zealand, followed by Chinese, South Africans, and Indians.

The Civil Union Bill, which grants recognition to same-sex partnerships, was passed by a 65-55 vote in December 2004 and came into effect in April 2005. Although the new law gives same-sex couples similar legal rights as married people, the Marriage Act still applies only to male-female couples.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of New Zealand can change their government democratically. A mixed-member electoral system combines voting in geographic districts with proportional representation balloting. As New Zealand is a member of the Commonwealth, Queen Elizabeth II is the chief of state and is represented by the governor-general. The prime minister—the head of government—is the leader of the majority party or leader of a majority coalition, and is appointed by the governor-general. The unicameral parliament, or House of Representatives, has 120 seats, of which 69 members are elected by popular vote in single-member constituencies and 51 members are chosen from party lists. All parliament members serve three-year terms.

The two main political parties are the center-left New Zealand Labour Party and the mildly conservative National Party. Prime Minister Helen Clark of the Labour Party took office in 1999 and has been in power since. For more than 130 years, the native Maori population has held seven reserved seats in the 120-member parliament. Maori constitute 11 percent of the voting population and around 10 percent of the country's four million people. The new Maori Party, the country's first ethnic party, was formed in 2004 in reaction to a government bill declaring all foreshore and seabed areas as state property held in perpetuity for all peoples of New Zealand. The Maori Party won a by-election in 2004, winning more than 90 percent of the votes in the North Island seat of Te Tai Hauauro.

New Zealand is one of the least corrupt countries in the world. The country was ranked second out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The media are free and competitive. Several newspapers are published nationally and locally in English, as well as in Filipino, Hindi, and Chinese for these growing minority populations. The broadcasting sector was deregulated in 1988. The first Maori-language television station was launched in March 2004; a Maori-language radio station has been broadcasting since 1996. A stronger movement among the Maori population to celebrate their language, arts, and history has increased demand for Maori-language media products. The government does not control or censor internet access, and competitive pricing promotes large-scale diffusion.

Freedom of religion is provided by law and respected in practice. Only religious organizations that intend to collect donations need to register with the government. Although a secular state, the government has fined businesses that operate on the official holidays of Christmas Day, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday. A 2001 law grants exemptions to several categories of stores in response to demands from the non-Christian population. Academic freedom is enjoyed at all levels of instruction.

The government respects freedom of assembly and association. Nongovernmental and civil society groups are active throughout the country, working to pro-

mote community health, minority rights, education, children's welfare, and other issues. Many receive considerable financial support from the government, in addition to private donations.

The New Zealand Council of Trade Unions is the main labor federation. Fewer than 20 percent of the country's wage earners are members of trade unions. Trade union membership has been in decline since the adoption in 1991 of the Employment Contracts Act (ECA), which ended compulsory union membership and prohibited certain types of strikes. The Labour-led government replaced the ECA with the Employment Relations Act (ERA) in 2001. The new law promotes collective bargaining; amendments passed in 2004 provide additional protections to workers when company ownership changes. The ERA also allows unions to charge bargaining fees to non-union workers who enjoy union-negotiated wages and conditions.

The judiciary is independent, and defendants can appeal to the Privy Council in London. Police discrimination against the indigenous Maori people, who comprise more than half of the prison population, has been reported.

Although no laws explicitly discriminate against the Maori, and their living standards have improved in general, most Maori (and Pacific Islanders) continue to lag behind the rest of the population in their social and economic status. In recent years, the Maori population has become more assertive in its claims for land, resources, and compensation from the government. A special tribunal hears Maori tribal claims tied to the 1850 Treaty of Waitangi between the Maori and British; the treaty leased Maori land in perpetuity to the white "settlers." Recent Maori claims for rights to gas and oil fields in the Marlborough Sounds on the South Island have caused tensions with the non-Maori population and become a major issue in national politics.

Violence against women remains a major issue, and the problem is particularly severe among the Maori population and Pacific Islanders. Many governmental and nongovernmental programs work to prevent domestic violence and provide support to victims, and special programs target the Maori community. However, these efforts have not significantly improved the situation. Recently, public pressure pushed the government to consider removal of language in the Crimes Act that allows parents to use "reasonable force" against children.

Nicaragua

Population: 5,800,000 **Political Rights:** 3
GNI/capita: \$740 **Civil Liberties:** 3
Life Expectancy: 69 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (72.9 percent),
 Evangelical (15.1 percent), Moravian (1.5 percent),
 Episcopal (0.1 percent), other (10.4 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Mestizo (69 percent), white (17 percent),
 black (9 percent), Amerindian (5 percent)
Capital: Managua



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
3,3PF	3,3PF	2,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3,PF	3,3PF

Overview:

In 2005, the political alliance between former presidents Daniel Ortega, of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), and Arnoldo Aleman, of the Liberal Constitutional Party (PLC), proved effective in diminishing the power of current president Enrique Bolanos. In April, thousands of Nicaraguans protested a bus fare hike.

The Republic of Nicaragua was established in 1838, 17 years after independence from Spain. Its history has been marked by internal strife and dictatorship. The Communist Sandinistas overthrew the authoritarian Somoza regime in 1979. Subsequently, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) attempted to establish a Marxist government, which led to a civil war. The United States intervened indirectly, supporting an irregular army known as the Contras, which established bases in neighboring Honduras and Costa Rica. The FSLN wrote a new constitution in 1987.

In 1990, the newspaper publisher Violeta Chamorro defeated the FSLN's Daniel Ortega in free and open elections. Before leaving power, the Sandinistas changed laws and sold off state property to party leaders, guaranteeing that they would have political and economic clout in the evolving political climate. Chamorro oversaw a transition of power, with the Sandinista military finally coming under civilian rule in 1995.

The 1996 elections saw former mayor of Managua Arnoldo Aleman of the Liberal Constitutional Party (PLC) capture the presidency after soundly defeating Ortega. Aleman's first priority as president was to reform the army and the police; he named a civilian minister of defense, and a new military code was adopted. Throughout his presidency, Aleman was dogged by charges of corruption, although he never faced formal legal proceedings while in office. In 1999, the PLC government agreed to a governing pact with the FSLN opposition, led by Ortega. The reforms guaranteed Aleman a seat in both the Nicaraguan and the Central American parliaments, thus assuring him immunity from prosecution.

In the November 2001 elections, PLC candidate Enrique Bolanos, a conservative businessman respected for his personal integrity, defeated Ortega, 54 to 45 percent, in a bitterly fought contest in which the two major parties stacked the deck

against participation by smaller parties. Concurrent legislative elections gave the Liberal Alliance 53 seats, the FSLN 38 seats, and the Conservative Party of Nicaragua (PCN) 1 seat.

Although Bolanos was elected president under the PLC banner, he vowed to prosecute corrupt members of the Aleman administration, including the former president, who was accused of giving his family, friends, and political supporters as much as \$100 million that he siphoned from state coffers. That vow caused a break between Bolanos and the PLC, and Bolanos went on to form his own party, the Alliance for the Republic (APRE). The effort to indict, prosecute, and convict Aleman for fraud and embezzlement was protracted but eventually successful; Aleman received a 20-year jail sentence for money laundering in 2003.

Subsequently, Aleman and Ortega renewed their political alliance to thwart Bolanos. With his control of the PLC and its power in the National Assembly, Aleman could have his political allies vote to block any of Bolanos's initiatives. With the FSLN's votes, the Assembly held a veto-proof majority against any of the president's policies. Despite an anticorruption purge of the courts in the 1990s, which swept out some judges beholden to the Sandinistas, FSLN appointees still dominate the country's legal system. With Ortega's political backing, the courts also supported the Assembly's blockade of the president's powers. Aleman used his new political alliance to petition the courts to allow him bail, so he could leave his ranch where he was detained on house arrest as part of his sentence. The former president was granted free movement around the capitol region, severely diluting most of the penalties of his sentence.

In January, the Assembly moved directly against Bolanos, passing new laws that effectively stripped the president of some of his powers. Assuming new powers, the Assembly appointed a list of managers for state utilities; the courts upheld the Assembly's position. However, Bolanos ordered the National Police to block any of the newly appointed managers from taking their positions. After further rulings by Nicaraguan courts, the police installed the Assembly's choices of managers.

Thus blocked by Nicaragua's judiciary, Bolanos appealed to the Central American Court of Justice, which ruled that the changes passed by Nicaragua's National Assembly should not take effect and that the Assembly had overstepped its powers. A tense, six-month standoff resulted during which the Nicaraguan government stalled. The political paralysis delayed Nicaragua's acting on the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), economic reforms requested by the International Monetary Fund, and judicial reform.

The political battles also produced changes within the government. Bolanos stripped Vice President Jose Rizo Castellon, of the PLC, of many of his duties, leading Rizo Castellon to resign. In September, the National Assembly struck against Bolanos' government, stripping Interior Minister Julio Vega and junior minister Mario Salvo—along with another three government officials—of their immunity from prosecution for campaign finance violations. The United States criticized the political pact that had stymied Bolanos as "a creeping coup" and threatened to withhold more than \$4 billion in aid, grants, and debt forgiveness. Eventually, the United States brokered a deal assuring that the new laws limiting presidential powers would not take effect until after Bolanos's term ends, in early 2007.

In April, during the worst of the political stalemate, thousands of university

students organized protests in the capital against a bus fare hike. As many as half of all Nicaraguans live on a dollar a day or less, making the three-cent hike in fares significant. Bolanos said that the bus fare increase was necessary because of skyrocketing oil costs. In an attempt to calm the protesters, Bolanos went personally to picket lines outside the presidential palace to discuss the need for the fare hike. However, after the protestors began throwing stones, he retreated with his security force. During the bus protest, a majority of Nicaragua's mayors signed a petition calling for Bolanos to resign the presidency, which he refused to do.

Nicaragua remains the second-poorest country in the Western Hemisphere behind Haiti. The government officially lists unemployment at 12 percent and underemployment at 34 percent, though those figures probably minimize the scope of the country's economic problems.

Nicaragua lost more than \$2 million in military aid from the United States because of a dispute over the destruction of missiles from the Cold War era. Nicaragua has 1,000 shoulder-mounted SA-7 surface-to-air missiles given by the Soviet Union during the era of Sandinista rule. The United States has pressured Nicaragua to destroy the missiles to prevent their falling into the hands of terrorists, and Bolanos promised that the missiles would be destroyed. However, the National Assembly, in its moves to undercut the president, removed Bolanos's power to destroy the missiles, and the matter remained unresolved at year's end.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Nicaraguans can change their government democratically. The constitution provides for a directly elected president and a 92-member, unicameral National Assembly. Both the presidential and legislative elections are held every five years.

Currently, the PLC holds 42 seats in the Assembly, the FSLN holds 38 seats, the Conservative Party holds one seat, and 10 independents and minor parties hold the remaining seats; the current Assembly has only 91 seats. Former cabinet minister Eduardo Montealegre has stitched together an alliance called the Nicaraguan Liberal Alliance-Conservative Party (ALN-PC), which sometimes votes as a bloc of five in the Assembly. The alliance is a forerunner to Montealegre's plans to run for president in 2006.

The climate for political and civic activities is often affected by corruption, violence, and drug-related crimes directed by street gangs. The drug gangs that operate in other Central American countries are also present in Nicaragua. Nicaragua was ranked 107 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution from the Sandinista period calls for a free press but allows some government censorship. Although the government has not used these powers, there has been no movement to change these constitutional provisions. Some judges, aligned with the FSLN, have ordered restrictions on the reporting of some legal stories. Radio remains the main source of information. Before leaving office, the Sandinistas privatized the national radio system, and it remains in the hands of Sandinista loyalists. There are six television networks based in the capital, including one government-owned network. Many of the networks slant the news in favor of various partisan factions. Three national newspapers based in the capital cover the news from a variety of political views. There is free access to the internet.

Freedom of religion is respected, and academic freedom is generally honored. Freedoms of assembly and association are recognized by law and generally respected in practice. Nongovernmental organizations are active and operate freely. As a whole, civic society has blossomed in the post-Sandinista era. Generally, public demonstrations are allowed. The April 2005 demonstrations—led by Sandinista-associated student groups and unions—saw the arrest and brief detention of violent protestors. The Sandinistas control many of the country's unions and use them to stage rallies and to protest against government policies. The legal rights of non-Sandinista unions are not fully guaranteed. The Ministry of Labor has declared strikes illegal. Citizens have no effective recourse when labor laws are violated either by the government or by the Sandinistas.

The judiciary remains dominated by Sandinista appointees. Many judges are susceptible to political influence and corruption. Because of long delays in trials and a large backlog of cases, the National Assembly has investigated ways to reform the judiciary. However, the government paralysis during 2005 stalled moves toward judicial reform. The FSLN and the PLC have used their influence over the judicial system and their political appointees on the bench to uphold laws making it difficult for minor parties to form and to get their candidates on election ballots. Judicial backing for these laws has also served to keep splinter groups from splitting from Nicaragua's two major parties.

The Ministry of Government oversees the National Police, the agency that is formally charged with internal security; in practice, the police share this responsibility with the army in rural areas. The conduct of security forces, reflecting enhanced civilian control, continues to improve, although abuses of human rights still occur. Forced confessions to the police remain a problem, as do cases in which security forces arbitrarily arrest and detain citizens. Prison and police holding-cell conditions are poor.

Although gang violence is increasing in Managua and other Nicaraguan cities, the crisis of drug gangs threatening national security has not come to Nicaragua. Although the gangs (*maras*) do have members in the country, Nicaragua has not seen the need to call out troops to quell these groups, as in other countries in the region. Nicaragua remains an important transshipment point for drugs making their way north from South America. The Pan-American Highway in Nicaragua's southwest region is a primary venue for narcotics traffickers, although smuggling by air is increasing.

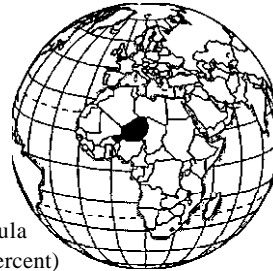
Nicaragua nominally recognizes the rights of its indigenous communities in its constitution and laws, but those rights have not been respected in practice. Approximately 5 percent of the population is indigenous and lives mostly in the Northern Autonomous Atlantic Region (RAAN) and Southern Autonomous Atlantic Region (RAAS). These regions are 50 percent of the national territory, but account for only 10 percent of the population. The largest community is that of the Miskito, with 180,000 people, and the smallest is that of the Rama, with 1,000. The 2001 ruling of the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights over logging rights in favor of these communities has not been fully implemented, although the legislation has been passed. In 2005, indigenous groups formally asked the government to investigate hundreds of atrocities committed by the Sandinistas during the civil war, when the Miskito were allies of the Contra forces. The Sandinistas have said that stories of

atrocities are fueled by continued distrust of the FSLN by the United States, and they blame the United States for encouraging the petition for investigations by the Miskito.

Violence against women, including rape and domestic abuse, remains a serious problem. Nicaragua is a source and transshipment staging point for the trafficking of women and children for purposes of prostitution.

Niger

Population: 14,000,000 **Political Rights:** 3
GNI/capita: \$200 **Civil Liberties:** 3
Life Expectancy: 43 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Muslim (80 percent), other [including indigenous beliefs and Christian] (20 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Hausa (56 percent), Djerma (22 percent), Fula (9 percent), Tuareg (8 percent), Beri Beri (4 percent), other (1 percent)
Capital: Niamey



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,5NF	7,5NF	7,5NF	5,5PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	3,3PF	3,3PF

Overview:

President Mamadou Tandja won a second and final term in office in the second round of presidential elections in December 2004, which were seen as credible by international and domestic observers. Acute food shortages, which affected as much as one-quarter of the population, and a weak economy posed significant challenges to Niger's government and to the wider international community.

After gaining independence from France in 1960, Niger was governed for 30 years by one-party and military regimes dominated by leaders of the Hausa and Djerma ethnic groups. After 13 years of direct military rule, Niger was transformed in 1987 into a nominally civilian, one-party state under General Ali Seibou. International pressure and prodemocracy demonstrations led by the Niger Union of Trade Union Workers forced Niger's rulers to accede to the Africa-wide trend toward democratization in 1990. An all-party national conference drafted a new constitution that was adopted in a national referendum in 1992.

Mahamane Ousmane, of the Alliance of Forces for Change, won a five-year term as the country's first democratically elected president in 1993. Colonel Ibrahim Bare Mainassara overthrew Ousmane in January 1996 and came to power as a result of fraudulent elections six months later. Parliamentary elections in November 1996 were held in an atmosphere of intense intimidation and were boycotted by most opposition parties.

Mainassara was assassinated by members of his presidential guard in April 1999. The commander of the presidential guard, Major Daouda Mallam Wanke, was appointed head of a transitional government to oversee the drafting of a constitution and the organization of democratic elections. Voters approved a new constitution in

July 1999, and presidential and legislative elections were held in November. Supported by the National Movement for a Developing Society (MNSD) and the Democratic and Social Convention (CDS), retired Lieutenant Colonel Mamadou Tandja was elected president in a second round of polling with 60 percent of the vote, defeating former president Ousmane. The MNSD and the CDS obtained a majority in the National Assembly. Both elections were deemed free and fair by international observers.

In July 2004, Niger held nationwide municipal elections as part of its decentralization process. Some 3,700 people were elected to local governments in 265 newly established communes. The ruling MNSD party won more positions than any other political party, though opposition parties made significant gains.

In December 2004, Tandja gained the support of four of his five opponents in the first round of presidential voting to defeat opposition leader Mahamadou Issoufou with 65.5 percent of the vote in the second round. In the 2004 legislative elections, four parties joined the ruling MNSD, and the CDS to win 88 of the 113 seats in the National Assembly.

Tandja's victory was largely credited to widespread support for his efforts to return Niger to relative economic and political stability after years of turbulence. However, Niger remains at the bottom of the UN's 2005 Human Development Index. Niger's land mass is dominated by desert, which covers approximately 80 percent of the country. Chronic structural difficulties exposed the exceptional economic fragility of poor rural households in 2005, as revealed by an alarming increase in extreme child malnutrition cases even in parts of Niger not effected by the 2004 drought and locust invasions. The rising cost of basic goods sparked public demonstrations in March 2005, led by the Coalition Against Costly Living.

As likely food shortages loomed in late 2004, appeals made by the United Nations for assistance to Niger went unanswered. The government began distributing food aid in early 2005 at subsidized prices that were still higher than most rural residents could afford, and initially downplayed the extent of the food crisis, blaming opposition parties and others for "politicizing" the issue. Journalists were harassed for criticizing the slow and insufficient response to a crisis that ultimately affected one-quarter of Niger's population. Media images of malnourished children eventually provoked a more robust response from the international community, though the amount of aid has fallen short of meeting the needs of the affected population.

A better harvest is predicted for 2006, and the government has recommitted itself to economic reforms intended to improve agricultural production. Apart from subsistence farming, on which the majority of the population depends, Niger's economy is based mainly on herding and small-scale trading in the informal sector. Uranium is the most important export, but world demand has declined.

The government launched an economic assistance program for Tuareg ex-combatants in October 2005, the final phase of the decade-old peace accord that ended conflict between ethnic Tuareg and government forces across the Sahel region. In an unusual partnership, the UN-sponsored program is being financed by the United States, France, Belgium, and Libya. Niger works closely with the U.S. government on programs intended to promote security and stem the growth of terrorist organizations across the vast Sahel region.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Niger can change their government democratically. Presidential and legislative polls held in 1999 and 2004 were considered to be free and fair. Niger's president is directly elected every five years. The country has a power-sharing presidential system, with the president as head of state and the prime minister as head of government. The president chooses the prime minister from a list of three persons presented by the majority party or coalition in the National Assembly. In 2004, President Mamadou Tandja requested that Prime Minister Hama Amadou remain in the position he has held since 2000. National Assembly members are elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms in the unicameral, 113-seat legislature.

There are 24 registered parties in Niger, and 9 currently are represented in the National Assembly. Efforts have been made to include minorities, especially northern Tuareg, in positions of authority.

Appointments were made to the government's anticorruption commission in 2005, the first development since the commission's creation in 2003. Several high-level government officials were investigated and charged with corruption in 2005; their cases are pending. Niger was ranked 126 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Constitutional protections for free expression are guaranteed, but these rights are not always respected in practice. The government has proposed legislation that would abolish criminal penalties for libel and otherwise strengthen press freedoms. In March 2005, the editor of the weekly journal *Alternative* was detained after leading protests against price increases in Niamey on behalf of the Coalition Against Costly Living. The journal's radio partner, Alternance FM, was also suspended. Police in the western city of Zinder searched the offices of the privately owned broadcaster Radio Television Tenere (RTT) and confiscated a videocassette containing footage of the March 2005 street demonstrations. In September 2005, the publications director of *Echos Express* was convicted, fined, and sentenced to a four-month prison term by a court in Agadez for defaming the local governor, whom *Echos* had criticized in a report on corruption in the distribution of famine aid. The case is on appeal. Security forces arrested independent journalist Abdoulkarim Salifou in November on charges of criminal libel after Salifou published an article that accused the country's treasurer of embezzling funds. Access to the internet is unhindered, though only a small percentage of the population has the means to use it.

Freedom of religion is respected, although Muslims are not uniformly tolerant of the rights of members of minority religions to practice their faith. Islam is practiced by 80 percent of the population. Academic freedom is guaranteed but not always respected.

Constitutional guarantees of freedom of assembly and association are generally respected, and most human rights and other nongovernmental organizations operate openly and publish reports that are often critical of the government. Security forces detained leaders of the Coalition Against Costly Living on charges of threatening state security after allegedly using language reminiscent of earlier coup attempts during a radio broadcast on the March 2005 demonstrations. The leaders were released provisionally, and their case is pending.

Workers have the right to form unions and bargain for wages, although more

than 95 percent of the workforce is employed in the nonunionized subsistence agricultural and small-trading sectors.

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, and courts have shown signs of independence. However, the judiciary is overburdened and subject to executive interference and other outside influence. Efforts at reform are under way, and respect for human rights has improved under Tandja's government. Nevertheless, prolonged pretrial detention is common. Police forces are underresourced and poorly trained, and there were isolated incidents of police abuse, including the reported beating of student demonstrators in the town of Konni in February.

Prisons are characterized by overcrowding and poor health and sanitary conditions; however, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other humanitarian groups have unrestricted access to prisons and detention centers. Discrimination against ethnic minorities persists, despite constitutional protections. The Hausa and Djerma ethnic groups dominate government and business, although major ethnic groups are represented at all levels of government.

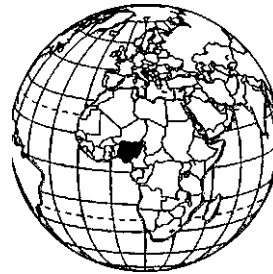
The government has supported greater minority representation in the National Assembly by designating eight seats for representatives of "special constituencies," specifically ethnic minorities and nomadic populations. Instances of "hate speech" targeted against specific ethnic groups have been investigated and prosecuted by the government.

Nomadic peoples continue to have less access to government services. Under pressure from human rights groups, the National Assembly in 2003 banned the keeping or trading of slaves, though the practice is believed to continue under a system of caste-based servitude. The government has begun to sensitize the population on the trafficking of children and has increased cooperation with its neighbors to limit the practice. In 2005, Niger signed a multilateral cooperation agreement with other countries in the region to combat child trafficking.

A quota system designed to improve women's access to appointed and elected office has increased women's representation at all levels of government. Women continue to suffer extensive societal discrimination, however, especially in rural areas. Family law gives women inferior status in property, inheritance rights, and divorce. In the east, some women among the Hausa and Peul ethnic groups are cloistered and rarely allowed to leave their homes without a male escort. Domestic violence against women is reportedly widespread. Sexual harassment and female genital mutilation are criminal offenses.

Nigeria

Population: 131,500,000 **Political Rights:** 4
GN/capita: \$350 **Civil Liberties:** 4
Life Expectancy: 44 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Muslim (50 percent),
 Christian (40 percent), indigenous beliefs (10 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Hausa and Fulani (29 percent),
 Yoruba (21 percent), Ibo (18 percent), other (32 percent)
Capital: Abuja



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,6NF	7,6NF	6,4NF	4,3PF	4,4PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF

Overview:

A national conference held in 2005 aimed at drafting changes to Nigeria's constitution ended without agreement on the most fundamental challenges facing the country, including how to share the nation's oil wealth. The government of President Olusegun Obasanjo continued its efforts to reform the economy and fight corruption, winning debt relief from international creditors. Meanwhile, the government cracked down harder on those it considered a threat to national unity.

The military has ruled Nigeria for all but 15 years since independence from Britain in 1960. Generals and their backers argued that they were the only ones who could keep a lid on simmering tensions among the country's 250 ethnic groups, as well as between religious communities; the north is largely Muslim, while the south is mainly Christian.

Nigeria initially appeared to be emerging from several years of military rule under General Ibrahim Babangida in 1993, when presidential elections were held. Moshood Abiola, a Muslim Yoruba from the south, was widely considered the winner, but the military annulled the results. It continued to rule behind a puppet civilian administration until General Sani Abacha, a principal architect of previous coups, took power in November 1993. A predominantly military Provisional Ruling Council (PRC) was appointed, and all democratic structures were dissolved and political parties banned. Abiola was arrested in June 1994 after declaring himself Nigeria's rightful president. He died in detention, after suffering from a lack of proper medical care, just five weeks after Abacha himself died suddenly in June 1998.

The departure of the two most significant figures on Nigeria's political landscape opened possibilities for democratic change. General Abdulsalami Abubakar, the army chief of staff, emerged as the PRC's consensus choice to be the country's next leader, and he promised to oversee a transition to civilian rule in 1999. However, Olusegun Obasanjo—a former general who had led a military regime in Nigeria from 1976 to 1979 and had spent three years in prison under Abacha—won the presidential poll in February. In legislative elections held that year, Obasanjo's People's Democratic Party (PDP) won the most seats in both the Senate and House of Representatives.

Nigeria made its first peaceful transition from one democratically elected government to another with the April 2003 election, when Obasanjo was reelected for a second term. Anticipated widespread unrest during the elections did not materialize, although there was violence leading up to the polls, which were marred by irregularities. While Obasanjo faced 19 opposition candidates, the race ultimately was between the southern Christian Obasanjo and former general Muhammadu Buhari, a northern Muslim and member of the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP). Obasanjo won the presidency with 62 percent of the vote compared with 32 percent for Buhari, who filed a petition on behalf of some 20 opposition parties to nullify the election results. The Supreme Court in 2005 unanimously rejected the challenge, saying the fraud discovered was not enough to have changed the poll results.

Obasanjo's PDP also dominated the 2003 legislative elections, in which at least 30 parties participated. Obasanjo's PDP won 52 of 109 Senate seats and 170 of 360 House seats. The ANPP captured 25 seats in the Senate and 81 in the House, while the Alliance for Democracy won 5 Senate seats and 30 House seats. Smaller parties secured the remainder of seats.

After initially resisting calls for a national dialogue, Obasanjo opened a national conference in 2005 by warning delegates against questioning Nigeria's unity. Although Nigerians had long called for a national conference, the talks drew criticism from Obasanjo's opponents and members of civil society. They complained that delegates were appointed by Obasanjo or nominated by Nigeria's 36 state governors—28 of whom belong to the ruling party—and therefore lacked credibility. About 400 delegates met for five months and failed to agree on fundamental issues such as how to divide the country's oil wealth and how to effectively deal with religious and ethnic tensions. The delegates called for a special commission to devise possible solutions to those problems. The National Assembly will consider recommendations from the conference for possible constitutional changes.

The government in 2005 cracked down harder on those it considered a threat to national unity or who might disrupt the country's oil output. Demonstrations and rallies held by the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) were broken up by security forces, and scores of people were detained, according to human rights groups. In October, authorities arrested a separatist ethnic militia leader in the volatile Niger Delta region and charged him with treason. Moujahid Dokubo-Asari, leader of the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force, was detained after he allegedly called for the breakup of Nigeria in a newspaper interview.

Serious human rights violations remained a problem in Nigeria during the year. In a rare public admission of guilt, the government in August admitted that there had been widespread extrajudicial killings of suspects and innocent citizens by the country's police. The comments came after New York-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that torture and killing of suspects by police was rampant in Nigeria and largely went unpunished. Obasanjo promised tough action to clean up the police force.

The Obasanjo government in 2005 continued its economic reform efforts and won praise from international creditors for attempts to fight corruption. In 2005, the International Monetary Fund said that for the first time in decades Nigeria's non-oil sectors were growing significantly faster than the oil sectors and that this had rees-

tablished confidence in the country as a foreign investment location. The Paris Club of creditor nations announced that it was impressed by Nigeria's economic reform program and wrote off \$18 billion in debt; Nigeria has a \$30 billion foreign debt.

Officials in September said they had recovered nearly \$460 million found in Swiss bank accounts linked to former president Abacha. Money linked to Abacha has been found in other countries as well.

The majority of Nigerians are engaged in small-scale agriculture, while most wealth is controlled by a small elite. The agriculture and manufacturing sectors deteriorated considerably in the pursuit of oil, which accounts for more than 98 percent of the country's export revenues and almost all foreign investment.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Nigeria can change their government democratically. The president is elected by popular vote for no more than two four-year terms. Members of the bicameral National Assembly are elected for four-year terms to the 109-seat Senate and the 360-seat House of Representatives. Local and international observers noted irregularities during the 2003 presidential and legislative elections, including ballot-box stuffing, multiple voting, alteration of results, and voter intimidation. Observers said fraud and intimidation were particularly prevalent in the southeast of the country and in the Niger Delta.

Major political parties include the ruling PDP, the ANPP, the National Democratic party, the Alliance for Democracy, and the People's Redemption Party. Major political parties include the ruling PDP, the ANPP, the National Democratic Party, the Alliance for Democracy, and the People's Redemption Party.

Corruption and impunity remain problems, with corruption having bled Nigeria of billions of dollars in oil revenue. The government has taken steps to improve transparency and reduce corruption, including reforming procedures for contract procurements and bidding, and several high-profile cases emerged in 2005. Former Senate president Adolphus Wabara was sacked and charged with corruption, and Education Minister Fabian Osuji was fired for allegedly bribing Wabara and six other lawmakers to smooth passage of his annual budget. After discovering that top officials were to have been among the beneficiaries, Obasanjo fired his housing minister for allegedly trying to sell off more than 200 government houses at cut-rate prices. Police Chief Tafawa Balogun suddenly resigned as inspector general of police in January and was later arrested and charged with graft and money laundering. Nevertheless, government critics note that no top official has actually been convicted and jailed for corruption since Obasanjo was elected president. The Senate in June 2005 refused to ban the acceptance of "gifts" in its new code of ethics; senators said that bribery was already illegal and accepting gifts was part of Nigerian culture. Nigeria was ranked 152 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech and expression is constitutionally guaranteed and generally respected in practice. More than 200 private radio and television stations broadcast throughout the country, and scores of print publications operate largely unhindered. However, criminal defamation laws continue to be used against journalists. Sharia (Islamic law) in 12 northern states imposes severe penalties for alleged press offenses. Local authorities regularly target journalists who criticize them, and the

media in northern Nigeria are most at risk. The government does not impede internet access.

A newspaper publisher, Owei Kobina Sikpi, was arrested in October after his publication, the *Weekly Star*, carried an article alleging a state governor was involved in money laundering. Sikpi was held secretly for nearly a week and then charged with seven counts of false information. Members of the State Security Service (SSS) in August raided the offices of the Lagos-based weekly *The Exclusive* and confiscated more than 200 copies of the tabloid. Authorities apparently wanted to censor coverage of ethnic Igbo nationalist groups. The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists has documented a pattern of SSS suppression of publications reporting on the proseparatist group MASSOB.

Religious freedom is guaranteed by the constitution, but many Nigerians, including government officials, often discriminate against those of a religion different from their own. Religious violence, often reflecting regional and ethnic differences and accompanying competition for resources, is common. However, religious violence claimed fewer lives in 2005 than in the previous year.

In May 2005, HRW said that the government deserved much of the blame for religious violence in Kano and Plateau states that killed nearly 1,000 people in 2004. The report concluded that many of the deaths could have been prevented if authorities had heeded warning signs, and that authorities still had not prosecuted the civilians and police responsible for the deaths. Hundreds of armed riot police were deployed to the northern city of Sokoto in June 2005 following clashes between Sunni and Shiite Muslims. More than a dozen people died in Sokoto between February and June in a dispute over access to mosques. Academic freedom is guaranteed and honored in practice.

Freedom of assembly and association are generally respected in practice. Thousands of demonstrators marched peacefully through Lagos in September to protest a rise in fuel costs after subsidies were cut; police were ordered not to carry firearms. However, Amnesty International said in November that brutal repression of protests remained a routine tactic of Nigerian security forces in the oil-rich Niger Delta, and that communities protesting in the region often suffered "collective punishment" by security forces. In 2005, security forces broke up several demonstrations in the southeast by the banned organization MASSOB, which claims that ethnic Igbos suffer discrimination by the government. Human rights groups report that dozens of pro-Biafran activists have been killed in the past six years and hundreds have been detained. (The Biafran civil war of the 1960s claimed some one million lives.) More than 50 people who participated in a soccer tournament in Lagos in the name of MASSOB in 2004 were detained for more than six months and charged with treason in March 2005. Authorities in October arrested MASSOB leader Ralph Uwazuruike, who maintains that the movement is nonviolent.

Despite several statutory restrictions on the rights of trade unions, workers—except members of the armed forces and those considered essential employees—may join trade unions, and the right to bargain collectively is guaranteed. About 10 percent of the workforce is unionized. Legislation passed in March prevents umbrella unions, such as the Nigeria Labor Congress (NLC), from calling strikes; such action is now decided by individual unions. The new legislation makes union membership voluntary and gives unions the right to form outside the umbrella group. It

also bans strikes in essential services such as health and education. According to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, Nigeria has "serious shortcomings" in the application and enforcement of core labor standards.

The judiciary is subject to political influence and is hampered by corruption and inefficiency. Defendants do not always have legal representation and are often ill-informed about procedures and their rights. Lengthy pretrial detention remains a problem. In the 12 northern states where Sharia law is in effect, human rights groups say Islamic courts fail to respect due process rights, which leads to harsh and discriminatory sentences. Nigeria's prisons are overcrowded, unhealthy, and life-threatening. Nevertheless, the government has allowed international organizations to visit detention facilities, and some improvements have been made.

Abuses by security forces and a climate of impunity remain problems. In July, HRW said police still routinely torture detainees. According to the report, rape and mutilation are commonly used to extract confessions, and suspects are suspended from the ceiling by their hands, beaten with metal objects, sprayed with tear gas in their eyes, or shot in the feet; sometimes the injuries result in death. A UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions said in July that Nigerian police use armed robbery as a blanket charge to jail people when they refuse to pay bribes and to justify the unlawful killing of civilians. The local Centre for Law Enforcement Education in Nigeria estimates that police at checkpoints shoot about 1 in 20 motorists who refuse or fail to pay bribes. A landmark police trial, in which six police officers were charged with the murder of six traders, opened in Abuja in July.

A human rights commission appointed by Obasanjo has concluded that three of Nigeria's former military rulers were personally liable for extrajudicial killings perpetrated while they were in power. The commission recommended that all three men—General Ibrahim Babangida, General Muhammadu Buhari, and General Abdulsalami Abubakar—be banned from holding high office in the future.

The constitution requires government offices to reflect the country's ethnic diversity. The Hausa-Fulani from northern Nigeria generally dominated the military and the government from independence until Obasanjo was elected in 1999. Obasanjo's government is both ethnically and religiously diverse. Although the constitution prohibits ethnic discrimination, societal discrimination is widely practiced, and clashes frequently erupt among the country's many ethnic groups. A number of armed youth groups have emerged to defend their ethnic and economic interests. Ethnic minorities in the Niger Delta feel particularly discriminated against, primarily with regard to receiving a share of the country's oil wealth. Officials in 2005 said that the next census would probably exclude questions on religious or ethnic origin, fearing that highlighting differences could inflame tensions.

Militants loyal to Niger Delta ethnic militia leader Moujahid Dokubo-Asari claim to be fighting for political autonomy and a bigger slice of oil revenues for the Ijaw ethnic group, the largest in the Delta region. Clashes between the Ijaws and their rivals, the Itsekiris, have claimed hundreds of lives in the Delta. Threats by Dokubo-Asari's group to kill foreign oil workers in 2004 sent oil prices soaring. That same year, Dokubo-Asari agreed to disarm in exchange for cash and amnesty. The militants briefly took over a few oil facilities after Dokubo-Asari was arrested in 2005.

Nigerian women face societal discrimination, although educational opportunities have eroded a number of barriers over the years. In some ethnic groups, women are denied equal rights to inherit property and marital rape is not considered a crime. About 60 percent of Nigerian women are subjected to female genital mutilation (FGM); the practice has declined steadily in the past 15 years. The Ministry of Health and several women's groups at local and state levels are working to educate communities about the dangers of FGM. Although the federal government publicly opposes FGM, it has taken no legal action to end the practice. Women's rights have suffered serious setbacks in the northern states governed under Sharia. Amnesty International said in May 2005 that Nigerian women often suffer abuse in the family: "In most cases, the criminal justice system fails to offer protection, justice, or redress to women who have been subjected to violence in the home." The National Assembly in 2005 was considering a bill providing penalties for violence against women. Human trafficking to, from, and within the country for purposes of labor and prostitution is a problem. The government in 2004 outlawed human trafficking and set up an agency to deal with offenders.

North Korea

Population: 22,900,000 **Political Rights:** 7
GNI/capita: \$440 **Civil Liberties:** 7
Life Expectancy: 71 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Buddhist, Confucian, other
Ethnic Groups: Korean
Capital: Pyongyang



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF

Overview:

After months of failed negotiations over the apparent escalation of North Korea's nuclear weapons program, on September 19, 2005, Pyongyang agreed to give up all its nuclear activities and rejoin the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Despite this concession to international opinion, in October, North Korea ordered an end to nearly all international humanitarian aid programs in the country, a move that has increased concerns that the lack of food supplies in North Korea may lead to renewed famine.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea was established in the northern part of the Korea Peninsula in 1948 following three years of post-World War II Soviet occupation. At independence, North Korea's uncontested ruler was Kim Il-sung, a former Soviet army officer who claimed to be a guerilla hero in the struggle against Japan, which had annexed Korea as a colony in 1910. North Korea invaded South

Korea in 1950 in an attempt to reunify the peninsula under Communist rule. Drawing in China and the United States, the ensuing three-year conflict killed at least 2.5 million people and ended with a ceasefire rather than a peace treaty. Since then, the two Koreas have been on a continuous war footing, and the border remains one of the most heavily militarized places in the world.

Kim Il-sung solidified his power base during the Cold War, purging rivals, throwing thousands of political prisoners into labor camps, and fostering a Stalinist personality cult that promoted him as North Korea's "Dear Leader." The end of the Cold War, however, brought North Korea's command economy to the brink of collapse, as Pyongyang lost crucial Soviet and Eastern bloc subsidies and preferential trade deals.

Kim's death in 1994 ushered in even more uncertainty. Under his son, the reclusive Kim Jong-il, the regime has maintained its rigid control on all aspects of its citizens' lives. According to reports by the United Nations and the U.S. State Department, during the initial years of Kim Jong-il's rule (1995-1997) natural disasters, severe economic mismanagement, and extreme political isolationism caused famine killing as many as 2.5 million people and economic shrinkage of approximately 30 percent.

Despite its recent and devastating history with famine, in October 2005, North Korea ordered the UN World Food Program (WFP) to shut down 19 food-enrichment factories, which since 1995 have provided more than two million tons of food aid. Seven percent of North Koreans are believed to be starving, and 37 percent of North Koreans are chronically malnourished. The factory closings came after North Korean deputy foreign minister Choe Su Hon declared, "Our government is prepared to provide the food to all our people," and made claims that the United States was attempting "to politicize humanitarian assistance, linking it to the human rights issue." In October 2004, U.S. president George W. Bush had signed the North Korean Human Rights Act, which banned all non-humanitarian assistance to North Korea because of its dismal human rights record. North Korea has stated that it will still accept long-term development aid, including assistance with infrastructural projects intended to promote the country's long-term economic growth.

In addition, North Korea's state-run health system has all but collapsed—hospitals lack adequate medicine and equipment, and clean water is in short supply because of electricity and chlorine shortages. Concerns over public health and sanitation have become more salient because of rising fears of an avian influenza pandemic in East Asia.

North Korea permitted some market reforms in 2002, which included easing price controls, raising wages, devaluing the currency, giving factory managers more autonomy, and allowing some farmers to sell their products at market prices. Nevertheless, living standards for ordinary North Koreans have actually decreased, as a result of a subsequent rise in inflation and unemployment. In October 2005, a ban on the free market sale of rice and other grains was imposed to ensure that "public distribution centers will take over countrywide distribution." Citizens have thus increasingly sought employment in the informal economy to complement their average monthly salary of \$1. At present, there is no expectation of more far-reaching market reforms; the government is opposed to any measures that would grant North Koreans more personal autonomy for fear of undermining the dictatorship's tight grip on power.

Tensions relating to North Korea's 2002 claim of having an active nuclear weapons program have effectively defined its foreign relations for the past several years. In 2002, North Korea expelled International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors charged with monitoring its Yongbyon nuclear reactor. In 2003, North Korea officially pulled out of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Despite North Korea's unverified claims of possessing nuclear weapons, many analysts believe that the greatest threat posed by North Korea's nuclear program is the potential of the cash-strapped country to sell plutonium to rogue states or terrorists for hard currency. For this reason, efforts have been made to engage North Korea in the six-nation nuclear talks, which have included South Korea, the United States, Russia, China, and Japan, in order to convince Pyongyang to end its nuclear program. North Korea has resisted these efforts. The North Korean Foreign Ministry maintains the country has manufactured nuclear weapons for self-defense to "cope with the Bush administration's ... undisguised policy to isolate and stifle the [North]."

In May 2005, military tensions in East Asia were heightened by the North Korean launch of a short-range missile into the Sea of Japan on the eve of a meeting by member nations of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Many analysts now believe that the missile launch amounted to a negotiating tactic—that of creating a minor crisis to force concessions in a subsequent round of the six-nation talks.

Despite initial opposition to the six-party talks, in a joint statement in September 2005, North Korea agreed to give up all its nuclear activities and to rejoin the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in return for, according to the U.S. State Department, an international agreement to discuss the provision of "security assurances, economic and energy cooperation" and the possible development of nuclear power for "peaceful purposes" in the form of a light-water reactor.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of North Korea cannot change their government democratically. North Korea is a totalitarian dictatorship and one of the most restrictive countries in the world. Every aspect of social, political, and economic life is tightly controlled by the state. The regime denies North Koreans all basic rights, subjects tens of thousands of political prisoners to brutal conditions, and maintains a largely isolationist foreign policy.

Kim Jong-il, who has been the North Korean leader since 1997, and a handful of elites from the Korean Worker's Party (KWP) rule by decree, although little is known about the regime's inner workings. Kim is formally general secretary of the KWP, supreme commander of North Korea's 1.1 million-person army, and chairman of the National Defense Commission. This last post has been the "highest office of state" since the office of president was abolished in 1998.

North Korea's parliament, the Supreme People's Assembly, is a rubber-stamp institution and meets only a few days each year. Parliamentary and local assembly elections were held in 1990, 1998, and, most recently, in August 2004. The elections were not free. The Central Election Committee often reports that Kim Jong-il receives 100 percent of the vote in his constituency. The government has created a few minority parties for the sake of appearances, but they do not fulfill any real electoral role. The next round of elections is slated for 2008.

North Korea was not ranked by Transparency International in its 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and the press, but in practice they are nonexistent. All media outlets—print, television, and radio—are either run or controlled by the state. In 2005, Reporters Without Borders reported that a North Korean journalist was punished for mistakenly referring to a deputy minister as simply a minister. Televisions and radios are permanently fixed to state channels, and all publications are subject to strict supervision and censorship. As of this year, internet access in North Korea is restricted to a few thousand people who have received state approval; all foreign websites are blocked by the state.

Although freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitution, it does not exist in practice. The U.S. State Department has reported that "members of underground churches have been killed because of their religious beliefs and suspected contacts with overseas evangelical groups."

North Koreans are subject to intense political and ideological indoctrination. According to a U.S. State Department human rights report, released in 2005, the cult of personality surrounding Kim Jong-il (and his father, Kim Il-sung) and the official *juche* ideology have approached the level of a state religion. "Juche" refers to a national ideology of self-reliance and may help explain the regime's resistance to foreign humanitarian aid, despite widespread hunger and poverty. The *juche* ideology, which takes precedence over academic education in the nation's schools, is ingrained into citizens through all forms of civic engagement, all of which are state-controlled. The state-owned media bolsters the cult of personality of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il by infusing plays, movies, books, and music with patriotic messages.

The law bans all independent civic and social welfare groups. There are no known associations or organizations other than those created by the government, although there have been reports this year of what has been called the "first sign of a dissident movement" in North Korea—the Freedom Youth League. Strikes, collective bargaining, and other basic organized-labor activities are illegal.

North Korea does not have an independent judiciary and does not acknowledge individual rights, emphasizing instead "socialist norms of life" and a "collective spirit." Little information is available about specific criminal justice practices. Security forces are known to commit serious human rights abuses. Reports of arbitrary detentions, "disappearances," and extrajudicial killings are common; torture is widespread and severe. Starvation, torture, and execution in prisons are frequent. Collective punishment—the imprisonment of an entire family if one member of the family is accused of a crime—is also a common practice.

In addition to its unofficial denial of nominal "liberties," the government operates a highly developed system of official social discrimination. In this regard, all citizens are classified under specific security ratings—"core," "wavering," or "hostile"—in terms of their perceived loyalty to the regime. This rating essentially determines every facet of a person's life, including employment and educational opportunities, place of residence, access to medical facilities, and even access to stores. These ratings are based on reports from a huge network of informers that monitors nearly all correspondence and communication and can subject entire communities to security checks.

Freedom of movement does not exist. Although internal travel rules have been relaxed to allow citizens to travel beyond their home village, most people have no

viable means of transportation. Forced internal resettlement is routine. Access to Pyongyang, where the availability of food, housing, and health care is relatively better, is tightly restricted. Emigration is illegal, although exit visas are sometimes issued to trusted businessmen, artists, athletes, scholars, and religious figures. Defection is a capital crime punishable by death. Controversy has developed in recent months over the Chinese government's willingness to return defectors to North Korea, where they are subject to torture, harsh imprisonment, or death.

Despite recent market reforms, North Korea's economy remains both centrally planned and grossly mismanaged. The government assigns all jobs, prohibits private property, and spends nearly one-third of its gross domestic product on its military. The economy is also hobbled by a lack of infrastructure, a scarcity in energy and raw materials, and an inability to borrow on world markets or from multilateral banks because of sanctions, lingering foreign debt, and ideological isolationism.

Little is known about how problems such as domestic violence or workplace discrimination may affect North Korean women. There have been widespread reports of trafficked women and girls among the tens of thousands of North Koreans who have recently crossed into China.

Norway

Population: 4,600,000 **Political Rights:** 1

GNI/capita: \$43,400 **Civil Liberties:** 1

Life Expectancy: 80 **Status:** Free

Religious Groups: Church of Norway (85.7 percent), Pentecostal (1 percent), Roman Catholic (1 percent), other Christian (2.4 percent), Muslim (1.8 percent), other (8.1 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Norwegian, Sami (20,000)

Capital: Oslo

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F



Overview:

In September 2005, a center-left coalition of parties led by the Labor Party won national elections, displacing the center-right alliance that had been in power since 2001. The country suffered hundreds of casualties in Thailand during the Asian tsunami in December 2004.

After being ruled by Denmark from 1450 to 1814, Norway enjoyed a brief spell of independence during which the Eidsvoll Convention, Norway's current constitution, was adopted. Subsequently, Norway became part of a Swedish-headed monarchy. Norway gained independence in 1905 and has since functioned as a constitutional monarchy with a multiparty parliamentary structure.

Norwegian citizens narrowly rejected European Union (EU) membership in referendums in 1972 and 1994, despite government support for joining. In addition to wanting to preserve their sovereignty, Norwegians feared the threat that membership would pose to the country's energy, agriculture, and fishing industries. As part of the European Economic Area, Norway has nearly full access to European markets. Nevertheless, while 75 percent of Norwegian exports go to EU countries, and Norway has adopted almost all EU directives, it has little power to influence EU decisions as long as it remains outside.

During September 2005 legislative elections, the center-left Red-Green coalition—led by the Labor Party and including the Socialist Left Party and the "green" Center Party—won 47.9 percent of the vote and 87 seats. The election marked the first time that Labor had entered into a coalition since the end of World War II. The previous governing coalition—a three-party center-right coalition that included the Conservatives, the Christian People's Party, and the Liberals—captured only 26.8 percent of the vote and 44 seats. The other major winner in the election was the anti-immigrant Progress Party, which won 22.1 percent of the vote and 38 seats, making it the largest single opposition party in parliament. The BBC reported that education, care for the elderly, and the state of the economy were the key issues of the electoral campaign.

A founding member of NATO, Norway has an active foreign policy. The government has sent envoys and negotiators to help resolve some of the world's most contentious disputes, most recently the conflict in Sri Lanka. In October, a top Norwegian envoy, Trond Furuhoide, held talks with the Sri Lankan government and the separatist LTTE (Tamil Tigers), which had stalled.

Norway runs 10 percent of the world's charities and gives one of the highest levels of overseas development aid as a percentage of its gross domestic product, a policy that has the support of 80 percent of the Norwegian public.

In 2005, Norway was ranked first in the UN Human Development Index for the fifth year running. Its high standard of living is due in large part to the discovery of energy deposits in the 1960s; Norway is currently the world's third-largest oil exporter. The government has put 80 percent of oil revenues in a petroleum fund that is invested overseas, thus helping to ensure that the benefits are enjoyed for many years.

During the Asian tsunami in December 2004, Norway suffered hundreds of casualties in Thailand—a popular vacation spot for Norwegians. Norwegian officials were criticized for their supposed lateness in responding to the disaster.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Norway can change their government democratically. The national parliament, called the Storting, currently has 169 seats, an increase of 4 over the number elected in 2001. The members of the Storting are directly elected for four-year terms by a system of proportional representation. One-quarter of the members are then selected to serve as the upper chamber, or Lagting, while the remaining members make up the lower chamber, or Odelsting. Neither body is subject to dissolution. The leader of the majority party or majority coalition in the Storting is appointed prime minister by the constitutional monarch, currently King Harald V. Although officially the head of state and commander in chief of the armed forces, the monarch performs largely ceremonial duties.

The indigenous Sami population, in addition to participating in the national political process, have their own Consultative Constituent Assembly, or Sameting, which has worked to protect the group's language and cultural rights and to influence the national government's decisions about Sami land and its resources.

Norway remains one of the least corrupt countries in the world. However, a 2003 Gallup survey found that nearly half of all Norwegians believe that bribery in the business world will be an increasing problem in the coming years. Norway was ranked 8 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

In 2003, a police probe into the Iranian operations of the state oil company Statoil led to the resignations of the chairman, the chief executive, and the head of the company's international division amid allegations of bribery. In June 2004, Statoil was found guilty of corruption charges and fined 20 million kroner (\$2.9 million); no former executive was indicted. Most recently, in July 2005, SINTEF, one of Norway's leading research organizations, was accused of bribery after it sent money to a company in the British Virgin Islands to help win oil contracts in Iran.

Freedom of the press is constitutionally guaranteed. The state subsidizes many newspapers, the majority of which are privately owned and openly partisan, in order to promote political pluralism. However, subsidies have been cut in recent years, and there are fears that some special-interest publications will be forced to close. A government ban on political commercials, designed to ensure equal opportunity to the media for all candidates regardless of varying resources, violates the European Convention on Human Rights, which Norway has signed. Norway continues to ban hard-core pornography in movie theaters, on television, and on video and DVD.

The monarch is the constitutional head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Norway, the state church, and one-half of the cabinet must belong to the Church. Other denominations must register with the state to receive support, which is determined by size of membership. Until recently, a course on religion and ethics focusing on Christianity was mandatory for students. In November 2004, the European Court of Human Rights determined that the course requirement contravened human rights principles. In response, the country adopted legislation affirming that the course does not preach religion. In addition, the government has promised, for the 2005-2006 school year, to introduce a new curriculum for the course and to make rules for exemptions easier. A commission appointed in 2002 to review church-state relations was expected to give its assessment to parliament by the end of 2005. Academic freedom is ensured for all.

The constitution guarantees freedom of peaceful assembly and association. Norwegians are very active in different non-governmental and volunteer organizations. Unions play an important role in consulting with the government on social and economic issues, and about 60 percent of the workforce belongs to unions. In August, a prominent Liberal Party politician called for a review of the right to strike in Norway; the review was called in reaction to a long transit strike in 2004 that affected the transport of goods to local businesses.

The judiciary is independent, and the court system, headed by the Supreme Court, operates fairly at the local and national levels. The king appoints judges under advisement from the Ministry of Justice. The police are under civilian control, and there were no reports of human rights abuses committed by any domestic law

enforcement authorities. According to the U.S. State Department's 2005 human rights report, prison conditions generally meet international standards.

The government helps protect the heritage of the Sami population through Sami language instruction, broadcast programs, and subsidized newspapers in their regions. A deputy minister in the national government deals specifically with Sami issues.

In December 2003, the government announced that asylum seekers denied residence in Norway would no longer be able to remain at immigration reception centers after an earlier report found a record number of asylum seekers registered at these centers. Polls suggest that discrimination in housing and employment against ethnic minorities is widespread. Nevertheless, the country's immigration chief announced in July that the country needs more immigrants, both skilled and unskilled, to maintain population levels and competence. The *Aftenposten*, one of five regional daily newspapers in the country, reported that the announcement was met with scorn by some immigrants who struggle to find jobs in Norway despite their education and knowledge of Norwegian.

A new marriage law, which includes a clause under which the couple must vow that they are getting married voluntarily and have an equal right to a divorce, has been criticized by the Roman Catholic Church. The Gender Equality Act provides equal rights for men and women, and a Gender Equality Ombudsman enforces the law. During the last elections, 37 percent of the seats in the Storting were won by women, a slight increase over the previous elections. A new law requires that at least 40 percent of a firm's board of directors be women; the figure currently stands at about 7 percent.

Norway is a destination point for the trafficking of women for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The country, however, remains a leader in anti-trafficking efforts, according to the U.S. State Department's 2005 Trafficking in Persons Report. In February, Norway convicted eight people in the largest trafficking case in the country to date. The leader of the group, which included Georgians, Lithuanians, Norwegians, and a Turk, was sentenced to 11 years' imprisonment. In January, the government launched a formal trafficking victim assistance program that includes assistance centers and a 24-hour hotline.

Oman

Population: 2,400,000 **Political Rights:** 6
GNI/capita: \$7,830 **Civil Liberties:** 5
Life Expectancy: 74 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Ibadi Muslim (75 percent), other
[including Sunni Muslim, Shi'a Muslim, and Hindu]
(25 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Arab, Baluchi, South Asian, African
Capital: Muscat



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview:

Despite recent limited steps to introduce political reform in Oman, ruling authority in 2005 remained heavily concentrated in the hands of Sultan Qaboos bin Said A1 Said.

In the spring, the government convicted individuals who were allegedly plotting to overthrow the government; the sultan pardoned these individuals later in the year.

Except for a brief period of Persian rule, Oman has been an independent nation since Sultan bin Seif's expulsion of the Portuguese in 1650. After the expulsion, which ended more than a century of Portuguese involvement in certain regions of Oman, the sultan conquered neighboring territories, building a small empire that included parts of the eastern coast of Africa and the southern Arabian Peninsula.

During the 1950s and 1960s, Oman experienced a period of internal unrest centered mostly in the interior regions of the country. In 1964, a group of separatists supported by Communist governments, such as that of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen), started a revolt in Oman's Dhofar province. This insurgency was not completely quelled until the mid-1970s, with Oman's government receiving direct military support from its traditional ally, the United Kingdom, as well as from Iran and Jordan.

Sultan Qaboos bin Said A1 Said came to power more than 30 years ago, after overthrowing his father, Sultan Said bin Taimur, who had ruled for nearly four decades. The new sultan launched a program to modernize Oman's infrastructure, educational system, government, and economy.

In 1991, Qaboos established the 59-seat (expanded to 83 seats in 1993) Consultative Council, or Majlis al-Shura, an appointed body aimed at providing the sultan with a wider range of opinions on ruling the country. The 1996 basic law, promulgated by royal decree, transformed the Consultative Council into an elected body, but the right to vote in these elections was not granted to all citizens; only a limited number of citizens selected by tribal leaders were allowed to participate in the first elections. The basic law granted certain civil liberties; banned discrimination on the basis of sex, religion, ethnicity, and social class; and clarified the process for royal succession.

This limited political reform in the 1990s was overshadowed by a stronger effort

to reform Oman's oil-dependent economy. Oil dominates Oman's economy, generating around 75 percent of the government's revenues. As Oman's oil fields are relatively small and aging, the country has sought to diversify its economic base in recent years. In 1995, Qaboos spearheaded an effort to liberalize the economy, reduce its dependence on oil exports, and attract international investments. In preparation for Oman's accession to the World Trade Organization in 2000, Oman lifted restrictions on foreign investment and ownership of enterprises in the country. In July 2003, the Ministry of Labor launched a five-year plan aimed at recruiting more Omani people into governmental and nongovernmental sectors.

Political reform lags behind economic reform, with Qaboos maintaining a strong grip on political authority. In October 2003, Oman held the first full election in its history, for its Consultative Council. Though the powers of the Consultative Council remain limited, the election marked the first time that Oman gave the right to vote to all adult citizens, both men and women.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Oman cannot change their government democratically. Citizens can express their views only in a very limited way, by electing members to the 83-member Consultative Council, which has no legislative powers and may only recommend changes to new laws. The Consultative Council is part of a bicameral body known as the Council of Oman; the other part, the 59-member State Council, or *Majlis al-Dawla*, is appointed by the sultan, currently Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said. The sultan has absolute power and issues laws by decree. He serves as the country's prime minister, heads the ministries of Defense, Foreign Affairs, and Finance, and is the governor of Oman's central bank.

Article 34 of the basic law states that citizens have the right to address public authorities on personal matters or on matters related to public affairs in a manner consistent with Omani law. Mechanisms for citizens to petition the government through local government officials exist, and certain citizens are afforded limited opportunities to petition the sultan in direct meetings. Political parties are banned, and no meaningful organized political opposition exists. Oman was ranked 28 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression and democratic debate are limited in Oman, with laws prohibiting criticism of the sultan. Article 61 of the Omani Press Law states that "every person who sends a message via a means of communication that is contrary to the government system and public morals or that is knowingly untrue ... shall be punished by a prison sentence of not more than one year and a fine of not more than 1,000 riyals."

In 2004, Oman promulgated the Private Radio and Television Companies Law, which established regulations for setting up private radio and television companies, a first for Oman. In October 2005, Oman announced the licensing of four private television and radio stations. Oman's government permits private print publications, although many of these publications accept government subsidies and practice self-censorship. Omanis have access to the internet through the national telecommunications company, and the government censors politically sensitive and pornographic content. In July, government authorities arrested Abdullah al-Riyami, a journalist

and poet, for speaking out against the government. Al-Riyami experienced harassment and intimidation from government authorities after publishing comments critical of the Omani government.

Islam is the state religion, according to the basic law. Non-Muslims have the right to worship, although non-Muslim religious organizations must register with the government and non-Muslims are banned from proselytizing. The Ministry of Awqaf (Religious Charitable Bequests) and Religious Affairs distributes standardized texts for mosque sermons and expects imams to stay within the outlines of these texts. The government restricts academic freedom by preventing the publication of politically sensitive topics.

The basic law allows the formation of nongovernmental organizations, but civic and associational life remains quite limited in Oman. The government has not permitted the establishment of independent human rights organizations. Article 32 of the basic law, the country's constitution, provides for the right to peaceful assembly within the limits of the law. All public gatherings require government permission, and the government has the authority to prevent organized public meetings without any appeal process. In May, Omani police used excessive force to disband demonstrators peacefully protesting the conviction of 31 'Ibadis on charges of plotting a coup.

Workers do not have the right to organize unions, but they can select a representative committee to voice their demands and represent their interests. In April 2003, the government issued a decree that removed a previous prohibition on strikes. Complaints related to labor and working conditions are managed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor and mediated by the Labor Welfare Board. Oman's 2003 labor law defines employment conditions for some citizens and foreign workers but does not apply to domestic servants, temporary workers, and those whose work contracts are for less than three months.

Although the basic law states that the judiciary is independent, it remains subordinate to the sultan and the Ministry of Justice. Sharia (Islamic law) is the source of all legislation, and Sharia courts are responsible for family law matters such as divorce and inheritance. In less populated areas, tribal laws and customs are frequently used to adjudicate disputes. Many of the civil liberties guarantees expressed in the basic law have not been implemented.

According to the law, arbitrary arrest and detention are prohibited. In practice, the police are not required to obtain an arrest warrant in advance. Government authorities must obtain court orders to hold suspects in pretrial detention, but the police and security services do not regularly follow these procedures. Prisons are not accessible to independent monitors, but former prisoners report crowded cells.

The Omani penal code contains broad and vague provisions for offenses against national security. These charges are prosecuted before the State Security Court, which usually holds proceedings closed to the public. In January, Omani security forces detained a number of individuals suspected of forming an organization aimed at destabilizing the country's national security. In the spring, courts convicted 31 Omanis of the 'Ibadi faith on charges of plotting to overthrow the government. In June, however, Sultan Qaboos pardoned the convicted plotters and gave amnesty to 24 demonstrators.

Omani law does not protect noncitizens from discrimination. In addition, some citizens of African origin have reported employment discrimination.

Although the basic law prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, women suffer from legal and social discrimination. Oman's personal status law, based on Sharia, favors the rights of men over those of women in marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody. According to official statistics, women constitute only 10 percent of the total labor force in Oman. Only two women won seats on the Consultative Council in the 2003 national elections. However, Qaboos appointed three women as government ministers in 2004, a first for Oman. Raweyah el-Bouseidi became the first female minister in the history of Oman when she was appointed minister of higher education. Rajihah bint Abd al-Amir became minister of tourism, and Sharifa bint Khalfan became the minister of social development. In September 2005, Sultan Qaboos appointed Hanina bint Sultan bin Ahmad al-Maghiri as the first woman to serve as ambassador to the United States.

Pakistan

Population: 162,400,000 **Political Rights:** 6
GNI/capita: \$520 **Civil Liberties:** 5
Life Expectancy: 62 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Muslim (97 percent) [Sunni (77 percent), Shi'a (20 percent)], other [including Christian and Hindu] (3 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashtun, Baloch, Muhajir
Capital: Islamabad



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
4,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	7,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview:

Pakistan remained firmly under the control of a military government headed by General Pervez Musharraf in 2005.

Despite facing sustained opposition from both the secular and Islamist political parties, the regime has retained its dominance over the political sphere, and Musharraf himself has managed to continue in his dual roles of president and head of the army despite his previous promises to relinquish one title. Local elections held in August and September, which were seen as a precursor to the likely conduct of national elections scheduled for 2007, were criticized as being widely rigged; instead of expanding the democratic process, they have further consolidated the government's hold over political institutions. In the absence of an independent legislature and judiciary, the media remain one of the only forums that provide oversight of official actions and policy. However, the government has become less tolerant of such criticism and, on a number of occasions, harassed or intimidated members of the press. A range of other human rights violations, including egregious legal and societal discrimination against women and religious minorities, continued to be reported during the year. Sectarian and terrorist violence remains a concern, and fighting between government forces and tribal groups in Waziristan and Balochistan escalated in 2005.

Pakistan came into existence as a Muslim homeland with the partition of British India in 1947. Following a nine-month civil war, East Pakistan achieved independence in 1971 as the new state of Bangladesh. The army has directly or indirectly ruled Pakistan for 31 of its 58 years of independence. As part of his efforts to consolidate power, the military dictator General Zia ul-Haq amended the constitution in 1985 to allow the president to dismiss elected governments. After Zia's death in 1988, successive presidents cited corruption and abuse of power in sacking elected governments headed by Benazir Bhutto of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in 1990 and 1996, and Nawaz Sharif of the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) in 1993.

After the PML decisively won the 1997 elections, Sharif, as prime minister, largely ignored Pakistan's pressing economic and social problems while attempting to undermine every institution capable of challenging him, including the judiciary and the press. However, when he attempted to reshuffle the army's leadership and fire the army chief, he was deposed in October 1999 in a bloodless coup. Chief of Army Staff General Pervez Musharraf then appointed himself "chief executive," declared a state of emergency, and suspended parliament, the provincial assemblies, and the constitution. In December 2000, 18 of Pakistan's political parties, including archrivals PML and PPP, joined to form the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (ARD), an umbrella group calling for an end to military rule. However, Musharraf was able to successfully neutralize Sharif and Bhutto, his primary political opponents, through a combination of court convictions and exile.

Musharraf's primary aim since gaining power has been to ensure a dominant role for the military after Pakistan made the nominal transition back to democratic rule. The controversial 2002 Legal Framework Order (LFO), which was intended as a vehicle for amending the constitution without the participation of parliament, gave him effective control over parliament and changed the electoral rules to the detriment of opposition parties. The regime also openly promoted progovernment political parties, such as the newly formed Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-i-Azam (PML-Q). In the 2002 parliamentary elections, no single party won a majority of seats; the PML-Q won 126 seats, while the PPP won 81 and the PML, 19. A coalition of six religious parties, the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA), performed unexpectedly strongly, winning 63 seats in the national parliament and a majority of seats in two provinces. With support from independents and deserters from the other main parties, the PML-Q was able to form a government; it then consolidated its position by winning a majority of seats in the 2003 Senate elections.

Parliament was deadlocked throughout most of 2003, with the main opposition parties insisting that Musharraf rescind the LFO, introduce legal and constitutional changes through the normal parliamentary process, and relinquish his position as army chief if he wished to continue as president. A deal brokered with the MMA enabled the government to pass a constitutional amendment in January 2004 legitimizing the coup; the government was then able to pass legislation in April 2004 establishing a powerful National Security Council (NSC), headed by the president, which further solidified the military's role in government. In a reversal of his pledge to the MMA that he would step down as army chief by year's end, Musharraf then announced in September 2004 that the need for stability required him to stay on in both roles. This decision was formalized when the parliament passed the President to Hold Two Offices Act, enabling him to stay on as army chief until 2007. In reac-

tion, the MMA launched nationwide protests and have continued to oppose the government.

In May 2005, Musharraf announced that he might stay on in both roles past 2007, when parliamentary elections are scheduled. Local council elections held in August and September were seen as a test of the government's commitment to allowing freer and fairer elections to take place. The elections were held on a non-party basis with more than 218,000 candidates contesting; in final results, PML-Q-backed candidates performed well in Punjab and Sindh, while nationalist parties scored gains in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Balochistan at the expense of MMA-backed candidates. However, opposition parties as well as monitoring groups expressed dissatisfaction with the conduct of the process. In addition to higher than usual levels of violence—there were over 60 election-related deaths and some 550 injured countrywide—numerous cases of pre-poll rigging, ballot stuffing, intimidation, and other forms of coercion and fraud were condemned by the independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), International Crisis Group (ICG), and others. With the moderate opposition parties having been further marginalized and with local government structures now more firmly under the grip of his political allies, Musharraf is now well placed to continue in power after the next national elections.

While managing to contain the secular opposition, Musharraf was initially less willing to rein in the Islamic fundamentalist groups with whom the military had traditionally had a close relationship. Although several groups have been banned since September 2001, when Musharraf pledged to support the United States in its war on terrorism, and hundreds of activists have been periodically arrested, more than 40 groups continue to function under new names, and their leaders have generally not been prosecuted. The increased parliamentary presence of religious parties with ties to radical *madrassas* (religious schools) and to militant groups suggests that the influence of the Islamists will continue to be strong. However, official tolerance for the activities of these groups declined following several assassination attempts against Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz in late 2003 and 2004. Working closely with U.S. intelligence, Pakistani security forces captured a number of high-value al-Qaeda targets in 2004, and troops engaging militants sheltering in the tribal areas of South Waziristan have killed or captured hundreds of fighters. After the July 7, 2005, bombings in London, which involved several British citizens of Pakistani origin who had studied in Pakistan, Musharraf ordered a renewed crackdown on militant groups and *madrassas*, which further worsened the relationship between the government and the MMA. Nevertheless, many militant groups remain active, and sectarian violence, which killed and injured several hundred people during 2005, continues to be a concern.

Fighting and unrest between government forces and tribal groups in Balochistan, which was triggered by the rape of a female doctor allegedly at the hands of the army, escalated in early 2005, and the situation remains tense. A separatist group, the Balochistan Liberation Army, has stepped up its attacks on infrastructure (particularly gas pipelines) and development projects and staff, while local tribal leaders continue to demand greater political autonomy and control over the province's considerable natural resources. The federal government, as well as Pakistan in general, was also severely tested by the October 8 earthquake, which hit Pakistani Kash-

mir as well as the NWFP, killing an estimated 73,000 and rendering about 3 million homeless, in addition to causing extensive damage to roads and infrastructure.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Pakistan cannot change their government democratically. Despite the election of a civilian National Assembly in October 2002, the Pakistani military, headed by General Pervez Musharraf, continues to wield effective control over the structures of government. The 1973 constitution provides for a lower National Assembly, which currently has 272 directly elected seats and 70 seats reserved for women and non-Muslim minorities, and a Senate, the majority of whose 100 members are elected by the four provincial assemblies for six-year terms. Shortly after the 1999 coup, Musharraf suspended the provincial and national assemblies, declared himself president, and in 2002 held a referendum widely regarded as rigged in order to extend his term as president. In preparation for national elections—after the coup, the Supreme Court mandated that they be held by October 2002—Musharraf further strengthened the powers of the presidency and formalized the military's role in governance. The LFO gave him the right to unilaterally dismiss the national and provincial parliaments, as well as providing for a National Security Council dominated by military figures that would supervise the work of the civilian cabinet.

The LFO also restricts certain individuals from standing for elected office, as well as restricting political parties in their choice of leadership. Some of these measures were explicitly aimed at preventing former prime ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif from contesting the 2002 elections. Although the government lifted the longstanding ban on political rallies shortly before the elections, significant restrictions remained in place, and the ability of opposition parties to mount effective campaigns was circumscribed. In its statement on the elections, the HRCP noted that governmental machinery had been used to intimidate opposition candidates. The report of the European Union Election Observation Mission concluded that there had been "serious flaws" in the electoral process.

Since the election, secular opposition parties and their leaders have continued to face intimidation and harassment from intelligence agencies and other government organs. In October 2003, Javed Hashmi, the leader of the ARD alliance, was arrested and charged with treason after he publicly criticized the army (he had read an anti-Musharraf letter at a news conference). In April 2004, Hashmi was sentenced to 23 years in prison on sedition charges. Prior to and during the local elections, a number of opposition candidates were abducted or otherwise intimidated, according to the ICG.

On the positive side, women and minorities now have enhanced representation in the parliament. After repeated complaints by religious minorities, the government abolished the system of separate electorates in January 2002, enabling them to vote alongside Muslims and thus participate more fully in the political system. In addition, 10 seats in the reconstituted National Assembly were reserved for minorities and 60 were reserved for women. However, women continue to have difficulty voting and running for office in the more conservative parts of the country.

Pakistan's government operates with limited transparency and accountability. Over the past six years, military officers have assumed an increasing role in governance through "army monitoring teams" that oversee the functioning of many civil-

ian administrative departments. The army now has a stake in continuing to influence both commercial and political decision-making processes, as well as maintaining its traditional dominance over foreign policy and security issues. Serving and retired officers receive top public-sector jobs in ministries, state-run corporations, and universities, and are given a range of other privileges. The effective functioning of the parliament has been hampered by ongoing opposition boycotts, and many pieces of legislation have been pushed through with limited debate.

Corruption is pervasive at almost all levels of politics and government, and appears to be worsening; Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index ranked Pakistan 144 out of 159 countries surveyed, a drop from the previous year. Although Musharraf has publicly stated that eliminating official corruption is a priority, the National Anti-Corruption Strategy approved in 2002 focuses on politicians, civil servants, and businessmen, while virtually ignoring military and security personnel. Corruption charges are frequently used as a tool to punish opposition politicians; for example, Yousuf Raza Gilani, a former speaker of the National Assembly, was fined, sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment, and disqualified from holding office on corruption charges in September 2004 after he refused to defect from the PPP.

The constitution and other laws authorize the government to curb freedom of speech on subjects including the constitution, the armed forces, the judiciary, and religion; blasphemy laws have also been used to suppress the media. On numerous occasions, police, security forces, and military intelligence subjected journalists to physical attacks, intimidation, or arbitrary arrest and incommunicado detention. In addition, Islamic fundamentalists and thugs hired by feudal landlords or local politicians continue to harass journalists and attack newspaper offices. In February, gunmen killed two journalists and injured two others in the tribal areas of South Waziristan. Police raided the offices of several publications in July and arrested vendors selling newspapers deemed to be promoting religious hatred and disharmony; in August, the publication licenses of three of these periodicals were revoked.

While a number of journalists practice self-censorship, Pakistan continues to have some of the most outspoken newspapers in South Asia, and the broadcast sector has become somewhat more diversified with the opening of a number of new private television stations. However, military authorities are using increasingly aggressive tactics to silence critical voices in the media, according to Human Rights Watch. A number of journalists have been pressured to resign from prominent publications, charged with sedition, or arrested and intimidated by intelligence officials while in custody. Authorities have also used advertising boycotts to put economic pressure on publications that do not heed unofficial directives on coverage; in 2005, the most prominent example of this occurred in May, when a ban on official advertising was placed on two newspapers in the Nawa-i-Waqt group of publications. The website of an online newspaper established abroad by exiled editor Shaheen Sehbaï remains blocked by Pakistani telecommunications authorities, and other web-based news sources are occasionally blocked. Musharraf himself has also contributed to an atmosphere that is inimical to free speech by making public threats against specific members of the press.

Pakistan is an Islamic republic, and there are numerous legal restrictions on religious freedom. Blasphemy laws provide for steep sentences, including the death

penalty, for defiling Islam, the prophet Muhammad, and the Koran; in addition, injuring the "religious feelings" of individual citizens is prohibited. Instances of low-ranking police officials being bribed to file false blasphemy charges against Ahmadis, Christians, Hindus, and occasionally other Muslims have been increasing in recent years. Ahmadis consider themselves to be Muslims, but the constitution classifies them as a non-Muslim minority, and the penal code severely restricts Ahmadi religious practice; in August, authorities closed 16 Ahmadi publishing houses.

According to the U.S. State Department's 2005 Report on International Religious Freedom, there were several dozen blasphemy cases pending in the courts as of mid-2005, and nine people were in prison following conviction. To date, appeals courts have overturned all blasphemy convictions, but suspects are generally forced to spend lengthy periods in prison, where they are subject to ill-treatment, and they continue to be targeted by religious extremists after they are released. However, in an attempt to limit abuse of these laws, an amendment was enacted in January requiring that a senior police officer investigate such charges. In November, after a Christian man was accused of desecrating the Koran and a Muslim mob burned down two churches and a convent near the town of Sangla Hill in reprisal, human rights and minority groups called once again for the repeal of the blasphemy laws.

Religious minorities also face unofficial economic, social, and cultural discrimination, and are occasionally subjected to violence and harassment. Attacks on places of worship occur frequently, with an increase during 2005 in violence at Sufi shrines and festivals. The government often fails to protect religious minorities from sectarian violence, and discriminatory legislation contributes to creating a general climate of religious intolerance. In March, right-wing religious groups successfully lobbied the government to retain religious designations on Pakistani passports.

The government generally does not restrict academic freedom. However, student groups, some of whom have ties to radical Islamist organizations, violently attack or otherwise intimidate students, teachers, and administrators at some universities, which contributes to a climate of intolerance. According to the ICQ college students are now also required to sign affidavits declaring that they will not participate in any political activity, and this ban is selectively enforced against supporters of opposition parties. During the year, the government proceeded with proposed reforms of the public education sector designed to minimize the teaching of religious intolerance.

The military government banned all public political meetings, strikes, and rallies in March 2000. Authorities regularly disperse protests using force and preemptively arrest political activists to prevent demonstrations from occurring. In December 2004, police arrested hundreds of PPP activists, including several legislators, prior to a planned rally, and in April 2005, thousands of PPP supporters were arrested in order to prevent them from welcoming Asif Ali Zardari, husband of PPP leader Benazir Bhutto, upon his arrival at Lahore airport. Some Islamist leaders have been held under house arrest or in preventive detention under the Maintenance of Public Order ordinance, which allows for three months' detention without trial. Laws governing sedition, public order, and terrorism have also been used to raid party offices and detain political activists and leaders in Punjab and Sindh.

Authorities generally tolerate the work of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and allow them to publish critical material. In May, however, NGO activists, led by the HRCP, who attempted to organize a symbolic, mixed-gender marathon in

Lahore were beaten and arrested by police. In recent years, Islamic fundamentalists have issued death threats against prominent human rights defenders and against female NGO activists who work in rural areas.

Trade unions are independent. The law restricts the right to strike, and workers in certain essential industries face restrictions on bargaining collectively and generally cannot hold strikes. Despite legislation outlawing bonded labor and canceling enslaving debts, illegal bonded labor continues to be widespread. News reports say that there is a growing trend involving bonded laborers who sell organs, particularly kidneys, in order to escape their servitude. The enforcement of child labor laws continues to be inadequate; recent surveys indicate that there are at least eight million child workers in Pakistan.

The judiciary consists of civil and criminal courts and a special Sharia (Islamic law) court for certain offenses. Lower courts remain plagued by endemic corruption; intimidation by local officials, powerful individuals, and Islamic extremists; and heavy backlogs that lead to lengthy pretrial detentions. The military regime undermined the Supreme Court's reputation for independence in January 2000, when it ordered all high-ranking judges to swear to uphold the Provisional Constitutional Order issued by Musharraf. When the chief justice and a number of other judges refused, they were replaced. Since then, the courts have rejected subsequent challenges to the legality of military rule. A November 2004 ICG report drew attention to the fact that the executive has extended its influence over the judiciary by using the appointments system to remove independent judges, fill key positions with political allies, and reward those who issue judgments favorable to the government.

Other parts of the judicial system, such as the antiterrorism courts, operate with limited due process rights. A 1999 ordinance vested broad powers of arrest, investigation, and prosecution in a National Accountability Bureau and established special courts to try corruption cases. Musharraf has used both selectively to prosecute rival politicians and officials from previous civilian governments. The Sharia court enforces the 1979 Hudood Ordinances, which criminalize nonmarital rape, extramarital sex, and several alcohol, gambling, and property offenses, and provide for Koranic punishments, including death by stoning for adultery, as well as jail terms and fines. According to Human Rights Watch, an estimated 210,000 cases are currently being processed under the ordinances. In part because of strict evidentiary standards, authorities have never carried out the Koranic punishments. In 2003, the provincial assembly in the NWFP passed a bill that declared Sharia (Islamic law) the supreme law of the province and empowered the government to Islamize the economy, the legal system, and education. In July 2005, after the NWFP passed the Taliban-style Hisba (accountability) Bill, under which a watchdog agency would monitor and enforce adherence to Islamic values and practices, Musharraf asked the Supreme Court to declare the bill unconstitutional.

The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) are under a separate legal system, the Frontier Crimes Regulation, which authorizes tribal leaders to administer justice according to Sharia and tribal custom. Feudal landlords and tribal elders throughout Pakistan continue to adjudicate some disputes and impose punishment in unsanctioned parallel courts called *jirgas*. A 2002 Amnesty International report raised concerns that the *jirgas* abuse a range of human rights and are particularly discriminatory towards women. In April 2004, however, the Sindh High Court

issued a ruling that banned all trials conducted under the jirga system in the province.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that police continue to routinely engage in crime, use excessive force in ordinary situations, arbitrarily arrest and detain citizens, extort money from prisoners and their families, accept money to register cases on false charges, rape female detainees and prisoners, commit extrajudicial killings, and torture detainees (often to extract confessions). Political opponents, former government officials, and other critics of the regime are particularly at risk of arbitrary arrest or abduction, torture, and denial of basic due process rights at the hands of military authorities, according to Human Rights Watch. In its 2005 annual report, the HRCP noted that instances of people being illegally detained by state agencies, sometimes for extended periods of time, appeared to be on the rise. Prison conditions continue to be extremely poor. A January 2005 Amnesty International report noted that the Juvenile Justice System Ordinance of 2000 remains largely unimplemented and that numerous children continue to be jailed alongside adults, heavily fined, and sometimes sentenced to the death penalty.

Press reports indicate that there may be as many as 200,000 armed militants currently active in Pakistan, and these extremists continue to carry out terrorist attacks both within Pakistan and in neighboring countries, including assassination attempts and suicide bombings directed at foreign, Shia, and Christian targets, which kill at least several hundred civilians each year. Sunni and Shia fundamentalist groups continue to engage in a cycle of retaliatory sectarian violence, mostly bomb attacks against mosques, other places of worship such as shrines, and religious processions or gatherings. The South Asia Terrorism Portal has estimated that almost 160 people were killed and more than 350 were injured as a result of sectarian violence in 2005, a slight improvement over the previous year. The perpetrators of such attacks are rarely prosecuted, and protection for affected communities is minimal.

Operations by the Pakistani army and security forces against foreign militants in the tribal areas of South Waziristan are ongoing, and cases of human rights abuses committed during the course of these operations, including arbitrary arrest and detention, the destruction of property and the displacement of civilians, and extrajudicial executions, continue to be reported. Meanwhile, suspected Taliban militants have strengthened their hold over the area, imposing strict behavioral codes and killing more than 60 progovernment political and religious leaders in 2005, according to the *Christian Science Monitor*. An upsurge in tension in Balochistan in January, where nationalist groups demanding increased autonomy and control over profits gained from natural resources have increased their attacks on gas pipelines and other infrastructure, has led to violence, instability, and displacement of civilians in a number of areas in the province.

In an atmosphere where the rule of law is weakly enforced and the military has expanded its control over economic resources, land rights are at risk. According to a Human Rights Watch report, tenant farmers in the Okara district of Punjab who have refused to cede their land rights to the army have faced besiegement, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, "forced divorce," dismissal from employment, and, in the most extreme cases, murder. The growing dominance of the military over economic and commercial activity has also been cause for concern.

A combination of traditional norms, discriminatory laws, and weak law enforce-

ment continues to contribute to rape, domestic violence, acid attacks, and other forms of abuse against women; according to the HRCP, up to 80 percent of women are victims of such abuse. Although less frequently than in the past, women are still charged under the Hudood Ordinances with adultery or other sexual misconduct arising from rape cases or alleged extramarital affairs, and 7,000 women are currently estimated to be in prison as a result of being wrongfully charged. The threat of being charged with adultery may prevent some women from reporting rape. In an attempt to reduce abuse of the ordinances, the government passed legislation in January requiring a court order before a woman can be detained under such charges.

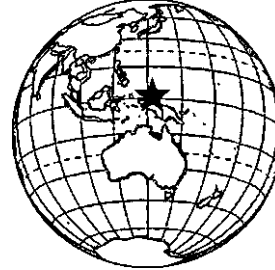
Gang rapes sanctioned by village councils as a form of punishment for crimes committed by a woman's relatives continue to be reported, despite the fact that harsh sentences have been handed down in some cases. During the year, the administration's flippant attitude towards the issue of violence against women was highlighted by the outcry that erupted over Musharraf's comments that rape had become a "money-making concern." He referred to several high-profile victims of rape—Shazia Khalid, a doctor in Balochistan who was raped in January and subsequently fled the country after being pressured by the government; and Mukhtaran Mai, who was gang-raped on the orders of a village council in 2002 and initially denied a visa to travel to the United States in June 2005—as taking advantage of the issue to obtain foreign visas.

According to the HRCP, at least 1,000 women are killed by family members in so-called honor killings each year. Usually committed by a male relative of the victim, honor killings punish women who supposedly bring dishonor to the family. Government-backed legislation introducing stiffer sentences and the possibility of the death penalty for those convicted of honor killings was signed into law in January. However, given a prevailing environment where authorities generally do not aggressively prosecute and convict the perpetrators of violence against women, activists have questioned the effectiveness of the bill.

Pakistani women face unofficial discrimination in educational and employment opportunities, and the trafficking of women and children remains a serious concern. Adequate access by children to education and health care continues to be a problem, despite the presence of a number of local and international NGOs that work to address such issues.

Palau

Population: 20,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$6,870 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 70 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (41.6 percent),
 Protestant (23.3 percent), other (35.1 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Paluan (70 percent), Asian (28 percent),
 white (2 percent)
Capital: Koror



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

Palau held a constitutional convention in 2005 to review proposed amendments, a number of which were approved, subject to a vote at the next general election. The House of Delegates approved the creation of a special commission to prepare for negotiations with the United States for a new economic assistance package.

The United States administered Palau, which consists of 8 main islands and more than 250 smaller islands, as a UN Trusteeship Territory from 1947 until 1981, when it became a self-governing territory. Full independence was achieved in 1994 under the Compact of Free Association with the United States. Under the terms of the compact, the United States provides Palau with \$442 million in economic aid between 1994 and 2009. In return for the maintenance of military bases in the island state until 2044, the United States provides Palau with defense protection. In anticipation of the termination of economic assistance in 2009, the government will form a commission to consider Palau's future, and economic, social, and environmental assessments will also be conducted.

Vice President Tommy Esang Remengesau was elected president in a narrow victory over Senator Peter Sugiyama in November 2000. In the November 2004 presidential poll, Esang was re-elected, winning two-thirds of the total number of votes cast.

In a referendum held concurrently with the November general election, voters endorsed the initiation of a constitutional convention in 2005 to consider amendments to the constitution. Matters for consideration include allowing dual citizenship, limiting terms in congress to three, making legislative posts part-time positions, merging the bicameral legislature into one, and allowing presidential and vice presidential candidates to run for election as a team. The constitution currently states that only citizens can vote and own land in Palau. An amendment would allow Palauans living in the United States (about 25 percent of all Palauan citizens) and elsewhere to acquire citizenship in their resident countries without losing their right to vote and own land in Palau. Other measures aim to reduce factional fighting and the cost of running a legislature for the country's small population. Seventeen delegates representing the various states had 60 days to review and approve the 251

proposed amendments. The review was completed in mid-July with the approval of 25 proposed amendments. Citizens will put the approved amendments to a vote in the next general election, which is scheduled for November 2008.

In recent years, the country has been plagued by reports of human and drug trafficking, prostitution, and money laundering by criminal groups. The government has said that more resources are essential to make the necessary improvements in law enforcement and the judiciary; among recent changes is a new border management system. In January 2005, two Chinese nationals, who were arrested for alleged illegal entry, reportedly traveled with Taiwanese passports and fake U.S. visas.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Palau can change their government democratically. Abicameral legislature, the Olbiil Era Kelulau, consists of the 9-member Senate and the 16-member House of Delegates. Legislators are elected to four-year terms by popular vote. The president and vice president are also elected to four-year terms by popular vote. There is no limit on the number of terms, except that the president may serve only two terms consecutively. President Tommy E. Remengesau Jr. was elected to his first term in November 2000, and Senator Sandra S. Pierantozzi became the first female vice president. Remengesau won a second four-year term and Camsek Chin was elected Vice President in November 2004. Politically, the island republic is organized into 16 states, each of which is headed by a governor.

There are no political parties, but there are no laws against their formation. Political alliances, quickly formed and dismantled, dictate politics and in recent years have had a serious destabilizing effect on governance.

Official corruption and abuses are serious problems. Public dissatisfaction with government corruption pressured the government to charge two lawmakers with fraud in February 2004. Palau was not surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech and the press is respected. There are three main regular publications: *Tia Belau*, an English weekly; *Palau Horizon*, another English weekly; and *Roureur Belau*, a Palauan weekly. There are five privately owned radio stations and one television station. Most households receive cable television, which rebroadcasts U.S. and other satellite television programs. There are two FM radio stations and one government-run station. The internet, though not in widespread use, is accessible without government intervention. Diffusion is limited by cost and access outside the main islands. The launch of www.palauradio.com in October this year provides an internet radio discussion forum to islanders in Palau and overseas.

Citizens of Palau enjoy freedom of religion. Although the government requires religious organizations to register with the Office of the Attorney General, no application has ever been denied. There were no reports of restrictions on academic freedom, and the government hopes to use the internet to improve access to education in the island republic.

Freedom of assembly and association are respected. Many nongovernmental groups focus on youth, health, and women's issues. No laws or policy bar formation of trade unions. The largely subsistence agricultural economy is heavily dependent on economic aid and rent from the United States under the compact, as well as remit-

tances from citizens working overseas. The government and tourist industry are the main employers.

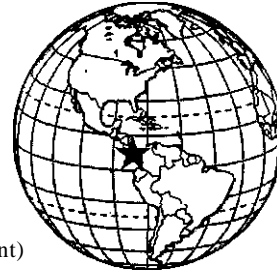
The judiciary is independent and trials are fair. A 300-member police and first response force maintain internal order. Palau has no armed forces; external defense is the responsibility of the United States under the compact. There are no reports of prisoner abuse or extreme hardship for prisoners.

Foreign workers account for about one-third of the population and 73 percent of the workforce. There have been reports of discrimination against and abuse of foreign workers, and the law bars foreign workers from changing employers in the country. In 2003, the government announced tighter supervision to prevent marriages of convenience between foreigners and Palauans. Foreigners are said to have used fake marriages to extend their stay in Palau and to enter the United States, which grants Palauan citizens visa-free entry and residence under the compact. There have been reports of human trafficking from China, the Philippines, and Taiwan. Some of the trafficked persons work in Palau, while others use it as a conduit to enter the United States.

High regard for women in this matrilineal society, in which land rights and descent are traced through women, has allowed many women to be active in both traditional and modern sectors of the economy, as well as in politics. A small number of domestic abuse cases, many linked to alcohol and drug abuse, have been reported. Civil society groups assert that the true number may be higher as a result of underreporting due to fear of reprisal and family pressure. The law prohibits rape, including spousal rape. Prostitution and sexual harassment are illegal.

Panama

Population: 3,200,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$4,060 **Civil Liberties:** 2
Life Expectancy: 75 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (85 percent), Protestant (15 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Mestizo (70 percent), West Indian (14 percent), European (10 percent), Amerindian (6 percent)
Capital: Panama City



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F

Overview:

The first year of President Martin Torrijos's administration was marked by confrontations with civic and labor groups frustrated by Panama's economic conditions. Protests and strikes in 2005 stalled Torrijos's attempts at reforming the country's social security system, while his larger national agenda was sidetracked by corruption scandals.

Panama was part of Colombia until 1903, when a U.S.-supported revolt resulted

in the proclamation of an independent republic. A period of weak civilian rule ended with a 1968 military coup that brought General Omar Torrijos to power. After the signing of the 1977 canal treaties with the United States, Torrijos promised democratization; the 1972 constitution was revised to provide for the direct election of the president and National Assembly for five years. However, a real transition to democracy would not come for another dozen years.

After Torrijos's death in 1981, General Manuel Noriega emerged as Panamanian Defense Force (PDF) chief. He rigged the 1984 election that brought to power the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD), which was then the political arm of the PDF. The Democratic Alliance of Civic Opposition (ADOC) won the 1989 election, but Noriega annulled the vote and declared himself head of state. He was removed during a U.S. military invasion, and ADOC's Guillermo Endara became president.

Both the PRD and the Arnulfista Party (PA, named after President Arnulfo Arias, who was president three times before the era of dictatorship) won elections in the 1990s. Presidential and legislative elections in May 2004 returned the PRD to power, with Martin Torrijos, the son of former strongman Omar Torrijos, defeating a number of presidential candidates from various parties; former president Guillermo Endara of the Solidarity Party (PS) was his closest challenger. The PRD also won a majority of 42 seats in the 78-seat National Assembly, followed by the PA with only 17 seats; several other parties captured fewer than 10 seats each.

The fallout from the elections continued to affect Panama's political parties in 2005. Endara broke with the PS to form a new political party, the Moral Vanguard of the Fatherland (MVP). The PS formed a four-party coalition with a variety of minor parties to create the leading legislative opposition to the PRD; the new opposition coalition is known as the Coordinated National Opposition (CNO). The PA forced out its founder, former president Mireya Moscoso, and the party changed its name to the Panamenista Party (PP). Leaders of the PP blamed Moscoso and her corrupt administration for the PA's poor showing at the polls in 2004, which reduced the party to a minor force in the National Assembly. The party's new name was reflective of Panama's history. Former president Arias had led the PP until he formally broke with the party in the 1980s when some of the party leaders became supportive of the Noriega dictatorship. Without Arias, the PP faded away; however, the name was resurrected to re-label what once was his widow's party.

Martin Torrijos put social security reform at the top of his agenda, and the PRD used its legislative majority to further the president's initiative. The law would increase the amount of social security taxes and the minimum amount a person must contribute to get benefits from the system and would increase the retirement age. A series of strikes by tens of thousands of construction workers, teachers, and other trade unionists in May and June 2005 brought developments to a halt, however; the unions, as well as the Catholic Church, strongly opposed the new law. Police struck back at the demonstrators by arresting hundreds. Torrijos was forced to suspend the law and to open talks with the unions and opposition groups as a way to avoid further debilitating strikes.

The demonstrations revealed widespread public dissatisfaction with the country's economic conditions, including rising fuel prices and endemic poverty. At least 40 percent of Panamanians live below the official poverty line, 14 percent are considered unemployed, and an additional 4 percent are listed by the government

as underemployed. Talks to restructure the social security system collapsed when the unions accused the government of not being transparent and honest in its negotiations. Torrijos left open the possibility of submitting the reforms to a national referendum.

Violence from the drug war continued to be a concern for Panamanians. Armed groups from Colombia crossed Panama's southern border with impunity, while drug gangs and street thugs raised the level of violence in urban centers. In reaction, the head of the national police announced plans in 2005 to open a new academy to teach elements of the police various military tactics. (Panama has no military and instead relies on the police to provide both internal security and defense of its borders; the Panamanian military was disbanded following the U.S. invasion to remove Noriega.) Endara condemned the plans for a new military-style academy as a way to remilitarize Panama.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Panama can change their government democratically. The 2004 national elections were considered free and fair by international observers. The president and deputies to the 78-seat unicameral National Assembly are elected by popular vote for five-year terms. The constitution guarantees freedom of political organizations. The PP holds 16 seats in the National Assembly, the CNO has 19 seats, and the PRD holds 42 seats.

In early 1999, Panama's largest political parties agreed to ban anonymous campaign contributions in an effort to stem the infiltration of drug money into the political process. Nevertheless, widespread corruption of the governmental apparatus indicates the difficulty in enforcing any such bans. The administration of President Martin Torrijos established a special commission to deal with corruption scandals from the administration of Mireya Moscoso and to uncover new abuses. On taking office, Torrijos implemented a Transparency Law that had been suspended by former president Moscoso. However, since that initiative, he has worked to limit the scope of the law, including keeping the minutes of cabinet meetings private and keeping the disclosure of assets by public officials from public view. Panama was ranked 65 out of 159 countries surveyed in the Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

All of the country's media outlets are privately owned with the exception of one state-owned television network and a network operated by the Catholic Church. However, there is a considerable concentration of media ownership by relatives and associates of former president Ernesto Perez Balladares of the PRD. There are five national dailies and four private television networks.

Panama is notable for its harsh legal environment for journalists. Moscoso had promised that she would work to repeal restrictive gag laws that Omar Torrijos had pushed into Panama's 1972 constitution. However, Moscoso never invested much political capital in the repeal effort. Before she left office, Moscoso did pardon more than 80 journalists who had been accused of criminal libel. When Martin Torrijos came into office, international journalism groups criticized the son of the former dictator because his government professed no plans to repeal the gag laws or the tough criminal libel statutes. Despite those restrictive laws, there is free access to the internet. Freedom of religion is respected, and academic freedom is generally honored.

Freedom of assembly is generally recognized, and nongovernmental organizations are free to organize. Although only about 10 percent of the labor force is in labor unions, the unions are well organized and powerful, as demonstrated by their ability to block Torrijos's social security reform initiative. The government has issued decrees that do not allow union organization in export processing zones.

The judicial system, headed by the Supreme Court, was revamped in 1990. However, it remains overworked and its administration is inefficient, politicized, and prone to corruption. An unwieldy criminal code and a surge in cases, many against former soldiers and officials of the military period, complicate the judicial process. In 2005, a corruption scandal involving members of the country's Supreme Court emerged. Various members of the court accused each other of corruption and filed complaints with the National Assembly. Trying to avert a judicial crisis, Torrijos appointed a special commission to look into the issue of judicial corruption and judicial reform. The commission was asked to prepare a special report for the National Assembly. Torrijos did not push for further investigation or the impeachment of justices, partially because the charges and countercharges included members of his party. At year's end, Torrijos's initiatives for judicial reform appeared to be stalled. About two-thirds of prisoners face delays of about 18 months in having their cases heard. The penal system is marked by violent disturbances in decrepit facilities that are severely overcrowded.

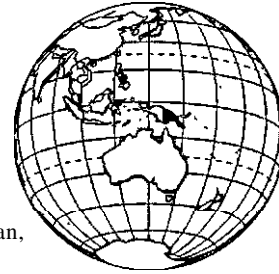
The Panamanian Defense Force (PDF) was dismantled after 1989, and the military was formally abolished in 1994. However, the civilian-run Panamanian Public Forces (the national police) that replaced the PDF, although accountable to civilian authorities through a publicly disclosed budget, are poorly disciplined and corrupt. There are four components of the force: the Panamanian National Police, the National Maritime Service, the National Air Service, and the Institutional Protection Service. Criminal investigations are the responsibility of a semiautonomous Judicial Technical Police. Like the country's prison guards, officers frequently use excessive force.

Discrimination against darker-skinned Panamanians is widespread. The country's Asian, Middle Eastern, and indigenous Indian populations are similarly singled out. The living conditions of the indigenous Indian populations, who often do not speak Spanish, are significantly lower than those of the general population, and these groups face significant discrimination in employment. Since 1993, indigenous groups have protested the encroachment of illegal settlers on Indian lands and delays by the government in formally demarcating the boundaries of those lands. Indian communities do, however, enjoy a large degree of autonomy and self-government.

Violence against women and children is widespread and common. Panama is both a destination and a transit point for human trafficking.

Papua New Guinea

Population: 5,900,000 **Political Rights:** 3
GNI/capita: \$500 **Civil Liberties:** 3
Life Expectancy: 55 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (22 percent),
 Protestant (44 percent), indigenous beliefs (34 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Melanesian, Papuan, Negrito, Micronesian,
 Polynesian



Capital: Port Moresby

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
2,4PF	2,4PF	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF

Overview:

Elections held in May 2005 on Papua New Guinea's Bougainville Island, which saw John Kabui chosen Bougainville's president, paved the way for the island's self-rule. Tensions with Australia over immunity for Australian soldiers and police forced their withdrawal from Papua New Guinea. Meanwhile, university students launched violent protests over a new grading policy.

Papua New Guinea (PNG), which consists of the eastern part of New Guinea and some 600 smaller islands, gained independence from Australia in 1975. The island that PNG shares with New Guinea is the second largest island in the world and is vulnerable to volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and tidal waves.

In 1988, miners and landowners on Bougainville Island began guerrilla attacks against the Australian-owned Panguna copper mine, which provided 40 percent of the country's total export revenues. By 1990, the rebels—who were demanding compensation and profit-sharing—were waging a low-grade secessionist struggle under the newly formed Bougainville Revolutionary Army. A short-lived ceasefire broke down in 1996, when gunmen assassinated Theodore Miriung, the head of a government-installed transitional administration on Bougainville. Tensions eased following a 1998 ceasefire brokered by Australia and New Zealand. A peace treaty between the government and the Bougainville Revolutionary Army in August 2001—which called for elections for self-rule in Bougainville and a referendum on independence in 10 to 15 years—ended the country's civil war, which had claimed more than 10,000 lives and crippled the country. The war displaced many people, and economic collapse resulted in the creation of large squatter communities in the capital and nearby cities and towns.

Both the United Nations and Australia have been deeply involved in the peace process and postconflict recovery: the United Nations had an observer mission in Bougainville, while Australia sent federal police officers to train local law enforcement in PNG in December 2003. Another group of Australian officers were sent to PNG in December 2004 to help restore law and order and reform the PNG Army. However, in May 2005, Australia pulled out its 150 police and army officers when the PNG Supreme Court decided that their deployment was unconstitutional and that Australian officers were not immune from prosecution. Negotiations eventually al-

lowed Australia to send back 40 police advisers to train PNG police in anticorruption work and law enforcement techniques.

Parliament approved a new constitution for Bougainville in December 2004. Elections, held in May 2005, saw more than 200,000 people vote in polls declared free and fair by international observers. John Kabui, an advocate for Bougainville independence, was elected the new Bougainville president, defeating former Bougainville governor John Momis. Kabui formally assumed his new post in June.

Crime—including firearms smuggling, rape, murder, and drug trafficking—is on the rise, and the government has done little to stop crime due to a lack of resources and political will. The country's economic and social troubles are exacerbated by high population growth, which at an annual rate of 2 percent is among the highest in the world; nearly half of the population lives on \$1 per day.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Papua New Guineans can change their government democratically. However, voter fraud and other electoral irregularities are not uncommon. Voters elect a unicameral parliament with 109 members from all 19 provinces and the National Capital District. The prime minister is the leader of the majority party or a majority coalition in parliament. As PNG is a member of the Commonwealth, the prime minister is formally appointed to the post by the governor general, who represents Queen Elizabeth II. The governor general is elected by the PNG parliament; Sir Paulias Matane was sworn in to the post in 2004. In 2005, a limited preferential voting system was formally adopted, which will allow voters to rank three preferred candidates; it replaces the first-past-the-post system that critics claimed was open to bribery. The new system was tested in a by-election in 2004 and will be used in the next general election in 2006. The last general election was held in June 2002, resulting in a coalition government headed by Prime Minister Michael Somare.

The major political parties are the National Alliance of Prime Minister Somare, the United Resources Party, the Papua New Guinea Party, and the People's Progressive Party. However, tribal and geographical ties and personalities are more important determinants of political affiliations and alliances than political parties.

Corruption is a severe problem hindering the country's recovery. However, authorities have yet to implement real reforms to increase transparency and strengthen the rule of law. In 2005, there was widespread public opposition to two government bills to prevent parliament members from dismissal and to increase district support grants to politicians. More than 20,000 people signed petitions against these two bills, which the public feared would lead to greater corruption and abuse by elected officials. PNG ranked 130 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech is generally respected. There are two major daily newspapers and several other smaller local weekly and monthly publications. The government operates two FM radio stations and one AM radio station, as well as a television station. Several radio stations and two television stations are operated by private entities. The Japanese government donated a new 1.5-megawatt generator to Radio Bougainville, allowing broadcasts to expand to 10 hours daily. In November 2004, Fiji TV acquired Media Niugini, PNG's only free-to-air station, which reaches about 45 percent of the population and controls 38 percent of the total PNG advertising market. Foreign newspapers are available, as are radio and television broadcasts from Australia and

other countries. The media provide independent coverage and report on controversial issues such as alleged abuses by police, cases of alleged corruption by government officials, and the views of the political opposition. There are no government controls on access to the internet, but access is limited by cost and connectivity issues.

The government generally respects freedom of religion. Belief in religious cults and sorcery is widespread in rural communities. Academics are generally free to set their curriculums and engage in research, but the government often does not tolerate strong criticism of the government or the economy. The introduction of a new grading policy in July sparked three weeks of violent protests in the capital by university students, who alleged that the new policy would downgrade their work. Students boycotted classes and burned university vehicles used by senior university officials.

The constitution provides for freedom of association, and the government generally respects this right in practice. A number of civil society groups provide social services and advocate for women's, conservation, and other causes. However, the government continues to restrict freedom of assembly in the form of marches and demonstrations, which require 14-day advance notice and police approval. The government recognizes workers' rights to strike, organize, and engage in collective bargaining.

The judiciary is independent, and the legal system is based on English common law. The Supreme Court is the final court of appeal and has original jurisdiction on constitutional matters. The National Court hears most cases and appeals from the lower district courts established at the provincial level. There are also village courts, which are headed by laypersons, to adjudicate minor offenses under both customary and statutory law. The government increased the number of full-time judges in 2002 and took steps to expand training of the judiciary.

Police and judicial reforms are much needed, according to New York-based Human Rights Watch. Law enforcement officials have been implicated in unlawful killings, the use of excessive force in arresting and interrogating suspects, extortions, and conducting excessively punitive and violent raids. The police commissioner admitted in September that more than 500 cases of police brutality had been reported since 2002, and more than 100 officers dismissed as a result. In November 2005, police allegedly robbed a school in the capital and injured more than 20 people when they opened fire; three were arrested for being drunk while on duty. There has been little progress in improving poor prison conditions and prison breaks are not uncommon. In January, 106 prisoners escaped from the Bohama prison—the largest jail break in three years. Sixteen prisoners escaped in September from a jail in Madang, and 33 escaped from a jail in Mount Hagen in October.

The country maintains ground, naval, air, and special operations forces. Control and effectiveness of the military are complicated by a lack of resources for training and equipment, low morale, low pay, corruption, and disciplinary issues. The Australian-led multinational force had downsized the PNG Army from 3,300 to 2,000 officers, and 30 Australian police officers are working to improve capacity and morale in the PNG police force.

Violence between native tribes is a serious problem rooted in a cultural tradition of revenge for perceived wrongs. Lack of police enforcement and the increased availability of guns have exacerbated this problem. Attacks on Chinese nationals and their businesses were reported in the past year in connection with a police crackdown on

the operation of horse racing machines and on illegal immigration. In several cases, police had allegedly led or participated in lootings of Chinese-owned businesses.

Discrimination and violence against women and children are serious problems. Domestic violence is punishable by law, but prosecutions are rare as police commonly treat it as a private matter, and family pressure and fear of reprisal discourage victims from pressing charges. Critics argue that polygyny and the custom of paying a bride price reinforce the view that women are property. Prime Minister Somare has voiced support for the death penalty for men convicted of gang rape. The spread of HIV/AIDS is a serious problem, with an estimated 2 percent of the population infected with the virus. PNG has the largest number of HIV/AIDS cases among the Pacific Island states.

Paraguay

Population: 6,200,000 **Political Rights:** 3
GNI/capita: \$1,110 **Civil Liberties:** 3
Life Expectancy: 71 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (90 percent), other [including Mennonite and Protestant] (10 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Mestizo (95 percent), other [including Amerindian and white] (5 percent)
Capital: Asuncion



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2002	2003	2004	2004	2005
4,3PF	4,3PF	4,3PF	4,3PF	4,3PF	4,3PF	4,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF

Overview:

In 2005, President Nicanor Duarte Frutos saw his leadership role in the long-ruling Colorado Party challenged by supporters of former dictator Alfredo Stroessner. Despite his having strengthened his influence over Congress, Duarte's popularity appeared to wane even as he pushed for reform of the 1992 constitution to allow for his reelection.

Paraguay, which achieved independence from Spain in 1811, has been wracked by a series of crises since civilian rule was restored in 1989 and the 35-year feudal reign of Alfredo Stroessner and the right-wing Colorado Party was ended. The fragility of the country's democratic institutions resulted in nearly 15 years of popular uprisings, military mutinies, antigovernment demonstrations, bitter political rivalries, and unbroken rule by the Colorados.

Luis Gonzalez Macchi assumed the presidency in 1999, after his predecessor fled the country amid charges that he had orchestrated the murder of his vice president. International concern about individuals and organizations with ties to Middle Eastern extremist groups operating in Ciudad del Este and along the tri-border area—where Paraguay, Brazil, and Argentina meet—followed the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States.

In December 2002, Gonzalez Macchi offered to leave office three months early, just a week after lawmakers voted to begin impeachment hearings against him. Ac-

cused of buying an armor-plated BMW stolen from Brazil, mishandling millions of dollars in state revenues, and embezzling \$16 million from two banks in the process of liquidation, Gonzalez Macchi barely survived an impeachment trial in early 2003. Even his supporters did not defend the president—who allegedly doubled his personal wealth during his four years in power—saying only that it was inadvisable to oust him so late in his term. Gonzalez Macchi and many in the Colorado Party were discredited, too, by their failed efforts to reverse the country's downward economic spiral.

Favoring populist, antiglobalization rhetoric during the 2003 presidential campaign, former education minister and journalist Nicanor Duarte Frutos, an insurgent Colorado, emerged victorious in national elections held in April. Duarte had promised to purge the public sector and the judiciary of corruption and inefficiency, create jobs, and return fiscal stability to the country. Although the Colorado Party lost ground in Congress in the concurrent legislative elections, it retained a majority of the 17 state governorships. On taking office in August, Duarte quickly began to inaugurate the good-government agenda that he had promised during the campaign. Skeptics, however, questioned whether the new anticorruption regime would be selectively applied to Duarte's rivals inside and outside the Colorado Party, or whether the elections would truly usher in a new period in Paraguayan politics.

Duarte did move to take control of the tax, ports, and customs authorities to combat tax evasion and smuggling; Paraguay has a highly dollarized banking system and a tax system in which two-thirds of what should be collected is never paid or is siphoned off, owing to corruption. In October 2003, his law enforcement minister, the commandant of the national police, and the head of customs were forced to resign following revelations about a smuggling and corruption scandal.

Despite Duarte government efforts to promote good governance, fight tax evasion, pay foreign debt arrearages, and adopt International Monetary Fund (IMF) reforms, Paraguay appeared near paralysis in 2004 in the face of an increase in public insecurity, a long-running economic recession, endemic public corruption, and a poverty rate of more than 60 percent. The country was shaken by a crime wave whose magnitude was symbolized by the seeming impunity with which criminals abducted the daughter of a former Paraguayan president in a blaze of gunfire. Sometimes violent land seizures by armies of homeless people in and around the capital city, Asuncion, contributed to a growing debate about the distribution of wealth in the country.

Public opinion surveys showed that after a decade and a half of turbulent civilian rule and 50 years after he had seized power, the once-discredited Stroessner—living in exile in Brazil—was viewed with favor by some two-thirds of Paraguayans. In September 2004, a Paraguayan court ordered Stroessner and his former armed forces chief of staff to be arrested in connection with the disappearance of three Paraguayan activists in Argentina in the 1970s under a secret regional police action known as Operation Condor.

Duarte justified his push for constitutional reform that would allow his reelection by pointing out that the current constitution was approved in an era of what he called "mutual mistrust," just three years after Stroessner's fall. Duarte's influence in both houses of Congress improved after a pact with the fractured Authentic Liberal Radical Party (PLRA), the country's strongest opposition party, secured the votes necessary for Duarte supporters to take control of the leadership positions in both bodies. However, in October 2005 the newspaper *ABC Color* accused Duarte supporters of spying on legislators known to oppose his reelection bid. The follow-

ing month, between 10,000 and 40,000 Stroessner supporters rallied in an effort to oppose a new term for the president.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Citizens of Paraguay can change their government democratically. The 2003 national elections were considered to be free and fair. The 1992 constitution provides for a president, a vice president, and a bicameral Congress consisting of a 45-member Senate and an 80-member Chamber of Deputies elected for five years. The president is elected by a simple majority vote, and reelection is prohibited. The constitution bans the active military from engaging in politics.

The Colorado Party has ruled Paraguay for 50 years; the other major political groupings include the PLRA, the Beloved Fatherland Party, the National Union of Ethical Citizens, and the National Agreement Party.

Corruption cases languish for years in the courts, and most end without resolution. According to the comptroller-general, corruption has cost the Paraguayan treasury \$5 billion since the country returned to democracy in 1989. Transparency International consistently ranks Paraguay as the most corrupt country in Latin America; in its 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index, Paraguay was ranked 144 of 159 countries surveyed worldwide.

The constitution provides for freedom of expression and the press, and the government generally respects these rights in practice. There are a number of private television and radio stations and independent newspapers, but only one state-owned media outlet, Radio Nacional, which has a limited audience. Journalists investigating corruption or covering strikes and protests are often the victims of intimidation or violent attack by security forces, and even death threats from politicians. In April 2004, radio reporter Samuel Roman was shot dead by two men riding on a motorcycle in a Paraguayan border town. In 2005, there were several threats and attacks on journalists that caused the Paraguayan Journalists Union to issue a statement complaining about a climate of insecurity around the country in which the media are forced to work. Vague, potentially restrictive laws that mandate "responsible" behavior on the part of journalists and media owners also threaten free expression. The government does not restrict use of the internet, nor does it censor internet content.

The government generally respects freedom of religion. All religious groups are required to register with the Ministry of Education and Culture, but no controls are imposed on these groups, and many informal churches exist. In August, the Senate approved a bill that would seize some property owned in the Chaco region by the Reverend Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church, which was accused by President Nicanor Duarte Frutos of paying local workers "starvation" wages. The government generally does not restrict academic freedom.

Although the constitution guarantees freedom of association and assembly, these rights have been undermined by the previous government's tolerance of threats and the use of force, including imprisonment, by its supporters against the opposition. There are numerous trade unions and two major union federations, although they are weak and riddled with corruption. The constitution gives public sector workers the right to organize, bargain collectively, and strike, and nearly all these workers belong to the ruling Colorado Party. A revised labor code designed to protect workers' rights was adopted in October 1993.

The judiciary, under the influence of the ruling party and the military, is susceptible to the corruption pervading all public and governmental institutions. The constitution permits detention without trial until the accused completes the minimum sentence for the alleged crime. There have been continuing reports of illegal detention by police and torture during incarceration, including of minors, particularly in rural areas. Reportedly corrupt police officials, who are poorly paid, remain in key posts and are in a position to give protection to, or compromise law enforcement actions against, narcotics traffickers. Colombian drug traffickers continue to expand operations in Paraguay, and accusations of high official involvement in drug trafficking date back to the 1980s. Overcrowding, unsanitary living conditions, and mistreatment of prisoners are serious problems in the country's prisons; more than 95 percent of those held are pending trial, many for months or years after arrest.

The lack of security in border areas, particularly in the tri-border region, has allowed large organized crime groups to engage in piracy and in the smuggling of weapons, narcotics, and contraband. In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks, attention focused on the serious lack of governmental control over Paraguay's lengthy and undeveloped land borders, extensive river network, and numerous airstrips (both registered and unregistered). The Islamic extremist organization Hezbollah and other militant organizations are active in the so-called Iguazu triangle region, which is delineated by the cities of Ciudad del Este in Paraguay, Foz do Iguacu in Brazil, and Puerto Iguazu in Argentina.

The constitution provides indigenous people with the right to participate in the economic, social, political, and cultural life of the country. However, in practice, the indigenous population is unassimilated and neglected. Low wages, long work hours, infrequent payment or nonpayment of wages, job insecurity, lack of access to social security benefits, and racial discrimination are common. Peasant and Indian organizations that demand and illegally occupy land often meet with police crackdowns, death threats, detentions, and forced evictions by vigilante groups in the employ of landowners. Impoverished Indian groups in the Chaco region are among the most neglected in the hemisphere, with 93 percent of homes lacking sanitation or drinking water. In February 2005, the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights accused the government of violating six articles of the American Convention on Human Rights by displacing indigenous populations from their ancestral lands and denying them the right to land, education, health, and judicial protection.

Paraguay's economy remains heavily based on agriculture and various forms of contraband. The country has one of the most unequal distributions of land in the world, and the top 10 percent own 40 percent of the wealth. Nearly 242,000 children between the ages of 10 and 17 work in Paraguay, and many are used in narcotics and weapons trafficking in Brazil by criminal bands.

Sexual and domestic abuse of women, which is both widespread and vastly underreported, continues to be a serious problem in Paraguay, with nearly one in 15 women reporting having been raped at least once in their lives. Although the government generally prosecutes rape allegations, often obtaining convictions, many rapes go unreported because victims fear their attackers or are concerned that the law does not respect their privacy. Employment discrimination is pervasive and spousal abuse is common. Trafficking in persons to, from, and within the country is proscribed by the constitution and criminalized in the penal code; however, there were occasional reports of the practice for sexual purposes.

Peru

Population: 27,900,000 **Political Rights:** 2
GNI/capita: \$2,140 **Civil Liberties:** 3
Life Expectancy: 70 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (81 percent),
 other [including Seventh Day Adventist] (19 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Amerindian (45 percent), mestizo
 (37 percent), white (15 percent), other (3 percent)
Capital: Lima



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
4,3PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	3,3PF	1,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F

Overview:

Despite Peru's sustained economic growth, President Alejandro Toledo reached the end of his presidential term in 2005 with the lowest approval rating of any Latin American leader and lacking in effective authority, in part because of allegations of corruption. Meanwhile, ousted strongman president Alberto Fujimori was detained in Chile pending an extradition request by Peru on charges of corruption and human rights abuse.

Since independence in 1821, Peru has seen alternating periods of civilian and military rule, with elected civilians holding office since a 12-year dictatorship ended in 1980. However, that same year, the Maoist Shining Path guerrilla group launched a vicious two-decades-long insurgency. Alberto Fujimori, a university rector and engineer, defeated the novelist Mario Vargas Llosa in the 1990 election.

In 1992, Fujimori, backed by the military, suspended the constitution and dissolved the Congress. In November, he held elections for an 80-member Constituent Assembly to replace the Congress, which his candidates won overwhelmingly after the opposition made a strategic decision to boycott the election. The Assembly created a constitution—which established a unicameral Congress more closely under presidential control—that was approved in a state-controlled referendum following the capture of the Shining Path leader, Abimael Guzman. Congress passed a law in August 1996 allowing Fujimori to run for a third term, despite a constitutional provision limiting the president to two terms.

In the April 2000 presidential election, Fujimori outpolled against Alejandro Toledo—a U.S.-educated economist who had been raised in one of the many urban squatter settlements populated by former peasants—49.9 percent to 40.2 percent. Toledo refused to participate in a second-round runoff, saying that he had been victimized by election-day voting irregularities, been repeatedly assaulted by Fujimori supporters in the earlier campaign, suffered constant death threats and phone taps, been virtually blacked out of media coverage, and been the target of smear campaigns in the press.

In early September 2000, a videotape was released showing Vladimiro Montesinos, the de facto head of the national intelligence service, bribing an opposition con-

gressman at the same time that the spy chief was also being linked to the illegal shipment of arms to Colombian guerrillas. After other similar videos (labeled "Vladivideos") were exposed, the scandal raised suspicions that Fujimori had secured a congressional majority by bribing opposition members of Congress to change sides. As a result, in late November, Fujimori was driven from office; opposition forces assumed control of Congress; and a respected opposition leader, Valentin Paniagua, was chosen as interim president. Following Fujimori's overthrow, the new opposition-controlled Congress began a process of renewing the constitutional tribunal, which had been gutted because some of its members had opposed the third-term law, and reforming the constitution. At the end of 2000, Fujimori announced that he was availing himself of his dual citizenship to remain in Japan.

In the April 2001 congressional elections, Toledo's Peru Posible party won 25 percent of the votes, compared to 19 percent garnered by its closest competitor, the Peruvian Aprista Party. Running on the slogan "Toledo Trabajo" (Toledo Means Jobs), Toledo bested former Aprista president Alan Garcia (1985-1990) in runoff presidential elections held in June. In August, Toledo sacked Peru's top military chiefs and promised to thoroughly restructure the armed forces. The 2002 reform of Peru's highly centralized political structure gave new regional governments almost a quarter of the national budget and a range of powers that had long been the province of the central government. However, Toledo's standing suffered from a host of personal scandals, and Peru Possible suffered a serious setback at the polls in elections for 25 new regional governments.

In August 2003, Peru's Truth and Reconciliation Commission—which Paniagua had appointed in July 2001—presented its report on the scope and origins of the political violence that had wracked the country from 1980 to 2000. While it concluded that the Maoist Shining Path guerrilla group was the "principal perpetrator of the human rights violations," which included 69,000 people killed, the commission also accused the military and security forces of serious and repeated atrocities. The report shocked many observers by more than doubling the number of deaths estimated to have occurred during the protracted insurgency; nearly three-fourths of the victims of both the guerrillas and the military were residents of Andean highland villages, rural poor who have long suffered neglect from the central government.

Toledo's popularity appeared to decline further by late 2003, as Peruvians took to the streets in increasing numbers in anger over his questionable ethics and failure to make good on campaign promises of more jobs. The popular disenchantment grew despite the country's posting an annual inflation rate of just 1.5 percent, the lowest in decades, and holding its position as Latin America's economic growth leader.

In 2004, Toledo's personal popularity plummeted and his Peru Posible party appeared on the verge of disintegration. At mid-year, Peru Posible lost control of the leadership of Congress after the resignation from the party of two of its founding members, which reduced its congressional representation to 36, 11 fewer than in 2001. By midyear, one public opinion survey showed that 70 percent of those polled felt that Toledo—considered on the basis of comparative polling data to be the most unpopular president in Latin America—was himself personally corrupt, and half said they wanted him to leave office early. In June, a special anticorruption court found former intelligence chief Montesinos guilty on charges of corruption, sentencing

him to 15 years in prison. Nonetheless, in September, the self-exiled Fujimori, wanted in Peru on charges including murder and kidnapping, declared that he would run for president in 2006—despite being legally banned from holding public office.

In early 2005, Toledo's vice president was forced to resign over a tax scandal, his personal lawyer was arrested for attempting to influence the justice system, and two cabinet ministers were forced to resign on corruption charges. Meanwhile, human rights advocates complained of a lack of progress in bringing institutional changes—beyond a partial demilitarization of the police and the inclusion of human rights courses in the military academies—recommended two years earlier by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In addition, the commission's chairman, Salomon Lerner, who is a practicing Catholic but has a Jewish father and brother, faced eight lawsuits filed by Peruvian military officers accused of rights violations as well as anti-Semitic death threats. On July 29, a law went into effect granting nonmonetary reparations to survivors and the families of victims of the armed conflict.

In November, Fujimori, who had been living in Tokyo, suddenly reappeared in Chile. After again declaring his intention to run for president despite a congressional ban on his holding office until 2011, he was detained by authorities there, who held him as Peru requested his extradition to face more than 20 criminal charges. However, some analysts cautioned that as Fujimori supporters are likely to emerge from the upcoming elections winning 15 to 20 of the 120 congressional seats, a new president might have to negotiate with Fujimori in order to run the country. At the end of 2005, public opinion polls showed Lourdes Flores Nano, of the National Unity Party, remained the frontrunner in the presidential contest, followed by former president Alan Garcia and Peruvian Nationalist Party candidate Ollanta Humala.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Peru can change their government democratically. In preparation for the 2001 vote, Congress reformed the constitution, replacing a single nationwide district for congressional elections with a system of multiple districts based on the departments (provinces) into which the country is divided for administrative purposes. The move provided fair representation for the almost 50 percent of the population who live outside the four largest cities and guaranteed them at least some attention from the state and from political parties, which traditionally have ignored them.

The president and the 120 members of the unicameral Congress are elected by popular vote for five-year terms. Twenty-eight parties had registered by the February 2005 deadline to participate in the 2006 elections. This political pluralism, as well as the fact that 70 percent of Peruvians polled say they do not ally themselves with a single party, foreshadow a fragmented result at the polls. In May 2005, Congress voted to send the attorney-general a report accusing President Alejandro Toledo of directing a campaign to force signatures to register his Peru Posible party for the 2000 elections. Forensic analysis showed that 77 percent of the 1.2 million signatures presented were false.

Peruvian prosecutors estimate that \$1.8 billion was stolen from the state during Alberto Fujimori's presidency, which ended in 2000. However, by mid-2005, of the 399 criminal cases related to his terms in office, sentence had been passed on only 39 of them. Public opinion polls revealed in 2005 that although practiced on a much smaller scale than during the Fujimori government, corruption was considered by 56

percent of those surveyed to be Peru's most serious problem. Peru was ranked 65 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The press is largely privately owned and is now considered to be free. Although the number of threats, including death threats, against journalists has fallen since Fujimori's presidency, the practice still persists, especially in the provinces. Some media observers claim that, at least in part, the upswing in public complaints about corruption reflect a tendency by the press, newly freed from the controls and interference of the Fujimori era, to engage in *denuncialogia*—an obsession with denunciations—that trivializes investigative journalism and helps to poison both political debate and public confidence. Radio and television are both privately and publicly owned. The government does not limit access to the internet.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the government generally respects this right in practice. However, the Roman Catholic Church receives preferential treatment from the state. Peru's 3,000-member Jewish community is suffering from a rise in anti-Semitic verbal attacks, and there has been an increase in the number of small, but vocal, neo-Nazi groups. The government does not restrict academic freedom.

The constitution provides for the right of peaceful assembly, and the authorities generally respect this right in practice. Freedom of association is also generally respected. The human rights community has reported that the Toledo administration continues to work toward strengthening relations between the government and civil society. The government permits numerous nongovernmental organizations dedicated to monitoring and advancing human rights to operate freely. In recent years, these groups reported no harassment or other attempts by the authorities to hinder their operations.

The law recognizes the right of public and private sector workers to organize and bargain collectively but limits their rights to those exercised in harmony with broader social objectives. Although workers exercise the right to strike, as provided by law, unions that represent workers in public services deemed essential by the government are restricted from striking, and strikers are required to notify the Ministry of Labor in advance of their intention to carry out a job action. Only about 5 percent of the formal sector workforce belong to labor unions, which reflects a legacy of hostility by the Fujimori regime, cuts in the public sector workforce, more flexible labor policies, and other market reforms. In July 2004, national labor unions called the first general strike in Peru since 1999, in protest against alleged public corruption. It received only tepid support and failed to shut down commercial activity in Lima, as had been intended.

During his period in office, Fujimori conducted a purge of the judiciary that removed 70 percent of judges. He replaced them with new appointees having "provisional" status, meaning that they lacked job tenure and thus were potentially unduly responsive to the government in cases where it had an interest. Since Toledo assumed office in July 2001, the Ministry of Justice has worked to put into place a broad anticorruption effort. However, popular perceptions of the justice system—that it is an inefficient, overloaded bureaucracy riddled by political influence and greed—have not changed. Scant resources have resulted in most of Peru's more than 3,000 judges being overworked and underpaid, and Toledo's unpopularity re-

suits in part from continuing public skepticism about any possibility of institutional reform.

Crime is spiraling out of control, driven by the country's economic woes. The National Statistics Institute reports that over half of the population still lives in poverty, which recent economic growth has done little to alleviate. Public safety, particularly in Lima, is threatened by gang warfare and an increase in violent crime; police estimate that there are now more than 1,000 criminal gangs in the capital alone. Conditions remain deplorable in prisons for common criminals. Torture and ill treatment on the part of the military and security forces remain concerns.

Under Toledo, the government has retained firm control over the military but has yet to embark on a comprehensive reform program to address the serious professional deformations promoted by Vladimiro Montesinos, their de facto head under Fujimori. Peru lacks the codified distinction between national defense and internal security that is characteristic of modern, democratic states, and responsibility for internal security is shared between the military and the Peruvian National Police. Recommendations by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, such as the implementation by the military of an ethics code stating that its members have a duty to disobey orders that run contrary to rights standards, have not been put into action.

Racism against Peru's large Native American population has been prevalent among the middle and upper classes, although the Fujimori government made some effort to combat it. The election of Toledo, who boasted of his indigenous heritage, is considered a watershed; in 2005, he told reporters that one of his government's most important accomplishments was having empowered impoverished indigenous communities by setting up social investment funds and cultural institutes. However, the provisions of the 1993 constitution, as well as subsequent legislation regarding the treatment of native lands, are less explicit about the lands' inalienability and protection from being sold off than were earlier constitutional and statutory laws. The failure of the government to codify aspects of customary law (*derecho consuetudinario*) into positive law has been accompanied by recent incidents of vigilante violence, including lynchings, in the predominantly indigenous highlands.

In recent years, women primarily from the upper and upper-middle classes have advanced into leadership roles in various companies and government agencies; by law, they are to receive equal pay for equal work. Spousal abuse is a serious problem, although recently the government has taken some steps to address the issue. Forced labor, including child labor, exists in the gold-mining region of the Amazon. Discrimination against homosexuals, including occasional acts of violence, is a problem. In July, several hundred lesbians, homosexuals, and bisexuals marched in downtown Lima for the fourth consecutive year, protesting what they called extensive discrimination.

Philippines

Population: 84,800,000 **Political Rights:** 3*

GNI/capita: \$1,080 **Civil Liberties:** 3

Life Expectancy: 70 **Status:** Partly Free

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (80.9 percent), Evangelical (2.8 percent), Iglesia ni Rristo (2.3 percent), Aglipayan (2 percent), other Christian (4.5 percent), Muslim (5 percent), other (2.5 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Tagalog (28.1 percent), Cebuano (13.1 percent), Ilocano (9 percent), Bisaya/Binisaya (7.6 percent), Hiligaynon Ilonggo (7.5 percent), Bikol (6 percent), Waray (3.4 percent), other (25.3 percent)

Capital: Manila

Ratings Change: The Philippines's political rights rating declined from 2 to 3, and its status from Free to Partly Free, due to credible allegations of massive electoral fraud, corruption, and the government's intimidation of elements in the political opposition.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	3,3PF



Overview:

Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's administration, which apparently won reelection in 2004 amid claims that it had boosted tax revenues and stabilized the budget deficit, encountered a crisis-filled year in 2005. An economic and fiscal crisis, linked to inflationary election-year spending by the constitutionally anomalous incumbent presidential candidate, paved the way for allegations of massive electoral fraud and the resignation of 11 cabinet members. The president also faced an opposition movement that included former president Corazon Aquino and influential national business associations. Her administration continued to struggle to reign in armed separatist and terrorist groups in the south, while attacks on journalists and human rights activists rose sharply during the year.

The Philippines won independence in 1946 after being ruled for 43 years by the United States and occupied by the Japanese during World War II. It held U.S. commonwealth status from 1935 until its independence. Once one of Southeast Asia's wealthiest nations, the Philippines has been plagued since the 1960s by insurgencies, economic mismanagement, and widespread corruption. The country's economic and political development was set back by Ferdinand Marcos's 14-year dictatorship. Marcos was finally chased from office in 1986 in a popular movement that installed Corazon Aquino, who had been cheated out of an electoral victory by the regime weeks earlier.

Aquino initiated a more liberal, reform-oriented system of government that set out to make significant democratic reforms. However, in the end, Aquino's administration failed to implement more than procedural reforms and managed few substantive changes to improve the socioeconomic situation of the population. Social and economic elites reconsolidated their hold on power under Aquino, and electoral

politics continued to reflect strongly the entrenched positions of elite political families. In the May 1992 presidential poll, Fidel Ramos—a key figure in the demonstrations that forced Marcos into exile—narrowly defeated Agrarian Reform Secretary Miriam Defensor-Santiago.

Joseph Estrada, vice president under Ramos, won the 1998 presidential election by a wide margin, securing strong support from impoverished Filipinos in a campaign built around promises of concrete socioeconomic reform. Almost from the outset, the Estrada administration was dogged by allegations of corruption, although an impeachment process eventually failed, stalled in a deadlocked Senate. In retrospect, Estrada's administration seems to have been no more graft-prone than either that of Fidel Ramos, who came before, or that of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, who succeeded him. The campaign against Estrada, however, had political support, and massive street protests removed him from office in 2001. Since that time, the prospect of massive demonstration-driven transitions in leadership has provided a more or less constant hypothetical alternative to electoral removal.

Macapagal-Arroyo, who was Estrada's vice president, assumed the presidency, and her political coalition soon won 8 of 13 contested Senate seats and a majority in the House in the May 2001 legislative elections. Nevertheless, Arroyo was dogged by questions about the legitimacy of her unelected administration. In the run-up to the May 2004 presidential election, Arroyo seemed initially to win over opposing candidate Fernando Poe Jr. with a reported 1.1-million-vote margin of victory. From the outset, however, charges of massive voter fraud began to circulate (not in itself a rare event in Philippine politics). Poe's supporters waged demonstrations, but these faltered until administration insiders themselves began to verify the charges.

As a postelection fiscal crisis emerged, an audiotape of a conversation between the president and election officials surfaced in June 2005. The conversation, admitted to be genuine by government officials, seemed to confirm allegations that the president had used her incumbent powers to rig the elections. Allegations that her husband and son were involved in illegal gambling activities (similar to those that led to Estrada's downfall) forced Macapagal-Arroyo to send both into a much publicized, though ultimately short-lived, voluntary exile; many cabinet officials resigned to fuel a new opposition movement. By year's end, protests calling for the president's resignation had grown more frequent, and the anti-Macapagal-Arroyo movement included Corazon Aquino, a broad array of civil society groups, and 11 former members of the government. Rumors also suggested that factions of the military would join the move to oust the government.

The administration undertook several efforts, including gag orders and punitive prosecution, to undercut the opposition movement. Recently, it initiated court-martial proceedings against Marine Brigadier General Francisco Gudani, superintendent of the Philippine Military Academy, when he decided (against administration orders) to answer a Senate subpoena and testify against the administration. By year's end, Executive Order 464 was announced, preventing department heads, high ranking military officers, and potentially a wide range of other executive branch officials from testifying before Congress without prior clearance from the president.

The southern Philippines continued to be wracked by Islamic militancy during the year. Abu Sayyaf continued to engage in terrorist activities, including bombings and kidnappings. Although claiming to be a Muslim secessionist group, its

activities appeared to be motivated mostly by the financial gains made by ransoms. Jemaah Islamiyah, a regional terrorist group with ties to al-Qaeda, is believed to have training grounds on the southern island of Mindanao. The Communist insurgency also continued at a low level. While the insurgency is nowhere as potent as in the middle 1980s, extortion of local businesses and attacks on military and civilian targets in the countryside have helped cripple rural development. The general security problem is compounded by the high level of corruption in the security forces. Human rights violations, particularly against journalists and human rights advocates, increased in 2004 and 2005.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of the Philippines can change their government democratically. However, the fairness of Philippine elections has been called dramatically into question by recent events. The Philippine National Police reported 192 incidents of electoral violence during the May 2004 presidential polls.

The Philippines has a presidential system of government, with the directly elected president limited to a single six-year term. The current president's constitutionally anomalous position stems from her initial rise to office in an extraconstitutional transition process, in which military pressure and protest drove Joseph Estrada from office. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo completed Estrada's first term, and then—despite some legal challenges—ran for a second, full term. As protest against her government mounted in 2005, many politicians, including former President Fidel Ramos, suggested that her second term be shortened, so that both together would add up to six years; Macapagal-Arroyo rejected this appeal.

The legislative Congress is bicameral. The 24 members of the Senate are elected on a nationwide ballot and serve six-year terms. The 264 members of the House of Representatives serve three-year terms; 212 of them are elected by district, and 52 of them are chosen by party list. Legislative coalitions are exceptionally fluid as alliances, and even parties rise and fall with the tide of wider political events. In 2005, the ruling People's Power Coalition was headed by President Macapagal-Arroyo's party, the National Union of Christian Democrats (Lakas); the main opposition party is the Struggle for a Democratic Philippines (Laban).

Corruption, cronyism, and influence peddling are widely believed to be rife in business and government. Despite recent economic reforms, a few dozen powerful families continue to play an overarching role in politics and hold an outsized share of land and corporate wealth. The Philippines was ranked 117 out of 159 out of countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The private press (most print and electronic media) is vibrant and outspoken, although newspaper reports often consist more of innuendo and sensationalism than investigative reporting, and many newspapers mostly declined to cover opposition activities until quite recently. Even though many television and radio stations are government owned, they are still outspoken, though they too lack strict journalistic ethics. Although the censorship board does have broad powers to edit or ban content, in general, government censorship is not a serious problem and tends to enforce purported moral standards rather than political orientation. However, the Philippines is one of the most dangerous places in the world for journalists to work, according to the National Union of Journalists in the Philippines. Eight Journalists

were killed in 2004, and the 2005 U.S. State Department's human rights report cites 8 such murders in 2005; radio journalists accounted for 75 percent of these deaths. While many were reportedly victims of revenge killings following their stories about crimes committed by local government officials, some were outspoken government critics. The internet is widely available and uncensored, with over 38,000 internet hosts. University professors and other teachers can lecture and publish freely.

Filipinos of all faiths can worship freely in this mainly Christian society, and church and state are separate. However, Muslims say that they face economic and social discrimination in mainstream society at the hands of the country's Roman Catholic majority. Many, according to a Social Weather Stations survey, report that discrimination has risen in the wake of global and national antiterrorism efforts. There are also reports of reverse discrimination (against Christians) in areas such as Mindanao, where Muslims are in the majority. Muslim-majority provinces lag behind Christian-majority ones on most development indicators. Only 12 of 236 members of Congress are Muslims, a figure that falls far short of proportional. According to the 2005 U.S. State Department's human rights report, ethnic minorities have equal juridical representation in the political system but suffer the consequences of living in remote, poorly served, and often insurgency-threatened areas of the country.

Citizens can hold protests, rallies, and other demonstrations without government interference. The law requires that groups request a permit before holding a rally, but this law is often ignored in practice. The Philippines has many active environmental, human rights, social welfare, and other nongovernmental groups. Trade unions are independent, and they may align themselves with international trade union confederations or trade secretariats. Collective bargaining is widespread, and strikes may be called, though unions must provide notice and obtain majority approval from union membership before calling a strike. Strikes often risk violence, however, as when police fired on striking plantation workers in Tarlac Province in November 2004, killing 12 and injuring more than 100. Only 4 percent of the national labor force is unionized.

Despite many gains since the Marcos era, the rule of law continues to be weak. The judiciary, while generally independent, is hampered by corruption and inefficiency. Low pay for judges and prosecutors is often cited as a major factor in making bribes and payoffs central to the resolution of most court cases. The constitution sets time limits for court cases, but because of backlogs, and because these limits are not mandatory, they are mostly ignored. There has been recent concern over the high number of incidents in which whistle-blowers who have resigned from government are charged with graft. Independent observers do not believe that the judicial system adequately guarantees defendants' constitutional rights to due process and legal representation.

Reports of arbitrary and unlawful detention or arrest in harsh prison conditions, disappearances, kidnappings, extrajudicial killings, and abuse of suspects and detainees continue. The 2005 U.S. State Department's human rights report cites a local Philippine source, the Task Force Detainees of the Philippines, which stated that "torture remained an ingrained part of the arrest and detention process"; that same report cited several instances of extrajudicial killings by security forces, as well as the excessive use of force. Members of the poorly disciplined Philippine National Police (PNP) are regularly described by the official Commission on Human Rights as

the country's worst rights abusers. A significant subset of these extrajudicial murders target human rights workers. The PNP is under the jurisdiction of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

The long-running conflict between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the separatist Islamic rebel group, has caused severe hardship for many of the 15 million Filipinos on southern Mindanao and nearby islands. Amnesty International recently accused both government and insurgent forces of summary killings and other human rights abuses in these conflicts. MILF guerrillas have attacked many Christian villages. Separately, the smaller Abu Sayyaf group has kidnapped and tortured many civilians and beheaded some of its captives. Islamic militants are suspected in a string of bombings on Mindanao in recent years, including a September 2005 bombing in Zamboanga that injured 24 people; in 2003, bombings in Davao City killed at least 38 people.

In the countryside, the 10,000-strong New People's Army (NPA), the military arm of the Communist insurgency, continues to engage in executions, torture, and kidnappings, according to the 2005 U.S. State Department's human rights report. The army and progovernment militias operating in Mindoro Oriental and other provinces are responsible for summary killings, disappearances, torture, and illegal arrests while fighting Communist rebels, according to Amnesty International. There were 150,000 internally displaced persons in the Philippines, mainly as a consequence of the Islamic insurgencies.

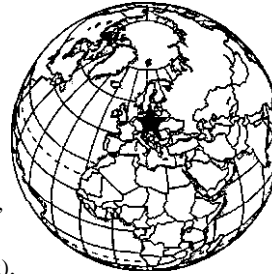
Citizens may travel freely, and there are no restrictions on employment or place of residence. The government generally respects the privacy of its citizens. However, the poor security situation takes a serious toll on individuals' ability to operate private businesses. Street crime, drug trafficking, kidnappings, extortion, and terrorist violence all conspire against business interests.

Filipino women have the same juridical rights as men, though this is not always borne out in practice. Women have made many social and economic gains in recent years, and more women than men now enter high school and university. In the job market, though, women face some discrimination in the private sector and have a higher unemployment rate than men, according to the 2005 U.S. State Department's human rights report. The UN Development Program's 2005 Human Development Report ranks the Philippines 66 on its Gender-Related Development Index, which compares favorably with the country's overall score of 84 on the Human Development Index.

Nevertheless, rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment on the job, and trafficking of Filipino women and girls abroad and at home for forced labor and prostitution continue to be major problems despite government and civil efforts to protect women from violence and abuse. In a recent Social Weather Stations survey, 15 percent of male respondents admitted to having caused physical harm to some woman. There are reports of bonded labor, especially of children, in underground sectors such as prostitution and drug trafficking. The NPA, MILF, and Abu Sayyaf have also been accused of using child soldiers, and in Mindanao in particular, this practice appears to be on the rise, according to Amnesty International.

Poland

Population: 38,200,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$5,280 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 75 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (89.8 percent),
 Eastern Orthodox (1.3 percent), Protestant (0.3 percent),
 other (8.6 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Polish (96.7 percent), German (0.4 percent),
 other [including Byelorussian and Ukrainian] (2.9 percent)
Capital: Warsaw



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In 2005, Poland's outgoing government was soundly defeated in elections, and the Law and Justice (PiS) party won both the parliamentary and presidential elections. Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz became prime minister, and Lech Kaczynski was elected president

From the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries, Poland and Lithuania maintained a powerful state that Prussia, Austria, and Russia destroyed in three successive partitions. Poland enjoyed a window of independence from 1918 to 1939 but was invaded by Germany and the Soviet Union during World War II and forced into the Communist sphere at the end of the war. Polish citizens endured decades of Soviet rule until 1989, the year Lech Walesa and the Solidarity trade union movement forced the government to accept democratic reforms.

Fundamental democratic and free market-oriented reforms were introduced during the 1989-1991 period. Later changes were stimulated by a need to adjust the Polish legal system to European Union (EU) requirements. Political parties with a background in the Solidarity movement were in power from 1989 to 1993 (several coalitions) and from 1997 to 2001 (Solidarity Election Action, or AWS). In 1995, former Communist Alexander Kwasniewski replaced Solidarity's Walesa, the previous president, and was subsequently reelected by a large margin of votes in 2000.

In September 2001, voters handed the government of Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek a decisive defeat in parliamentary elections. Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) leader Leszek Miller became the new prime minister. In elections for the Sejm (lower house of parliament), a coalition of the center-left SLD and the Union of Labor (UP) took 216 seats out of 460 but failed to win a majority. The two parties formed a government with the leftist Polish Peasant Party (PSL), which had won 42 seats. Civic Platform (PO), a new centrist party, finished second with 65 seats. The following parties divided the remaining seats: the leftist-popular, agrarian Self-Defense Party (Samoobrona), 53 seats; the center-right PiS, 44; the right-wing League of Polish Families (LPR), 38; and the German minority, 2. The Solidarity movement, now a looser coalition known as the "Coalition Electoral Action Solidarity of the Right," and the Freedom Union (UW) failed to secure a single seat.

On May 1, 2004, Poland joined the EU, along with nine other, mostly post-Communist countries. In subsequent negotiations over a new draft constitution for the EU, Poland fought unsuccessfully for the disproportionate voting clout it was given in the Treaty of Nice. Poland was therefore skeptical of the constitution and may have defeated it in a referendum, but France and the Netherlands did so first, in May and June 2005, effectively killing the constitution.

In March 2004, Miller announced that he would resign as prime minister, effective in May. His SLD-led government's popularity suffered from the effects of a weak economy, high unemployment, and high budget deficits, and was also dogged by allegations of corruption. The final blow was the defection of a group of SLD members of parliament, who announced their intention to form a new party, the Social Democratic Party of Poland. Miller was replaced by the SLD's Marek Belka, who served as a caretaker until elections in 2005. The SLD's weakness was confirmed by a particularly sound drubbing in the European Parliament elections in June 2004.

In the September 2005 legislative elections, PiS won a stunning victory by increasing its seat total from 44 to 152, while the SLD fell from 216 seats to just 56. The second-best-performing party was the PO, winning 133 seats. PiS is led by twin brothers, Lech and Jaroslaw Kaczynski. Jaroslaw was originally expected to be the party's choice for prime minister, but when it appeared that Lech might win the presidency—and that Poles might be skeptical of having twin brothers in the country's two most powerful jobs—Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz became prime minister-designate instead. In October's presidential election, Lech Kaczynski won a surprise victory over the PO's Donald Tusk, with 54 percent of the vote. Shortly afterward, after failing to reach a coalition accord with the PO, PiS formed a minority government under Marcinkiewicz, with the support of some of the smaller right-wing parties.

Over the past several years, Poland has sought to carve out a twenty-first century leadership position for itself in Europe. This attempt is most clearly demonstrated by the prominent role of Polish troops in the stabilization of Iraq following the ouster of Saddam Hussein's regime by U.S.-led forces. However, in November 2005, Poland was the subject of unwelcome attention when it was accused by Human Rights Watch of cooperating with the American CIA in running a secret prison for detainees in the war on terrorism. Human Rights Watch's accusations were based on the flight records of a plane believed to be used by the CIA to transport prisoners. Poland has denied hosting any such "black site."

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Poland can change their government democratically. Voters elect the president and members of the bicameral parliament, which consists of the Sejm and the Senate. The president's appointment of the prime minister is subject to confirmation by the Sejm, whose 460 members serve a four-year term. The prime minister is chiefly responsible for most government policy, but the president has an important role, especially in foreign policy. The 100-member Senate, also elected for a four-year term, can delay legislation but has few other powers.

The political party system is fragmented. For years, the largest and most coherent groups were the AWS and SLD; however, the former has disappeared from parliament, and the latter was reduced to a fraction of its former power in the 2005 elec-

tion. PiS and the PO have become the two most important parties, while parties such as Samoobrona and the LPR are small but vocal.

In 2003, the SLD-led government faced allegations that party figures were linked to organized crime and corruption. The "Rywin affair," which involves allegations that film producer Lew Rywin sought a bribe from a major newspaper publisher in return for using his political connections to influence the shape of the draft media law, helped bring down Prime Minister Leszek Miller in 2004. New allegations of corruption surfaced in 2004 involving an alleged bribe by a Russian oil company to a Polish government minister for the sale of a Polish refinery to the Russian company.

Poland's membership in the EU required it to meet the EU's "Copenhagen criteria," including "stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities." In its final report on Poland's progress, issued in 2003, the EU Commission said, "Poland has reached a high level of alignment with the *acquis* [the body of EU laws] in most policy areas." The report did criticize slow progress on corruption, however. Poland was ranked 70 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The 1997 constitution guarantees freedom of expression and forbids censorship. However, the country's libel law treats slander as a criminal offense, and journalists oppose the growing number of related lawsuits. Infringements on media freedom include gag orders and arbitrary judicial decisions concerning investigations of individuals affiliated with parties in power. The law requires the media to maintain "respect for Christian values." Internet access is unrestricted.

The state respects freedom of religion and does not require religious groups to register. However, registered religious groups enjoy a reduced tax burden. In 2003, the Roman Catholic Church for the first time met with serious accusations of sexual impropriety by clerics. The Church responded with investigations and dismissals, including that of a bishop.

Academic freedom is generally respected, though a law on the books threatens anyone who "publicly insults or humiliates a constitutional institution" with a fine or up to two years' imprisonment.

Polish citizens can petition the government, assemble freely, organize professional and other associations, and engage in collective bargaining. Public demonstrations require permits from local authorities. Civil society in Poland was seen as hastening the downfall of the Communist regime and remains active. Since the 1980s, when shipyard workers in Gdansk launched a national strike and formed the Solidarity labor union, Poland has had a robust labor movement. Although Solidarity's political strength has waned in recent years, labor groups remain active and influential.

Poland has an independent judiciary, but courts are notorious for delays in administering cases. In 1989, the country began a reform process that has sought to increase the efficiency and professionalism of the judiciary. In its 2002 accession report, the European Commission acknowledged "steady progress" and "improved efficiency" in this process, but it noted that Poland should continue efforts to increase public access to justice, address public perceptions of corruption within the judiciary, and improve the treatment of detainees by the police. State prosecutors have proceeded slowly on investigations into graft and corruption, contributing to

concerns that they are subject to considerable political pressure. Prison conditions are fairly poor by European standards.

Ethnic minorities generally enjoy generous protections and rights provided under Polish law, including funding for bilingual education and publications and privileged representation in parliament; they are not subject to a minimum vote threshold of 5 percent to achieve representation. Poland's once-vibrant Jewish community was reduced to a tiny minority by the Holocaust during World War II and subsequent emigration. Poland's other minority groups are small, but some, particularly the 30,000 Roma, suffer discrimination in employment and housing, racially motivated insults and (infrequently) attacks.

Women have made inroads in the professional sphere and are employed in a wide variety of occupations. A number of women hold high positions in government and the private sector, and the first nominee by Poland to the European Commission was a woman, Danuta Huebner. However, domestic violence against women is a problem in Poland. Abortion is illegal unless the health of the mother is at risk, the pregnancy results from rape or incest, or the fetus is irreparably damaged, and the law is strictly enforced. As in several other formerly Communist countries, trafficking in women and girls for the purposes of prostitution remains a problem.

Portugal

Population: 10,600,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$11,8000 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 77 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (94 percent),
 Protestant (6 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Portuguese, African
 and Eastern European minorities
Capital: Lisbon



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

The Socialist Party ousted the governing Social Democratic Party in Portugal's February 2005 legislative elections. A strike by public workers in July challenged the new government, which plans to cut public spending to bring the country back in line with European Union (EU) rules. Meanwhile, hundreds of farmers protested in favor of greater government help to deal with severe drought conditions in the country.

Portugal was proclaimed a republic in 1910, after King Manuel II abdicated during a bloodless revolution. Antonio de Oliveira Salazar became prime minister in 1932 and ruled the country as a fascist dictatorship until 1968, when his lieutenant, Marcello Caetano, replaced him. During the "Marcello Spring," repression and censorship

were relaxed somewhat, and a liberal wing developed inside the one-party National Assembly. In 1974, a bloodless coup by the Armed Forces Movement, which opposed the ongoing colonial wars in Mozambique and Angola, overthrew Caetano.

A transition to democracy began with the election of a Constitutional Assembly that adopted a democratic constitution in 1976. A civilian government was formally established in 1982 after a revision of the constitution brought the military under civilian rule, curbed the president's powers, and abolished the unelected Revolutionary Council. Portugal became a member of the European Economic Community (later the European Union [EU]) in 1986, and in early 2002, the euro replaced Portugal's currency, the escudo. In 1999, Portugal handed over its last overseas territory, Macao, to the Chinese, ending a long history of colonial rule.

In February 2005 elections, the Socialists gained 120 of the 230 seats in parliament, while the governing Social Democrats captured only 72. The Communist Party garnered 14 seats; the Popular Party, 12 seats; and the Left Bloc, 8 seats. The general election, which was called more than a year early, ushered in Portugal's fourth government in three years. Socialist leader and former environment minister Jose Socrates became prime minister, edging out Pedro Santana Lopes, who was in power for only seven months. Lopes had gained the office after his predecessor, Jose Manuel Barroso, left in July 2004 to head the European Commission.

In May, about 30 young people began to give testimony in a high-profile pedophilia case, which had begun in November 2004. The case emerged from a series of allegations in 2003 of child abuse in the long-established, state-run Casa Pia orphanages. The seven people accused of participating in the sex ring include a television presenter, a former top diplomat, and a former director of the Casa Pia children's home network.

The 127 elite Portuguese police officers that were serving under Italian command in Nasiriya, Iraq, came back home in February after a 15-month tour of duty. Barroso, the former prime minister, had supported the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, even hosting the Azores summit that effectively marked the declaration of hostilities. Despite the new Socialist government's opposition to the war, Portugal agreed to help train Iraqi troops.

A July strike by public workers challenged the new government and its plans to reduce public spending to bring the country back in line with EU fiscal rules. The prime minister also plans to raise the value-added tax to cover the deficit. The EU ordered Portugal to cut its budget deficit to keep the country in line with EU regulations, which were eased earlier in the year for special situations like economic stagnation. This represented the second time that the country had been in trouble with the EU on fiscal matters; in 2002, Portugal was the first member country to face sanctions by the EU for violating the rules.

A national referendum to relax the country's strict abortion laws was blocked by the Constitutional Court. According to the BBC, the court argued that the vote could not take place in November as planned by the Socialists because the same referendum had been rejected by the president in the current legislature. Current law allows a woman an abortion only if her life is in danger, or if it is necessary for her mental or physical health, or in cases of rape, incest, or fetal impairment.

Severe drought compelled hundreds of farmers to stage protests demanding greater government help. In addition to dry weather, devastating wildfires plagued

Portugal over the summer of 2005, a situation made worse by the delay of new firefighting equipment.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Portugal can change their government democratically. The 230 members of the unicameral legislature, the Assembly of the Republic, are elected every four years by popular vote using a system of proportional representation. The president is popularly elected for a five-year term, renewable once. The president receives advice from the Council of State, which includes six senior civilian officers, former presidents elected under the 1976 constitution, five members chosen by the Assembly, and five members selected by the president. While the president holds no executive powers, he can delay legislation with a veto and dissolve the Assembly to call early elections. The prime minister is nominated by the Assembly and the choice is confirmed by the president. The constitution was amended in 1997 to allow immigrants to vote in presidential elections. The Portuguese have the right to organize in different political parties and other political groupings of their choice, except for fascist organizations. The autonomous regions of Azores and Madeira are relatively independent, with their own political and administrative regimes, and their own legislation and executive powers.

Portugal was ranked 26 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of the press is guaranteed by the constitution, and laws against insulting the government or the armed forces are rarely enforced. Commercial television has been making gains in recent years, providing serious competition for the public broadcasting channels that lack funds. Internet access is not restricted.

Although the country is overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, the constitution guarantees freedom of religion and forbids religious discrimination. The Religious Freedom Act, which was adopted in 2001, provides religions that have been established in the country for at least 30 years (or recognized internationally for at least 60 years) with a number of benefits formerly reserved for the Catholic Church, such as tax exemptions, legal recognition of marriage and other rites, chaplain visits to prisons and hospitals, and respect for traditional holidays. Academic freedom is respected.

There is freedom of assembly and association, and citizens can participate in demonstrations and open public discussion. National and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including human rights groups, operate in the country without government interference. Workers have the right to organize, bargain collectively, and strike for any reason, including political ones. In July 2005, public workers staged a strike in response to the new government's plans to cut public spending to bring the country back in line with EU rules.

The constitution provides for an independent court system. However, a considerable backlog of pending trials has resulted from general inefficiency and a number of vacancies in the judicial system. Human rights groups have expressed concern about the number of human rights abuses in the country, including unlawful police shootings, deaths in police custody, and poor prison conditions that amount to cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. A Justice Ministry report released during the year cited a number of problems in the country's prison system, including overcrowding, poor sanitary conditions, and high rates of HIV/AIDS among pris-

oners. The prison population—as a percentage of the total population—is over the EU average. Citing problems of overcrowding and unsanitary conditions, a 2004 report by the country's Justice Ministry argued that Portuguese prisons are the "worst" in the EU.

The constitution guarantees equal treatment under the law and nondiscrimination. The government has taken a number of steps in the past few years to combat racism, including passing antidiscrimination laws and launching initiatives that seek to promote the integration of immigrants and Roma (Gypsies) into Portuguese society. However, there have been few prosecutions in cases involving racial or religious discrimination or the use of excessive force by the police toward immigrants and Roma.

The country is a destination and transit point for trafficked persons, particularly women from Eastern Europe and former Portuguese colonies in South America and Africa. However, according to the 2005 U.S. State Department's human rights report, Portugal has made progress combating trafficking by offering more services to immigrants and conducting information campaigns. The Casa Pia pedophilia case has also heightened awareness of child sex trafficking in the country. In 2000, a law was introduced that makes domestic violence a public crime and obliges the police to follow through on reports. Abortion is illegal, except under exceptional circumstances, such as when the mother's life is at risk. The Constitutional Court blocked a national referendum to relax the country's strict abortion laws because the same referendum had been rejected by the president in the current legislature. During the elections in February 2005, 19.5 percent of the seats were won by women, about the same as in the previous elections in 2002.

Qatar

Population: 800,000 **Political Rights:** 6
GNI/capita: \$20,701 **Civil Liberties:** 5
Life Expectancy: 70 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Muslim (95 percent), other (5 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Arab (40 percent), Pakistani (18 percent),
 Indian (18 percent), Iranian (10 percent), other (14 percent)
Capital: Doha



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview:

In response to international pressure, Qatar banned the use of underage camel jockeys and repatriated 200 underage jockeys in the summer of 2005. In addition, Qatar opened a new human rights department in the Ministry of the Interior and created a shelter for victims of trafficking. Despite this progress, there was little movement on reforming the country's political system, and the royal family remained in firm control of its monopoly on political power.

For the first half of the nineteenth century, the Al Khalifa family of Bahrain dominated the territory now known as Qatar. The Ottoman Empire occupied Qatar from 1872 until World War I, when the United Kingdom recognized Sheikh Abdullah bin Jassim Al Thani as the ruler of Qatar, and Sheikh Abdullah signed a series of treaties of friendship and commerce with the United Kingdom. After World War II, Qatar rapidly developed its oil production industry, and the oil wealth contributed to economic and social development in the country.

Qatar became formally independent in 1971. From 1971 to 1995, Emir Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani ruled as an absolute monarch, with few government institutions checking his authority. In 1995, the emir was deposed by his son Hamad, who began a program to introduce gradual political, social, and economic reforms. Hamad dissolved the Ministry of Information shortly after taking power, an action designed to demonstrate his commitment to expanding press freedom.

In 1996, Hamad permitted the creation of Al-Jazeera, which has become one of the most popular Arabic language satellite television channels in the Middle East. Al-Jazeera, however, generally does not cover Qatari politics and focuses instead on regional issues such as the situation in Iraq and the Arab-Israeli conflict. In the past few years, Sheikh Hamad accelerated a program to build Qatar's educational institutions, attracting foreign universities to establish branches in Qatar; Cornell University established a separate campus of the Weill Cornell Medical College in Doha in 2002. In 1999, Qatar held elections for a 29-member municipal council and became the first state of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to introduce universal suffrage.

In 2002, a 38-member committee appointed by Hamad presented a draft constitution, which was refined and presented to the public in a referendum in April 2003. This new constitution, which was approved by almost 97 percent of voters, slightly broadens the scope of political participation without eliminating the monopoly on power enjoyed by the Al Thani family. Most rights in the new constitution do not apply to the majority of people living in Qatar—noncitizen residents.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Qataris cannot change their government democratically. They possess only limited power to elect local government representatives with limited powers over local services.

These representatives report to the minister of municipal affairs and agriculture, who is appointed by the emir. The head of state is the emir—currently Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani—and the Al Thani family has a monopoly on political power in Qatar. The emir appoints a prime minister and the cabinet. The constitution states that the emir appoints an heir after consulting with the royal family and other notables. A constitution, ratified by public referendum in 2003 and promulgated by the emir in 2004, provides for elections to 30 of the 45 seats in a new advisory council. The emir has the power to appoint the other 15 members of the advisory council.

In April 2003, citizens voted for a 29-member advisory Central Municipal Council, which will serve a four-year term. The Central Municipal Council addresses local infrastructure issues such as street repair and services such as trash collection. The government does not permit the existence of political parties.

Critics allege a lack of transparency in government procurement, with few proper procedures in place to ensure fair competition for government contracts. In April

2005, three government officials were fired for involvement in a scandal related to fraudulent stock purchases of the Qatar Gas Transport Company. Qatar was ranked 32 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution guarantees freedom of expression, and the state has generally refrained from direct censorship. However, content in the print and broadcast media is influenced by leading families. The five leading daily newspapers are privately owned, but their owners and board members include royal family members and other notables. Although the satellite television channel Al-Jazeera is privately owned, the Qatari government has reportedly paid operating costs for the channel since its inception. Qataris have access to the internet through a telecommunications monopoly that has recently been privatized, but the government censors content and blocks access to certain sites deemed pornographic or politically sensitive.

Islam is Qatar's official religion; however, the new constitution explicitly provides for freedom of worship. The Ministry of Islamic Affairs regulates clerical affairs and the construction of mosques. Converting to another religion from Islam is considered apostasy and is a capital offense, but there have been no reports of executions for apostasy. In June, Qatar hosted the Third Conference for Religious Dialogue, the first time the country hosted a conference with representatives from Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. The new constitution provides for freedom of opinion and research, but scholars often practice self-censorship on politically sensitive topics.

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly and the right to form organizations, but these rights are limited in practice. Public protests and demonstrations are rare, with the government placing strict limits on the public's ability to organize demonstrations. All nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) need state permission to operate, and the government closely monitors the activities of these groups. In April, the Ministry of Civil Service Affairs and Housing promulgated new regulations for NGOs and professional associations. The regulations streamline operating requirements for associations and set restrictions on membership and activities.

There are no independent human rights organizations, but a National Committee for Human Rights (NCHR), consisting of members of civil society and government ministries, has done some work on investigating allegations of human rights abuses. The NCHR has a human rights hotline and presents regular reports to the government cabinet on the human rights situation.

A new labor law came into effect in January, expanding some protections for citizens. However, the law prohibits noncitizen workers from forming labor unions. Foreign nationals, who make up most of the workforce in Qatar, face severe disadvantages in labor contract cases. Although foreign laborers have limited legal rights to appear before the same courts as Qatari citizens, fear of job loss and deportation prevents many workers from exercising even these limited rights. In August, hundreds of foreign construction workers organized a strike to protest nonpayment of salaries and deterioration of living conditions.

Despite constitutional guarantees, the judiciary is not independent in practice. The majority of Qatar's judges are foreign nationals who are appointed and removed by the emir. The judicial system consists of two sets of courts: Sharia (Islamic law) courts, which have jurisdiction over a narrow range of issues, such as family law;

and civil law courts, which have jurisdiction over commercial and civil suits. These two sets of courts have been united under the Supreme Judiciary Council, which regulates the judiciary. Qatar has a three-tiered system of courts: the Courts of First Instance, Appeal, and Cassation.

The constitution protects individuals from arbitrary arrest and detention and bans torture. However, these rights are restricted by Law 17 of 2002, which provides exemptions from the prohibition of arbitrary arrest and detention for the "protection of society." This law empowers the minister of the interior to detain a defendant for crimes related to national security on the recommendation of the director-general of public security. In 2005, three individuals were detained under Law 17. Defendants are entitled to legal representation. Prisons meet international standards, and the police generally follow proper procedures set in accordance with the law.

The government discriminates against noncitizen foreign nationals in education, housing, health care, and other services offered free of charge to citizens. In June, government officials stripped 5,000 persons of Qatari nationality, most of them dual citizens in Saudi Arabia. However, the government also began addressing some problems in Qatar related to trafficking in persons by legislating a ban on underage camel jockeys. In July and August, it repatriated about 200 underage jockeys to Sudan. In July 2005, the Ministry of the Interior established a human rights department to handle cases of human rights abuses and trafficking in persons. In September, the government opened a shelter for trafficking victims.

The constitution treats women as full and equal persons. Article 35 of the constitution bans discrimination based on sex, country of origin, language, or religion. Nevertheless, despite legal guarantees of equality, women continue to face societal gender discrimination, and few legal mechanisms are available for women to contest instances of discrimination. Sharia law gives preference to men over women on a range of issues related to family law, including divorce, custody of children, and inheritance. Qatari women must receive permission from male guardians to obtain driver's licenses, and men sometimes prevent female relatives from traveling alone. Qatar's educational system is segregated by gender. Women outnumber men at the University of Qatar, but women face social restrictions on their ability to travel and study abroad. Women have the right to participate in elections and run for office. In the April 2003 municipal elections, Sheikha Yousef Hassan al-Jufairi became the first woman elected to public office.

Romania

Population: 21,600,000 **Political Rights:** 2*

GNI/capita: \$2,260 **Civil Liberties:** 2

Life Expectancy: 71 **Status:** Free

Religious Groups: Eastern Orthodox [including all sub-denominations] (87 percent), Protestant (6.8 percent), Catholic (5.6 percent), other (0.6 percent)

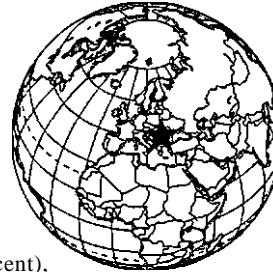
Ethnic Groups: Romanian (90 percent), Hungarian (7 percent), Roma (2 percent), other (1 percent)

Capital: Bucharest

Ratings Change: Romania's political rights rating improved from 3 to 2 due to a presidential runoff election that resulted in a victory for the opposition candidate and that was widely viewed as fair and competitive.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
2,3F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	3,2F	2,2F



Overview:

Opposition leader Traian Basescu of the Alliance for Truth and Justice won the November-December 2004 presidential election, which was widely viewed as fair and competitive. The opposition alliance formed a coalition in parliament with two parties that had previously partnered with the outgoing ruling party.

Throughout the latter half of the Cold War, Romania was ruled by Nicolae Ceaucescu, one of Eastern Europe's most repressive dictators, with virtually no opposition. In late 1989, popular dissatisfaction with Ceaucescu's rule led to his overthrow and execution by disgruntled Communists. A provisional government was formed under Ion Iliescu, a high-ranking Communist and the leader of the National Salvation Front (NSF). The 1992 parliamentary elections saw the NSF split into neo-Communist and reformist factions. In November 1996, Emil Constantinescu of the Democratic Convention of Romania (CDR) defeated Iliescu in presidential elections.

In the November 2000 parliamentary elections, the former Communist Party, renamed the Party of Social Democracy (PSD), came to power. The most surprising development in these elections was the extent of support for the nationalist Greater Romania Party (PRM), led by Vadim Tudor. The concurrent presidential poll was won by Iliescu, while Tudor came in second place. Adrian Nastase of the PSD was named prime minister.

Elections for both president and parliament took place on November 28, 2004. Traian Basescu of the Alliance for Truth and Justice, Prime Minister Nastase, and 10 other candidates from smaller parties competed for the post of president in the first round of voting. Nastase, who won 41 percent of the vote, faced a runoff against Basescu, who captured 34 percent of the vote. Despite a second-place finish in the first round, Basescu ultimately won the presidency in the second-round runoff on December 12 with just 51 percent of the vote to Nastase's 49 percent.

Although the PSD secured the most seats in the parliamentary election, no party captured a majority. The PSD initially formed a coalition with the Humanist Party (PUR)—its traditional ally—and the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR). However, Basescu's surprising defeat of Nastase in the December 12 runoff for the presidency resulted in the PUR—which subsequently changed its name to the Conservative Party (PC)—and UDMR abandoning the PSD to joining the Alliance for Truth and Justice in a ruling coalition. Meanwhile, the PRM lost support in the 2004 elections. Calin Popescu Tariceanu of the PNL became prime minister.

Observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe deemed the 2004 elections to have been democratic, although some procedural concerns were raised. Control over the number of times each voter cast a ballot was weak, and the opposition accused the PSD of bussing supporters to various poll locations to vote multiple times. Reporters Without Borders and other monitoring agencies judged broadcast media coverage to be biased toward the ruling party, although press coverage was seen as more balanced. However, the election bureau rejected opposition calls for annulment of the results due to fraud. The presidential runoff had fewer irregularities than in the November elections.

In July 2005, Prime Minister Calin Popescu Tariceanu announced that he would resign after the Constitutional Court rejected a package of judicial reform laws; he withdrew his promise the same month after severe floods caused massive damage in parts of the country. Pressure from the European Union (EU) and insufficient support for the ruling alliance in polls were likely other motives for his decision to remain in office.

Romania applied to join the EU in 1995. Negotiations, which began in 2000, were completed at the end of 2004. The EU Commission's 2004 report on Romania noted progress in several areas, but the EU is reserving the right to postpone Romania's accession date from the scheduled 2007 until 2008. Many in the EU have expressed misgivings about Romania's preparedness for membership. A cabinet reshuffle by the Romanian government in August was aimed at speeding up EU reforms.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Romania can change their government democratically. Elections since 1991 have been considered generally free and fair by international observers. The president, who is directly elected, does not have substantial powers beyond foreign policy. He appoints the prime minister, who remains the most powerful politician, when no party has an absolute majority. The members of the bicameral parliament are elected for four-year terms, and a 2004 constitutional amendment stipulates that the president is now elected for a five-year term. A 5 percent electoral threshold favors large parties; six parties are currently represented in the parliament. The president is not permitted to be a member of a political party.

The 1991 constitution provides for a seat to be allotted to each national minority that passes a special threshold lower than the 5 percent otherwise needed to enter parliament. The number of these seats varies according to the number of eligible minorities, thus changing the total number of seats in the Chamber of Deputies. In the 2004 elections, 18 such seats were allotted. While the Hungarian minority is represented in the ruling coalition, political participation and representation of Roma are very weak.

Despite the existence of anticorruption legislation, implementation of laws has been weak, and corruption remains a serious problem. Foreign businessmen complain of being targeted by corrupt officials for bribes, and no high-level officials have been prosecuted despite evidence that corruption is institutionalized in some areas. Nevertheless, the current government is generally considered to rely less on patronage and to be more committed to anticorruption efforts than its predecessor. At the request of the EU, it commissioned an independent assessment of the state of corruption in the country in 2005. The report, published in March, recommended a number of anticorruption measures to be adopted before Romania joins the EU. Many new laws were passed, including one obliging the most extensive asset declarations by politicians and civil servants to date, beginning in May. Romania was ranked 85 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The 1991 constitution enshrines freedom of expression and the press, and the media are characterized by considerable pluralism. The editor of the independent newspaper *Evenimentul Zilei* was transferred to a remote post in December 2004, resulting in protests and resignations by other journalists. The owner of the paper, Swiss-based Ringier, had been accused of trying to tone down criticism of the government. German-owned *Romania Libera* has faced similar pressures, and its editor was forced to step down in December as well. In January 2005, the Romanian intelligence service admitted that it had tapped the phones of two unidentified journalists suspected of espionage. Journalists protested changes to the law on national broadcast media made in mid-2005, which they said would reinforce political control. The entry into force of the 2004 penal code amendments decriminalizing libel have been delayed until 2006. Nevertheless, pressure on media has decreased overall since the presidential runoff in December 2004, and freedom of expression has improved.

Religious freedom is generally respected, although "nontraditional" religious organizations sometimes encounter difficulties in registering with the state secretary of religions. Lack of registration denies adherents the right to exercise freely their religious beliefs and prevents them from building places of worship and cemeteries. The government formally recognizes 18 religions in the country, each of which is eligible for some level of state support for activities including the building of houses of worship and salaries for clergy members. The Romanian Orthodox Church remains dominant. The government does not restrict academic freedom.

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly and association, and the government respects these rights in practice. In general, the government does not place restrictions on the work of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Workers have the right to form unions and to strike, but in practice many employers work against unions and their illegal actions are rarely punished.

The judiciary remains one of the most problematic institutions in Romania. Enforcement of judgments in civil cases is inconsistent. In order to ensure coherence with a draft penal procedure code, the 2004 penal code will not enter into force until September 2006. An action plan for the judiciary, which was launched in March, has been implemented according to schedule. In June, the parliament adopted legislation designed to reduce judicial corruption and strengthen independence.

Police have been accused of using excessive force, including the unnecessary use of firearms that sometimes results in death and the occasional beatings of de-

tainees. Mistreatment is rarely investigated or punished. A 2004 Amnesty International (AI) report criticized conditions in Romania's psychiatric hospitals; the government put AI's recommendations into practice, but problems remain. A law on prisons that entered into force in 2005 is designed to improve supervision, and overcrowding has been reduced. There have been charges that Roma are disproportionately targeted by law enforcement officials.

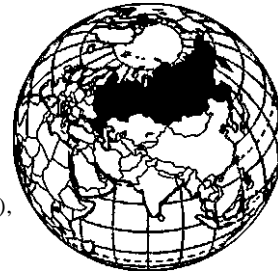
Romania has 18 recognized minorities, the largest of which are the Hungarians. Minorities have the right to use their native tongue in communicating with authorities in areas where they represent at least 20 percent of the population. The situation has improved for the Hungarian minority, but discrimination against Roma continues, especially in housing, access to social services, and employment. A National Agency for Roma created in 2001 has taken some steps, but change has not been significant. A draft law on cultural autonomy of national minorities has not yet been adopted.

Property rights are respected, although the ability of citizens to start businesses continues to be limited by red tape and corruption. Emergency legislation passed in July will provide for restitution of or compensation for property confiscated by the Communist regime, but implementation has been slow, and the status of property seized unlawfully remains in doubt.

The constitution guarantees women equal rights with men, but gender discrimination is a problem. Only about 10 percent of the seats in parliament are held by women. Trafficking of women and girls for the purpose of forced prostitution has become a major problem. A national action plan has had little effect, although new legislation came into force in 2005.

Russia

Population: 143,000,000 **Political Rights:** 6
GNI/capita: \$2,610 **Civil Liberties:** 5
Life Expectancy: 66 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Russian Orthodox, Muslim, other
Ethnic Groups: Russian (79.8 percent), Tatar (3.8 percent),
 Ukrainian (2 percent), Bashkir (1.2 percent),
 Chuvash (1.1 percent), other (12.1 percent)
Capital: Moscow



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
3,4PF	3,4PF	4,4PF	4,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview:

During 2005, President Vladimir Putin took further steps toward the consolidation of executive authority by increasing pressure on the opposition and civil society, strengthening state control over the economy, and pursuing politically driven prosecutions of independent business leaders. The government introduced legislative changes making governors appointed rather than elected officials, as well as electoral sys-

tem reforms making it almost impossible for parties outside the control of the Kremlin to enter the State Duma (lower house of parliament). New media legislation adopted in 2005 further restricted freedom of speech.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991, the Russian Federation reemerged as an independent state under the leadership of Boris Yeltsin. In 1993, Yeltsin put down an attempted coup by hard-liners in parliament, and a new constitution creating a bicameral national legislature, the Federal Assembly, was approved. The December 1995 parliamentary elections, in which 43 parties competed, saw strong support for Communists and ultranationalist forces. In the 1996 presidential poll, Yeltsin easily defeated Communist Gennady Zyuganov. The August 1998 collapse of the ruble and Russia's financial markets ushered in a new government that returned to greater state spending and economic control. One year later, Vladimir Putin, then the head of the Federal Security Service, was named prime minister.

Conflict with the separatist region of Chechnya, which included a brutal two-year war from 1994 to 1996, was reignited in 1999. After a Chechen rebel attack on the neighboring republic of Dagestan in August 1999 and deadly apartment house bombings in several Russian cities blamed by the Kremlin on Chechen militants, Russia responded with an attack on the breakaway region. The second Chechen war dramatically increased Putin's popularity, and after the December 1999 elections to the State Duma (lower house of the Federal Assembly), progovernment forces were able to shape a majority coalition.

An ailing Yeltsin—who was constitutionally barred from a third presidential term—resigned on December 31, 1999. Yeltsin turned over power to Putin, who, in the March 2000 presidential election, secured a 53 percent first-round victory over Communist leader Zyuganov, who received 29 percent. After taking office, Putin moved to consolidate his power, including implementing legislation removing Russia's 89 governors from positions in the Federation Council (upper house of the Federal Assembly) and allowing the president to suspend them from office if they violated federal law. Putin also created seven new "super regions" headed by Kremlin appointees and introduced personnel changes that have considerably altered the composition of the ruling elite through an influx of personnel from the security and military services; they now represent more than 25 percent of the country's ministers, deputy ministers, legislators, governors, and "super governors." Putin also challenged the political clout of some economic magnates through criminal investigations and legal proceedings claimed to be part of an anticorruption campaign, but which critics say are selective political persecutions.

The December 2003 Duma election was marred by extensive bias in media coverage. Questions of vote manipulation were raised when two liberal opposition parties fell just short of the 5 percent threshold required for representation, despite exit polls that showed they had surpassed it. The Kremlin-controlled United Russia Party captured 306 of the Duma's 450 seats. With the national broadcast media and most print media uniformly favorable to incumbent president Putin, no challenger was able to mount a respectable challenge in the March 2004 presidential election. Putin, who refused to take part in debates with his challengers, received 71.4 percent of the vote to 13.7 for his closest rival, Communist Nikolai Kharitonov, in a first-round victory; voter turnout was 64.3 percent.

Using as a pretext the September 2004 Beslan tragedy—in which over 300 hostages, mostly children, were killed after terrorists captured a school building—Putin introduced legislative changes that made the post of governor appointed by the president rather than elected. In the face of Putin's growing power, most governors publicly endorsed the curtailment of their autonomy despite well-known private displeasure with the plan. As a result, most of the governors whose term in office expired in 2005 were reappointed by Putin. The Duma, where Putin's United Russia Party commands more than a two-thirds constitutional majority, rubber-stamped these changes.

In spite of its facade of invulnerability, Putin's regime was seriously challenged in 2005. A wave of public protests against the social benefits reform in January-February damaged Putin's public image. The new policy, which replaced privileges and in-kind benefits, such as free transportation, with highly inadequate monetary compensations for underprivileged groups, spurred demonstrations across the country. Many protesters were detained and even arrested, while top government officials issued allegations that the demonstrations had been carefully orchestrated, possibly by the same forces that organized revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia. As a result of the protests, however, some of the privileges rolled back in January were restored in some regions of Russia.

The triumphant Orange Revolution in Ukraine struck a blow to Moscow's plans of reinstating Russia's control over the countries of the former Soviet Union. The demonstration of "people power" in the neighboring country also raised questions about the long-term stability of the government in the Kremlin. Russian officials and state-controlled media launched counterpropaganda efforts denouncing the democratic revolutions in the former USSR as part of a plot to strip Russia of its power and influence. The government heavily promoted loyalist youth organizations, such as Nashi, in an effort to crowd out potential opposition movements. In July, Putin announced that his government would ban all foreign aid to civil society groups inside Russia. Russia also explicitly committed itself to defending authoritarian governments across the former Soviet Union.

The year saw the conclusion of the trial of billionaire oil magnate Mikhail Khodorkovsky and his colleague Platon Lebedev on charges of tax evasion. Khodorkovsky and Lebedev were found guilty in a verdict that took almost two weeks to read, and each were sentenced to eight years in prison. Core assets of Khodorkovsky's Yukos energy company were seized and sold to meet huge tax assessments. The government continued to levy tax liens on companies connected to Khodorkovsky by demanding a nearly \$1 billion payment from the oil company TNK-BP in May. The government also continued to support the expansion of the economic power of the state-controlled Gazprom concern into a conglomerate with vast, varied interests including oil, gas, and media interests.

Russia continued its repressive campaign against scholars and academics in 2005. In February, Russian Federal Security Service detained and interrogated Dr. Oscar A. Kaibyshev, former director of the Institute for Metals Superplasticity Problems, on possible espionage charges related to exporting dual-use technology (technology that has both civilian and military uses) to South Korea. Dr. Kaibyshev insisted that all of the technology in question was declassified.

Strife in Chechnya continued throughout the year, with Russian counterinsurgency

operations and guerrilla warfare, assassinations, acts of terrorism by Chechen rebels, and punishing raids by the pro-Russian militia. The assassination of Chechen breakaway leader Asian Maskhadov in March 2005 shattered the already faint hopes for a negotiated solution to the crisis.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Russians cannot change their government democratically. In the State Duma elections of December 2003, more than two-thirds of the seats were won by the Kremlin's United Russia Party, while most of the remaining seats were captured by parties promoted by the Kremlin-controlled media. There was significant evidence that there had been an undercount in the vote for liberal opposition parties that prevented them from attaining the 5 percent threshold required for parliamentary representation. The leader of the third largest legislative party, Motherland (Rodina), backed President Vladimir Putin in the March 2004 presidential race. The Liberal Democratic Party, the fourth largest group in the Duma, is an ultranationalist faction known for the long-standing ties of its leaders to intelligence circles. The Communists are the sole party in the legislature relatively free of Kremlin influence. In the presidential election of March 2004, state dominance of the media was in full display, debate was absent, and Putin won a first-round victory with 71.4 percent of the vote, more than five times that of his closest rival.

The 1993 constitution established a strong presidency with the power to appoint, pending parliamentary confirmation, and dismiss the prime minister. The bicameral legislature consists of a lower chamber (the State Duma) and an upper chamber (the Federation Council). The power of the president is likely to be strengthened when the president gains control over the appointment of regional governors, who until now have been elected officials.

Amendments to the electoral law introduced in 2005 raised the threshold for political parties for entering the State Duma from 5 to 7 percent; banned the formation of electoral coalitions; and granted party leaders unlimited control over the behavior of rank-and-file legislators. In practice, these changes will make it almost impossible for the parties outside Kremlin control to enter the State Duma.

Corruption throughout the government and business world is pervasive. Tough legislation to combat money laundering entered into force in 2002, leading the Financial Action Task Force of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to remove Russia from its list of noncooperating countries. However, the trial of Yukos chairman Mikhail Khodorkovsky and his associates, as well as new tax assessments and pressures on other Russian magnates, coming on the heels of the persecution and prosecution of former media owners Vladimir Gusinsky and Boris Berezovsky, reaffirms the view held by many independent Russian analysts that Putin's anticorruption efforts are selectively applied and have often targeted critics and potential political adversaries. Russia was ranked 126 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Although the constitution provides for freedom of speech, the government continues to put pressure on the dwindling number of media outlets still critical of the Kremlin. Since June 2003, when the last independent national television network, TVS, was seized by the government, allegedly to settle the company's debts, all Russian national television networks have been controlled by the government or

by economic interests that support the government and uniformly praise the president. While the independent Ekho Moskvyy radio station airs a wide range of viewpoints, it is vulnerable because it is owned by the Kremlin-controlled Gazprom conglomerate. Gazprom continued to consolidate its control over the media market in 2005 by purchasing the veteran daily *Izvestiya*.

Libel laws are used to intimidate independent media. More than 6,000 lawsuits were filed against newspapers and journalists in 2004. In May, the State Duma approved a package of amendments aimed at penalizing media outlets for reprinting or rebroadcast erroneous news reports during electoral campaigns. Experts have voiced concern that the Kremlin-initiated bill could provide a new pretext for silencing unfavorable media. With print and broadcast media increasingly under government control, the internet, where there is wider access to independent information, is used regularly by 4.2 percent of the population. This cohort of regular users is growing by 20 to 40 percent a year, according to a Russian government report.

In the breakaway republic of Chechnya, the military continued to impose severe restrictions on Russian and foreign journalists' access to the war zone, issuing accreditation primarily to those of proven loyalty to the government. The government routinely intimidates media outlets for unsanctioned reporting on issues related to terrorism and the war in Chechnya. The newspaper *Kommersant* received a warning from the government in February, and the ABC bureau in Moscow lost its accreditation in July, for publishing and airing interviews with Chechen breakaway leaders.

Freedom of religion is respected unevenly. A 1997 law on religion requires churches to prove that they have existed for at least 15 years before being permitted to register. As registration is necessary for a religious group to conduct many of its activities, new, independent congregations are consequently restricted in their functions. Regional authorities continue to harass nontraditional groups, with the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons among the frequent targets. Foreign religious workers, including Roman Catholic priests, are often deported, barred from entry, or refused visa renewals. In March, a Moscow court convicted the director of the city's Andrei Sakharov Museum and his deputy of organizing an exhibition of art irreverent to the Russian Orthodox Church.

Academic freedom is generally respected, although the academic system is marred by some corruption at the higher levels and by very low levels of pay for educators. The arrests and prosecutions of scientists and researchers on charges of treason created a chill in some research institutes, engendering a climate that is restrictive of international contacts.

The government provides some space for freedom of assembly and association. However, legislation passed in 2002 gives the authorities the right to suspend political parties or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) whose members are accused of extremism. Critics argue that the law offers an excessively broad definition of extremism, giving the government great latitude to suppress legitimate opposition political activities. Protests by pensioners against the social benefits reform in January-February were met with arrests and detentions in many regions of Russia. Supporters of oil tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky were routinely detained and arrested in 2005 for waging demonstrations at the site of his trial, while anti-Khodorkovsky groups, assembled by proregime youth organizations, were allowed to demonstrate freely.

The NGO sector is composed of thousands of diverse groups, with many of them dependent on funding from foreign sources. While there had earlier been trends among Russia's newly wealthy to support the NGO sector through charitable giving, the prosecution and repression of business magnates (including Mikhail Khodorkovsky, patron of the Open Russia charitable fund) who had earlier supported NGOs focused on democratic reform has had a chilling effect on such funding. As part of post-Beslan reforms introduced by Putin in attempt to centralize his grip on power, a Public Chamber was established as an advisory body of civil society representatives to the president. One-third of its members are appointed by the president, and the presidential appointees select the remaining members. The Public Chamber has been criticized as a meaningless body created essentially as window dressing. In July, Putin announced at a meeting with human rights groups that all foreign aid to civil society organizations in Russia would be banned in order to block external interference in Russia's affairs. Legislation restricting the activities of NGOs was introduced in the State Duma in November 2005.

While trade union rights are legally protected, they are limited in practice. Although strikes and worker protests occur, antiunion discrimination and reprisals for strikes are not uncommon, and employers often ignore collective bargaining rights. In a rapidly changing economy in transition from the former system of total state domination, unions have been unable to establish a significant presence in much of the private sector. The largest labor federation works in close cooperation with the Kremlin.

The judiciary suffers from corruption, inadequate funding, and a lack of qualified personnel. After judicial reforms in 2002, the government has made progress in implementing due process and holding timely trials. Since January 2003, Russia's reformed criminal procedure code has provided for jury trials throughout the country, but the legislature has voted to postpone introducing jury trials in certain areas by up to four years because of financial and technical difficulties. The new code also gives the right to issue arrest and search warrants to the courts instead of prosecutors, and it abolishes in absentia trials. After the Beslan attack, Putin declared his intention to establish full control over an office in the Supreme Court that supervises the hiring and removal of judges.

Critics charge that Russia has failed to address ongoing problems, such as the widespread use of torture and ill-treatment by law enforcement officials to extract confessions. Russian police began using scaled-down "cleansing" tactics employed in Chechnya to combat crime in Russia proper in 2005. Police raids in the Bashkir town of Blagoveshchensk in December 2004 following beatings of police officers by hooligans ended with massive arrests, detentions, and, reportedly, torture of mostly innocent residents. Evidence of excessive brutality during crime-combating raids also surfaced in March in two locations in Tver oblast.

While prisons suffer from overcrowding, inadequate medical attention, and poor sanitary conditions, authorities took steps in 2003 to reduce the prison population, including introducing alternative sentences to incarceration. The new criminal procedure code limits pretrial detention to six months and has reduced overcrowding in pretrial detention centers (known as SIZOs). Putin has disbanded the presidential pardons commission, which was viewed as a safeguard against the harsh penal system and had released about 60,000 inmates since its inception in 1991, and or-

dered the creation of commissions in each of the country's regions. Human rights groups are frequently denied access to prisoners.

Ethnic minorities, particularly those who appear to be from the Caucasus or Central Asia, are subject to governmental and societal discrimination and harassment. Racially motivated attacks by skinheads and other extremist groups occur occasionally. Fringe anti-Semitic and racist parties organize small public rallies, and periodicals with racist and anti-Semitic content are published but attract a small readership.

The government places some restrictions on freedom of movement and residence. All adults are legally required to carry internal passports while traveling, documents that they also need in order to obtain many government services. Some regional authorities impose residential registration rules that limit the right of citizens to choose their place of residence freely. Police reportedly demand bribes for processing registration applications and during spot checks for registration documents, and these demands often unfairly target the Caucasian and dark-skinned populations.

In recent years, property rights have been legally strengthened. A land code that established the legal framework for buying and selling nonagricultural land was adopted in late 2001. In June 2002, parliament passed a law allowing the sale of agricultural land to Russian citizens; such sales had been severely restricted since the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. However, prosecutions of economic magnates critical of the Kremlin, coupled with large tax liens on select companies, have reinforced perceptions that property rights are being eroded and that the rule of law is subordinated to political considerations.

Widespread corruption remains a serious obstacle to an effective market economy and is an impediment to genuine equality of opportunity. According to a 2002 report by the Moscow-based INDEM Foundation, Russians spend an estimated \$37 billion annually on bribes and kickbacks, ranging from small payments to traffic police to large kickbacks by companies to obtain lucrative state contracts. Members of the old Soviet elite have used insider information to gain control of key industrial and business enterprises.

Domestic violence remains a serious problem, while police are often reluctant to intervene in what they regard as internal family matters. Economic hardships contribute to widespread trafficking of women abroad for prostitution. There is credible evidence that women face considerable discrimination in the workplace, including lower pay than their male counterparts for performing similar work.

Rwanda

Population: 8,700,000 **Political Rights:** 6
GNI/capita: \$220 **Civil Liberties:** 5
Life Expectancy: 44 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (56.5 percent),
 Protestant (26 percent), other (17.5 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Hutu (84 percent), Tutsi (15 percent),
 Twa [Pygmy] (1 percent)
Capital: Kigali



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview:

In 2005, the ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) maintained its tight control over the country's political life. A leading Hutu-dominated guerrilla group in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo announced that it had laid down its arms. Traditional courts moved ahead with judging low-level alleged perpetrators of the genocide, and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) examined the cases of more senior figures.

Rwanda's ethnic divide is deeply rooted. National boundaries demarcated by Belgian colonists led to often violent competition for power within the fixed borders of a modern state. Traditional and Belgian-abetted Tutsi dominance ended with a Hutu rebellion in 1959 and independence in 1962. Hundreds of thousands of Tutsis were killed or fled the country in recurring violence during the next decades. In 1990, the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) launched a guerrilla war to force the Hutu regime, led by General Juvenal Habyarimana, to accept power sharing and the return of Tutsi refugees.

President Habyarimana and Burundian president Cyprien Ntaryamira were killed in a plane crash near Kigali in April 1994. While the perpetrators of this act have never been identified, many observers believe that Hutu extremists, angered by Habyarimana's negotiation with the RPF, committed the act. The Hutus' chauvinist solution to claims for land and power by Rwanda's Tutsi minority, which constituted approximately 15 percent of the population, was to pursue the complete elimination of the Tutsi people. The ensuing genocide was well plotted, with piles of imported machetes distributed and death lists broadcast by radio, but it did not stop the RPF from successfully taking over the country.

The Hutu-dominated army and militia, along with as many as two million Hutu refugees, fled into neighboring countries, especially the Democratic Republic of the Congo. International relief efforts that eased the suffering of these refugees also had the effect of allowing the retraining and rearming of large numbers of the former army and militia forces. The United Nations, which had earlier ignored specific warnings of an impending genocide in 1994, failed to prevent such activities, and the RPF took direct action, over-running the refugee camps in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Nearly three million Rwandan refugees subsequently returned to Rwanda between 1996 and 1998 and were peacefully reintegrated into society. Security has improved considerably since 1997, although isolated killings and "disappearances" continue. The government, led by the RPF, closely directs the country's political life. In 2000, President Pasteur Bizimungu resigned and was replaced by Vice President Paul Kagame, who had already been the *de facto* leader of the country. A new prime minister, Bernard Makuza, was appointed.

Rwanda's extended postgenocide political transition period officially ended in 2003 with the holding of national elections. The RPF's preeminent position in Rwandan political life—combined with a short campaign period, the material advantages of incumbency, and the continuing effects of the genocide that inhibit free expression of political will—ensured Kagame's victory and that of the RPF and its allies in the August presidential and September parliamentary elections. The largest opposition party, the Hutu-based Democratic Republican Movement (MDR), was declared illegal by the authorities for allegedly sowing "divisionism," a code word for the fanning of ethnic hatred. In a sign of the extent of the RPF's influence, even the MDR parliamentary delegation voted to ban the party. A new constitution that officially permits political parties to exist, under certain conditions, was unveiled in 2003.

In early 2004, a parliamentary commission issued a report criticizing a number of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) with propagating "genocide ideology." Subsequently, under the threat of banning, these organizations significantly limited activities that involved criticism of the government and its policies. In June, Bizimungu, a Hutu who was the first president after the genocide, was sentenced to 15 years in prison on charges of inciting civil disobedience, creating a criminal gang, and embezzling state funds, although Amnesty International and other independent observers questioned the fairness of the trial.

In 2004, the government of Rwanda continued to use the legacy of the 1994 genocide as grounds for limiting dialogue between Rwandans. It took several actions that had the effect of further constricting political space, including restricting NGOs. The leading opposition party remained inactive after threats to ban it. Steps were taken to reduce the backlog of legal cases resulting from the genocide.

During 2005, the RPF maintained its domination over the country's political life. The Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR)—an exiled guerrilla group thought to have about 10,000 fighters, including members of the Interahamwe blamed for the 1994 genocide—announced an end to its armed struggle. It agreed to return home and form a political party after receiving safety guarantees.

After long delays, traditional courts moved ahead with judging low-level alleged perpetrators of the genocide. Meanwhile, the International Criminal Tribunal of Rwanda (ICTR) examined the cases of more senior figures. Continued instability in the region, including tensions with neighboring Uganda over neighboring Congo, pose considerable challenges to the country's peaceful development and provide an excuse for the RPF to closely control the country's political development.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Rwanda cannot change their government democratically. The 2003 presidential and parliamentary elections gave Rwandans only a limited amount of political choice.

The 2003 constitution includes provisions that give strong powers to the president, who has sole authority to appoint the prime minister and who can dissolve the National Assembly. The constitution provides for a 26-member, indirectly elected Senate in addition to an 80-member, directly elected lower house, the Chamber of Deputies. Senators serve eight-year terms of office, while members of the lower house serve five-year terms.

The constitution officially permits political parties to exist but only under certain conditions. Political parties closely identified with the 1994 massacres are banned, as are parties based on ethnicity or religion. The cabinet must consist of representatives from several different parties, and the largest party is not allowed to occupy more than half of the cabinet seats. The constitution also provides that the president, prime minister, and president of the lower house cannot all belong to the same party. Hutus have some representation in the government, including Prime Minister Bernard Makuza, who was from the MDR prior to its banning.

The constitution restricts political campaigning at the grassroots level. Its emphasis on "national unity" as a priority and a provision outlawing the incitement of ethnic hatred can be interpreted to limit the legitimate exercise of political pluralism. The constitution also includes a "forum" of parties that is ostensibly designed to foster communication between parties but which can also serve to control party actions. Thus, most parties function as satellites of the RPF.

The government has undertaken a number of anticorruption measures. In 2005, President Paul Kagame fired several top leaders on corruption and embezzlement charges, including the minister of agriculture and the ambassadors to France and Ethiopia and the African Union. Government institutions particularly focused on the corruption issue include the Office of the Ombudsman, the auditor-general, and the National Tender Board. Rwanda was ranked 83 out of 159 countries in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

That the RPF does not encourage a political culture of openness and debate is seen in its attitude toward the press. The media reflect the RPF's predominant role and are constrained by fear of reprisals. The 2005 annual report by Reporters Without Borders, a Paris-based press watchdog group, concluded that "despite its claims to support freedom of the press, the Kagame government continues to behave like a predator." The independent national weekly *Umuseso* has been closely watched, harassed, and repeatedly prosecuted. Journalists censor their own writing and say that the authorities have made it clear that certain topics cannot be discussed. As a result, newspaper coverage is heavily progovernment. Several journalists remained held in 2005 on politically inspired charges. The broadcast media are government-controlled, although a media bill passed in June 2002 paved the way for the licensing of private radio and TV stations. There are a growing number of newspapers in the country and limited, although increasing, internet access.

Religious freedom is generally respected. Clerics were among both the victims and the perpetrators of the 1994 genocide. The implication of several Catholic clerics in the genocide has complicated relations between the government and the Roman Catholic Church. Academic freedom is generally respected.

Although the constitution codifies freedom of association and assembly, in reality these rights are limited. For example, activities that the government defines as "divisive" are prohibited. In 2004, the parliament accepted the recommendations of a

parliamentary commission created to investigate the existence and spread of a "genocide ideology" in Rwanda. As a result, the parliament recommended that five NGOs and several religious groups be banned and also called for action against several international NGOs operating in Rwanda. International human rights organizations, such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, expressed serious concern that these decisions were based on overly broad interpretations of the law, vague allegations, and insubstantial research. The executive branch decided not to ban implicated organizations outright but to refer cases to the court system for prosecution. Under the threat of banning, several targeted organizations have significantly muted their formerly independent and at times critical attitude toward the RPF.

Constitutional provisions for labor rights include the right to form trade unions, engage in collective bargaining, and strike. There are 27 registered unions under two umbrella groups. The larger group is the Central Union of Rwandan Workers, which was closely controlled by the previous regime but which now has relatively greater independence.

The judiciary has yet to establish a profile independent of the executive. However, a new series of courts has been established that are manned by trained officials, and much of the old legal code has been revised to bring it up to date and to better respect human rights. At the beginning of 2005, about 120,000 genocide suspects were incarcerated in grossly overcrowded jails; during the year, tens of thousands were released. The traditional justice system of *gacaca* was reinstated in 2002; in this system, local notables preside over community trials dealing with the less serious genocide offenses, including those that had been allegedly committed by the released inmates. Some observers have expressed concern about the potential for partiality or for the application of uneven or arbitrary standards. About 700 individuals, most from the local level, have been indicted thus far, although two members of parliament have also been implicated. The investigative phase of the *gacaca* process is almost complete. Since the beginning of the process, more than 5,000 people suspected of being involved in the 1994 genocide have fled to neighboring Burundi and Uganda.

The ICTR, in Arusha, Tanzania, moved ahead with its work in a deliberate fashion. The tribunal is composed of international jurists and is similar to that in The Hague dealing with those accused of genocide and crimes against humanity in the former Yugoslavia. In 2005, several major trials involving former senior government officials proceeded. Relations between Rwanda and the court in Arusha have been very uneven in recent years, with Rwanda accusing the ICTR of incompetence and the court accusing Rwanda of refusing to cooperate in war crimes investigations involving its army. As of late 2005, the pace of ICTR adjudications had increased, with the ICTR having rendered 22 guilty verdicts and 3 acquittals.

There are increased legal protections for equal rights. A national identity card is required when Rwandans wish to move within the country, but these are issued regularly. In previous years, there were cases of government officials forcing citizens to return to the districts listed on their identity cards. Rwanda's new constitution, adopted in May 2003, requires women to occupy at least 30 percent of seats in the National Assembly and Senate. In fact, Rwanda has the highest percentage of women in national parliaments in the world, with 48.8 percent representation in the

lower house. In December 2003, the Rwanda Senate elected Aloysia Cyanzaire as the first female chief justice of the Supreme Court. Women's rights to inherit land have been strengthened through legislation. Despite these improvements, ongoing de facto discrimination against women continues. Economic and social dislocation has forced women to take on many new roles, especially in the countryside.

St. Kitts and Nevis

Population: 50,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$7,600 **Civil Liberties:** 1*
Life Expectancy: 70 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Anglican, other Protestant,
 Roman Catholic
Ethnic Groups: Black (majority), British, Portuguese,
 and Lebanese
Capital: Basseterre



Ratings Change: St. Kitts and Nevis's civil liberties rating improved from 2 to 1 due to a consolidation of the rule of law.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F

Overview:

In 2005, Saint Kitts took controversial steps to scale down involvement in the sugar industry in anticipation of changing global trade rules that threatened this sector.

Opposition leaders responded by calling for public protests and demonstrations against the reforms. Prime Minister Denzil Douglas's third consecutive term in office was complicated by efforts in Nevis to secede from Saint Kitts. Meanwhile, the country's traditionally strong rule of law continued to be consolidated during the year.

European colonization of Nevis began in the seventeenth century with the arrival of English and French colonists. The English settled mostly on Nevis, while the French chose Saint Kitts. Intermittent warfare led to changes in sovereignty, but the Treaty of Paris in 1783 awarded both islands to Britain. In 1967, together with Anguilla, they became a self-governing state in association with Great Britain; Anguilla seceded late that year and remains a British dependency. The Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis attained full independence on September 19, 1983.

In the run-up to the March 6, 2000, elections, incumbent Prime Minister Denzil Douglas was able to tout his government's efforts at promoting resort construction in Saint Kitts, combating crime, and raising public employees' salaries. Critics of the ruling Saint Kitts and Nevis Labour Party (SKNLP) claimed that the country had accumulated \$192 million in debt and that the government had failed to reinvigorate the islands' sugar economy. The SKNLP won a stronger parliamentary majority in elections, taking all eight seats on Saint Kitts, out of the 11-member National As-

sembly. Opposition leader Kennedy Simmonds's People's Action Movement (PAM), which had hoped to oust the SKNLP by winning three seats in Saint Kitts and forming a coalition with the winners of seats in Nevis, instead lost its only seat on the island to the SKNLP, which had previously held seven seats.

In 2002, the Financial Action Task Force removed the twin island federation from its list of jurisdictions that were "non-cooperative" in the fight against money laundering and other financial crimes.

Douglas called early elections for October 25, 2004, and his SKNLP won 7 seats, while the opposition PAM took the remaining seat on Saint Kitts. Douglas's call for early elections was seen as a successful effort to ensure that he and the SKNLP would serve a third consecutive term in office. On Nevis, the Concerned Citizens Movement (CCM), a major force behind Nevis's push for independence and led by the premier of the island's local assembly, Vance Amory, kept 2 seats, while the Nevis Reformation Party (NRP) held on to 1. In January 2005, the Saint Kitts and Nevis government accepted an offer from the London-based Commonwealth Secretariat to reform the country's electoral system.

Momentum began to gather in mid-2003 for Nevis to secede from Saint Kitts, a process that cast a shadow over the twentieth anniversary of independence from Great Britain, which was celebrated on September 19 of that year. Nevis premier Amory, whose party dominates the local assembly, declared that he would move toward a referendum on independence following his party's success in the October 2004 national elections. Nevis is accorded the constitutional right to secede if two-thirds of the elected legislators in its local assembly approve and two-thirds of Nevisian voters endorse secession in a referendum. Though a 1998 referendum on independence failed the required two-thirds majority, Nevisians continued to feel neglected. No Nevisian is a member of the governing cabinet, and the island is entitled to only 3 of 11 seats in the national legislature. There is little support for independence from the region or further afield. However, the issue is still pending without resolution.

In March 2005, Prime Minister Douglas announced that Saint Kitts and Nevis would cease to produce sugar for export. The islands' 300-year-old sugar industry was unprofitable for some years and faced even steeper losses from pending changes in Europe's sugar import regime. Some in the opposition PAM called on workers to take up machetes and march against the sugar industry closure, but sizable severance payments to former sugar laborers succeeded in mollifying many sugar reform opponents.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Saint Kitts and Nevis can change their government democratically. The 2004 elections were generally deemed free and fair. The Saint Kitts and Nevis national government consists of the prime minister, the cabinet, and the unicameral National Assembly. Elected Assembly members—eight from Saint Kitts and three from Nevis—serve five-year terms. Senators are appointed, and their number may not exceed two-thirds of the elected members—one chosen by the leader of the parliamentary opposition for every two chosen by the prime minister. Saint Kitts's main political parties are the SKNLP and the PAM. On Nevis, the CCM and the NRP dominate. Nevis also has a local assembly, composed of five elected and three appointed

members, and pays for all of its own services except for those involving police and foreign relations. Saint Kitts has no similar body. The country is a member of the Commonwealth with a governor-general appointed by the Queen of England. Prime Minister Denzil Douglas's government has supported constitutional reform to ensure greater equity in representation, revise electoral boundaries, and improve voter registration procedures.

In an effort to ensure greater transparency in political party financing, a constitutional amendment was approved requiring the disclosure of all campaign donors whose gifts exceed a certain threshold. However, drug trafficking and money laundering have had a corrupting influence on the political system by undermining the effectiveness of the police force and tainting the judicial process. Saint Kitts and Nevis was not surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Constitutional guarantees of free expression are generally respected. Television on Saint Kitts is government owned, although it is managed by a Trinidadian company, and there are some government restrictions on opposition access to it. Prime Minister Douglas has kept pledges to privatize radio, with the selling off of the government radio station. There are eight radio stations and two daily newspapers on the island. In addition, each major political party publishes a weekly or fortnightly newspaper. Opposition publications freely criticize the government, and international media are available. There is free access to the internet.

The free exercise of religion is constitutionally protected, and academic freedom is generally honored.

The right to organize civic organizations and labor unions is generally respected, as is the right of assembly. The main labor union, the Saint Kitts Trades and Labour Union, is associated with the ruling SKNLP. The right to strike, while not specified by law, is recognized and generally respected in practice.

The judiciary is generally independent, and legal provisions for a fair and speedy trial are generally observed. The highest court is the West Indies Supreme Court in Saint Lucia, which includes a court of appeals and a high court. Under certain circumstances, there is a right of appeal to the Privy Council in London. However, the islands' traditionally strong rule of law, which continued to be consolidated during the year, has been tested by an increase in drug-related crime and corruption, and the intimidation of witnesses and jurors is a problem. The national prison is overcrowded, and conditions are abysmal. The deportation of a number of felons from the United States under the U.S. Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 has contributed to a feeling of being overwhelmed among local law enforcement agencies.

Reports suggest that the country's economic citizenship program, which allows for the purchase of passports through real estate investments with a minimum of \$250,000 and a registration fee of \$35,000, has facilitated the illegal immigration of persons from China and other countries into the United States and Canada. In January, the government enacted new work permits for foreign nationals mandating that their jobs must be advertised to current citizens. The move was seen as targeting the influx of Guyanese seeking work in Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Violence against women is a problem. The Domestic Violence Act of 2000 criminalizes domestic violence and provides penalties for abusers. The Department

of Gender Affairs, a part of the Ministry for Social Development, Community, and Gender Affairs, has offered counseling for victims of abuse and conducted training on domestic and gender violence. There are no laws against sexual harassment. More girls than boys have access to primary and secondary education. Two of seventeen members of parliament are women.

St. Lucia

Population: 200,000 **Political Rights:** 1

GNI/capita: \$4,310 **Civil Liberties:** 1*

Life Expectancy: 74 **Status:** Free

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (67.5 percent), Seventh Day Adventist (8.5 percent), Pentecostal (5.7 percent), Anglican (2 percent), Evangelical (2 percent), other Christian (5.1 percent), Rastafarian (2.1 percent), other (7.1 percent)

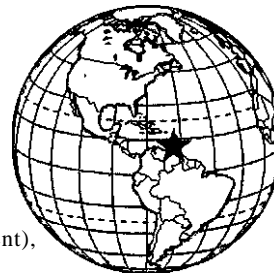
Ethnic Groups: Black African (90 percent), mulatto (6 percent), East Indian (3 percent), white (1 percent)

Capital: Castries

Ratings Change: Saint Lucia's civil liberties rating improved from 2 to 1 due to an enhanced rule of law.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F



Overview:

In 2005, the ruling Saint Lucia Labour Party (SLP) achieved some success in reducing drug trafficking and curbing violent crime. Bucking the regional trend, Saint Lucia's murder rate fell slightly in 2005.

Saint Lucia, a member of the Commonwealth, achieved independence from Great Britain in 1979. In May 1997, Kenny Anthony led the Saint Lucia Labour Party (SLP) to victory in legislative elections. On taking office, Anthony began to address concerns of an electorate weary of economic distress and reports of official corruption. In 1999, his government faced a series of issues concerning the hotel and airline industries, both vital for the tourism industry. In 2000, Anthony and the SLP gave their approval for regulated casino gambling, brushing aside objections from religious groups and the United Workers Party (UWP), to seemingly focus even more of their energies on revitalizing the country's tourism trade.

In June 2001, Anthony announced a two-month crackdown on crime, including increased police patrols and heavy penalties for gun crimes. He maintained that these measures were necessary to combat a wave of murders and armed robberies that he blamed, in part, on a U.S. policy of deporting hardened criminals born in Saint Lucia back to the island.

The SLP swept to victory in the December 3, 2001, general elections, winning 14

of 17 seats in parliament, just short of the 16-1 majority it had achieved in 1997. However, in an election called six months ahead of schedule, constituencies dominated by banana farmers registered their discontent with Anthony's party, reflecting a measure of popular dissatisfaction with his efforts to keep the island's ailing banana industry afloat. The farmers were unhappy that the Anthony administration had not made efforts to reduce the high production costs that made Saint Lucian exports uncompetitive. Nevertheless, Anthony was the only party leader to survive the election. Although her UWP won the other three seats, Morella Joseph—the first woman to lead a party into a general election—lost her seat, and National Alliance leader George Odium and former UWP prime minister Vaughan Lewis failed in their efforts to be elected.

In November 2003, the government and opposition announced the establishment of a Constitution Review Commission to examine Saint Lucia's constitution as it relates to issues of law and order. The level of violence had increased noticeably, with police blaming much of the violence on drug-related gangs. The United States named Saint Lucia as a principal transit point in the eastern Caribbean for South American cocaine. Local authorities are also troubled over the increasing number of travelers coming through the island with fraudulent passports. In early 2005, the government initiated a controversial gun amnesty program that pays criminals \$925 to turn in their weapons. By October, 150 guns had been collected, but critics say the program is rewarding criminals and may actually be increasing the number of guns being brought into the country.

A revised version of the Criminal Code's Clause 166, passed by parliament in February 2004, allows for abortion in a number of restricted cases, including rape or incest. The country is 90 percent Roman Catholic, and there has been some backlash against this provision at home and abroad. In January 2004, Gender Relations Minister Sarah Flood-Beaubrun was dismissed after calling supporters of the measure "murderers." Groups abroad have called for the censure of major Saint Lucia government leaders by the Vatican and the recanting of honors bestowed on them, as well as the excommunication of the governor-general of the country, Calliopa Pearlette Louisy. Nonetheless, there is wide support for the measure among Saint Lucia's younger population.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Saint Lucia can change their government democratically. The 2001 legislative elections were considered free and fair, although fewer than 50 percent of those eligible actually voted; 60 percent of registered voters had turned out in 1997. A governor-general represents the British monarchy. Under the 1979 constitution, a bicameral parliament consists of the 17-member House of Assembly, elected for five years, and an 11-member Senate. The prime minister is chosen by the majority party in the House of Assembly. Six members of the Senate are appointed by the prime minister, three by the leader of the parliamentary opposition, and two in consultation with civic and religious organizations. The island is divided into eight regions; each with its own elected council and administrative services. Two parties—the SLP, in power since 1997, and the UWP, the official opposition—dominate politics; parties are free to organize.

There have been allegations of corrupt activities on the part of government of-

ficials. In October, Saint Lucia's Constitutional Reform Commission began to review steps toward electoral reform, with an emphasis on increasing the transparency and credibility of election supervision mechanisms. Saint Lucia was not surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution guarantees freedom of speech, which is respected in practice.

The media carry a wide spectrum of views and are largely independent of the government. There are five privately owned newspapers, two privately held radio stations, and one partially government-funded radio station, as well as two privately owned television stations. There is free access to the internet.

The constitution guarantees free exercise of religion, and that right is respected. Academic freedom is generally honored.

Constitutional guarantees regarding the right to organize civic groups and labor unions and to assemble freely are generally respected. Civic groups are well organized and politically active, as are labor unions, which represent the majority of wage earners.

The judicial system is independent and includes a high court under the West Indies Supreme Court (based in Saint Lucia), with ultimate appeal under certain circumstances to the Privy Council in London. In July 2003, a treaty replacing the Privy Council with the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), to be based in Trinidad and Tobago, was approved by Saint Lucia. In November of that year, the parliament passed the Caribbean Court of Justice 2003 agreement, with Saint Lucia pledging to contribute \$2.5 million toward the establishment of the regional court. The CCJ is to have an appellate function and will also interpret the Caribbean Community (Caricom) Treaty.

Traditionally, citizens have enjoyed a high degree of personal security, although there are episodic reports of police misuse of force. In recent years, a rise in crime—including drug-related offenses, violent clashes during banana farmers' strikes, and increased violence in schools—has created concern among citizens, although the government achieved some success in reducing drug trafficking and curbing violent crime in 2005. The island's nineteenth-century prison, built to house a maximum of 80 inmates, now holds close to 500. In late 2002, the government finished construction of a new, \$17 million prison facility on the eastern part of the island. In 2005, the Anthony government took steps to resume the implementation of hanging to help deter violent crime.

Though there are no official barriers to their participation, women are underrepresented in politics and the professions. Female enrollment in primary and secondary education is slightly higher than male enrollment. A growing awareness of the seriousness of violence against women has led the government and advocacy groups to take steps to offer better protection for victims of domestic violence. In November 2004, the Ministry of Health noted that 67 percent of women seeking treatment for HIV/AIDS at clinics reported physical and sexual abuse.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines

Population: 100,000 **Political Rights:** 2
GNI/capita: \$3,650 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 72 **Status:** Free

Religious Groups: Anglican (47 percent), Methodist (28 percent), Roman Catholic (13 percent), other [including Hindu, Seventh-Day Adventist, other Protestant] (12 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Black (66 percent), other [including mulatto, East Indian, and white] (34 percent)

Capital: Kingstown



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
2,1F	2,1F	2,1F	2,1F	2,1F	2,1F	2,1F	2,1F	2,1F	2,1F

Overview: Saint Vincent and the Grenadines enjoyed relative political calm in 2005, although relations between the government and the opposition remained tense. Concerns about the drug trade escalated when Caribbean neighbors complained about the country's ineffective counternarcotics policies.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines achieved independence from Great Britain in 1979, with jurisdiction over the northern Grenadine islets of Bequia, Canouan, Mayreau, Mustique, Prune Island, Petit Saint Vincent, and Union Island. The country is a member of the Commonwealth, with the British monarchy represented by a governor-general.

In the March 2001 elections, the social-democratic Unity Labour Party (ULP) captured 12 of the 15 contested parliamentary seats, and Ralph Gonsalves became prime minister. The incumbent, conservative New Democratic Party (NDP) won only 3 seats. International observers monitored the election, which had been preceded by large antigovernment protests and the first serious political unrest in the country's history.

In 2001, Gonsalves, a one-time radical opposition figure, led a successful initiative to save the financially ailing Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) by relieving it of some administrative requirements, now carried out by its individual members. After a controversial trip to Libya, also in 2001, Gonsalves was criticized for not revealing publicly that the Arab nation had promised to buy all the bananas that the Caribbean could produce.

In June 2003, the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force removed Saint Vincent and the Grenadines from its list of jurisdictions deemed "non-cooperative" in the fight against money laundering. This move was regarded as a major victory by Gonsalves's government. In the same month, the U.S. Coast Guard detained eight ships when it discovered that several officers had licenses that were improperly issued by Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

In October 2004, the second reading of a proposed new constitution for the

country was held, one week after the Constitutional Review Commission launched a new informational publication on the issue. Throughout the year, the opposition NDP, led by Arnhim Eustace, staged an effective, publicity-based campaign against the prime minister's government and policies, culminating in a November 3 candle-light march. The protests were a response to perceived mismanagement and corruption by the Gonsalves administration.

In June 2005, Barbados Prime Minister Owen Arthur charged that authorities in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines were not doing enough to stop the flow of illegal drugs or stifle international criminal networks operating out of Saint Vincent.

Also in 2005, opposition leaders questioned whether the supervisory mechanism for next year's elections was sufficiently independent. In particular, Eustace accused the ruling party of using public money for campaign purposes and voiced concerns about irregularities in the run-up to the general elections.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines can change their government democratically. The constitution provides for the election of 15 representatives to the unicameral House of Assembly to serve for five years. The prime minister is the leader of the majority party in the House. In addition, six senators are appointed to the House—four by the government and two by the opposition. The March 2001 election was considered free and fair by international observers.

There have been allegations of drug-related corruption within the government and the police force, and of money laundering through Saint Vincent banks. In 1995, the U.S. government alleged that Saint Vincent was becoming a drug-trafficking center and that high-level government officials were involved in narcotics-related corruption. Since then, Saint Vincent has taken steps to cooperate with U.S. anti-drug-trade efforts, such as signing an extradition treaty in 1996 with Washington. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was not surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The press is independent, with two privately owned, independent weeklies and several smaller, partisan papers. Some journalists believe that government advertising is used as a political tool. The only television station is privately owned and free from government interference. Satellite dishes and cable are available to those who can afford them. The radio station is government owned, and call-in programs are prohibited. Equal access to radio is mandated during electoral campaigns, but the ruling party takes advantage of state control over programming. There is free access to the internet.

The right to freedom of religion is constitutionally protected and reflected in practice. Academic freedom is generally honored. In September, universal secondary education was introduced. Access to higher education is limited but improving as the University of the West Indies initiates degree programs with community colleges in Saint Vincent and other OECS states.

There is constitutional protection for freedom of assembly and association. Civic groups and nongovernmental organizations are free from government interference. Labor unions are active and permitted to strike.

The judicial system is independent. The highest court is the West Indies Supreme Court (based in St. Lucia), which includes a court of appeals and a high court.

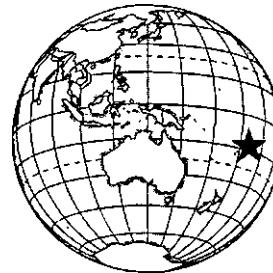
A right of ultimate appeal may report, under certain circumstances, to the Privy Council in London. The independent Saint Vincent Human Rights Association has criticized long judicial delays and a large backlog of cases caused by personnel shortages in the local judiciary. It has also charged that the executive branch of government at times exerts inordinate influence over the courts.

Murder convictions carry a mandatory death sentence; in November 2004, Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves publicly endorsed the death penalty as a partial response to the rise in violent crime on the islands, urging judges not to be swayed by a Privy Council ruling that mandatory death sentences are unconstitutional. In 2004, 28 people were murdered in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, which is the highest number on record for the country. Prison conditions remain poor—one prison designed for 75 inmates houses more than 300—and prisons are the targets of allegations of mistreatment.

Violence against women, particularly domestic violence, is a major problem. The Domestic Violence Summary Proceedings Act, which provides for protective orders, offers some protection. The punishment for rape is generally 10 years in prison, while sentences of 20 years for sexual assaults against minors are handed down.

Samoa

Population: 200,000 **Political Rights:** 2
GNI/capita: \$1,860 **Civil Liberties:** 2
Life Expectancy: 73 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Christian (99.7 percent),
 other (0.3 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Polynesian (93 percent), Euronesian
 [mixed] (7 percent)
Capital: Apia



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
2,2F	2,2F	2,3F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F

Overview:

In 2005, a high chief and parliament member questioned whether there are too many village chiefs in Samoa. Government doctors went on strike in September to seek better work conditions and higher pay.

Germany controlled this group of Pacific Islands, formerly known as Western Samoa, between 1899 and World War I. New Zealand administered the islands under a League of Nations mandate and then as a UN Trust Territory until Western Samoa became independent in 1962. In 1988, the country changed its name to Samoa. A largely subsistence agricultural economy, the country depends heavily on remittances from more than 100,000 Samoans working overseas.

The centrist Human Rights Protection Party (HRPP) has dominated politics since

independence. Tofilau Eti Alesana, who became prime minister in 1982, resigned in 1998 for health reasons. He was replaced by Deputy Prime Minister Tuilaepa Aiono Sailele Malielegoai, who led the HRPP to another victory in March 2001 by winning 30 of the 49 parliamentary seats. The main opposition party, the Democratic United Party, chose Valasi Tafito as its new leader after its former secretary Tofa S'a Atonio Lemi was killed by an assailant in Auckland in October 2005.

In 2005, political and public debates continued over the role and powers of village chiefs in Samoa. *Matai*, or village chiefs, control local government and churches through the village *fono*, or legislature, which is open only to them. While many serve their communities well in solving conflicts and providing leadership, there have been many cases of abuse of power in recent years. For example, families have been banished from villages and have had their homes burned down because they belonged to churches outside of those—such as the Methodist Church, the Catholic Church, and the Congregational Christina Church of Samoa—recognized by the government.

Government doctors went on strike in September for better working conditions and higher pay. In early November, the government ordered the striking doctors to return to work. Those given government scholarships to study were threatened with legal action and barred from leaving the country. Of the 32 original striking doctors, only two returned to work, two left for Micronesia, and the rest resigned. In the end, the government acquiesced to the majority of the doctor's requests, but could not meet their demand to increase the salary for new doctors, arguing that it could not raise salaries for just one part of the civil service. The prolonged strike severely affected the delivery of health services in the island nation.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Samoans can change their government democratically. Previously, only the matai could vote. Executive authority is vested in the chief of state. The 90-year-old Chief Susuga Malietoa Tanumafili II holds this title for life; the Legislative Assembly will elect his successor for five-year terms. The chief of state appoints the prime minister, who heads the government and names his own cabinet. All laws passed by the 49-member unicameral legislature must receive approval from the chief of state to take effect. Although candidates are free to propose themselves for electoral office, approval of the matai is essential. Two parliament seats are reserved for "at-large" voters, that is, Samoans of mixed European-Samoan and Chinese-Samoan heritage. In 2003, the number of government ministries was reduced from 27 to 14 through mergers designed to streamline the government.

Official corruption and abuses do not appear as widespread or serious as in some other Pacific Island states. Nevertheless, there have been allegations of corruption over the years. Samoa was not ranked in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The government generally respects freedom of speech and the press. The government operates one of the country's two television stations. Five private radio stations and satellite cable television are available in parts of the capital. There are three English-language and several Samoan newspapers. Journalists are legally required to reveal their sources in the event of a defamation suit against them, but this law has not been tested in court. In 2004, publishers, journalists, and civil society

groups called on the government to abolish the Printers and Publishers Act of 1982 and the Law of Criminal Libel. They criticized the laws for imposing on the media legal fees incurred by government leaders, who are frequently intolerant of news reports about them. There are several internet service providers, and internet use is growing rapidly.

The government respects freedom of religion in practice, and relations among religious groups are generally amicable. In 2000, the Supreme Court ruled that the 1990 Village Fono (Council of Chiefs) Act, which gives legal recognition to fono decisions, could not be used to infringe on villagers' freedom of religion, speech, assembly, and association. This ruling followed a fono decision in the village of Saluilua to banish members of a Bible study group, which the fono regarded as illegal. Similar rulings followed in 2003 and 2004. The government appointed the Law Reform Commission in 2003 to address conflicts between traditional customs and Christianity. There were no reports of restrictions on academic freedom.

Freedom of assembly and association is respected in practice. Human rights groups operate freely. About 20 percent of wage earners belong to trade unions. Workers have the legal right to bargain collectively, but they rarely pursue this option. Government workers can strike, subject to certain conditions to assure public safety. More than 60 percent of adults work in subsistence agriculture.

The judiciary is independent and upholds the right to a fair trial. The Supreme Court is the highest court with full jurisdiction over civil, criminal, and constitutional matters. The chief of state, on the recommendation of the prime minister, appoints the chief justice. Prisons meet basic international standards. Human rights groups have not reported problems such as lengthy detentions before trial, corruption of the courts in adjudicating cases, or prisoner abuse.

Samoa has no armed forces, and the small police force is under civilian control. The country receives assistance from Australia, the U.S. and New Zealand to train its police and security personnel. The police have little impact in the villages, where most disputes are settled by the fono, and punishments usually involve fines in cash or kind. Banishment from the village is reserved for serious offenses. Fono vary considerably in their decision-making styles and in the number of matai involved, and abuses by some fono officials have caused the public to question the legitimacy of their actions.

The government generally respects freedom of movement. A new permanent resident permit was introduced in 2004 as part of the Immigration Act of 2004. The cabinet is required to determine annually eligibility and residency requirements for the granting of permanent resident permits. The cabinet decided to provide 10 permanent resident permits, two of which were for applicants outside of Samoa, as part of the government's effort to attract foreign investments.

Domestic violence against women and children is common and reported to be on the rise. Spousal rape is not illegal. Domestic abuses typically go unreported because of social pressure and fear of reprisal. Women's rights advocates saw the addition of 17 female police officers in October 2004 as a step forward in improving police responsiveness to reports of rape and other violent acts against women and children.

San Marino

Population: 30,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: na **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 81 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic
Ethnic Groups: Sanmarinese, Italian
Capital: San Marino



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In February 2005, the Council of Europe's Committee for the prevention of torture carried out its third visit to San Marino. The European Union (EU) Savings Taxation Directive, which taxes savings accounts held by European citizens in the country, came into effect in July.

Founded in the year 301, San Marino is the world's oldest and second-smallest republic (after Vatican City). Although the Sammarinesi are ethnically and culturally Italian, they have succeeded in maintaining their independence against great odds since the fourth century. The papacy recognized San Marino's independence in 1631, as did the Congress of Vienna after the Napoleonic Wars in 1815. In 1862, Italy and San Marino signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation that began a long period of closeness between the two countries. Despite its dependence on Italy, from which it currently receives budget subsidies, San Marino maintains its own political institutions. It became a member of the Council of Europe in 1988 and a member of the United Nations in 1992. Tourism and banking dominate the country's economy.

Early elections called in June 2001 led to the return of a coalition of the Christian Democrats (PDCS) and the Socialist Party (PSS). The PDCS won 25 seats, the PSS 15, the Party of Democrats (PD) 12, the Popular Alliance of Democrats (APDS) 5, the Communist Refoundation (RC) 2, and the National Alliance (AN) 1. A government crisis late in 2003 was resolved in December of that year with the replacement of the minister of foreign affairs.

The world famous Italian opera singer Renata Tebaldi died at her home in San Marino in December 2004. She was 82 and had lived in San Marino for twenty years. A highly acclaimed soprano, Tebaldi was, during her long career, a great rival of Maria Callas's.

In February 2005, the Council of Europe's Committee for the prevention of torture carried out its third visit to the country. The delegation followed up concerns that were raised in previous visits about detentions at San Marino Prison and safeguards offered to people detained by law enforcement agencies.

The European Union (EU) Savings Taxation Directive, which provides a way to

tax revenue from savings accounts held by European citizens in a member state other than their own country of residence or in certain non-EU countries, came into effect on July 1. San Marino agreed to participate in the directive, which is intended to prevent harmful tax practices.

In October, Claudio Muccioli and Antonello Bacciochi were elected as captains-regent—joint heads of state. The term of office for captains-regent is six months.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

The Sammarinesi can change their government democratically. The 60 members of the Great and General Council (a unicameral legislature) are elected every five years by proportional representation. The executive power of the country rests with the 10-member Congress of State (cabinet), which is headed by the two captains-regent selected every spring and fall by the Great and General Council from among the council's own members to serve as joint heads of state for a six-month period. Although there is no official prime minister, the secretary of state for foreign affairs has assumed some of the position's prerogatives.

The PDCS, PSS, and the PD are the three dominant political parties in the country. Due to the small size of the country and its low population, no party gains an absolute majority and the government is usually run by a coalition of parties.

There are few problems with corruption in the country. San Marino was not ranked in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech and the press is guaranteed in San Marino. There are daily newspapers, a state-run broadcast system for radio and television called RTV, and a private FM station, Radio Titiano. The Sammarinesi have access to all Italian print media and certain Italian broadcast stations. Access to the internet is unrestricted.

The country prohibits religious discrimination by law. Roman Catholicism is the dominant, but not the state, religion. People can request a donation of 0.3 percent of their income through their taxes to be allocated to the Catholic Church or other churches such as the Waldesian Church or the Jehovah's Witnesses. Academic freedom is respected in the country.

People are free to assemble, demonstrate, and conduct open public discussions. Despite the small size of the country, people join civic organizations. Workers are free to organize into trade unions and bargain collectively with employers. They are also free to strike, if they do not work in military occupations. Approximately half of the country's workforce is unionized.

The judiciary is independent. Lower court judges are required to be noncitizens—generally Italians—to assure impartiality. The final court of review is San Marino's Council of Twelve, a group of judges chosen for six-year terms from among the members of the Grand and General Council. The country's prison system generally meets international standards, and civilian authorities maintain effective control over the police and security forces.

The population is generally treated equally under the law, although the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance has raised some concerns in the past about the status of foreigners in the country. Most of the foreign-born residents are Italians; only about 2 percent—mostly women from Central and Eastern Europe who work as private nurses for the elderly and ill—come from outside the EU. San Marino has no formal asylum policy, and a foreigner must live in the coun-

try for 30 years to be eligible for citizenship. The European Convention on Nationality recommends that the period of residence before a foreigner can apply for citizenship should not exceed 10 years. In 2001, San Marino ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Women are given legal protections from violence and spousal abuse, and gender equality exists in the workplace and elsewhere. There are, however, slight differences in the way men and women can transmit citizenship to their children. The country has restrictive laws regarding abortion, which, is permitted only to save the life of the mother.

Sao Tome and Principe

Population: 200,000 **Political Rights:** 2

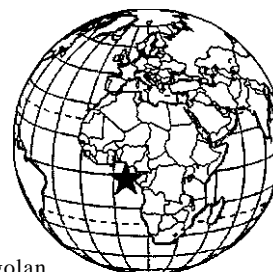
GNI/capita: \$290 **Civil Liberties:** 2

Life Expectancy: 63 **Status:** Free

Religious Groups: Christian [Roman Catholic, Evangelical Protestant, Seventh-Day Adventist] (80 percent), other (20 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Mestico, angolares (descendants of Angolan slaves), forros (descendants of freed slaves), servicais (contract laborers from Angola, Mozambique, and Cape Verde), tongas (children of servicais born on the islands), Europeans (primarily Portuguese)

Capital: Sao Tome



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F

Overview:

Controversial oil-exploration licenses granted in the Joint Development Zone (JDZ) with Nigeria provoked a political crisis in Sao Tome and Principe in June 2005 that was only resolved with the naming of Maria do Carmo Trovoada Silveira, the well-respected head of the Central Bank, to serve as both prime minister and finance minister. In September, Attorney General Adelino Pereira announced an investigation into alleged irregularities in the awarding of the licenses.

Seized by Portugal in the sixteenth century, the tiny Gulf of Guinea islands of Sao Tome and Principe gained independence in 1975. The Movement for the Liberation of Sao Tome and Principe (MLSTP) functioned under President Manuel Pinto da Costa as the only legal party until a 1990 referendum established multiparty democracy. Miguel dos Anjos Trovoada, an independent candidate backed by the Democratic Convergence Party, returned from exile to become the first democratically elected president in 1991. He was reelected to a second and final term in 1996.

Fradique de Menezes, backed by Trovoada's Independent Democratic Action party (ADI), gained 56 percent of the vote to 38 percent for the MLSTP's Pinto da

Costa in the 2001 presidential elections. A coalition government was created after no party gained a majority in the March 2002 parliamentary elections. International observers declared both polls to be free and fair.

In July 2003, officers allegedly disgruntled over persistent poverty and corruption briefly ousted President Menezes. He was returned to power one week later with broad regional and international support. Controversial foreign investment deals in 2004 led to a cabinet shuffle that left the president's party, the Force for Change Democratic Movement (MDFM), in the opposition. Menezes later replaced the prime minister with Damiao Vaz de Almeida of the MLSTP-Social Democratic Party.

Disagreements with Menezes over the granting of the first oil-exploration licenses in the JDZ, as well as the handling of negotiations with striking civil servants anxious to receive their share of the oil bonanza in the form of a minimum wage increase, led to Almeida's resignation in June 2005. A threat by the MLSTP, which controls the largest number of seats in the parliament, to leave government and force early parliamentary elections was avoided after the appointment of Maria do Carmo Trovoada Silveira, who had earned widespread respect for her stewardship of the country's central bank, to serve as both prime minister and finance minister.

In September, Attorney General Adelino Pereira announced an investigation into alleged corruption in the controversial awarding of five JDZ oil blocks in advance of the scheduled signing of oil production-sharing contracts. This followed protests that many of the Nigerian-controlled companies that were awarded exploration rights were little more than investment vehicles for financial speculators with no track record in oil production or exploration.

The potentially large offshore oil fields that link Sao Tome and Principe are likely to be a continuing source of political conflict, though Sao Tome has committed itself to transparency in the oil sector. The development of a revenue management law and broad public consultations to determine national development priorities are seen as important steps toward that goal. Sao Tome and Principe has strengthened its relationship with the United States, which has a growing stake in the country's potential oil wealth. Nigeria wields increasing influence over the political class.

Sao Tome's poor island economy has been largely dependent on cocoa since independence in 1975, and the majority of the population is engaged in subsistence agriculture and fishing. Sao Tome benefited from \$200 million in debt relief in December 2000 under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) program, but it has not benefited from subsequent debt reductions. In August 2005, the International Monetary Fund approved a three-year, \$4.3 million Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility arrangement.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Sao Tome and Principe can change their government democratically. Presidential and legislative elections in 1991 gave citizens their first chance to elect their leader in a free and transparent contest. The president is elected for a five-year term. Members of the single-chamber, 55-seat National Assembly are elected by popular vote to four-year terms. The prime minister is chosen by the National Assembly and approved by the president. Presidential and legislative elections are scheduled for **2006**.

The MLSTP currently holds 24 legislative seats, the MDFM holds 23, and the

Ue-Kedadji coalition has 8. A number of other parties exist and often work in coalition with the larger parties; all parties operate freely.

Sao Tome's potential oil wealth has fueled growing corruption among members of the country's ruling elite. In June, the legislatures of Nigeria and Sao Tome agreed to form a joint parliamentary oversight committee to monitor the JDZ, and Sao Tome's attorney general requested cooperation from Nigeria in his investigation of the awarded oil-exploration licenses. Sao Tome was not ranked by Transparency International in its 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is protected by the constitution and respected in practice. While the state controls a local press agency and the only radio and television stations, no law forbids independent broadcasting. Opposition parties receive free airtime, and newsletters and pamphlets criticizing the government circulate freely. There are no government restrictions on internet access.

Freedom of religion is respected within this predominantly Roman Catholic country. The government does not restrict academic freedom. Education is compulsory through the sixth grade and tuition free to the age of 15 or grade 6, though rural students often stop attending school after fourth grade. Primary school enrollment stands at approximately 74 percent.

Freedom of assembly and association is respected. Citizens have the constitutional right to gather and demonstrate with an advance notice of two days to the government. The rights to organize, strike, and bargain collectively are guaranteed and respected. In May, government workers conducted a nationwide strike for higher wages that resulted in a negotiated settlement. However, the terms of the settlement have not been implemented.

Sao Tome's judiciary is independent, though occasionally subject to manipulation. The Supreme Court has ruled in the past against both the government and the president. The court system is understaffed, inadequately funded, and plagued by long delays. Prison conditions are harsh.

The constitution provides for equal rights for men and women, but women encounter significant discrimination in all sectors, including education and employment. However, several women have been appointed to cabinet positions, including that of prime minister. Domestic violence against women is reportedly common and rarely prosecuted. Women are often disadvantaged because of their reluctance to take disputes outside their families or a lack of knowledge about their rights. Abortion is prohibited.

Saudi Arabia

Population: 24,600,000 **Political Rights:** 7
GNI/capita: \$9,240 **Civil Liberties:** 6*
Life Expectancy: 72 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Muslim (100 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Arab (90 percent), Afro-Asian (10 percent)
Capital: Riyadh



Ratings Change: Saudi Arabia's civil liberties score increased from a 7 to a 6 due to the growing impact of regional media on press freedom.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,6NF

Overview:

Saudi Arabia continued to demonstrate signs of possible change and reform in 2005, with a new leader taking over the country and municipal elections held during the year.

King Abdullah bin Abdul al-Aziz A1 Saud succeeded his brother, King Fahd bin Abdul al-Aziz A1 Saud, who died on August 1, 2005. The transition did not lead to any substantive changes in Saudi Arabia's political structure, with power over all key policy issues remaining firmly in control of the Saud royal family, but a national dialogue and debate on the need for political reform continued. Municipal elections took place in the spring and summer, though the partially elected municipal councils had not met by the end of November. A regional media transformation continued to affect Saudi Arabia in 2005, contributing to a slight increase in civil liberties, as regional satellite television channels, the internet, and other new forms of media expanded the available zone for debate within Saudi Arabia.

In the 72 years since its unification in 1932 by King Abdul Aziz A1 Saud, Saudi Arabia has been controlled by the A1 Saud family, with King Abdullah bin Abdul al-Aziz A1 Saud, the current king, the sixth in the A1 Saud ruling dynasty. The Saudi monarchy rules in accordance with a conservative school of Sunni Islam. In the early 1990s, Saudi Arabia embarked on a limited program of political reform, introducing an appointed Consultative Council, or Majlis al-Shura. However, this step did not lead to any substantial shift in political power. In 1995, King Fahd bin Abdul al-Aziz A1 Saud suffered a stroke, and in 1997, Abdullah, then crown prince, took control of most decision making.

Saudi Arabia has been under intense scrutiny from the international community since the September 11, 2001, attacks against the United States—15 of the 19 hijackers were Saudi citizens, and Osama bin Laden, the leader of the terrorist group al-Qaeda, is from a wealthy Saudi family. The Saudi government has taken steps to stem the flow of financial support to terrorist groups, implementing new rules against money laundering and more closely monitoring charitable contributions and organizations suspected of financing terrorist operations in Saudi Arabia and globally.

Terrorist groups that have posed a threat to Saudi Arabia for the past decade escalated their attacks in 2003 in an effort to destabilize the autocratic monarchy.

These assaults continued through 2004, culminating in an attack in Khobar on residential compounds where mostly foreign oil workers lived and resulting in the killing of 22 people. The government increased its counterterrorism efforts, killing dozens of suspected terrorists, detaining hundreds on suspicion of involvement with terrorism, and claiming to have destroyed five of six major terrorist networks operating in the kingdom. Though diminished compared with 2003 and 2004, Saudi Arabia experienced some unrest in 2005, with clashes between Saudi security forces and terrorist suspects occurring in the spring. In April, the government announced it had killed Abdul-Rahman Yazji, one of the kingdom's most wanted Islamist militants.

The formal transition of power from King Fahd, who died in August 2005, to King Abdullah, led to increased discussions of political reform in the kingdom. In August, Prince Talal bin Abdel-Aziz, a former finance minister and a half-brother of Abdullah's, called for political reform and a constitution in Saudi Arabia. Talal also said that the current Majlis al-Shura should be given additional powers and be turned into a "quasi-legislative" council. These comments reflect a growing number of voices in support of similar proposals within the royal family and more broadly in Saudi society.

Saudi Arabia organized elections for municipal councils in the first half of 2005, giving Saudi men a limited opportunity to select some of their leaders at the local level. Women were completely excluded from the political process. The eligible electorate consisted of less than 20 percent of the population: it included male citizens who were at least 21 years old, not serving in the military, and resident in a particular electoral district for at least 12 months. Half of the seats are open for election, and the other half will remain positions appointed by the monarchy. Officials in the Municipal and Rural Affairs Ministry and the Interior Ministry screened candidates, and all results were subject to final approval from the government. More than eight months after the final municipal election was held, none of the municipal councils had met, which raised questions about the Saudi government's seriousness about political reform.

With the largest proven oil reserves in the world, Saudi Arabia is the world's leading oil producer and exporter. The country's oil wealth and importance to the global economy are key features affecting Saudi Arabia's external relations, and the Al Saud dynasty uses this unmatched wealth to shape and control internal politics. The government's dominance of the economy, endemic corruption, and financial mismanagement have led to mounting economic problems, with the world's largest oil producer seeing a decline in real gross domestic product (GDP) per person over the last decade. Unemployment is estimated at more than 30 percent, and a growing youth population is making economic conditions even more difficult by putting more pressure on the Saudi government to create new jobs. The most recent census found that 56 percent of the Saudi population is below the age of 20, and 45 percent is under the age of 15.

Record oil prices filled Saudi Arabia's coffers and alleviated some recent economic woes—Saudi Arabia earned \$ 160 billion from oil exports in 2005. The country witnessed a 7 percent increase in its GDP, a 50 percent surge in oil exports, and a 100 percent increase in its stock market in 2005 as a result of high oil prices. Saudi Arabia remained on track for joining the World Trade Organization by the end of 2005, after 12 years of negotiations.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Citizens of Saudi Arabia cannot change their government democratically. Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy. The country's 1992 basic law declares that the Koran and Sunna (literally, the "way of the prophet Muhammad," or the deeds and sayings of Muhammad) are the country's constitution. A 120-member Majlis al-Shura (Consultative Council) is appointed by the monarch for four-year terms. This council has limited powers and does not affect decision making or power structures in a meaningful way. The Council of Ministers, an executive body appointed by the king, passes legislation that becomes law once ratified by royal decree. The monarchy has a tradition of consulting with select members of Saudi society, but this process is not equally open to all citizens.

Saudi Arabia does not have political parties, and the only semblance of organized political opposition exists outside of the country, with many Saudi opposition activists being based in London. The Al Saud dynasty dominates and controls political life in the kingdom.

Corruption is a significant issue, with foreign companies reporting that they often pay bribes to middlemen and government officials to secure business deals. Saudi Arabia was ranked 70 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The government tightly controls content in domestic media outlets but is unable to do much about regional satellite television coverage, with Arab regional satellite channels growing in popularity. Government authorities have banned journalists and editors who publish articles deemed offensive to the country's powerful religious establishment or the ruling authorities. The Saudi regime has taken steps to limit the impact of new media. Government officials reportedly banned camera-equipped mobile phones from the country. The government has blocked access to some internet websites deemed by the government as too offensive or sensitive.

In October, Saudi authorities allowed a private media company to organize a cinema for women and children in the halls of a large hotel in Riyadh—the first time in three decades that Saudi authorities have allowed public cinemas. The Saudi regime began banning such shows in the 1980s on the grounds that they were religiously prohibited.

Religious freedom does not exist in Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of Islam and the faith's two holiest cities—Mecca and Medina. Islam is Saudi Arabia's official religion, and all Saudis are required by law to be Muslims. The government prohibits the public practice of any religions other than Islam, and restricts the religious practices of both Shiite and Sufi Muslims. Although the government recognizes the right of non-Muslims to worship in private, it does not always respect this right in practice.

Academic freedom is restricted in Saudi Arabia, and informers monitor classrooms for compliance with limits on curriculums, such as a ban on teaching Western philosophy and religions other than Islam. In 2004, the government began efforts to reform school curriculums to delete disparaging religious references in textbooks. In November 2005, a court sentenced Mohammad al-Harbi, a high school chemistry teacher, to 40 months in prison and 750 lashes for "mocking religion" after he reportedly discussed the Bible and praised Jews.

Saudis do not enjoy freedom of association and assembly. In 2003, the government approved the establishment of the National Human Rights Association (NHRA),

a semiofficial organization charged with reviewing allegations of human rights violations and monitoring the country's compliance with international human rights agreements. Chaired by Majlis al-Shura member Abdullah bin Saleh al-Obeid, the NHRA has 41 members, including 10 women. The organization reported in June 2005 that it had received about 2,000 human rights complaints.

A Jeddah court sentenced 15 people to prison terms and flogging in January for taking part in a demonstration calling for political reform. In May, three activists were sentenced to jail terms of between six and nine years, charged with "stirring up sedition and disobeying the ruler" for circulating a petition supporting a constitutional monarchy. The activists refused to defend themselves in the courtroom because the trial was held behind closed doors. King Abdullah pardoned the three activists in early August.

In September, the government approved a new labor law aimed at bringing Saudi law in line with international standards in advance of the country's joining the World Trade Organization. The law established new provisions for categories of workers previously not protected under Saudi law, set end-of-service benefits, established clear terms for terminating employment, and required large companies to provide nurseries to help working mothers. It also banned child labor and set provisions aimed at settling labor disputes. In addition, the new law sought to advance the goal of the "Saudization" of the country's workforce by stipulating that Saudis must make up at least 75 percent of a company's workforce. Finally, the law stated that women are permitted to work in "all sectors compatible with their nature."

The judiciary lacks independence from the monarchy. The king appoints all judges on the recommendation of the Supreme Judicial Council, and the monarchy serves as the highest court of appeal. The rule of law is regularly flouted by the Saudi regime, with frequent trials falling short of international standards. Secret trials are common, and political opponents of the regime are often detained without charge and held for indefinite periods. In 2001, the Council of Ministers approved a 225-article penal code that bans torture. However, allegations of torture by police and prison officials are frequent, and access to prisoners by independent human rights and legal organizations is strictly limited.

Although racial discrimination is illegal, substantial prejudice against ethnic, religious, and national minorities exists. Roughly two million Shiites, representing 10 to 15 percent of Saudi Arabia's population, live in Saudi Arabia. Shiites are underrepresented in major official positions—no Shiite has served as a minister or member of the royal cabinet. An estimated six million foreign workers from Asia and Africa are subjected to formal and informal discrimination and have difficulty using the justice system.

Saudis have the right to own property and establish private businesses, but much private enterprise activity is connected with members of the ruling family, the government, and elite families. Although Saudi Arabia first joined the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in 1993, its slow process of privatization and economic reform has prevented it from becoming a member of the World Trade Organization for several years. However, by the end of 2005, Saudi Arabia was on track for finally joining the organization.

Women are not treated as equal members of society, and many laws discriminate against women. They may not legally drive cars, and their use of public facili-

ties is restricted when men are present. By law and custom, women cannot travel within or outside of the country without a male relative. According to interpretations of law in Saudi Arabia, daughters receive half the inheritance awarded to their brothers. The testimony of one man is equal to two women in Islamic law courts. Unlike Saudi men, Saudi women who marry a non-Saudi are not permitted to pass their nationality on to their children, and their husbands cannot receive Saudi nationality. Saudi women are not permitted to serve as lawyers, and women seeking access to the courts must work with a male. The Committee to Prevent Vice and Promote Virtue, a semi-autonomous religious police force commonly known as the *mutawa'een*, enforces a strict policy of segregation between men and women and often uses physical punishment to ensure that women meet conservative standards of dress in public.

The government did not allow women to take part in the municipal elections that took place in early 2005. Prince Mansour bin Miteb bin Abdul Aziz, head of the elections committee, announced in advance of the elections that the country did not have sufficient time to prepare for both women and men to vote, indicating that Saudi Arabia would require separate polling stations run by female election judges before it allowed women to participate politically.

Education and economic rights for Saudi women have improved. Girls were not permitted to attend school until 1964, but now more than half of the country's university students are female. In May 2004, women won the right to hold commercial licenses, which opened the door for greater economic participation. In addition, women have become more visible in a society that is deeply conservative and segregated along gender lines. In January 2005, Saudi state television began using women as newscasters. In November, two women became the first females elected to Jeddah's chamber of commerce, a small step forward for women's leadership in business.

Senegal

Population: 11,700,000 **Political Rights:** 2
GNI/capita: \$540 **Civil Liberties:** 3
Life Expectancy: 56 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Muslim (94 percent), Christian [mostly Roman Catholic] (5 percent), indigenous beliefs (1 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Wolof (43.3 percent), Pular (23.8 percent), Serer (14.7 percent), Jola (3.7 percent), Mandinka (3 percent), Soninke (1.1 percent), European and Lebanese (1 percent), other (9.4 percent)

Capital: Dakar

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001*	2002	2003	2004	2005
4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F



Overview:

Members of Senegal's political opposition in 2005 accused President Abdoulaye Wade of being increasingly authoritarian as the country headed toward presidential elections

in 2007. They pointed to efforts to have Idrissa Seek—a former close ally of Wade and his most formidable political rival should he choose to run in 2007—face embezzlement charges. Meanwhile, the Group of 8 in June annulled Senegal's external debt

Since independence from France in 1960, Senegal has escaped military or harsh authoritarian rule. President Leopold Senghor, an acclaimed poet and noted academic in France, exercised de facto one-party rule under the Socialist Party (PS) for more than a decade after independence. Most political restrictions were lifted after 1981. Abdou Diouf, of the PS, succeeded Senghor in 1981 and won large victories in unfair elections in 1988 and 1993.

Abdoulaye Wade's victory in the presidential poll in 2000—his fifth attempt to win the presidency—overturned four decades of rule by the PS. Wade, of the Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS), captured 59.5 percent of the runoff vote, against 41.5 percent for Diouf. The election was judged to have been free and fair by international observers.

The people of Senegal adopted a new constitution by an overwhelming majority in January 2001, reducing presidential terms from seven to five years, setting the number of terms at two, and giving women the right to own land for the first time. President Wade dissolved the National Assembly, which had been dominated by the former ruling PS, and elections were held in April. A coalition led by Wade won 89 of the 120 seats available, followed by the PS with 10; smaller parties captured the remainder of the seats.

Preliminary peace accords between the government and the separatist Movement of the Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) were signed in 2001. The geographic isolation of Casamance, which is separated from much of the rest of Senegal by The Gambia, helped contribute to a feeling of marginalization that sparked the conflict in 1982; ethnically, the people of Casamance identify more with their southern neighbors in Guinea-Bissau than with northern Senegalese. A subsequent peace accord was signed in December 2004, and the government and MFDC met to decide how to implement the accord's provisions. A handful of breakaway factions of the MFDC rejected the peace agreement, and sporadic attacks on civilians and military patrols occurred in 2005, although they were less frequent than in previous years.

In 2004, Wade dismissed Idrissa Seek as prime minister on suspicion that he was trying to challenge Wade's leadership of the PDS. The National Assembly in August 2005 voted to force Seek to face embezzlement charges before a special high court reserved for criminal allegations against government officials; opposition leaders said that they would try to have the vote rescinded. The government charged that Seek, deputy leader of Wade's PDS, had misappropriated funds designated for public works projects. Seek was then charged with endangering national security and ordered to prison until trial. Seek, who denied any wrongdoing, was to be tried in the High Court of Justice; it would be the first time in more than four decades that a case has been filed in the court. Seek is considered President Wade's most formidable political rival should he choose to run in 2007.

In May, Abdourahim Agne, the vocal leader of the small center-left Reform Party, was arrested and charged with threatening the state after he urged people to take to the streets to demand Wade's resignation.

Senegal's economy has enjoyed modest growth since the mid-1990s. In June, the Group of 8 (G8) annulled Senegal's external debt along with the debts of several other African nations. Senegal became a member of a contact group between African countries and members of the G8 to help, in part, increase African domestic and foreign trade.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Senegal can change their government democratically. Changes to the 1992 Electoral Code lowered the voting age to 18, introduced secret balloting, and created a nominally fairer electoral framework. The National Observatory of Elections, which was created in 1997, performed credibly in overseeing the 1998 legislative polls and the presidential elections in 2000. Elections for the 120-seat, unicameral National Assembly are held every five years. The president is elected by popular vote every five years. The president appoints the prime minister.

Members of Senegal's political opposition opposed an idea put forth by President Abdoulaye Wade to postpone National Assembly elections from 2006 until 2007 to coincide with presidential elections in an effort to cut costs. Wade said that the extra money would help victims of massive flooding in Senegal in 2005. Opposition leaders accused Wade of seeking to change the electoral calendar to deal with problems within his PDS.

There are more than 75 legally registered political parties in Senegal. Major parties include the PDS, the PS, the Alliance of Forces for Progress (AFP), the Union for Democratic Renewal (URD), and the National Democratic Rally (RND).

Although the government has initiated reforms to strengthen the rule of law and improve transparency, corruption remains a problem. Senegal was ranked 78 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is generally respected, and members of the independent media are often highly critical of the government and political parties. There are about 20 independent radio stations, some of which broadcast in rural areas. More than a dozen independent newspapers and three government-affiliated newspapers are available. The state owns the only national television station. There is liberal access to the internet.

The government does not carry out formal censorship, but some self-censorship is practiced because of criminal laws against "discrediting the state" and disseminating "false news" that Wade has promised to repeal. A national security provision, Article 80, criminalizes any "maneuver or act that might compromise public security or cause serious political disturbance." Mandatory detention follows for anyone charged under the law. The Interior Ministry closed Senegal's leading private radio station, Sud FM, for several hours in October 2005 after the station interviewed Salif Adio, a breakaway hard-line leader of the Casamance rebellion. Authorities questioned employees and stopped all Sud FM transmissions for about 10 hours. Officials said the interview threatened state security and banned rebroadcasts of it.

Religious freedom in Senegal, which is over 90 percent Muslim, is respected. Rivalries between Islamic groups have sometimes erupted into violence. Some of Senegal's most powerful men are the leaders of the country's Islamic Sufi brotherhoods. Academic freedom is guaranteed and respected.

Freedom of association and assembly is guaranteed, but authorities have sometimes limited these rights in practice. Human rights groups working on local and regional issues are among many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that operate freely. Although union rights to organize, bargain collectively, and strike are legally protected, there are some restrictions on the right to strike. Most workers are employed in the informal business and agricultural sectors. Nearly all of the country's small industrialized workforce is unionized, and workers are a potent political force.

Poor pay and lack of tenure protections create conditions for external influence on a judiciary that is, by statute, independent. High-profile cases often attract considerable interference from political and economic elites. Uncharged detainees are incarcerated without legal counsel far beyond the lengthy periods already permitted by law. Prison conditions are poor. In December 2004, the National Assembly voted to abolish the death penalty; Senegal has not carried out any executions for four decades.

Pressure mounted in 2005 on the government of Senegal to extradite former Chadian president Hissene Habre, who has lived in exile in Senegal for 15 years. A group of Chadian citizens said that they were victims of torture under Habre's regime and want him arrested and extradited to Belgium for trial. In September, a Belgian judge issued an international arrest warrant for Habre for crimes against humanity and torture. New York-based Human Rights Watch said the move was as significant as Spain's arrest warrant for General Augusto Pinochet of Chile. In 2000, a Senegalese court had charged Habre with torture and crimes against humanity, but the country's highest court ruled that he could not stand trial for crimes committed outside the country. Wade has said that he has no objection to Habre's extradition.

No members of the security forces believed to be responsible for human rights violations in the past have been charged or prosecuted. Three human rights groups in Senegal denounced a February amnesty law as a "law of impunity" which gives amnesty to politically motivated crimes committed in Senegal and abroad between 1983 and 2004; Wade approved the measure.

The government has made an effort to achieve ethnic and regional balance in military and civilian positions of power.

Constitutional rights afforded women are often not honored, especially in rural areas, and women enjoy fewer opportunities than men for education and formal sector employment. Despite governmental campaigns, domestic violence against women is reportedly common. Many elements of Sharia (Islamic law) and local customary law, particularly those regarding inheritance and marital relations, discriminate against women. Although Senegal banned female genital mutilation in 1999, it is still practiced among some ethnic groups. The government and NGOs have been working to educate the population about the health risks of the practice. In May, Senegal adopted a law on human trafficking that provides penalties of up to 30 years in prison.

Serbia and Montenegro

Population: 10,700,000 **Political Rights:** 3
GNI/capita: \$1,190 **Civil Liberties:** 2
Life Expectancy: 73 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Orthodox (65 percent),
 Muslim (19 percent), Roman Catholic (4 percent),
 other (12 percent)



Ethnic Groups: Serb (63 percent), Albanian (17 percent),
 Montenegrin (5 percent), Hungarian (3 percent), other (12 percent)

Capital: Belgrade

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	5,5PF	4,4PF	3,3PF	3,2F	3,2F	3,2F	3,2F

Overview:

Five years after the overthrow of Slobodan Milosevic, Serbia and Montenegro faced a number of serious issues in 2005: the continued dysfunctional existence of the state union itself in the face of a strong independence movement in the junior republic of Montenegro; the possible loss of the internationally occupied and administered province of Kosovo; strong pressure from the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) to arrest and extradite one of the most wanted fugitives from the Bosnian conflict, General Ratko Mladic; and a split within the ranks of pro-Western parties and the concurrent increasing strength of political forces that had ruled Serbia in the 1990s. Meanwhile, in November, the European Union (EU) approved the beginning of negotiations for a Stability and Association Agreement with Serbia and Montenegro.

In April 1992, the former Yugoslav republics of Serbia and Montenegro jointly proclaimed the formation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) after the 1991 disintegration of Josip Broz Tito's Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). Slobodan Milosevic's Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) ruled the country during the 1990s through its control over the country's security forces, financial and monetary institutions, and state-owned media. During the wars accompanying the breakup of Yugoslavia, Serbia under Milosevic was extensively involved in the fighting in both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. In 1997, a younger generation of politicians in Montenegro renounced their ties to Milosevic, setting Montenegro on a slow course toward independence.

In 1998-1999, an Albanian insurgency in Serbia's Kosovo Province provoked increasingly violent reprisals by FRY forces against the guerrillas and the Albanian civilian population in regions affected by the fighting. In March 1999, NATO launched a 78-day bombing campaign against the FRY to force the withdrawal of Yugoslav and Serbian military and paramilitary forces from the province. Since June 1999, a NATO-led force has occupied Kosovo.

The end for the Milosevic regime came on October 5, 2000, when an attempt to

steal the September presidential elections resulted in hundreds of thousands of people converging on Belgrade to overthrow Milosevic and his regime. The Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS), a coalition of 18 political parties and an independent trade union, took power following parliamentary elections in December 2000. Milosevic's overthrow and the DOS's victory, however, did not improve relations between Serbia and its federal partner. In March 2002, under strong pressure from the European Union (EU), the two republics signed the "Belgrade Agreement," which created a new state union simply called "Serbia and Montenegro." However, the new state continues to suffer from numerous problems, largely the result of the great disparity in size between the two republics. Montenegro is only one-tenth the size of Serbia in population and constitutes a negligible part of the overall Serbia-Montenegro economy, while at the same time enjoying parity representation in most institutions of government. The union of the two republics preserved some vestiges of a common state but also provides each republic with its own central bank, currency—the euro is the official currency in Montenegro, while Serbia uses the dinar—and customs and taxation system.

Within Serbia itself, the dominant parties and political leaders of the DOS coalition for most of the post-Milosevic period were the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), led by former law professor Vojislav Kostunica, and the Democratic Party (DS), led by the late Serbian premier Zoran Djindjic. On March 12, 2003, Djindjic was assassinated by a group of organized crime figures associated with members of Milosevic-era security structures.

The latest elections to the Serbian parliament in December 2003 stabilized the Serbian political situation somewhat by eliminating a number of small, relatively weak parties from the ruling coalition. While the nationalist Serbian Radical Party (SRS) won the most seats in the elections, the parties loosely considered to be prodemocratic or "pro-Western" were able to form a coalition government to keep the SRS from coming to power. The new Serbian government, formed in March 2004 after two months of wrangling, made Kostunica Serbia's new prime minister. The minority coalition was composed of the DSS, the liberal, reformist G17 Plus party led by the economists Miroljub Labus and Mladjan Dinkic, and the center-right Serbian Renewal Movement-New Serbia coalition led by Vuk Draskovic and former Cacak mayor Velimir Ilic (with tacit support from Milosevic's former party, the SPS).

Following three unsuccessful attempts to hold presidential elections during the course of 2002-2003, Serbia finally managed to elect a president in June 2004. In a tight race, Djindjic's successor as head of the DS, Boris Tadic, succeeded in gaining a victory over Tomislav Nikolic, the leader of the SRS. In September 2004, municipal elections throughout Serbia confirmed the DS and the SRS as the republic's leading parties, although turnout for the municipal elections was a meager 23 percent.

Serbia remains precariously divided between the 50-55 percent majority of the electorate that supports parties that overthrew Milosevic in 2000 and the 40-45 percent segment of the voting public that supports either the SRS or the SPS. To many observers, the greatest threat to Serbia's democratic transition is the inability of the DSS and the DS to form a coalition government, and there is considerable concern that a downturn in the economy or a major foreign policy shock (such as the loss of Kosovo), could lead many people to start supporting more extreme parties such as the SRS. Indicative of the level of discord between political parties in Serbia is the

fact that in September, the DS began a boycott of parliament, ostensibly to protest two members of its parliamentary caucus joining the ruling coalition, but also conveniently removing itself from parliament when serious matters such as the future of Kosovo, cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), and the future of the state union itself were being addressed.

In Montenegro, Milo Djukanovic, who served as president from 1998 to 2002, stepped down as president in 2002 and became Montenegro's prime minister. (Djukanovic has served as either president or prime minister of Montenegro continuously since 1991.) Two attempts to elect a new Montenegrin president in 2002 failed after the elections did not attract the required 50 percent voter turnout. In February 2003, a new presidential law that dropped the 50 percent rule came into force. Subsequently, in May, Filip Vujanovic, a Djukanovic ally, was elected with 64 percent of the votes, with 48.3 percent of eligible voters participating, although the elections were marred by the refusal of opposition parties to field candidates.

Montenegro remains split between a majority Orthodox Christian population that declares itself to be Montenegrin and/or Serb and wants to maintain ties with Belgrade, and a minority population, consisting of Orthodox Christians supported by ethnic Albanians in Montenegro, some Muslims in the mainly Muslim Sandzak region, and some Roman Catholics along Montenegro's Adriatic coast, who prefer independence. Many Sandzak Muslims, however, prefer maintaining the union because separation would mean the division of the Sandzak region, and consequently, their ethno-religious community, between two independent states. There are other questions about Montenegro's ultimate stability as an independent state, especially given the Djukanovic regime's reputed ties to organized crime organizations. Djukanovic himself has reportedly been indicted by an Italian court for smuggling, and since 2000, three high-ranking police officials in Montenegro have been assassinated, as has the editor of a Podgorica newspaper critical of Djukanovic.

In November 2004, the EU adopted a "two-track mechanism" to guide Serbia and Montenegro's road toward EU membership, essentially allowing each republic to chart its own course toward fulfilling EU accession requirements. The two-track mechanism, however, still foresees Serbia and Montenegro acceding to the EU as a joint state. In November 2005, the EU approved the beginning of negotiations for a Stability and Association Agreement with Serbia and Montenegro.

While there is some debate within Serbia over whether it would be preferable for Serbia to go it alone in its efforts to gain EU accession (rather than maintaining ties with Montenegro), Serbian political parties advocating outright separation from Montenegro have fared poorly in recent elections. In Montenegro, public opinion between pro-independence and pronunion supporters is almost evenly split—most public opinion polls suggest the pro-independence option gains 2 to 3 percentage points more support than the pronunion option—but a considerable number of citizens (15-18 percent) remain undecided on the issue. The Belgrade Agreement allowed for a Montenegrin referendum on independence within three years, and the government of Montenegrin prime minister Milo Djukanovic is planning to hold a referendum on this matter sometime in 2006.

Serbia continues to have considerable difficulties in its relations with the ICTY. In 2005, the Kostunica government's policy of facilitating "voluntary transfers" of indicted individuals to the ICTY was generally seen as successful in both satisfying

the tribunal and preventing outbreaks of social discontent within the country. Fourteen such transfers were made during the course of the year, while six of those under indictment are believed to be at large in Serbia. Many citizens have opposed extraditing Serb military and political leaders to the ICTY, although the broadcast of a videotape on Serbian television in June showing a Serbian paramilitary unit executing six bound Muslim prisoners during the Bosnian war shocked many Serbs, and attitudes toward the ICTY changed significantly. Despite these overall improvements, Serbia's failure to apprehend and extradite one of the most wanted individuals from the Bosnian conflict, General Ratko Mladic, remains a major stumbling block in the country's quest for better relations with the EU and the United States.

In September, the World Bank named Serbia and Montenegro the leading reformer for 2005 of a group of 12 transition countries.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Serbia and Montenegro can change their government democratically. The latest national elections were conducted freely and fairly. The chief executive in the state union of Serbia and Montenegro is the president, elected by the unicameral Assembly of Serbia and Montenegro, which is composed of 126 deputies (91 from Serbia and 35 from Montenegro). A major point of contention between the two republics has been the holding of direct popular elections for the state union Assembly as called for in the Belgrade Agreement (the current deputies have been nominated by their respective parliaments). Montenegro has consistently delayed scheduling elections in order to avoid the creation of popularly legitimized federal institutions.

Each republic elects its own president in direct popular elections, and each republican government also has its own prime minister. The Montenegrin National Assembly is a unicameral, 75-seat legislature, and the Serbian National Assembly is a unicameral, 250-seat legislature, with deputies in both assemblies elected to four-year terms of office.

Numerous political parties exist and compete for power in elections. The main parties in Serbia currently are the DS, the DSS, and the SRS. In Montenegro, the main parties are Montenegrin prime minister Milo Djukanovic's Democratic Party of Socialists (SDP), and the main opposition party, the Socialist People's Party of Montenegro (SNP-CG).

Corruption has decreased overall from the excesses of the Milosevic era. However, the popular perception, most probably due to greater media openness of the problem, is that corruption remains at very high levels. Serbia and Montenegro was ranked 97 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of the press has improved significantly since the Milosevic period, when the regime controlled state-owned media and some prominent members of the independent media were assassinated by "unknown" assailants. In Montenegro, the publisher of a major opposition daily highly critical of the government, Dusko Jovanovic, was assassinated in May 2004. In August 2005, the Serbian parliament amended the broadcast law in such a way that critics claimed increased potential government control over the media. The amendments postponed privatization of local broadcast media until 2008. At the same time, the amendments allowed government-appointed members of the Broadcast Council to have six-year terms, while

members appointed by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and professional journalist's organizations only have four-year terms.

Libel remains a criminal offense in Serbia. However, under the new Serbian criminal code adopted in September, libel can only be punished by fines, not by prison sentences. Media advocacy groups continue to call for libel to be decriminalized. In Montenegro as well, libel remains a criminal offense, but punishable by fines rather than prison terms. There were reports during the year that government officials in Montenegro threatened media outlets that covered governmental corruption. In 2004, the Serbian National Assembly passed the Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance, although the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has stated that improvements still need to be made to the law as it is now written. There were no reports of the government restricting access to the internet, although there were reports that the government was selectively monitoring e-mail correspondence.

According to the constitution, all citizens enjoy freedom of religious belief. However, with ethnic and religious identities closely intertwined in the region, increases in interethnic tensions often take on the appearance of religious intolerance. When Albanian extremists in Kosovo launched violent attacks against Serbs in Kosovo in March 2004, mobs in Belgrade and Nis responded by torching mosques in both cities. Restitution of church property nationalized by the Communists remains a point of dispute between church and state. Properties belonging to seven traditionally recognized religious communities in Serbia are tax-exempt, but the dozens of other religious groups operating in Serbia are required to pay taxes on their properties. There were no reports that the government attempted to restrict academic freedom during the year.

Citizens enjoy freedom of association and assembly. Foreign and domestic NGOs enjoy the freedom to pursue their activities. New laws that codify relations between trade unions and the government are currently being drafted.

Legal and judicial reform is under way, although progress has been slow because of the complicated political situation in the country. Five years after the fall of Milosevic, the Serbian government has still been unable to draft a new constitution for the country, which is crucial for Serbia's EU accession plans. Corruption in the judicial system is perceived to be widespread. The judicial system is still plagued by a large backlog of cases, underpaid judges and state prosecutors, and an excess of judges left over from the Milosevic era, and the system takes an excessively long time in filing formal charges against suspects. Moreover, the authority and independence of the judicial system continue to suffer as a result of the failure of legislative institutions to heed judicial rulings. Prison conditions generally meet international standards.

The Montenegrin judicial system is also reported to lack independence from political authorities, and corruption within the judiciary remains a significant problem. In a case filed in October 2003, Prime Minister Djukanovic claimed that an opposition party member had committed libel by claiming that Djukanovic was engaged in human-trafficking operations. The judge fined the opposition leader in question, Miodrag Zivkovic, 8,000 euros after prohibiting Zivkovic from submitting any evidence to the court on his own behalf. The judge also refused to accept as evidence reports from the OSCE and the U.S. State Department. Defense requests for access to earlier investigations into the sex-trafficking scandal were also turned down.

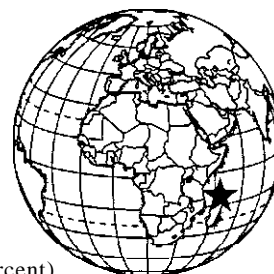
Post-Milosevic reform of the military and security services continues to be an ongoing problem given the close ties between Milosevic-era security officials, networks supporting those indicted for war crimes, extreme nationalist forces, and some organized crime groups. Serbia and Montenegro officials maintain that one of their main foreign policy goals is to join NATO's Partnership for Peace program, and ultimately NATO itself, although these goals remain hotly debated in a country that was in conflict with NATO less than seven years ago.

Cultural and ethnic minorities have their own political parties, access to media in their mother tongue, and other types of associations. Nevertheless, the numbers of individuals from ethnic minorities participating in government do not represent their percentages in the entire population. There are frequent complaints of unfair treatment and police harassment of the Roma (Gypsy) community. During the March 2004 attacks against Serbs in Kosovo, mobs attacked mosques in Belgrade and Nis; however, senior government and political leaders quickly condemned the violence. In September 2005, the Kostunica government formed a National Minorities Council, whose task it will be to protect religious, linguistic, and other features of ethnic minorities living in Serbia.

Although women are legally entitled to equal pay for equal work, traditional patriarchal attitudes prevalent throughout the Balkans often limit women's roles in the economy. In general, women are underrepresented in higher levels of government. There are currently 13 women in the 126-seat state union parliament, 26 women in the 250-seat Serbian parliament, and 8 women in the 75-seat Montenegrin parliament. In October, the Serbian government set up a Council for Gender Equality to work on issues of importance to women. Domestic violence remains a serious problem. Some towns in southern Serbia have become an important part of the network trafficking women from the former Soviet Union to Western Europe for purposes of forced prostitution.

Seychelles

Population: 100,000 **Political Rights:** 3
GNI/capita: \$6,530 **Civil Liberties:** 3
Life Expectancy: 71 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (82.3 percent), Anglican (6.4 percent), Seventh Day Adventist (1.1 percent), other Christian (3.4 percent), Hindu (2.1 percent), Muslim (1.1 percent), other (3.6 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Mixed French, African, Indian, Chinese, and Arab
Capital: Victoria



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF

Overview:

During 2005, Seychelles coped with the aftermath of the December 2004 tsunami, which resulted in significant dislocation of the country's tourist-based economy.

Seychelles, an archipelago of some 115 islands in the western Indian Ocean, was a French colony until 1810. It was then colonized by Britain until its independence in 1976. A member of the Commonwealth, Seychelles functioned as a multiparty democracy for only one year before then-prime minister France-Albert Rene seized power by ousting former president James Mancham. Mancham and other opposition leaders operated parties and human rights groups in exile after Rene made his ruling Seychelles People's Progressive Front (SPPF) the sole legal party. Rene and his party continued to control government jobs, contracts, and resources, and Rene won one-party "show" elections in 1979, 1984, and 1989. By 1992, however, the SPPF had passed a constitutional amendment to legalize opposition parties, and many exiled leaders returned to participate in a constitutional commission and multiparty elections.

Rene won a legitimate electoral mandate in the country's first multiparty elections in 1993. The 1998 polls were accepted as generally legitimate by opposition parties, which had waged a vigorous campaign. The Seychelles National Party (SNP), led by the Reverend Wavel Ramkalawan, emerged as the strongest opposition group by espousing economic liberalization, which Rene had resisted.

The political dominance of Rene and the SPPF was further shaken in the August 2001 presidential election, when Rene won a narrow victory that engendered widespread complaints of fraud from the opposition. An official observer delegation from the Commonwealth concluded that the elections were peaceful but not entirely free and fair. In October 2002, Rene dissolved the parliament and called for early legislative elections. The SPPF won the elections, but the SNP made significant inroads, winning 43 percent of the vote.

Given his age and the length of time he had served as president, Rene's resignation in April 2004 was not unexpected. The SPPF remains the dominant political party, and Rene continues to wield considerable political influence as its leader. Rene was replaced by Vice President James Michel, who had previously served in various senior-level government positions prior to his appointment as vice president in 1996. The next presidential elections are scheduled to take place in 2006.

The Seychellois economy was badly affected by the December 2004 tsunami, which damaged public infrastructure and facilities. The Seychelles government assessed damage from the tsunami at about \$30 million. Tourism and fisheries, both vital to the economy, also suffered. Tourism produces 70 percent of the country's hard currency, and employs approximately 30 percent of the labor force.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Citizens of Seychelles can change their government democratically. However, SPPF control over state resources and most media gave ruling-party candidates significant advantages in the polls.

The current constitution was drafted in 1993 by an elected constitutional commission. The president and the National Assembly are elected by universal adult suffrage for five-year terms. The head of government is the president, who appoints the Council of Ministers. As amended in 1996, the constitution provides for a 34-member, unicameral National Assembly, with 25 members directly elected and 9 allocated on a proportional basis to parties gaining at least 10 percent of the vote. Other amendments have strengthened presidential powers, and the current president, James

Michel, has assumed direct responsibility for several key ministries. The opposition SNP leadership claims that its sympathizers are harassed by police and are victims of public sector, job-related security investigations, which are generally carried out by SPPF agents at the district level. Opposition and SNP leader Reverend Wavel Ramkalawan has called for fair conditions for all political parties for the 2006 election. According to Ramkalawan, the government impedes freedom of assembly and opposition access to the electronic media.

Seychelles had become a one-party state under the regime established following France-Albert Rene's 1977 military coup, but opposition parties were legalized in 1992. Rene remains chairman of the SPPF. The SNP and the Democratic Party have been two traditionally important opposition parties.

Concerns about the extent of governmental corruption have focused particularly on the lack of transparency in the allocation of government-owned land and privatization. Credible allegations have been made that government officials have sold Seychellois passports illegally. Seychelles was ranked 55 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech has improved since one-party rule was abolished. Independent and pro-opposition publications have spoken out despite tough libel laws, although some self-censorship persists. There is one daily government newspaper, *The Nation*, and at least two other newspapers support or are published by the SPPF. Independent newspapers are critical of the government, but government dominance and the threat of libel suits restrict media freedom. The opposition weekly *Regar* has been sued repeatedly for libel under broad constitutional restrictions on free expression. In December 2004, the newspaper was heavily fined for ignoring a Supreme Court order that it not publish a letter by three judges.

There is a lack of balanced presentation in the state media of national events and deliberations at the National Assembly. The board of directors of the officially multipartisan Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation includes only one opposition representative, although it does have several non-SPPF members. High licensing fees have discouraged the development of privately owned broadcast media. There are no restrictions placed on internet usage.

The right of religious freedom is mandated in the constitution and exists in practice. Churches in this predominantly Roman Catholic nation have been strong voices for human rights and democratization, and they generally function without government interference.

The constitution explicitly endorses freedom of assembly and association. Private human rights-related organizations operate in the country along with other nongovernmental organizations. Public demonstrations are generally tolerated, although on occasion the government has impeded opposition party gatherings. The right to strike is formally protected by the 1993 Industrial Relations Act but is limited by several regulations. The SPPF-associated National Workers' Union no longer monopolizes union activity; two independent unions are now active.

The judiciary includes the Supreme Court, the Constitutional Court, a court of appeals, an industrial court, and magistrates' courts. Judges generally decide cases fairly but still face interference in cases involving major economic or political actors. There are no Seychellois judges, and the impartiality of the non-Seychellois magistrates can be compromised by the fact that their tenure is subject to contract re-

newal. Security forces have been accused of using excessive force, including torture and arbitrary detention, especially in attempting to curb crime.

Islanders of Creole extraction face de facto discrimination. Nearly all of Seychellois political and economic life is dominated by people of European and South Asian origin. Discrimination against foreign workers has been reported. The government does not restrict domestic travel but may deny passports for reasons of "national interest."

Women constitute 29.4 percent of the parliament—one of the highest percentages in Africa; this has been achieved without the benefit of a quota system. In general, however, women are less likely than men to be literate, and they have fewer educational opportunities. While almost all adult females are classified as "economically active," most are engaged in subsistence agriculture. Domestic violence against women is reportedly widespread but is rarely prosecuted and only lightly punished. Inheritance laws do not discriminate against women.

Sierra Leone

Population: 5,500,000 **Political Rights:** 4
GNI/capita: \$150 **Civil Liberties:** 3
Life Expectancy: 40 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Muslim (60 percent), indigenous beliefs (30 percent), Christian (10 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Temne (30 percent), Mende (30 percent), other tribes (30 percent), Creole (10 percent)
Capital: Freetown



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
4,5PF	7,6NF	3,5PF	3,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	4,4PF	4,3PF	4,3PF	4,3PF

Overview:

The war crimes tribunal for Sierra Leone continued its work in 2005, as international pressure mounted for the country's most-wanted fugitive, former Liberian president Charles Taylor, to stand trial. The UN peacekeeping force was set to depart Sierra Leone at the end of 2005, and mechanisms were being put in place to help assure a smooth transition leading to elections in 2007.

Founded by Britain in 1787 as a haven for liberated slaves, Sierra Leone became independent in 1961. The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) launched a guerrilla campaign from neighboring Liberia in 1991 to end 23 years of increasingly corrupt one-party rule by President Joseph Momoh. Power fell to Captain Valentine Strasser in 1992, when he and other junior officers attempted to confront Momoh about poor pay and working conditions at the front; Momoh fled the country. The Strasser regime hired South African soldiers from the security company Executive Outcomes to help win back key diamond-rich areas. In January 1996, Brigadier Julius Maada-Bio quietly deposed Strasser. Elections proceeded despite military and

rebel intimidation, and voters elected Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, a former UN diplomat, as president.

In 1997, Major Johnny Paul Koroma toppled the Kabbah government, established the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), and invited the RUF to join the junta. Nigerian-led West African troops, backed by logistical and intelligence support from the British company Sandline, restored Kabbah to power in February 1998, but the country continued to be wracked by war. A peace agreement in July 1999 led to the beginning of disarmament, but the process stopped in May 2000 with a return to hostilities and the taking of about 500 peacekeepers as hostages. British troops flew in to help, and disarmament resumed in May 2001.

In the May 2002 presidential poll, in which eight candidates competed, Kabbah was reelected with 70 percent of the vote, compared with 22 percent for Ernest Koroma of the All People's Congress (APC). The RUF candidate, Alimamy Pallo Bangura, lagged with barely 2 percent of the vote. Kabbah's Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) dominated parliamentary elections the same month, winning 83 of 112 available seats; only two other parties won seats.

The UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone began holding trials in 2004 of those deemed primarily responsible for war crimes and human rights abuses committed during the civil war. Thirteen people have been indicted. In November 2005, New York-based Human Rights Watch asserted that the court had broken new ground with practices to promote fair trials, protect witnesses, and make justice accessible to Sierra Leoneans. However, the group said, Charles Taylor's ongoing exile in Nigeria threatened to undercut the court's ability to fulfill its mandate. Taylor, the former president of Liberia, was accused of backing the RUF with weapons in exchange for diamonds. Nigeria claims that handing over Taylor would go against the terms of the deal under which Taylor agreed to step down in August 2003.

Although Liberia is currently at peace, insecurity in neighboring Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire is perilous for the entire region. The last troops of the once 17,300-strong UN Mission in Sierra Leone, the world's largest peacekeeping mission, were scheduled to leave by the end of 2005. A UN assistance team is to step in after the peacekeepers leave and will help conduct elections in 2007.

To help maintain stability, the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission, modeled on South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, has recommended that the government reform the judicial system, intensify efforts to eradicate corruption, and fight discrimination against women. Three years after the end of the war, many Sierra Leoneans are discouraged, complaining of corruption, poor infrastructure, and a lack of jobs. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said in October 2005 that the critical issues of marginalization and exclusion that were the underlying causes of the civil war had not been addressed.

The Brussels-based International Crisis Group (ICG) said in December 2004 that Sierra Leone and Liberia risked sliding back into conflict if the international community did not stay committed—for the next 15 to 25 years—to a fresh approach to restore security and civil liberties. According to the report, government institutions in Sierra Leone were focused on finding new sources of donor revenue, rather than developing autonomy and self-sufficiency. The ICG also said that voices from civil society who could make real change tended to be marginalized, while the economy was left vulnerable to criminal elements.

Sierra Leone has vast diamond resources, but smuggling and war have turned it into one of the world's poorest countries. A ban on rough-diamond imports from Sierra Leone does not include diamonds that carry proven certificates of origin from the government. The country's rutile mines—once the biggest industry in the country—reopened in 2005. Rutile, a black metal, is used to make titanium dioxide, which is essential to the aerospace industry. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) in January 2005 announced that Sierra Leone had shown significant economic recovery since the end of the civil war, especially in the sectors of agriculture, mining, manufacturing, and services.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Sierra Leone can change their government democratically. Presidential and legislative elections in February and March 1996 were imperfect, but were considered legitimate. Despite some logistical problems, the May 2002 presidential and parliamentary elections were considered the country's fairest since independence. President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and his SLPP enjoyed the advantage of incumbency and state resources for both elections. Sierra Leone has a 124-seat unicameral parliament of which 112 seats are chosen by popular vote and 12 seats are filled by paramount chiefs chosen in separate elections. Parliamentary elections are held every five years. The president is elected by popular vote every five years and serves as both chief of state and head of government.

Dozens of political parties have been formed, but many revolve around a specific personality and have little following. The major political parties include the SLPP, the APC, and the Peace and Liberation Party.

Corruption is a major problem. However, an anticorruption commission established by parliament in 2000 has already brought several cases to court. In February, the Ottawa-based Partnership Africa Canada said that Sierra Leone had improved transparency in its diamond trade, and that remaining problems had less to do with willful corruption and mismanagement than with challenges of governance and procedure. Sierra Leone was ranked 126 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech and of the press is guaranteed, but the government at times restricts these rights. Criminal libel laws are used occasionally to jail journalists. There are several government and private radio and television stations, and newspapers openly criticize the government and armed factions. Dozens of newspapers are printed in Freetown, but most are of poor quality and often carry sensational or undocumented stories. Internet access is not impeded.

International press freedom groups harshly criticized the government in 2004 following the imprisonment of a well-known Sierra Leonean journalist. Paul Kamara, editor and publisher of the independent newspaper *For Di People*, was sentenced in October to two years in prison because of articles that linked Kabbah to fraudulent activities in 1967. The court found Kamara guilty on two counts of "seditious libel" under the 1965 Public Order Act. In October 2005, the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists said that it was "outraged" that Kamara remained in jail a year after being convicted. That same month, Kabbah reportedly sent a letter to the Independent Media Commission, which oversees Sierra Leone's news media, in which he called for the seditious libel law to be amended. A judicial inquest in Au-

gust found that an attack in May of that year on editor Harry Yansaneh, who took over for Kamara at *For Di People*, contributed to his death from kidney failure two months later. A magistrate ordered the arrest of member of parliament Fatmata Hassan, three of her children, and two other men in connection with Yansaneh's death. Before the attack, Hassan was seeking to evict *For Di People* and five other independent newspapers from the offices they had rented from Hassan's family for many years.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed and respected in practice. Academic freedom is guaranteed.

The rights of freedom of assembly and association are guaranteed, and these rights are generally respected in practice. Several national and international nongovernmental organizations and civic groups, including human rights groups, operate openly and freely. Workers have the right to join independent trade unions of their choice. Up to 60 percent of workers in urban areas, including government employees, are unionized. There is a legal framework for collective bargaining, and workers have the right to strike. However, a report by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions in February said there were serious violations of core labor standards in Sierra Leone. According to the report, several thousand children worked in diamond mining, as prostitutes, and as domestic servants. The confederation also said that women were discriminated against in the formal economy.

The judiciary has demonstrated independence, and a number of trials have been free and fair. Rural courts extensively supplement the central government judiciary in cases involving family law, inheritance, and land tenure. However, corruption and a lack of resources are impediments to the judiciary. Arbitrary arrest without charge is common, and there are often lengthy pretrial detentions in harsh conditions. Prison conditions are harsh and sometimes life threatening.

Eight international judges were appointed to sit on the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone. The court made history as the first international war crimes tribunal to sit UN-appointed judges alongside local judges at a court in the country where the atrocities took place. Its goal was to deliver justice less expensive and faster than tribunals for Rwanda and Bosnia. Funding has been a key source of frustration and potential impediment for the court to complete its work, Human Rights Watch said in November 2005.

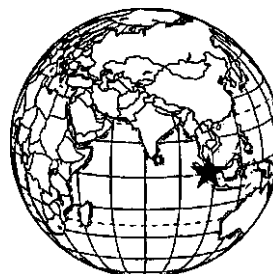
Ethnic loyalty is an important factor in the government, armed forces, and business. Complaints of ethnic discrimination are common.

Sierra Leone once had one of Africa's worst human rights records. Abduction, maiming, rape, forced conscription, and extrajudicial killing were commonplace. Although security has improved considerably, lack of equipment for security forces and poor infrastructure could hinder longer-term efforts to keep a lid on unrest in Sierra Leone, especially if demobilized combatants lack opportunities for employment.

Despite constitutionally guaranteed equal rights, women face extensive legal and de facto discrimination, as well as limited access to education and formal (business) sector jobs. Married women have fewer property rights than men, especially in rural areas, where customary law prevails. Abuse of women, including rape, sexual assault, and sexual slavery, were rampant during the war. No laws prohibit female genital mutilation, which is widespread. Parliament passed legislation in 2004 providing penalties for human trafficking.

Singapore

Population: 4,300,000 **Political Rights:** 5
GNI/capita: \$21,230 **Civil Liberties:** 4
Life Expectancy: 79 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Buddhist (42.5 percent), Muslim (14.9 percent), Taoist (8.5 percent), Hindu (4 percent), Catholic (4.8 percent), other Christian (9.8 percent), other (15.5 percent)



Ethnic Groups: Chinese (77 percent), Malay (14 percent), Indian (8 percent), other (1 percent)

Capital: Singapore

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
4,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF

Overview:

In 2005, Sellapan Ramanathan (SR Nathan) was reelected president of Singapore after authorities judged that all three of his potential opponents were unsuitable for the office. In January, Singapore and Malaysia agreed to settle a recent dispute over Singapore's land reclamation project in the Johor Straits.

Singapore, located along major shipping routes in Southeast Asia, became a British colony in 1867. Occupied by the Japanese during World War II, the city-state became self-governing in 1959, entered the Malaysian Federation in 1963, and became fully independent in 1965. Under Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) transformed a squalid port city into a regional financial center and an exporter of high-tech goods. At the same time, Lee restricted individual freedoms and stunted political development.

In 1990, Lee handed power over to Goh Chok Tong, who largely continued Lee's conservative policies and kept the PAP dominant in parliament. In the nine general elections that have been held since independence, the PAP has never won fewer than 95 percent of parliamentary seats, and in recent years an increasing number of PAP candidates have run unopposed.

During the campaign for the last parliamentary elections, held in November 2001, the PAP received 75 percent of the vote and captured 82 of parliament's 84 seats. Opposition parties contested only 29 seats. Veteran opposition politician J. B. Jeyaretnam of the Workers' Party was barred from contesting the elections. Judicial authorities also declared him bankrupt for being a day late in paying an installment on a damages award to PAP politicians who had successfully sued him for defamation. In 2004, opposition politician Chee Soon Juan found himself in a similar predicament when he failed to fend off a defamation lawsuit brought against him by two leaders of the PAP.

Lee Hsien Loong became Singapore's prime minister on August 12, 2004, as part of a planned turnover of power. His inauguration ended the 14-year tenure of Goh Chok Tong, but he has done little to change the country's political cli-

mate. Although he made concerted efforts to appear more approachable, he is still regarded as being more conservative and potentially more authoritarian than his predecessor.

In September 2005, President Sellapan Ramanathan (SR Nathan) was sworn in for a second term as Singapore's largely ceremonial head of state. SR Nathan was reelected unopposed after authorities judged all three of his potential challengers to be unfit for office.

The economy in 2005 continued a two year growth spurt, reflecting expansion of global electronics market, biomedical products, and transportation technology. GDP growth rates reached 5.7 percent in 2005, with strong projections for 2006.

Singapore's most important foreign relations remain those with the United States and with neighboring Malaysia. Ties with Malaysia, traditionally strained, have improved since the accession of new figures to political leadership in both countries (in Malaysia, Abdullah bin Ahmad Badawi replaced Mahathir Mohamed as prime minister in October 2003). In January, Singapore and Malaysia settled an 18-month row over a Singaporean land reclamation project in the shared Johor Straits; while Singapore is allowed to continue the project, it must cooperate with Malaysia to ensure navigation rights and environmental protection.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Singapore cannot change their government democratically. Singapore's 1959 constitution created a parliamentary system of government and allowed for the right of citizens to change their government peacefully. Periodic elections are held on the basis of universal suffrage, and voting is compulsory. In practice, however, the ruling PAP dominates the government and the political process and uses a variety of indirect methods to handicap opposition parties.

The largely ceremonial president—currently SR Nathan—is the head of state and elected by popular vote for six-year terms; a constitutionally mandated committee is empowered to vet presidential candidates. The prime minister, the head of government, is not chosen through elections; like the cabinet, the prime minister is appointed by the president. Singapore has had only three prime ministers since it gained independence in 1965. Lee Kuan Yew governed for 31 years, after which he appointed Goh Chok Tong as his successor. Goh named Lee's eldest son, Lee Hsien Loong, deputy prime minister in 2003; the younger Lee assumed the post of prime minister in August 2004.

The legislature has just one house, with 94 members. Members of parliament are elected (84 in the current parliament), appointed by opposition political parties (up to 3 members, though there is currently only 1), or appointed by the president (9 in the current parliament).

Though general elections are free from irregularities and vote rigging, the PAP's manipulation of the political system means that they cannot be termed fair. Opposition parties are constrained by the ban on political films and televised programs; expressions of political opinion are curtailed by the threat of libel or slander suits; there are strict regulations and limitations on associations, including political associations; and the PAP's influence on the media and in the courts remains strong. The net result is that there is no effective opposition.

The government is known for its transparency and its relative lack of corrup-

tion. Singapore was ranked 5 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Singapore's press is somewhat freer than in past years, but it remains a tightly constrained media market. Two companies own all of the newspapers in the city-state: one is government-controlled, and the other has close relations to the government. Although editorials and news coverage generally reflect governmental policies, newspapers are increasingly publishing letters, columns, and editorials critical of the government.

Journalists face pressure from the ruling party not to oppose the government's goals, and thus often avoid reporting on sensitive topics, including alleged government corruption or nepotism or the supposed compliance of the judiciary. All television channels and all radio stations, except for the BBC World Service, are operated by government-linked companies. The Newspaper and Printing Presses Act allows authorities to restrict the circulation of any foreign periodical whose news coverage has been deemed to interfere in domestic politics. Foreign newspapers and magazines are available, although authorities can restrict their circulation if they carry articles that the government finds offensive. In 2005, foreign news organizations, including *The Economist*, the *International Herald Tribune*, the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, and *The Wall Street Journal Asia*, paid large fines or had their circulation restricted in lawsuits filed by ruling party stalwarts. In 2005, Reporters Without Borders rated Singapore 140 out of 167 countries worldwide, which represents a slight improvement over 2004's 147 rating. This rating continues to make Singapore the lowest rated industrialized country on the index. Nevertheless, the U.S. State Department's 2005 human rights report noted that limited space for political debate in the press seems to have expanded slightly over the past year.

The government screens and sometimes censors films, television programs, videos, music, books, and magazines, mainly for excessive amounts of sex, violence, and drug references. The PAP has loosened some restrictions on the arts, and the prime minister has vowed to make some moves in the direction of liberalization, partly as a result of input from a citizen advisory panel. In 2005, a series of half-hour "reality shows" about sex began to air on television, and an all-nude theater review visited Singapore for a performance run. In September, despite a lawsuit and an injunction, authorities allowed an opposition documentary to be aired on television. The internet is regulated via state control of access points and site surveillance. Still, the Committee to Protect Journalists reports that some news bloggers set up sites from undisclosed locations, making the internet an increasingly viable forum for alternative political perspectives.

Singaporeans of most faiths can worship freely. However, the government has banned the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Unification Church. Restrictions on the Jehovah's Witnesses stem from the fact that the group's roughly 2,000 members refuse to perform compulsory military service. The Societies Act stipulates that all religious groups register with the government.

Faculty members of public universities and political research institutions are not entirely free from government influence, since all such institutions have direct government links. The PAP prohibits public discussion of sensitive racial and religious issues and closely regulates political speech. Foreign speakers and academ-

ies fall under particular scrutiny; for example, one visitor was allowed to attend a public forum on the death penalty, but prevented from speaking.

The government restricts freedom of association through the strict 1966 Societies Act, which includes a provision that permits only groups registered as political parties or associations to engage in organized political activities. The Societies Act covers most organizations of more than 10 people, and these groups are required to register with the government. Singaporeans must get police permits to hold public talks or to make political speeches, and public assemblies of more than five people must have police approval. Still, in 2005, the prime minister issued a degree stating that people no longer need a permit for private, indoor gatherings as long as the topic of discussion is not race or religion. Nevertheless, this past year, a private party for homosexuals was prevented on the grounds that holding such a gathering would be contrary to the public interest. The October "White Elephant" saga—where police investigated, but declined to prosecute, those responsible for posting cardboard "white elephant" signs to signal popular frustration at the mothballed Buangkok Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) station—underscored the limits on freedom of association and expression.

Unions are permitted under the Trade Unions Act, and restrictions on their formation are relatively narrow (government employees may not join unions, for example). Almost all unions are affiliated with the National Trade Unions Congress, which freely acknowledges that its interests are closely aligned with those of the PAP. Collective bargaining is commonplace, and strikes are legal—except for workers in the water, gas, and electricity sectors—but rare. According to the BBC, there are some 140,000 women, primarily from the Philippines, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka, employed as domestic servants in Singapore; exploitation and physical abuse of these workers is a problem.

The judiciary's independence has been called into question by the government's overwhelming success in court proceedings, particularly defamation suits against political opponents. It is not clear, however, whether the government pressures judges or simply appoints judges who share its conservative philosophy. Many judges have ties to the PAP and its leaders. In any case, the judiciary is efficient, and in criminal cases, defendants enjoy a presumption of innocence and the right to confront witnesses and other rights of due process.

The government generally respects citizens' right to privacy. However, the issue is not specifically addressed in the constitution, and the government does maintain the right to search a person or property without a warrant if it deems the search necessary to preserve evidence. The government is also believed to monitor telephone and internet communications, though this is not confirmed.

The government can detain suspects without trial under both the Internal Security Act (ISA) and the Criminal Law Act (CLA). The ISA was once applied mainly against suspected Communist security threats, but the government has recently used the law to detain suspected Islamist terrorists. It allows authorities to detain suspects without charge or trial for an unlimited number of two-year periods. A 1989 constitutional amendment prohibits judicial review of the substantive grounds for detention under the ISA and of the constitutionality of the law itself.

The government uses the CLA to detain mainly organized crime and drug-trafficking suspects; the act includes provisions for a one-year, extendable, preventive

detention period. Meanwhile, the Misuse of Drugs Act allows authorities to commit suspected drug users, without trial, to rehabilitation centers for up to three years. In November, the impending execution of an Australian citizen convicted of trafficking heroin received substantial global media attention and prompted some Australians to call for their government to intervene.

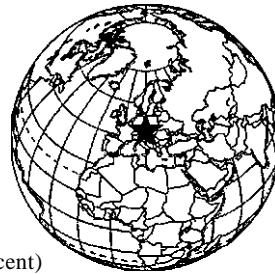
Security forces are not known to commit serious abuses. Police occasionally mistreat detainees, and the government has in recent years jailed officers convicted of such abuses. The penal code mandates caning, in addition to imprisonment, for about 30 offenses; it is discretionary for certain other crimes involving the use of force. Caning is reportedly common. The U.S. State Department's 2005 human rights report stated that Singaporean prisons are Spartan, but generally within international standards.

The government actively promotes racial harmony and equity in Singapore's multiethnic society, and there is no legal discrimination. All citizens enjoy freedom of movement, although the government occasionally infringes on citizens' rights to choose housing by enforcing its policy of assuring ethnic balance in public housing, in which most Singaporeans live. Men can be conscripted for two years of compulsory military service on turning 18. Despite government efforts to boost their educational achievement, ethnic Malays have not on average reached the schooling and income levels of ethnic Chinese or ethnic Indians and reportedly face unofficial discrimination in private sector employment.

Women enjoy the same legal rights as men in most areas, and many are well educated and hold professional jobs. Relatively few women, however, hold top positions in government and the private sector.

Slovakia

Population: 5,400,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$4,940 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 74 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (68.9 percent),
 Protestant (10.8 percent), other (20.3 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Slovak (85.8 percent),
 Hungarian (9.7 percent), Roma (1.7 percent), other (2.8 percent)
Capital: Bratislava



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
2,4PF	2,4PF	2,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

Economic reforms by Slovakia's coalition government, which helped lead to impressive economic growth in 2005, also cost its member parties somewhat in popularity. One coalition partner left the government in August, worsening the coalition's minority status in the parliament, and a parliamentary boycott in September nearly toppled the government.

Anti-Communist opposition forces brought about the collapse of the Czechoslovak government in 1989, and the country held its first free elections the following year. After elections in June 1992, negotiations began on increased Slovak autonomy within the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic. These discussions eventually led to a peaceful dissolution of the federation and the establishment of an independent Slovak Republic on January 1, 1993.

From 1993 to 1998, Vladimir Meciar—who served twice as prime minister during this period—and the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) dominated politics in the newly independent Slovakia. Meciar battled with then-president Michal Kovac over executive and governmental powers, opposed direct presidential elections, flouted the rule of law, and intimidated independent media. His policies resulted in Slovakia's failure to meet the criteria necessary to open European Union (EU) accession talks and to join NATO.

In the 1998 parliamentary elections, voters supported a major shift in Slovakia's political orientation by rejecting Meciar's rule and electing a broad right-left coalition. The new parliament selected Mikulas Dzurinda as prime minister and pursued policies to enhance judicial independence, combat corruption, undertake economic reforms, and actively seek membership in the EU and NATO.

In September 2002, 25 parties competed in free and fair parliamentary elections, although only 7 parties exceeded the 5 percent representation threshold. Meciar's HZDS obtained 19.5 percent of the vote, but his party did not receive sufficient support to form a new government. Dzurinda's Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKU) finished second and succeeded in forming a center-right government in partnership with the Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK), the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), and the Alliance of the New Citizen (ANO). Seventy percent of eligible voters participated in the election.

Slovak nongovernmental organizations were particularly active during the campaign, organizing get-out-the-vote initiatives, publishing voter-education materials, and monitoring media coverage. By law, public television channels provided equal airtime to candidates during the official campaign period. While parties were free to advertise in newspapers, laws prohibited campaign advertising on private television.

In April 2003, the legislature ratified Slovakia's accession to NATO, and in a binding national referendum that was held the following month, Slovaks voted overwhelmingly in favor of joining the EU, with 92 percent supporting membership. However, turnout for the referendum was a disappointing 52 percent of eligible voters, just slightly above the 50 percent needed to make the vote valid. Slovakia duly joined NATO and the EU in April and May 2004, respectively.

In Slovakia's first election for the European Parliament, enthusiasm for participation lagged far behind the zeal for membership itself. Just 17 percent of eligible adults voted in the June 2004 elections, the lowest total in the 25-member EU. The SDKU, KDH, and HZDS each took around 17 percent of the vote, as did a new left-wing populist party, Smer. Each received three seats in the European Parliament. The Hungarian party, SMK, took two seats.

In April 2004, Slovakia held a two-round election for the presidency. Former prime minister Meciar did best in the first round, winning 32.7 percent of the vote. He faced a runoff against his former right-hand man, Ivan Gasparovic, later in the month. In

the second round, with a turnout of just 43.5 percent, Gasparovic won with 59.9 percent, as Slovaks rejected the man who had caused their international isolation in the 1990s.

In 2005, the economic reforms pushed by the government caused it to drop in popularity. ANO left the coalition in the fall, after its founder, who was minister of the economy, was dismissed by the president (at Dzurinda's request) following accusations of conflicts of interest in his financial dealings. In September, opposition legislators boycotted the opening of parliament, which led to repeated failed efforts—due to lack of a quorum—to open the new parliamentary session. Finally, with the help of a handful of opposition members and independents, Dzurinda succeeded in opening parliament, but doubts remained about whether the government would survive until the deadline for new elections in September 2006.

Along with other countries that have made NATO and EU membership strategic objectives and which are eager to have solid relations with the United States and the EU, Slovakia has sought to find an appropriate political and diplomatic balance in its relations with the United States and the EU. Slovakia sent a small number of troops, mostly de-mining specialists, to Iraq, where three Slovak soldiers have been killed.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Slovakia can change their government democratically. Voters elect the president and members of the 150-seat, unicameral National Council (parliament). A 2001 law grants voting privileges to foreigners, allowing permanent residents to vote in elections for municipal and regional governments. The prime minister is appointed by the president but must have majority support in the parliament in order to govern.

Slovakia's political party system is fragmented. At the end of 2005, the governing parties were the SDKU, the KDH, and the SMK. The ANO (which also means "yes"), a probusiness and pro-market party, left the coalition in late 2005. The opposition parties are Vladimir Meciar's People's Party-Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (LS-HZDS), the left-populist Smer (Direction, which has absorbed smaller groups and is now officially Smer-Social Democracy), and the far-left Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS).

Corruption is a problem in Slovakia, especially in health care, education, the police, and the judiciary, according to the European Commission. Slovakia began a program of reforms in 1999 that has centralized and increased staffing for government anticorruption efforts. Moreover, the Law on Free Access to Information has contributed to improved transparency in government administration. Slovakia was ranked 47 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Slovakia was required to meet the "Copenhagen criteria" in order to join the EU; these standards include "stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities." The European Commission, the EU's executive, issued a positive opinion on Slovakia's candidacy in November 2003 (allowing it to join in May 2004), saying Slovakia had "reached a high level of alignment with the *aquis* [the body of EU law] in most policy areas." However, the commission noted that more work remained to be done, including in the area of antidiscrimination law.

Slovakia's media are largely free but remain vulnerable to political interference. Prison terms for press abuses such as defamation were eliminated in a 2002 reform, though threats of civil defamation lawsuits still worry media outlets. In December 2004, a court ordered *Sme*, a daily newspaper, to pay \$96,750 for libeling a Supreme Court judge, giving rise to fears of a general chilling effect on journalists. The government does not limit access to the internet.

The government respects religious freedom. Registered churches and religious organizations are eligible for tax exemptions and government subsidies. The Roman Catholic Church is the largest denomination in the country and consequently receives the largest share of government subsidies. Although Slovakia has not banned or impeded any groups from practicing their faith, the U.S. State Department notes the persistence of anti-Semitism among some parts of the population. The government respects academic freedom.

The government respects the right to assemble peacefully, petition state bodies, and associate in clubs, political parties, and trade unions. However, civil society is not as active as in other countries of Central Europe. Judges, prosecutors, firefighters, and members of the armed forces may not strike.

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary and a Constitutional Court, and an independent Judicial Council oversees the assignment and transfer of judges. The European Commission has noted the perception of a high level of corruption in the Slovak courts and expressed concern over the judiciary's perceived lack of impartiality. Corruption and a significant backlog of cases have raised questions about the judicial system's capacity to function at EU levels.

There are more than 10 recognized ethnic minorities in Slovakia. While minorities have a constitutional right to contribute to the resolution of issues that concern them, Roma (Gypsies) continue to experience widespread discrimination and inequality in education, housing, employment, public services, and the criminal justice system. In 2003, there were reports of coerced or forced sterilization of Roma women the year before, on the orders of local health officials. Roma also face the persistent threat of racially motivated violence. Even though the law criminalizes such acts, reports indicate that law enforcement officials do not always investigate crimes against Roma. In response to these problems, the government began a new program to improve Roma education and housing in 2002. The government has also established an informal advisory board to widen dialogue with the Roma community.

In December 2003, Slovakia reached an agreement with Hungary on the application of Hungary's Status Law, which grants special health and educational benefits to ethnic Hungarians residing outside of Hungary. A foundation in Slovakia will administer the support for Hungarians living there. Hungarians are represented by the SMK in the parliament, currently a member of Dzurinda's coalition.

Slovakia has a market economy in which the private sector accounts for approximately 80 percent of gross domestic product and 75 percent of employment. Official unemployment remains high at approximately 14 percent, but the government contends that many of those who collect unemployment benefits may simultaneously be working on the black market.

Although women enjoy the same legal rights as men, they continue to be underrepresented in senior-level business positions and in the government.

Slovenia

Population: 2,000,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$11,920 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 77 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Catholic (57.8 percent),
 Orthodox (2.3 percent), Muslim (2.4 percent),
 other (37.5 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Slovene (83.1 percent), Serb (2 percent),
 Croat (1.8 percent) Bosniak (1.1 percent), other (12 percent)

Capital: Ljubljana



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

Slovenian voters, by the slimmest of margins, approved a new broadcast law in 2005 that was criticized by many journalists and media professionals. Slovenia's policies toward ethnic minorities continue to draw criticism both inside and outside of the country.

The territory now constituting Slovenia was part of the Hapsburg Empire from 1335 to 1918. At the end of World War I, Slovenia became a part of the new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929), and after World War II, it became a constituent republic of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In 1990, Slovenia held its first postwar, multiparty, democratic elections, in which the Democratic United Opposition (DEMOS) secured victory. Voters also elected former Communist leader Milan Kucan president. Kucan was reelected in Slovenia's first postindependence polls in 1992 and 1996.

Slovenia was spared the war and destruction that accompanied much of the rest of the former Yugoslavia after the country disintegrated, and Slovenian society has enjoyed remarkable consensus in the postindependence period. Throughout the 1990s, a large majority of citizens agreed that Slovenia should concentrate on entering European and trans-Atlantic organizations, and domestic policy focused on maintaining a social-democratic model for Slovenian society. For most of this period, Slovenia was ruled by center-left governments, the most important element of which was Janez Drnovsek's Liberal Democratic Party (LDS).

In Slovenia's latest presidential elections, held over two rounds in late 2002, Drnovsek won 56 percent of the vote in a second-round runoff, comfortably outdistancing his opponent, the Social Democratic Party of Slovenia (SDS) candidate Barbara Brezigar. Seventy-one percent of the electorate turned out to vote in the first round of the elections and 65 percent for the second round.

In 2004, the 12-year lock on power of Slovenia's left-of-center parties was broken after Prime Minister Anton Rop's LDS-led coalition suffered a number of political defeats, while in the October 2004 parliamentary elections, Janez Jansa's center-right SDS succeeded in unseating the LDS and becoming Slovenia's most popular political party. Turnout for the parliamentary elections was 60 percent.

Slovenia's most pressing civil rights problem in recent years has been resolving the fate of the "erased"—some 18,000 non-Slovene citizens of the former Yugoslavia who remained in Slovenia after independence, but who were administratively removed from official records after they failed to apply for citizenship or permanent resident status during a brief window of opportunity that was allowed in 1992. The erased were subsequently systematically denied driver's licenses, access to state health care, and pensions. Under pressure from the European Union (EU), the Slovenian government began drafting legislation in 2003 to restore these rights. In April 2004, an LDS-sponsored bill granting retroactive residency rights to the erased was rejected in a referendum called by the opposition; 95 percent of the electorate opposed the government-backed bill, although with a low turnout of only 31 percent of the electorate.

Twelve years after gaining independence, in 2004 Slovenia achieved its primary foreign policy goals of becoming a member of both the EU and of NATO, becoming the first of the former Yugoslav republics to become fully integrated into both organizations. Aiding Slovenia's successes in this regard were its relatively favorable geographical location and strong history of ties to Western Europe, a strong economy, and the advantages of being a largely ethnically homogeneous political entity.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Slovenia can change their government democratically. Voters directly elect the president to a five-year term. Slovenia has a bicameral parliament: members of the 90-seat National Assembly, which chooses the prime minister, are elected to four year terms, and the 40-seat National Council, a largely advisory body, represents professional groups and local interests. Elections throughout the postindependence period have been considered free and fair. Slovenia's main political parties since 1991 have been Drnovsek's LDS and the center-right SDS, currently led by Prime Minister Janez Jansa.

Although Slovenia enjoys a reputation for being the most corruption-free of the Central and East European states that recently entered the EU, corruption in Slovenia nevertheless remains a significant problem and is publicly perceived as such. The most general forms of corruption in Slovenia involve conflicts of interest among government officials, an intertwining of the public and private sectors, and private businesses' reliance on official connections to obtain lucrative government contracts. Slovenia was ranked 31 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The government respects the constitutional rights of freedom of speech and of the press, although insulting public officials is prohibited by law. Most print media outlets are privately owned and support themselves with advertising revenues. In September, Slovenia held a referendum on a new State Broadcasting Law, which voters approved by the narrowest of margins (barely more than 50 percent supported the reforms). However, critics charged that the new law increases the government's control over the main state-owned television and radio network (RTV). A major complaint against the various media is that they do not represent a wide range of political or ethnic interests. Some analysts believed that the new broadcasting law was an attempt by the government of Prime Minister Janez Jansa to acquire more control of the public broadcasting system, which they have argued is biased against the cen-

ter-right. There are also reports of some degree of self-censorship resulting from indirect political or economic pressures on media outlets.

The Slovenian media launched its first-ever general strike on election day in October 2004 to protest low wages. Many of Slovenia's main media outlets, including three of the four main daily newspapers and state-owned RTV, joined the action. The strike was suspended after three days when the Trade Union of Slovenian Journalists won a commitment for new negotiations to begin on a collective bargaining agreement with the Association for Press and Media in the Chamber of Commerce of Slovenia, which represents most of Slovenia's large media enterprises. There were no reports of government attempts to restrict access to the internet during the year.

The constitution guarantees freedom of conscience and religion. Most Slovenians are Roman Catholics, although the Roman Catholic Church appears to be suffering from a significant crisis among its adherents; between 1991 and 2002, the percentage of Slovenes who identified themselves as active Catholics dropped from 69.8 percent to 57.8 percent. Societal discrimination against Muslims remains a problem in Slovenia. For the past 30 years, Slovenian authorities have refused to allow the country's small Muslim community to build a mosque in Ljubljana, which some Slovenian officials have justified out of fear that it would provide "infrastructure for terrorism" in Slovenia. In July 2004, the Slovenian Constitutional Court blocked a proposed referendum challenging zoning laws allowing construction of the mosque to proceed, ruling that fundamental, universal human rights can overrule the democratically expressed will of the population. However, the mosque's construction is now being delayed by a denationalization claim filed by the Catholic Church for the property on which the mosque is supposed to be built. There were no reports of government restrictions on academic freedom during the year.

The government respects the right of individuals to assemble peacefully, form associations, participate in public affairs, and submit petitions. Numerous nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate without government interference, and the government on the whole supports the role they play in the policymaking process. Workers enjoy the right to establish and join trade unions, to strike, and to bargain collectively.

According to the EU, the Slovenian judiciary enjoys "a high degree of independence." The judiciary consists of the Supreme Court, an administrative court, regional and district courts, and an appeals court, along with a Constitutional Court. A separation of powers is built into the political system, and the various branches of government generally respect each other's powers and authorities. The constitution guarantees citizens due process, equality before the law, and a presumption of innocence until proven guilty. The main problem facing the judicial system is the fact that it is overburdened, with some criminal cases taking two to five years. Prison conditions are in line with international standards, although some overcrowding has been reported.

According to Slovenia's Criminal Code, incitement to racial hatred is illegal. The constitution entitles the "autochthonous" Italian and Hungarian ethnic communities to one deputy each in the National Assembly, and Roma are automatically given seats on 20 municipal councils. Despite these official rights, however, Slovenia has had persistent problems in dealing with various ethnic minorities—Italians, Muslim residents and guest workers, and citizens of the former Yugoslavia. In December

2003, the Italian-minority member of Slovenia's parliament resigned from the presidential commission for minorities after claiming that the Italian minority was being pressured to assimilate.

There have been persistent reports of police harassment of Roma and residents from other former Yugoslav republics, who have become known as the "new minorities." Governmental and societal discrimination against Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, Kosovo Albanians, and Roma now living in Slovenia has been reliably reported. Public opinion polls conducted among non-Slovenes in 2004 showed that almost 10 percent of respondents "frequently encounter ethnic intolerance," 5 percent frequently hide their ethnic identity, and 36 percent occasionally do. An April 2004 referendum overwhelmingly rejected restoring a variety of rights to individuals who had been "erased" from official government registries after independence from the former Yugoslavia. The results of the referendum increased both domestic and international concern about the civil rights of non-Slovenians living in the country. The problem remains unresolved, as the Slovenian parliament continues to debate the issue.

According to the constitution, Slovenian citizens enjoy all recognized personal rights and freedoms, including the freedom to travel and to choose one's place of residence and the right to own private property.

Women enjoy the same constitutional rights and freedoms under the law as do men. On average, Slovenian women receive 89 percent of the pay of their male counterparts, which compares favorably with similar rates in Western European countries. At the same time, women remain underrepresented in political life. Currently, there are 14 women serving in the 90-seat National Assembly, 3 women in the 40-seat National Council, and one woman in the 17-member Cabinet of Ministers. Countrywide, women make up only 13 percent of town council members and less than 6 percent of all local mayors. In February, the Slovenian parliament adopted a measure requiring that 40 percent of the electoral lists for the European parliamentary elections be reserved for women. Some 60 percent of Slovenia's women are in the workforce, the largest proportion of any of the 10 countries that joined the EU in 2004.

Domestic violence remains a concern. There are no laws prohibiting sexual harassment in the workplace. Slovenia is primarily a transit country, and secondarily a country of destination, for women and girls trafficked from other parts of Eastern Europe for the purpose of prostitution. In November, the National Assembly passed a law on witness protection to prosecute forced-prostitution and trafficking cases more effectively.

Solomon Islands

Population: 500,000 **Political Rights:** 3

GNI/capita: \$550 **Civil Liberties:** 3

Life Expectancy: 62 **Status:** Partly Free

Religious Groups: Church of Melanesia (32.8 percent),

Roman Catholic (19 percent), South Seas Evangelical

(17 percent), Seventh-Day Adventist (11.2 percent),

United Church (10.3 percent), Christian Fellowship

Church (2.4 percent), other Christian (4.4 percent), other (2.9 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Melanesian (94.5 percent), Polynesian (3 percent), Micronesian (1.2 percent), other (1.3 percent)

Capital: Honiara



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	4,4PF	4,4PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF

Overview:

The country continued in 2005 to recover from a coup five years earlier and the ethnic conflict that engendered it.

During the year, former rebels were brought to trial and several high-ranking officials were tried for alleged corruption. The government passed a new investment bill to facilitate foreign investment to help rebuild the economy.

The Solomon Islands, consisting of more than 27 islands and 70 language groups, gained independence in 1978 after having been a protectorate of the United Kingdom. Clan identity remains much stronger than national identity and is a deep source of ethnic rivalry. Tensions between the two largest groups—the Guadalcanalese, natives of the main island of Guadalcanal, and the Malaitans, who come from the nearby province of Malaita—over jobs and land rights erupted into open warfare in 1998. The Isatambu Freedom Movement (IFM), claiming to represent native Guadalcanalese interests, forced the eviction of 30,000 Malaitans from Guadalcanal. Scores were injured or killed in the fighting that ensued between the IFM and the Malaita Eagle Force (MEF), a band of armed Malaitans. In June 2000, the MEF seized control of the capital, Honiara, and forced Prime Minister Bartholomew Ulufa'alu to resign. Fighting officially ended with the Townsville Peace Agreement of October 2000, which Australia and New Zealand helped to broker.

Parliamentary elections in December 2001 brought a new government to power under Sir Allan Kemakeza. After the June 2003 departure of a UN mission—which had been sent to help restore peace—the Australia-led, multinational Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) took over to assist local police regain control and to help restore and reform the government. Since coming into office, Kemakeza has been struggling against substantial resistance to reforming the government and revitalizing the economy. Change has been slow, but some important progress has been made. In May 2004, the national parliament convened for the first time since the MEF took the capital in June 2000. Several leaders of the civil

war factions have been arrested and brought to trial. Harold Keke, a former MEF leader, and two associates were sentenced to life in prison in 2005 for killing a cabinet minister in 2002, and several senior officials have been arrested and charged for their alleged involvement in the 2000 coup and related crimes. The police's new Corruption Targeting Task Force has been working with RAMSI to investigate official corruption; several high-ranking officials were arrested and charged in 2005. For example, the minister of health was arrested and charged with theft of development aid money, and former prime minister Ezekiel Alebua was arrested for the inappropriate use of a victims' compensation fund. Another cabinet minister and a former finance minister were also charged with corruption.

RAMSI marked its second anniversary on July 24, 2005, and the operation was deemed to have been a success in restoring stability and peace to the country. Some legislators have said that the country needs RAMSI for many more years to help it to recover and reform. Improving peace and order is encouraging new investment in mining and oil plantations. In May, the government passed a new investment law that would fast-track foreign investment, but critics charge that more actions are needed to remove bureaucratic barriers and curb corruption to spur investment and growth.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of the Solomon Islands can change their government democratically. As a member of the Commonwealth, the British monarch—Queen Elizabeth II—is the nominal head of state. She is represented by a governor-general who is chosen by parliament for a five-year term. Nathaniel Waena, the current governor-general, was elected to this office in July 2004. The government is a modified parliamentary system with a 50-member, single-chamber Legislative Assembly; members are elected for four-year terms. A parliamentary majority elects the prime minister, who appoints his own cabinet. The next general election is scheduled for 2006, but the government maintains that it lacks funds to register voters.

The leading political parties are the People's Alliance Party and the Solomon Islands Alliance for Change Coalition. However, politics is driven more by personalities and clan identities than party affiliations.

Corruption is a serious problem, resulting in public dissatisfaction and significant economic harm. Frequent allegations of official corruption and abuse of power have tied politicians and government officials to logging contracts, licensing, and public contracts. At the end of November, there were reports alleging that Prime Minister Allan Kemakeza was involved in stealing millions of dollars of compensation funds for victims of the ethnic conflict from 1998 through 2000. Children of high-ranking government officials were also reported to have received a large number of government scholarships for overseas study. Petty corruption among the lower ranks of government officials also appears to be widespread. The Solomon Islands was not ranked in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression and of the press is generally respected. Reports on corruption and abuses by police and politicians appear in the local media. Those charged with wrongdoing sometimes use legal and extralegal means to intimidate journalists, but the government generally leaves matters to the courts for adjudication. The print media includes a daily, a weekly, and two monthly publications. The government

operates the only radio station. There is no local television station, but foreign broadcasts can be received via satellite. Internet access is low, mainly because of the lack of telecommunications infrastructure and prohibitive costs.

Freedom of religion is generally respected. Academic freedom is also respected despite serious disruptions in instruction and research as a result of the recent violence and a lack of government funds. A 2005 government decision to provide free primary education will benefit 75,000 school-children and their families. There are no universities in the country, but students can obtain instruction and university degrees through an extension center of the University of the South Pacific, which has campuses in Fiji, Samoa, and Vanuatu.

Many civil society groups operate freely, with the largest numbers of groups promoting development and religion. The constitution guarantees freedom of assembly and the government generally recognizes this right. Laws require organizers of demonstrations to obtain permits, which are typically granted. Workers are free to organize, and strikes are permitted. Wage earners represent 10 to 15 percent of the workforce; the rest engage in subsistence farming and fishing.

Threats against judges and prosecutors have weakened the independence and rigor of the judiciary. Judges and prosecutors have also been implicated in corruption and abuse scandals. In October 2004, the chief justice was dismissed for alleged misconduct. A lack of resources limits the government's ability to provide legal counsel and timely prosecution of trials. Traditional chiefs have asked the government to provide more funds to rural traditional courts to ease demand on the formal court system.

The constitution provides for an ombudsman, with the power to subpoena and investigate complaints of official abuse, mistreatment, or unfair treatment. The ombudsman's office has potentially far-reaching powers but is limited by a lack of resources.

There is no army. Domestic security and law enforcement relies are provided by a civilian-controlled police force of about 1,000 people. Factional and ethnic rivalries within the police since the 2000 coup have rendered the police virtually useless. Many Malaitan officers joined the MEF, and the hiring of 1,200 untrained former militants as "special constables" to stop fighting also caused problems. Many of these "special constables" have been involved in criminal activities; police reform is a major focus for RAMSI. Prisons conditions are basic, but they meet international standards. A new prison building, with a recreation center, kitchen, toilets in every cell, and a family visitation center, has improved living conditions for prisoners. In 2005, two police officers were charged with the abduction and rape of a woman.

Despite legal guarantees of equal rights, discrimination limits the economic and political roles of women. No law prohibits domestic violence, although rape and common assault are illegal. Reports of violence against adult and teenage women have increased since the 2000 coup. The conflict in the late 1980s, along with a lack of funds for public education and health programs, have contributed to the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS; 16 percent of the population is infected with the virus.

Somalia

Population: 8,600,000 **Political Rights:** 6
GNI/capita: na **Civil Liberties:** 7
Life Expectancy: 47 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim
Ethnic Groups: Somali (85 percent), other
[including Bantu and Arab] (15 percent)
Capital: Mogadishu



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	6,7NF	6,7NF	6,7NF	6,7NF	6,7NF	6,7NF

Overview:

Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in June 2005 moved from Kenya, where it had been created eight months earlier, to Somalia. However, divisions quickly widened as the president and the prime minister moved to a town north of Mogadishu, citing security concerns. The United Nations expressed concern over violations of Somalia's arms embargo and said that tensions between the country's leaders were preventing federal institutions from functioning.

Somalia, a Horn of Africa nation, gained independence in July 1960 with the union of British Somaliland and territories to the south that had been an Italian colony. Other ethnic Somali-inhabited lands are now part of Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya. General Siad Barre seized power in 1969 and increasingly employed divisive clan politics to maintain power. While flood, drought, and famine racked the nation, the struggle to topple Barre caused civil war, starvation, banditry, and brutality since the late 1980s. When Barre was deposed in January 1991, power was claimed and contested by heavily armed guerrilla movements and militias divided by traditional ethnic and clan loyalties.

Extensive television coverage of famine and civil strife that took approximately 300,000 lives in 1991 and 1992 prompted a U.S.-led international (UN) intervention. The armed humanitarian mission in late 1992 quelled clan combat long enough to stop the famine but ended in urban guerrilla warfare against Somali militias. The last international forces withdrew in March 1995 after the combined casualty count reached into the thousands. Approximately 100 peacekeepers, including 18 U.S. soldiers, were killed. The \$4 billion UN intervention effort had little lasting impact.

The Djibouti-hosted Conference for National Peace and Reconciliation in Somalia adopted a charter in 2000 for a three-year transition, established the Transitional National Government (TNG), and selected a 245-member Transitional National Assembly (TNA). The TNA elected Abdiqassim Salad Hassan as transitional president in August 2000. The TNG and more than 20 rival groups signed a ceasefire in October 2002 in Kenya as a first step toward establishing a federal system of government. However, over the next year, the talks deadlocked when some faction leaders dropped out to form their own parallel talks in Mogadishu.

The faltering peace process was revitalized at a national reconciliation confer-

ence in Nairobi in 2004. Under the guidance of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a group of seven Horn of Africa countries acting as mediators, Somali delegates concluded the contentious process of forming a 275-member parliament, the Transitional Federal Assembly (TFA), in August 2004 as part of the new transitional government. In October 2004, legislators elected Abdullahi Yusuf, an Ethiopian-backed career soldier and leader of the breakaway enclave of Puntland, to a five-year term as president of Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG). The choice of Yusuf as president was divisive and controversial, according to the Brussels-based think tank International Crisis Group (ICG), which called Yusuf the "archetypal Somali warlord."

Despite substantial progress in realizing the goals of the peace talks, intermittent clashes continued to erupt between various rival factions throughout the country, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of civilians. In August 2004, the new TFG, consisting of the 275-member TFA, replaced the TNG. The country's four largest clans were each given 61 seats, and an alliance of minority clans took the remaining 31.

Under the Somali National Charter adopted in 2003 and amended in early 2004, Yusef appointed Ali Muhammad Gedi, a prominent member of the political arm of the United Somali Congress, as his prime minister in November 2004. Under the interim charter, Gedi will lead a five-year central government. That government faces the daunting tasks of enforcing a ceasefire among warring clan-based militias, forming a new police force and army, and rebuilding the economic infrastructure.

In June 2005, some members of the newly formed TFG moved to Mogadishu from Kenya. However, other TFG members, including the president and prime minister, moved to the town of Jowhar, about 55 miles north of the capital, citing security concerns. Divided both literally and figuratively, with some members seated in Mogadishu and others in Jowhar, the government has barely been able to function. At issue are where the government should be located and whether a peacekeeping force should be deployed to the country.

In October, UN secretary-general Kofi Annan said that friction among Somalia's leaders was preventing the country's federal institutions from functioning effectively. He expressed concern that the political tensions had prompted "military preparations" on both sides. The United Nations said that there was an increase in the flow of arms and ammunition into Somalia in violation of the arms embargo imposed 13 years ago. The government has denied violating the embargo. In November, IGAD called for the lifting of the arms embargo, saying that the transitional government would then be able to establish security institutions, and also recommended the deployment of military observers.

Several key cabinet ministers and legislators strongly oppose any moves to include soldiers from countries bordering Somalia in the peacekeeping force proposed by President Yusuf. The proposed mandate of the force would include "peace enforcement," and it would be seen as partisan, according to the ICG. It said that for peacekeepers to become embroiled in the Somali conflict would undermine both the prospects for peace and the development of the African Union's peacekeeping capacity. No deployment will succeed, it said, without broad consensus on the force. Many Somalis do not believe that frontline states would be impartial participants in a peacekeeping force.

The region of Somaliland has exercised *de facto* independence from Somalia since

May 1991, although it has failed to gain international recognition. A clan conference led to a peace accord among its clan factions in 1997, establishing a presidency and bicameral parliament with proportional clan representation. Somaliland is far more cohesive than the rest of the country, although reports of some human rights abuses persist. A referendum on independence and a new constitution were approved in Somaliland in May 2001, opening the way for a multiparty system. Dahir Riyale Kahin of the ruling Unity of Democrats party emerged as the winner of historic Somaliland presidential elections in 2003. International observers declared the voting to be free and fair. The United Nations has praised efforts by Somaliland to establish democracy and stability. The ruling Unity of Democrats won 33 of the 82 seats in parliamentary elections in October 2005, and the opposition Kulmiye (Solidarity) and Justice and Welfare parties took 28 and 21 seats, respectively. Nearly 250 candidates contested the polls. International observers said the elections fell short of several international standards but were conducted in a generally peaceful, free, and fair manner.

The region of Puntland established a regional government in 1998, with a presidency and a single-chamber quasi legislature known as the Council of Elders. Political parties are banned. The traditional elders chose Abdullahi Yusuf, now the new president of Somalia, as the region's first president for a three-year term. After Jama Ali Jama was elected to replace him in 2001, Yusuf refused to relinquish power, claiming that he was fighting terrorism. Yusuf seized power in 2002, reportedly with the help of Ethiopian forces. With the election of Yusuf as the transitional president of Somalia, the Puntland parliament elected General Adde Musse as president in January 2004.

Somalia is a poor country, where most people survive as pastoralists or subsistence farmers. A report by the United Nations in August 2005 said nearly a million people in Somalia were in need of immediate humanitarian assistance as a result of drought and conflict. More than a decade of conflict and a persistent drought have devastated the country's agricultural and livestock production.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Somalis cannot change their government democratically. The 2000 elections marked the first time Somalis had an opportunity to choose their government on a somewhat national basis since 1969. Some 3,000 representatives of civic and religious organizations, women's groups, and clans came together under the auspices of the IGAD, following Djibouti-hosted peace talks, to elect a transitional parliament in August 2000. In August 2004, the new 275-member parliament, the TFA, came into existence. Abdullahi Yusuf, leader of the breakaway enclave of Puntland, was elected to a five-year term as president.

Somalia was ranked 144 out of 159 countries surveyed by Transparency International in its 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Somalia's charter provides for press freedom, but journalists face threats and harassment. The country has about 20 privately owned newspapers, a dozen radio and television stations, and several internet websites. Most of the independent newspapers or newsletters that circulate in Mogadishu are linked to a specific faction. Although journalists face harassment, most receive the protection of the clan supporting their publication. The former transitional government launched its first

radio station, Radio Mogadishu, in 2001. Press freedom is very limited in the country's two self-declared autonomous regions of Somaliland and Puntland.

The Paris-based Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said in September that Somali journalists were finding it more difficult to work. RSF expressed concern over alleged threats against the National Union of Somali Journalists by "warlords, Islamic courts, and businessmen." The killing of two reporters in Somalia in 2005 highlighted the dangers of practicing journalism in the country. In February, unknown gunmen shot dead BBC producer Kate Peyton outside her hotel in Mogadishu. In June, Duniya Muhyadin, a journalist for the privately owned radio station HornAfrik, was shot dead in Mogadishu as she covered a demonstration. Another HornAfrik journalist, Abdallah Nurdin Ahmad, was shot and wounded by an unknown gunman in a separate incident.

Somalia is an Islamic state, and religious freedom is not guaranteed. The Sunni majority often views non-Sunni Muslims with suspicion. Members of the small Christian community face societal harassment if they proclaim their religion, but a number of international Christian aid groups operate without hindrance. Academic freedom faces some restrictions similar to those imposed on the media, and there is no organized higher education system in most of the country.

Several indigenous and foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate in Somalia with varying degrees of latitude. A number of international aid organizations, women's groups, and local human rights groups operate in the country. The charter provides workers with the right to form unions and assemble freely, but civil war and factional fighting led to the dissolution of the single labor confederation, the government-controlled General Federation of Somali Trade Unions. Wages are established largely by ad hoc bartering and the influence of clan affiliation.

Somalia's charter provides for an independent judiciary, although a formal judicial system has ceased to exist. In Mogadishu, Sharia (Islamic law) courts have been effective in bringing a semblance of law and order to the city. Efforts at judicial reform are proceeding slowly. The Sharia courts in Mogadishu are gradually coming under the control of the TFG. Most of the courts are aligned with various subclans. Prison conditions are harsh in some areas, but improvements are under way.

Human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killing, rape, torture, beating, and arbitrary detention by Somalia's various armed factions, remain a problem. Many violations are linked to banditry. The United Nations said in August that the government's failure to establish its authority in Somalia was partly behind the problem of continued rights abuses. Unidentified assailants shot and killed a prominent Somali peace activist in Mogadishu in July. Abdulkadir Yahya Ali was the co-founder and director of the Center for Research and Dialogue, which is affiliated with the War-torn Societies Project International.

Although more than 80 percent of Somalis share a common ethnic heritage, religion, and nomadic-influenced culture, discrimination is widespread. Clans exclude one another from participation in social and political life. Minority clans are harassed, intimidated, and abused by armed gunmen.

Travel throughout Somalia is restricted by poor security. Clans largely control business activity.

Women's groups were instrumental in galvanizing support for Somalia's peace process. The country's new charter prohibits sexual discrimination, but women ex-

perience intense discrimination under customary practices and variants of Sharia. UN agencies and NGOs are working to raise awareness about the health dangers of female genital mutilation. Various armed factions have recruited children into their militias.

South Africa

Population: 46,900,000 **Political Rights:** 1

GNI/capita: \$2,750 **Civil Liberties:** 2

Life Expectancy: 52 **Status:** Free

Religious Groups: Zion Christian (11.1 percent), Pentecostal/Charismatic (8.2 percent), Catholic (7.1 percent), Methodist (6.8 percent), Dutch Reformed (6.7 percent), Anglican (3.8 percent), other Christian (36 percent), Muslim (1.5 percent), other (18.8 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Black (79 percent), white (9.6 percent), mixed (8.9 percent), Indian/Asian (2.5 percent)

Capital: Pretoria



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F

Overview:

Various controversies surrounding the ruling African National Congress (ANC)—including the ongoing corruption trial of former deputy president and ANC stalwart Jacob Zuma—dominated South Africa's political landscape in 2005. After being charged with corruption in June, Zuma was sacked by President Thabo Mbeki, a move that incited strong opposition and allegations of political conspiracy from Zuma's supporters in the party. The year also saw escalating challenges to the ANC's economic policies and demonstrations of public discontent with the pace and extent of service delivery in South Africa.

In 1910, the Union of South Africa—including the British colonies of the Cape and Natal and the two Afrikaner republics of Transvaal and Orange Free State—was created as a self-governing dominion of the British Empire. All political and most civil rights were limited to South Africa's minority white population; the majority black population, as well as the colored (mixed-race) and Asian (primarily Indian) minorities, were effectively disenfranchised. In 1948, the Afrikaner-dominated National Party (NP) came to power on a platform of comprehensive, institutionalized racial separation, or "apartheid." Partly as a result, South Africa declared formal independence in 1961 and withdrew from the British Commonwealth. The NP continued to govern South Africa under the apartheid system for decades. Eventually, mounting domestic and international pressure prompted President F. W. de Klerk to legalize the previously banned African National Congress (ANC) and Pan-Africanist

Congress and, in 1990, to release ANC leader Nelson Mandela from prison. Between then and 1994, when the first nonracial general elections were held, almost all apartheid-related legislation was abolished and an interim, democratic constitution was negotiated and enacted.

The April 1994 elections—judged free and fair by international observers despite significant political violence—resulted in a landslide victory for the ANC and the election of Mandela as president. As required by the interim constitution, a national unity government was formed, including the ANC, the NP, and the Zulu-nationalist Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). Negotiations within a Constitutional Assembly produced a permanent constitution, which was signed into law by Mandela in December 1996. In 1999, general elections saw the ANC claim almost two-thirds of the national vote; Thabo Mbeki, Mandela's successor as head of the ANC, won the presidency.

National elections in April 2004 demonstrated the continuing political dominance of the ANC. The party won 70 percent of the vote—its best showing yet—and claimed 279 of the 400 seats in the National Assembly; Mbeki was sworn in for a second five-year term. The ANC also secured outright majorities in seven of the nine South African provincial legislatures. The liberal (and primarily white-based) Democratic Alliance (DA) won 12.4 percent of the vote (50 seats in the National Assembly), while the IFP won almost 7 percent (28 seats). Several small opposition parties captured the remaining votes.

The ANC's rise to power has been accompanied by increasing tensions within the party's governing alliance, including the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), as well as with its core constituents—trends that continued in 2005. In May, large and recurring demonstrations in and around Cape Town and Port Elizabeth saw hundreds of people demanding better housing and public service delivery, promised by the government in numerous election campaigns but not yet provided; similar protests took place in Free State Province in late 2004. Both the demonstrators and police employed violence during the protests. In August, COSATU organized the Western Province Coalition for Jobs and Against Poverty, an alliance of more than 70 religious and civic groups aimed at challenging the Mbeki administration's "neo-liberal" economic development policies.

The most contentious issue concerning the ANC, however, is the Jacob Zuma corruption scandal. In June, Schabir Shaik—Zuma's financial adviser and ANC ally—was found guilty by the Durban High Court of corruption and fraud charges related to government arms contracts (the 1999 "arms-deal" scandal) and sentenced to 15 years in prison; Shaik's trial included accusations that Zuma had accepted bribes from Shaik on behalf of a French arms manufacturer. Later that month, Mbeki sacked Zuma, and Zuma appeared in court to face corruption charges. Zuma's supporters—primarily from the ANC's left wing, including the ANC Youth League, the ANC Women's League, COSATU, and the SACP—claimed that the scandal was the product of a political conspiracy spurred by Mbeki's allies in the ANC and the media, a charge that became more vociferous after anticorruption investigators raided Zuma's Johannesburg home in August. As a result, Mbeki was forced to challenge the ANC alliance to establish a commission of inquiry to investigate whether Zuma's prosecution was motivated by Mbeki's desire to sideline his former deputy (and then-

likely successor). The controversy became even more heated in November, when Zuma was accused of raping a family friend. In November, the ANC's National Executive Committee issued a statement reiterating its faith in the country's justice system and rejecting the supposition that Zuma was a victim of a political conspiracy.

Some six million South Africans are infected with HIV/AIDS; South Africa has the largest number of people living with the disease of any country in the world. Mbeki's government, arguing that the HIV virus did not necessarily cause AIDS, has resisted making antiretroviral drugs available to the public health system. In 2003, the government yielded to substantial international and domestic pressure to provide universal antiretroviral drug treatment, a process that began in 2004. Shortly thereafter, however, Mbeki reappointed controversial health minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, who has publicly recommended traditional remedies such as garlic, lemon, olive oil, and beetroot as superior to antiretroviral drugs in combating HIV/AIDS. In May, the South Africa-based Medical Research Council estimated that AIDS caused one in three deaths in the country.

While recent years have seen the emergence of a significant African middle class amid an economic boom, South Africa's substantial wealth remains concentrated in a small segment of the population. Forty-percent of South Africans live in poverty.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of South Africa can change their government democratically. Three successful national elections have taken place since 1994, the last in April 2004. Elections for the 400-seat National Assembly and 90-seat National Council of Provinces are by proportional representation based on party lists. The National Assembly elects the president to serve concurrently with the five-year parliamentary term. The next local elections are scheduled for March 2006.

In general, the electoral process—including voter registration, voter education, and reliable balloting and vote counting—has functioned properly. However, the state-owned South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) has been accused of pro-ANC election coverage. While political violence has decreased substantially in every election cycle, several people were killed in the run-up to the 2004 elections.

The ANC dominates the South African political landscape, as evidenced by its sweeping electoral victory in April 2004. The DA is South Africa's main opposition party, with 50 seats in parliament. The IFP, no longer a significant force outside of the KwaZulu-Natal Province, won 28 seats. The New National Party (NNP), descended from the National Party that created and ruled the South African apartheid state, has seen its share of the national vote shrink by 90 percent in 10 years. Allied with the ANC in the April 2004 elections, the NNP announced in August 2004 that it was officially merging with the ANC and then disbanded in April 2005.

While the country features a wide-ranging anticorruption framework, with several agencies and special bodies claiming a legal mandate to prevent, detect, and combat corruption among public officials, enforcement of these laws and related sanctions is a problem. In addition to the corruption trials of Shaik and Zuma, 2005 saw several other corruption scandals emerge. Beginning in January, 136 members of the National Assembly were investigated for illegally inflating their travel expenses to pay for luxury items; 5 members were convicted of corruption in March, and another 21 were charged with travel-related fraud in June. In August, opposition par-

ties called for an investigation into an oil deal (labeled "oilgate") executed as part of the now defunct UN oil-for-food program in Iraq; allegedly, the deal served as a front for the diversion of state funds to the ANC. South Africa was ranked 46 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression and the press, protected in the constitution, is generally respected. A number of private newspapers and magazines are sharply critical of the government, political parties, and other societal actors. For primarily socioeconomic reasons, most South Africans receive the news via radio outlets, a majority of which are owned and controlled by the state broadcaster, the SABC. The SABC also dominates the television market with three stations; still, the country's two commercial television stations, e.tv and Mnet, are reaching increasingly greater proportions of the population. While editorially independent from the government, the SABC has come under fire for displaying progovernment and pro-ANC biases and for encouraging self-censorship.

The government continued to reveal a heightened sensitivity to media criticism—including accusing critical journalists of racism and betraying the state. Reporters are occasionally subject to threats and harassment, and are sometimes forcibly denied access to official proceedings. In May, the Johannesburg High Court issued a gag order against an article on the "oilgate" corruption scandal set to appear in the independent *Mail & Guardian* newspaper. The article was gagged because the newspaper refused to reveal its sources of (allegedly illegally obtained) information for the story. The gag order was lifted in June; however, in September, the government issued a subpoena to the *Mail & Guardian's* online host, requiring the M-Web company to deliver records of a bank statement related to "oilgate" published on the *Mail & Guardian Online* website. Also in May, officials in Limpopo Province barred SABC journalists from entering the provincial legislature; two weeks earlier, an adviser to Limpopo's premier accosted SABC employees about the broadcaster's coverage of local politicians. Internet access is unrestricted and growing rapidly, although many South Africans cannot afford the service fee.

Freedom of religion and academic freedom are constitutionally guaranteed and actively protected by the government in practice.

Freedoms of association and peaceful assembly are secured by the constitution, and South Africa features a vibrant civil society and an embedded protest culture. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate freely, and citizens are easily able to form NGOs and obtain the required certificate of registration. However, police used force to break up several protests in 2005, as well as other demonstrations over disease and housing issues. In July, some 40 people protesting the slow rollout of antiretroviral drugs in Eastern Cape were injured after police used rubber bullets and tear gas to disperse the demonstration. Two months later, police fired rubber bullets at protesting residents of the typhoid-stricken town of Delmas in Mpumalanga Province.

South Africans are free to form, join, and participate in independent trade unions. Labor rights codified under the 1995 Labor Relations Act are respected, and more than 250 trade unions exist. Unions have been active since the early twentieth century and played a critical role in the antiapartheid movement; as a result, the country features a politically engaged and influential trade union movement. COSATU—

which includes the National Union of Mineworkers and the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa and claims over two million affiliate members—is part of a tripartite governing alliance with the ANC and the SACP. In September 2004, hundreds of thousands of public sector workers went on strike in the largest industrial action in the last decade. A number of strikes involving workers in the mining and textile sectors were peacefully conducted and resolved in the period under review.

The independence of the South African judiciary is guaranteed by the constitution, and the courts—particularly the Constitutional Court and the Supreme Court—operate with substantial autonomy. Although defendants are granted a range of procedural rights, in practice, staff and resource shortages undermine South Africans' (particularly poor South Africans') rights to a timely trial and state-funded legal counsel and have produced a significant backlog of cases. While corruption in the upper courts is not a significant concern, the lower (magistrates) courts have proven more susceptible. In addition, there have been reports of violent intimidation directed at judges and magistrates.

Despite constitutional prohibitions and government efforts to the contrary, there were reports of torture and the use of excessive force by police during interrogation, arrest, and detention. Deaths in police custody continue to be a problem. Excessive pretrial detention and negligent conditions for pretrial detainees were cited by a UN Working Group in 2005 as major shortcomings of the South Africa penal system. While most prisoners wait an average of three months before trial, some must wait up to two years. Prisons often do not meet international standards and are characterized by overcrowding, poor health conditions, and abuses of inmates by staff or other prisoners. High crime rates and concerns about police capabilities have fueled regular instances of vigilante justice and a burgeoning private security industry.

The Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC)—established in 1995 to both expose apartheid-era abuses and heal racial divisions through a series of open hearings—formally concluded its activities in 2001. By October 2004, more than 16,000 victims of abuses had received a one-time reparation payment of 30,000 rands (US\$4,600), and some 850 had been granted amnesty by the TRC for perpetrating such abuses. The controversial issue of reparations for victims of apartheid is actively debated between civil society and the government. In October 2005, the last piece of apartheid legislation, the Black Administration Act, was repealed.

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on "race, . . . ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth." State entities, such as the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) and the Office of the Public Prosecutor (OPP), are empowered to investigate and, with respect to the OPP, prosecute violations of antidiscrimination laws. Citing the legacy of the apartheid system, the government has passed a significant amount of legislation mandating affirmative action for previously disadvantaged groups (defined as "Africans," "Coloureds," and "Asians") in both public and private employment as well as education. However, racial imbalances in the workforce persist, and a majority of the country's business assets remain in the hands of white-owned businesses. The government has focused policy (with very mixed results) on reforming inequities in housing, health care, and land ownership, as well as instituting a Black Economic Empowerment program that aims to increase the

black stake in the economy, mostly via aggressive preferences in employment and government tenders.

Increased illegal immigration, particularly from Zimbabwe and Mozambique, has led to a rise in xenophobia and occasional attacks perpetrated by both police and nonstate actors. The nomadic Khoikhoi and Khomani San peoples, indigenous to South Africa, suffer from social and legal discrimination. In a March report, the SAHRC found ample evidence of police abuse of members of the Khomani San community, including police culpability in the widely publicized killing of Optel Rooi, a community leader and master tracker.

South Africa features one of the world's most liberal legal environments for homosexuals. In February 2004, the Supreme Court of Appeals ruled in favor of a lesbian couple who argued that the country's Marriage Act should include same-sex marriage; in 2002, the Constitutional Court ruled that homosexual couples should be allowed to adopt children.

The protection of property rights is a subject of much controversy in South Africa. Some 80 percent of farmland is owned by white South Africans, who make up 14 percent of the population. As a result, thousands of black and colored farm workers suffer from insecure tenure rights, and illegal squatting on white-owned farms is a serious problem. In July, delegates to a state-sponsored national land summit advised the government to revise the "willing buyer, willing seller" land redistribution program in favor of a quicker, less market-based approach. New deputy president Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, who attended the summit and supported the move away from market-friendly land reform, caused a major stir when she later stated that South Africa should "learn lessons" from and employ "the skills" of Zimbabwe in pursuing more rapid land reform. (Since 2000, Zimbabwe has seized thousands of white-owned farms and evicted both farm owners and laborers, precipitating a massive economic decline.)

Still, the state generally protects citizens from arbitrary deprivation of their property. In May, a farmer whose land had been invaded by some 40,000 squatters since 2000 (and allowed to do so by local police) was awarded compensation by the Constitutional Court. However, in a landmark development in October, the government issued the country's first expropriation order, forcing a white farmer to sell his land for redistribution after negotiations on a compensation price failed.

Equal rights for women are guaranteed by the constitution and promoted by the constitutionally mandated Commission on Gender Equality. While the constitution allows the option and practice of customary law, it does not allow such law to supersede the constitutional rights assured to women as South African citizens. Nevertheless, women suffer de facto discrimination with regard to issues surrounding marriage, divorce, inheritance, and property rights. Domestic violence and rape, both criminal offenses, are serious problems: South Africa has one of the world's highest rates of sexual abuse. Women are also subject to sexual harassment and wage discrimination in the workplace and are not well represented in top management positions. However, women hold 131 seats in the National Assembly and head 12 (of 28) ministries and 4 provinces; in June, Mbeki appointed Minerals and Energy Minister Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka as deputy president.

South Korea

Population: 48,300,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$12,030 **Civil Liberties:** 2
Life Expectancy: 77 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Christian (26 percent), Buddhist (26 percent), Confucian (1 percent), other (47 percent), other (1 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Korean
Capital: Seoul



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	1,2F	1,2F

Overview: The South Korean government had a turbulent year in 2005, as ideological disputes deepened a divide between President Roh Moo-huyn's liberal Uri Party and the conservative, opposition Grand National Party (GNP). At issue was the government's attitude toward North Korea and proposed changes to the 1948 National Security Law (NSL). In July, the Supreme Court ruled that women had equal rights as men regarding the inheritance of family property.

The Republic of Korea was established in 1948, three years after the Allied victory in World War II ended Japan's 35-year colonization of Korea and led to the division of the Korean Peninsula between U.S. (in the south) and Soviet (in the north) forces. The Korean War (1950-1953) pitted the U.S.- and UN-backed Republic of Korea (South Korea) against the Soviet- and Chinese-backed Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), and left some 3 million Koreans dead or wounded. During the Cold War, South Korea's mainly military rulers crushed left-wing dissent and kept the nation on a virtual war footing in response to the continuing threat from the North. During this time, South Korea also led an industrialization drive that transformed a poor, agrarian land into one of the world's largest economies.

South Korea began its democratic transition in 1987, when military strongman Chun Doo-hwan acceded to widespread student protests and allowed his successor to be chosen in a direct presidential election. In the vote that took place that December, Chun's protege, Roh Tai-woo, defeated the country's two best-known dissidents, Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung.

After joining the ruling party in 1990, Kim Young-sam defeated Kim Dae-jung in the 1992 presidential election to become South Korea's first civilian president since 1961. As president, Kim reduced corruption, sacked hard-line military officers, curbed the domestic security services, and successfully prosecuted former presidents Chun and Roh for corruption and treason. However, the country was hit hard by the regional financial crisis of 1997-1998. Angry over the government's failure to better supervise the country's banks and business conglomerates, South Koreans in December 1997 elected as president the former dissident Kim Dae-jung, who became the country's first opposition candidate to win a presidential election.

Under Kim, South Korea's economy rebounded to become one of the most robust in Asia.

Public frustration with a series of corruption scandals, along with criticism that Kim Dae-jung's policy of engagement with North Korea had reaped few benefits, helped the opposition Grand National Party (GNP) take the most seats in the 2000 parliamentary elections. It captured 133 out of parliament's 273 seats, with Kim's Millennium Democratic Party (MDP) taking 115. With Kim constitutionally barred from seeking a second term, Roh Moo-huyn, 56, won the December 2002 presidential elections on the MDP ticket. Roh narrowly beat Lee Hoi-chang, the candidate of the main opposition GNP, after a campaign in which Roh mixed populist promises with anti-American rhetoric.

Anti-American sentiment has grown in recent years as the South Korean population increasingly turns toward pro-North Korean sentiment; there have been ideological clashes within the government in regards to this growing sentiment, surrounding the National Security Law (NSL), as well as public disputes.

Roh took office in February 2003 facing an economic slowdown, an opposition-led parliament, and public moves by North Korea to revive its nuclear weapons program. In addition, a major fundraising scandal added urgency to long-standing calls for an overhaul of South Korea's campaign finance laws. Late in the year, prosecutors were investigating allegations that former top aides to Roh, as well as legislators from across the political spectrum, accepted millions of dollars in illegal corporate donations before and after the 2002 presidential election. The opposition-led parliament put off consideration of several bills as it remained at loggerheads with Roh over how to investigate the scandal. In October 2003, parliamentarians loyal to Roh—mostly from the MDP, but a few from the GNP—formed the Uri Party. The following month, Roh vetoed a GNP bill calling for an independent counsel to investigate allegations of corruption in his administration. The president said any independent investigation should wait until prosecutors investigating three of his former aides finished their work. Elected on pledges to improve corporate governance, bring greater transparency to state institutions, and engage (rather than contain) bellicose North Korea, Roh was forced to reshuffle his priorities.

In February 2004, Roh survived a political crisis when the opposition brought about a parliamentary motion to impeach him. The charges against him in the impeachment proceedings concerned a breach of election rules (Roh had urged support for the Uri Party), economic mismanagement, and corruption. However, these charges were widely seen as exaggerated, if not inappropriate. South Korean voters demonstrated their disapproval of the proceedings by supporting the president's party in parliamentary elections held in April 2004. The Uri Party won 152 seats to become the majority ruling party. The GNP and the MDP, the main opposition parties and the instigators of the impeachment vote, won 121 seats and 9 seats, respectively. The MDP's loss was particularly severe, and proved the impeachment vote had been an enormous miscalculation. Although Roh had stepped down from power following the impeachment vote, the Uri Party's victory in the parliamentary elections led the Constitutional Court to overturn the impeachment vote, and Roh was reinstated as president in May. Nevertheless, the Uri Party holds only a narrow majority in the parliament, and Roh's aggressive style continues to polarize the political environment within the country.

South Korea's relations with North Korea—particularly the appropriateness of the 1948 (NSL)—were a major issue in 2005. The NSL assumes an antagonistic relationship between North and South Korea and imposes restrictions on freedoms of expression, media, and of movement. During the year, the NSL came under fire for being antidemocratic and antinationalistic by the Korean public and the Uri-led government. However, the opposition GNP argued that the NSL is a key pillar of their anti-Communist platform; its repeal would be contrary to the party's ideological position and detrimental to the national interest.

While disarmament talks with North Korea remain at a standstill, South Korea has shown major progress by signing a joint declaration with the European Parliament allowing it to participate in any future talks with North Korea. Government officials hope that European participation may help speed up progress in this area.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of South Korea can change their government democratically. South Korea's elections are free and fair, and the government is elected on the basis of universal suffrage. The constitution, which was created in 1988, vests powers in a directly elected president, who is limited to a single five-year term. The unicameral National Assembly, consisting of 299 members, is directly elected for a four-year term.

The 2004 parliamentary election demonstrated that major steps had been taken since 2002 to improve electoral processes. Improvements included adherence to campaigning rules, record levels of voter turnout, and a reduction in electoral irregularities under the watch of the National Election Commission.

Political pluralism is robust in South Korean politics, with multiple political parties competing for power. Major political parties include the Uri Party, the (MDP), the the Grand National Party (GNP), the United Liberal Democrats (ULP), and the Democratic Labor Party (DLP).

Despite the overall health of the South Korean political system, bribery, influence peddling, and extortion by officials have not been eradicated from political, business, and everyday life. However, the South Korean government has made recent progress in developing institutions and laws to help fight corruption. South Korea was ranked 40 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

South Korea's news media are free and competitive. Newspapers are privately owned and report fairly aggressively on governmental policies and alleged official and corporate wrongdoing. The government directly censors films for sex and violence, though it has been increasingly liberal in recent years. Violent and sexually explicit websites are also censored. South Korea's online media have been praised by Reporters Without Borders for expanding quickly without censorship. The journalism watchdog group names South Korea as the top-ranked Asian country in the area freedom of information .

The administration of President Roh Moo-huyn has recently come under attack for trying to push through legislation that would restrict the circulation of conservative dailies, thereby restricting their influence in a strongly divided country. To the credit of the South Korean government, the law did not pass. The NSL stipulates that South Koreans may not listen to North Korean radio. However, no effective measures are in place to block access to broadcasts by North Korean stations. Re-

porters Without Borders and other organizations have supported the repeal of the NSL because its revocation would improve media freedom by allowing freer media coverage on North Korea. The GNP has threatened to obstruct a repeal motion with all "means and methods" at their disposal.

The constitution in South Korea provides for freedom of religion, and the government does not enforce any state religion. Academic freedom is also unrestricted, with the exception of limits on statements of support for the North Korean regime or pro-Communist comments.

South Korea maintains freedom of association, and the Law on Assembly and Demonstrations requires only that the police be informed in advance of all demonstrations, including political rallies. Human rights, social welfare, and other nongovernmental groups are active and operate freely.

South Korea's independent labor unions strongly advocate workers' interests, often by organizing high-profile strikes and demonstrations that sometimes lead to arrests. According to the U.S. State Department's 2005 human rights report, there were 228 strikes, involving 105,577 workers, between January and August 2005. Beginning in 2006, multiple unions will be permitted at the company level, a change expected to give workers greater choice of representatives. The law, however, still bars defense industry and white-collar government workers from forming unions and bargaining collectively, although government workers can form more limited workplace councils. Even those federations not recognized by the government operate in practice without restriction, however. Collective bargaining is widespread among both legal and unrecognized labor federations.

South Korea's judiciary is generally considered to be independent, and the U.S. State Department report declared that it is "becoming increasingly so in practice." There is no trial by jury; judges render verdicts in all cases. The National Police Administration, under the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs, is occasionally responsible for human rights abuses such as verbal and physical abuse of detainees. The police administration is generally considered well-disciplined and uncorrupt.

Laws concerning detention are often vague. Of particular concern is the broadly drafted NSL, which authorizes the arrest of South Koreans accused of espionage or of supporting North Korea in general. The interpretation of this law means that people can be arrested for making positive remarks about North Korea, although these arrests are the subject of considerable dispute. In August 2004, the Constitutional Court ruled that the law did not excessively restrict human rights, but in October, the ruling Uri Party introduced legislation to loosen or scrap the law, offering the country alternatives ranging from revisions of the existing law to the drafting of an entirely new law. The move was part of the government's broader reform drive, but thousands of people rallied in protest, asserting that the law in its current form was still a necessary safeguard against security threats from North Korea.

Because South Korean citizenship is based on parentage rather than place of birth, non-ethnic South Koreans face extreme difficulties obtaining citizenship. Lack of citizenship bars them from the civil service and makes it harder to be hired by some major corporations. The country's very few ethnic minorities face legal and societal discrimination.

The government generally respects citizens' right to privacy. An Anti-Wiretap

Law sets out the conditions under which the government can monitor phone calls, mail, and e-mail. Travel both within South Korea and abroad is unrestricted; the only exception is travel to North Korea, for which government approval is required.

Although women in South Korea possess de jure equality, there is considerable de facto discrimination within society, with men enjoying more social privileges and better employment opportunities. However, a landmark ruling by the Supreme Court in July 2005 granted married women in South Korea equal property rights with men concerning the inheritance of property owned by family clans. Previously, married women were considered to be part of their husband's family and were not eligible to inherit family property. Women's rights groups in South Korea hailed the decision as significant for reducing gender discrimination within the family.

Spain

Population: 43,500,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$17,040 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 80 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (94 percent),
 other (6 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Mediterranean and Nordic
Capital: Madrid



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	19978	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

A solid majority of Spanish voters backed the European Union (EU) constitution in a national referendum in February 2005. In regional elections in April, the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) won the most votes in that region, but failed to win a majority. In May, the Spanish parliament gave the government permission to begin peace talks with Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA, or Basque Fatherland and Freedom)—the Basque separatist group—if the group agreed to a complete ceasefire. During the year, Spain arrested dozens of people suspected of involvement in terrorist activities, including the March 2004 Madrid train bombings.

The unification of present-day Spain dates from 1512. After a period of colonial influence and wealth, the country declined as a European power and was occupied by France in the early nineteenth century. By the end of the century, after a number of wars and revolts, Spain lost its American colonies. The Spanish Civil War, from 1936 to 1939, led to the deaths of more than 350,000 Spaniards and the victory of Franco's Nationalists, who executed, jailed, and exiled the opposition Republicans. During Franco's long rule, many countries cut off diplomatic ties, and his regime was ostracized by the United Nations from 1946 to 1955. Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA, or Basque Fatherland and Freedom)—the Basque separatist group—was formed in 1959 with the aim of creating an independent Basque homeland. After a transitional

period upon Franco's death in 1975, Spain emerged as a parliamentary democracy, joining the European Economic Community, the precursor to the European Union (EU), in 1986.

During the March 2004 parliamentary elections, the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) won more than 43 percent of the vote, capturing 164 seats in the Congress of Deputies (lower house). The PSOE toppled the conservative Popular Party (PP), which had been in power for 11 years, and which took 148 seats. Other parties winning seats included the left Convergence and Union (CiU); Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC); the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV); the United Left (IU); and the Canarian Coalition (CC). Lacking an outright majority, the PSOE relied on the support of various regionalist parties to support its legislation. In the Senate, the PP led by winning 102 directly elected seats, while the PSOE took 81.

The election came only three days after multiple terrorist bombings of commuter trains in Madrid that killed close to 200 people. Shortly after the bombing, the conservative government blamed ETA, a factor that angered voters when it was discovered that the perpetrators were instead linked to al-Qaeda. The attacks allegedly came in response to the conservative government's staunch support of the U.S.-led war in Iraq. Shortly after his accession to the post of prime minister, Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero pulled the 1,300 Spanish troops out of Iraq. However, he also promised to double the Spanish peacekeeping force in Afghanistan; Spain currently has around 850 NATO troops in Afghanistan. In August 2005, 17 Spanish peacekeepers were killed when their helicopter crashed into the top of a hill in the western city of Herat in Afghanistan.

During 2005, Spain arrested dozens of people suspected of involvement in terrorist activities. In September, a Syrian-born man, Imad Yarkas, was found guilty by a Spanish court of conspiring with the September 11 plotters; this was the first time a defendant in Europe has been found guilty of direct links to the September 11 attacks in the United States. Spanish authorities jailed Tayssir Alouni, a former Al-Jazeera journalist, for collaborating with a terrorist organization. Alouni, a Syrian-born Spanish citizen who in the past had interviewed Osama bin Laden for Al-Jazeera, was sentenced to seven years for acting as a financial courier to al-Qaeda; Alouni has denied the charges.

In January, the Basque regional parliament narrowly voted to support PNV leader Juan Jose Ibarretxe's independence plan for the region, which includes a separate judiciary and financial system, and separate citizenship; the plan was eventually rejected by the Spanish parliament (National Assembly). In February, Ibarretxe became the first head of one of Spain's 17 semiautonomous regions to address the National Assembly. In April, the PNV won the most votes in regional elections, but failed to win a majority. The newly formed Communist Party of the Basque Country (EHAK) captured nine seats.

In May, the National Assembly gave the government permission to begin peace talks with ETA if the separatist group agreed to a complete ceasefire. In June, ETA agreed to only a limited ceasefire, saying that it would halt attacks on elected politicians. Suspected Basque militants were arrested throughout the year, and a number of bombings in 2005 were linked to ETA.

Spain's lower house of parliament passed a law in June allowing same-sex couples to marry and adopt children, making Spain the third country in the world to legalize same-

sex marriages. The first marriage between two men happened shortly afterward in July. A Spanish judge challenged the new law, saying the marriages are incompatible with the constitution, which refers to marriage as only between a man and a woman.

In February, a solid majority of Spanish voters backed the EU constitution in a national referendum. Although 77 percent of voters approved the constitution, the victory for pro-Europeanists was undermined by the low turnout of only 42 percent—the lowest of any national vote since Spain restored democracy two decades ago.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Spain can change their government democratically. The Congress of Deputies, the lower house of the National Assembly, has 350 members who are elected from closed party lists in individual constituencies. The Senate has 259 members, 208 of which are directly elected and 51 of which are appointed as regional representatives. Members of both the Senate and Congress serve four-year terms. Following legislative elections, the prime minister (also the president of the government) is selected as a candidate by the monarch and is usually the leader of the majority party or coalition. The candidate must also be elected by the National Assembly. The country is divided into 17 autonomous regions with varying degrees of power.

People generally have the right to organize in different political parties and other competitive groups of their choice. The main political parties are the PSOE, the PP, the left CiU, the ERC, the PNV, the IU, and the CC. However, the Basque-separatist Batasuna party remains permanently banned since 2003 for its alleged ties to the armed group ETA.

Spain ranked 23 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index. According to a 2004 report by Transparency International, the country's anticorruption efforts have improved in recent years. Spain has a free and lively press with more than 100 newspapers that cover a wide range of perspectives and are active in investigating high-level corruption. Daily newspaper ownership, however, is concentrated within large media groups like Prisa and Zeta. Arnaldo Otegi, a spokesman for the banned Basque nationalist party Batasuna, was sentenced to a year in prison for slandering Juan Carlos, the king of Spain. Otegi, a convicted kidnapper who currently faces charges for defending terrorism, said that the king was "in charge of torturers." Journalists who oppose the political views of ETA are often targets of the Basque separatist group. Internet access is not restricted.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed in Spain through constitutional and legal protections. Roman Catholicism, however, is the dominant religion and enjoys privileges that other religions do not, such as financing through the tax system. Jews, Muslims, and Protestants have official status through bilateral agreements with the state, while other religions (for example, Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons) have no special agreements with the state. The government does not restrict academic freedom. However, academics who oppose the political views of ETA are often targets of the Basque separatist group.

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly, and the government respects this right in practice. People are free to demonstrate and speak publicly. Domestic and international nongovernmental organizations operate freely without government restrictions. With the exception of members of the military, workers are free to

organize and join unions of their choice. Workers also have the right to strike, although there are limitations imposed on foreigners. The Basic Act on Rights and Freedoms of Foreigners in Spain, which went into force in 2001, limits the rights of foreign workers to organize and strike. The law, which forces foreigners to "obtain authorization for their stay or residence in Spain" before they can organize, strike, or freely assemble, is intended to distinguish between "legal" and "irregular" foreigners. The issue is currently before the Constitutional Court. In 2005, the Comisiones Obreras, Spain's largest trade union confederation, called for labor rights for prostitutes. According to the confederation, of the approximately 300,000 to 400,000 prostitutes working in the country, about 90 percent are immigrants.

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary. However, there have been concerns about the functioning of the judicial system, including the impact of media pressure on sensitive issues like immigration and Basque terrorism. There have been reports of police abuse of prisoners, especially immigrants. Police can also hold suspects of certain terror-related crimes for up to five days with access only to a public lawyer. Prison conditions generally meet international standards.

In April, an Argentine ex-naval officer, Adolfo Scilingo, was convicted of crimes against humanity and given 640 years in prison by a Spanish court. The offenses were committed during Argentina's "dirty war" between 1976 and 1983, when the country was under military rule. Some of Scilingo's victims, including Spanish citizens, were drugged, stripped naked, and thrown out of planes. The trial was the first under new laws in Spain that allow local prosecution for crimes committed in another country. In October, Spain's highest court expanded its powers to include cases of genocide committed abroad, even if Spanish citizens are not involved.

In October, a Spanish national, Hamed Abderrahman Ahmed, was convicted of belonging to a terrorist organization, al-Qaeda. Abderrahman, who had been held in U.S. military custody in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, for two years, was turned over to Spanish authorities in February 2004.

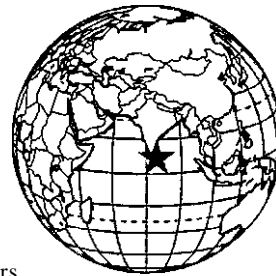
Under the new PSOE government of Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, the country instituted a three-month amnesty for illegal immigrants, which came to a close in May. Immigrants who could show residency in Spain for at least six months, a work contract of at least six months, and a clean criminal record were given the right to live and work in Spain. Human Rights Watch called for an independent investigation into abuses committed against illegal immigrants trying to enter Spain from Morocco. After international criticism of its deportation policies, Spain halted a recently resurrected 1992 agreement with Morocco, which allowed Spain to return all illegal immigrants who enter Spanish territory from Morocco, regardless of their nationality. Many of the illegal immigrants enter Spain by way of the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in Morocco. The country's Aliens Law also allows for the expulsion of legal immigrants if they are involved in activities that are considered threatening to the country's national security.

Women enjoy legal protections against rape, domestic abuse, and sexual harassment in the workplace. However, violence against women—particularly within the home—remains a serious problem in the country. The new prime minister has made the protection of women's rights and gender equality a centerpiece of his administration. A new law was introduced to parliament over the year that would force men to share household chores and the care of their children and elderly family

members. If adopted, men will have to sign a marriage contract at the wedding that will oblige them to share domestic responsibilities or face penalties in the event of a divorce settlement. Trafficking in women for the purpose of sexual exploitation remains a problem. In February 2005, the government modified its Aliens Law to include a provision for providing assistance to trafficking victims, the U.S. State Department reports, including making it easier to obtain residency permits. There are no quotas for women in national elective office. However, 35 percent of the seats in parliament during the elections in March were won by women, a 7 percent increase from the previous elections in 2000.

↓ Sri Lanka

Population: 19,700,000 **Political Rights:** 3
GNI/capita: \$930 **Civil Liberties:** 3
Life Expectancy: 73 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Buddhist (69.1 percent),
 Muslim (7.6 percent), Hindu (7.1 percent),
 Christian (6.2 percent), other (10 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Sinhalese (73.8 percent), Sri Lankan Moors
 (7.2 percent), Indian Tamil (4.6 percent), Sri Lankan Tamil (3.9 percent),
 other (10.5 percent)
Capital: Colombo



Trend Arrow: Sri Lanka received a downward trend arrow due to an increase in political violence and targeted assassinations, particularly in the eastern province, during the year.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
3,5PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF

Overview:

Political fractiousness continued to weaken the Sri Lankan government and polity during 2005, mostly as a result of differences between former president Chandrika Kumaratunga's ruling People's Alliance (PA) coalition and its partner the leftist People's Liberation Front (JVP) over the correct approach to the peace process and to rehabilitation efforts conducted in the wake of the December 2004 tsunami. The year ended with a narrow victory for the PA candidate, Mahinda Rajapakse, in the November presidential election, but the government continues to rule without a clear mandate. Meanwhile, wrangling between the southern political factions continued to impede any meaningful progress on peace talks with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE, or Tamil Tigers) separatist rebels. The February 2002 ceasefire is technically still in place, but was increasingly tested during the year by violations, mostly on the part of the LTTE; those violations included politically motivated killings, skirmishes with government troops and breakaway factions, the forcible conscription of child soldiers, and restrictions on freedom of expression and of association.

Since independence from Britain in 1948, political power in this island nation, formerly known as Ceylon, has alternated between the conservative United National Party (UNP) and the leftist Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). While the country made impressive gains in literacy, basic health care, and other social needs, its economic development was stunted and its social fabric tested by a long-standing civil war that has killed an estimated 65,000 people. The conflict initially pitted several Tamil guerrilla groups against the government, which is dominated by the Sinhalese majority. The war, although triggered by anti-Tamil riots in 1983 that claimed hundreds of lives, came in the context of long-standing Tamil claims of discrimination in education and employment opportunities. By 1986, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which called for an independent Tamil homeland in the North Eastern Province, had eliminated most rival Tamil guerrilla groups and was in control of much of the northern Jaffna Peninsula. At the same time, the government was also fighting an insurgency in the south by the leftist People's Liberation Front (JVP). The JVP insurgency, and the brutal methods used by the army to quell it in 1989, killed 60,000 people.

In 1994, Chandrika Kumaratunga ended nearly two decades of UNP rule by leading the SLFP-dominated People's Alliance (PA) coalition to victory in parliamentary elections and then winning the presidential election. Early in her term, she tried to negotiate a peace agreement with the LTTE, but following a renewal of hostilities by the LTTE, she reverted to focusing on a military solution to the conflict. Kumaratunga won early presidential elections in 1999, but the UNP and its allies gained a majority in parliamentary elections held in December 2001 and Ranil Wickremasinghe, the UNP leader, became prime minister.

In response to an LTTE ceasefire offer, the new government declared a truce, lifted its ban on the LTTE and its economic embargo on rebel-held territory, and restarted Norwegian-brokered peace talks. A permanent ceasefire accord with provisions for international monitoring was signed in February 2002. By December, the government and the Tamil Tigers had agreed to share political power in a federal system. Although the LTTE suspended its participation in peace talks in April 2003, it stated that it remained committed to a political solution.

However, the peace process has remained constrained since then by conflict between the main political parties about how to approach the Tigers, as well as by intransigence on the part of the Tigers themselves. In November 2003, President Kumaratunga declared a state of emergency and temporarily suspended parliament, stating that recently revealed LTTE proposals for the establishment of a Tiger-dominated interim self-governing authority (ISGA) in the North Eastern Province were a threat to national security. Although the state of emergency was pulled back and parliament resumed functioning, Wickremasinghe claimed that his ability to govern had been severely curtailed by the fact that Kumaratunga continued to hold the important defense portfolio.

The impasse was broken when the president dissolved parliament and called for elections to be held in April 2004. Bolstered by the direct support of the Marxist JVP, Kumaratunga's new PA-led United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) coalition won 105 out of 225 seats and managed to form a minority government. Apart from the JVP, other extremist and ethnic-based parties also made inroads, including a new party formed by Buddhist clergy, the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU, or National Heri-

tage Party), which won 9 seats. The new government's tenuous grip on power became immediately apparent when it failed to secure the election of its candidate to the post of Speaker of Parliament; instead, the UNP was able to win the position with the help of votes from members of the smaller ethnic parties.

Though Kumaratunga remained committed to finding a political solution to the ethnic conflict, progress in resuming meaningful peace talks was complicated by the addition to the ruling coalition of the JVP, which adamantly opposes granting more powers to the provinces or to the LTTE, and by the presence of pro-Sinhalese forces such as the JHU in parliament. Such stances are completely at odds with the LTTE's insistence that any future talks include discussions on the formation of an ISGA, which would give the LTTE effective rule over the North Eastern Province, and Kumaratunga was unwilling to risk the stability of her coalition government by proceeding with talks on such a basis.

Meanwhile, the ceasefire with the LTTE continued to hold, despite increasing incidences of violations. Uncertainty was also created in early 2004 when the LTTE leader in the Eastern Province, Colonel Karuna, who controlled an estimated 6,000 out of a total of 15,000 LTTE troops, formed a breakaway faction, alleging discrimination in the treatment of eastern Tamils by the LTTE leadership. However, his rebellion proved to be short-lived; after fierce internecine fighting in April, Karuna disbanded his forces and went into hiding, although clashes and killings between the two groups have continued as both attempt to reassert their control over the east. The LTTE has alleged that the government has provided logistical support to Karuna, although the government denies these claims.

The December 2004 tsunami devastated parts of the Sri Lankan coast, killing 31,000 and displacing up to 500,000 people. Initially, it was hoped that the disaster would force the LTTE (whose cadres had been weakened by the destruction) and government to work together on the extensive rehabilitation efforts required, but after an immediate period of cooperation, tensions emerged over the details of the proposed Post-Tsunami Operations Management Structure (P-TOMS) agreement. While some alleged that it discriminated against Tamils and Muslims, the JVP opposed the overall framework of the agreement, arguing that it gave the LTTE too large a role in the reconstruction effort. When President Kumaratunga signed the agreement in June 2005, the JVP pulled out of the ruling coalition and asked the Supreme Court to declare the P-TOMS agreement to be illegal. In July, the Supreme Court upheld the right of the president to enter into the agreement but rejected several of its provisions, thereby hindering its overall implementation. With a diminished strength in the legislature, the ruling coalition was further weakened and unable to move forward with its policy objectives, including restarting the peace talks.

In another key decision, the Supreme Court ruled in August that the presidential elections, which Kumaratunga had controversially tried to postpone until 2006, should be held in 2005. As Kumaratunga was barred from standing again because of term limits, the PA nominated Mahinda Rajapakse, prime minister since 2004, as its candidate. Against the wishes of Kumaratunga and some other party leaders, Rajapakse immediately took a hard line, alienating minority groups and making preelection alliances with the JVP and JHU in which he committed himself to abolishing the P-TOMS mechanism and renegotiating the ceasefire agreement. As a result, largely, of an LTTE boycott, which led to extremely low voter turnout in the Tamil-majority

northern and eastern areas (for example, 1.2 percent in Jaffna as compared with more than 70 percent nationally), Rajapakse narrowly won the November 17 presidential election with 50.3 percent of votes cast, as opposed to 48.4 percent for his opponent, former prime minister Ranil Wickremasinghe. Calls for the vote to be re-administered in certain areas were rejected by the election commission.

Throughout the year, the increased incidence of ceasefire violations and violence, mostly instigated by the LTTE, that was noted in 2004 continued to rise. Political killings included members of rival Tamil parties, suspected Karuna sympathizers and government informants, and journalists and human rights workers. High-profile assassinations included that of Rizwi Meedin, a senior intelligence agent, and of Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar, who was killed in Colombo in August. Kadirgamar, an ethnic Tamil, was a vociferous critic of the LTTE and had led the drive to have the LTTE declared a terrorist organization. Heightened tensions between all three ethnic communities—Sinhalese, Tamil, and Muslim—in the east led to almost daily killings and other forms of intimidation. Low-level fighting between the LTTE and Karuna factions and skirmishes between the LTTE and the army have also continued, bringing the two sides close to direct military confrontation in July. The LTTE has also continued to recruit and train new cadres and enhance their military capabilities, which leads some to believe that in the absence of a political settlement, the group may risk a return to outright war.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Sri Lanka can change their government democratically. The 1978 constitution vested strong executive powers in a president who is directly elected for a six-year term and can dissolve parliament. The 225-member unicameral parliament is directly elected for a five-year term through a mix of single-seat, simple-plurality districts and proportional representation. Elections are open to multiple parties, and fair electoral laws and equal campaigning opportunities ensure a competitive political process.

While elections are generally free and fair, they continue to be marred by some irregularities, violence, and intimidation, and the LTTE generally refuses to allow free elections in the areas under its control. The interim report issued by the independent Center for Monitoring Election Violence noted that with 368 incidents on election day, the 2004 parliamentary elections were considerably less beleaguered by violence and malpractice than previous polls had been. The interim report of the European Union Election Observation Mission on the November 2005 presidential election noted that the election had proceeded fairly smoothly in the south, despite some inappropriate use of state resources for campaign purposes and biased reporting by both state-run and private media outlets. However, voting in the north, held under a boycott enforced by the LTTE, was marred by violence and intimidation (including political killings and grenade attacks on polling stations and on the buses designed to carry voters into government-controlled territory) and resulted in very low levels of voter participation.

In recent years, the fact that the executive and legislative branches of government have been controlled by competing parties headed by long-standing political rivals has led to a general unwillingness to effectively resolve issues and construct coherent state policies. Although President Chandrika Kumaratunga's coalition was able to unseat the UNP's Ranil Wickremasinghe in the April 2004 elections and form

a minority government headed by her choice of prime minister, the coalition lacks the mandate and parliamentary strength to accomplish meaningful change. Differences of opinion between the main political factions over the correct way to approach the peace process have led to an inability to formulate a united strategy toward the LTTE and its specific demands during the ongoing but currently stalled negotiations.

Official corruption is a growing concern, and the legal and administrative framework currently in force is inadequate in terms of either promoting integrity or punishing the corrupt behavior of public officials. No current or former politician has thus far been sentenced for bribery or corruption, although a number of cases are under investigation or prosecution. Sri Lanka was ranked 78 out of 159 countries surveyed in the 2005 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is provided for in the constitution, and independent media outlets can generally express their views openly. However, the Colombo-based Free Media Movement (FMM) has noted that state-run media—including Sri Lanka's largest newspaper chain, two major television stations, and a radio station—have been used by the government for political ends, including pressure on editors and biased election coverage. The LTTE does not permit free expression in the areas under its control and continues to terrorize a number of Tamil journalists and other critics. Increasing tension and violence during 2005, both between the government and LTTE and between the LTTE and other Tamil factions, negatively affected journalists' ability to cover the news freely, particularly in the troubled north and east. A number of journalists and media outlets faced intimidation (including death threats) during the year, two Tamil journalists were killed, and distributors and Tamil media outlets were also attacked.

Journalists, particularly those who cover human rights issues or official misconduct, continue to face intimidation and threats from the police and security forces and from government officials; the critical English-language newspaper *Sunday Leader* and its editor, Lasantha Wikramatunga, were particularly singled out by authorities in this regard during the year. In a growing trend, those perceived as being supportive of Tamil interests have drawn ire from Sinhalese nationalist groups. In May, the FMM received death threats from one such extremist group, while other journalists and media outlets, such as *Sudaroli*, a Tamil-language newspaper based in Colombo, have also been targeted. Meanwhile, reporters attempting to cover the news face harassment by political activists, Sinhalese nationalist groups, and the LTTE. The environment for media workers worsened particularly prior to the November presidential election campaign. Internet access is not restricted.

Religious freedom is respected and members of all faiths are generally allowed to worship freely, although the constitution gives special status to Buddhism and there is some discrimination and occasional violence against religious minorities. The LTTE discriminates against Muslims in the areas under its control and has attacked Buddhist sites in the past. The U.S. State Department's 2005 Report on International Religious Freedom notes that Christian missionaries are occasionally harassed by Buddhist clergy and others opposed to their work. Tensions between the island's Buddhist majority and the Christian minority—and in particular, evangelical Christian groups—are worsening, according to a 2004 report released by the U.S.-based Jubilee Campaign, with a sharp increase in attacks against churches and

individuals noted from the end of 2003 and the introduction of anticonversion legislation in July 2004. This trend continued in 2005, as the JHU made repeated efforts to push such legislation through Parliament.

The government generally respects academic freedom. However, the LTTE has a record of repressing the voices of those intellectuals who criticize its actions, sometimes through murder or other forms of violent intimidation. Groups such as the University Teachers for Human Rights-Jaffna (UTHR-J) have faced particularly severe harassment at the hands of the LTTE.

Freedom of assembly is generally respected, although political parties occasionally disrupt each other's rallies and gatherings. On several occasions during the year, police used excessive force to disperse demonstrations. In June, the BBC reported that police used tear gas and batons to break up a protest by Buddhist monks opposed to a tsunami-aid deal with Tamil rebels. Except in conflict-affected areas, human rights and social welfare nongovernmental organizations generally operate freely. However, the LTTE does not allow for freedom of association in the regions under its control and reportedly uses coercion to force civilians to attend pro-LTTE rallies.

Sri Lanka has a strong workers' rights tradition, with more than 1,500 trade unions registered. Most unions are independent and are legally allowed to engage in collective bargaining. Except for civil servants, most workers can hold strikes. However, under the 1989 Essential Services Act, the president can declare a strike in any industry illegal. Kumaratunga used the act to end several strikes. Employers on tea plantations routinely violate the rights of the mainly Tamil workforce.

Successive governments have respected the constitutional provision for an independent judiciary, and judges can generally make decisions in an atmosphere free of overt intimidation from the legislative or executive branches. However, there is growing concern about the perceived politicization of the judiciary, in particular regarding the conduct of the chief justice of the Supreme Court, Sarath Nanda Silva. According to the FMM, in recent years Silva has narrowed the scope of human rights litigation, dismissed a number of judges without holding an inquiry or disciplinary hearing, and consistently defended the government in legal actions relating to political disputes. At the lower levels of the judiciary, corruption is fairly common among both judges and court staff, and those willing to pay bribes have more efficient access to the legal system.

Despite an overall reduction in the number of human rights abuses committed by police and security forces, the rule of law remains somewhat weak, and torture and prolonged detention without trial continue to be issues of particular concern. Such practices are facilitated by legislation such as the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), under which security personnel can arrest and detain suspects indefinitely without court approval. Most of those detained under the PTA were released following the February 2002 ceasefire, but several dozen have been kept in custody, according to Amnesty International. Emergency regulations, under which detainees can be held for up to a year without trial, were brought into force after the tsunami and again after the assassination of Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar in August 2005. Although more than 1,700 suspects were detained during the year under these regulations, the majority were released within 24 hours.

There has been little progress in reducing acts of torture by the security forces and police, particularly of detainees during routine interrogations in order to extract

confessions. The independent National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), established in 1997, is empowered to investigate human rights abuses but has suffered from insufficient authority and resources. It recently focused its attention on the issue of police torture and has opened investigations into cases involving more than 100 police officers; perhaps as a result, the NHRC was attacked in October 2005 by unknown persons who ransacked offices, destroyed files, and set papers on fire. Cases of custodial death and custodial rape also continue to occur, with several dozen cases being reported in 2005. A lack of aggressive prosecution of the majority of past abuses contributes to a climate of impunity for those who have overstepped the bounds of the law. In May, Human Rights Watch criticized the Supreme Court acquittal of the remaining defendants in the case of the 2000 mob killing of 27 Tamil inmates at the Bindunuwewa detention facility.

The LTTE has effective control on the ground in large sections of the north and east of the country and operates a parallel administration that includes schools, hospitals, courts, and police and other law enforcement personnel. The Tigers raise money through extortion, kidnapping, theft, and the seizure of Muslim property, and have used threats and attacks to close schools, courts, and government agencies in their self-styled Tamil homeland. Despite their involvement in the peace process, the rebels continue to be responsible for summary executions of civilians, "disappearances," arbitrary abductions and detentions, torture, and the forcible conscription of children to be used as soldiers. Press reports, as well as an exhaustive November 2004 Human Rights Watch report, indicate that the Tigers continue to recruit thousands of teenage girls and boys despite their June 2003 pledge to release all children within their ranks. Recruitment efforts are at times so intense that parents keep their children home from school so that they will not be forcibly abducted. In July 2005, the BBC reported that UNICEF had noted an increase in recruitment by the LTTE during the previous two months, and this trend continued during the latter half of the year.

The LTTE has also targeted Tamil political parties, journalists, and human rights activists that challenge its claim to represent the Tamil people, particularly the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP). The U.S. State Department's 2005 report said that more than 100 people were killed as a consequence of their political affiliation during the year, including EPDP members, followers of the breakaway Karuna faction of the LTTE, military intelligence officers, elected officials, and members of civil society. In addition, the Norwegian-led Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission has received reports of more than 1,466 politically motivated abductions. The Tigers typically deny all involvement in politically motivated violence, as well as the abduction of children, despite clear evidence to the contrary. In 2005, killings of army and navy personnel, as well as of suspected informers and intelligence agents, also dramatically increased.

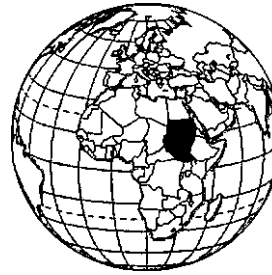
Tamils maintain that they face systematic discrimination in several matters controlled by the state, including government employment, university education, and access to justice. Thousands of Tamils whose ancestors were brought from India to work as indentured laborers in the nineteenth century did not qualify for Sri Lankan citizenship and faced discrimination and exploitation by the native Sinhalese. However, in October 2003, parliament approved legislation granting citizenship to about 170,000 previously stateless "Indian" Tamils. Tensions between the three major ethnic

groups (Sinhalese, Tamil, and Muslim), which lead to occasional violent clashes, remain a concern. According to Refugees International, an estimated 350,000 internally displaced refugees remain unwilling or unable to return to the northeast and continue to live in government-run camps throughout the country, while at least 500,000 were displaced as a result of the tsunami.

Women are underrepresented in politics and the civil service. Female employees in the private sector face some sexual harassment as well as discrimination in salary and promotion opportunities. Rape and domestic violence against women remain serious problems, and authorities weakly enforce existing laws. Although women have equal rights under civil and criminal law, matters related to the family, including marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance, are adjudicated under the customary law of each ethnic or religious group, and the application of these laws sometimes results in discrimination against women. The government remains committed to ensuring that children have good access to free education and health care, and has also taken steps to prosecute those suspected of crimes against children, including pedophilia.

Sudan

Population: 40,200,000 **Political Rights:** 7
GNI/capita: \$460 **Civil Liberties:** 7
Life Expectancy: 57 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim (70 percent), indigenous beliefs (25 percent), Christian (5 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Black (52 percent), Arab (39 percent), Beja (6 percent), other (3 percent)
Capital: Khartoum



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF

Overview:

While Sudan's 22-year-long civil war in the south concluded with a peace pact in 2005, widespread ethnic cleansing, massacres, and rape continued in the country's western Darfur region throughout the year. On-again, off-again talks between the government and Darfur rebel groups and an expanded African Union force failed to dampen the violence. The peace deal enacted a power-sharing arrangement with the southern leader John Garang, who was killed later in the year in a helicopter crash. A new violent front threatened to emerge in the country's east, as previously dormant rebel groups, demanding economic equality, clashed with government forces.

Sudan, Africa's largest country, achieved independence in 1956 after nearly 80 years of British rule, and it has been embroiled in civil wars for 39 of its 49 years as an independent state. The Anyanya movement, representing mainly Christian and

animist black Africans in southern Sudan, battled Arab Muslim government forces from 1956 to 1972. In 1969, General Jafar Numeiri toppled an elected government, ushering in a military dictatorship. The South gained extensive autonomy under a 1972 accord, and for the next decade, an uneasy peace prevailed. Then, in 1983, Numeiri restricted southern autonomy and imposed Sharia (Islamic law). Civil war resumed, and Numeiri was overthrown in 1985. Civilian rule was restored in 1986 with the election of a government led by Sadiq al-Mahdi of the moderate Islamic Ummah Party. War, however, continued. Lieutenant General Omar al-Bashir ousted al-Mahdi in a 1989 coup, and al-Mahdi spent seven years in prison or under house arrest before fleeing to Eritrea. Until 1999, al-Bashir ruled through a military-civilian regime backed by senior Muslim clerics including Hassan al-Turabi, who wielded considerable power as the ruling National Congress (NC) party leader and speaker of the National Assembly.

Tensions between al-Bashir and al-Turabi climaxed in December 1999; on the eve of a parliamentary vote on a plan by al-Turabi to curb presidential powers, al-Bashir dissolved parliament and declared a state of emergency. He fired al-Turabi as NC head, replaced the cabinet with his own supporters, and held deeply flawed presidential and parliamentary elections in December 2000, which the NC won overwhelmingly. In June 2000, al-Turabi formed his own party, the Popular National Congress (PNC), but he was prohibited from participating in politics. In January 2001, the Ummah Party refused to join al-Bashir's new government despite the president's invitation, declaring that it refused to support totalitarianism.

Al-Turabi and some 20 of his supporters were arrested in February 2001 after he called for a national uprising against the government and signed a memorandum of understanding in Geneva with the southern-based, rebel Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA). In May 2001, al-Turabi and four aides were charged with conspiracy to overthrow the government; al-Turabi was placed under house arrest. In September 2002, he was moved to a high-security prison and subsequently released in October 2003.

By sidelining al-Turabi, who was considered a leading force behind Sudan's efforts to export Islamic extremism, al-Bashir began to lift Sudan out of international isolation. Although Vice President Ali Osman Mohammed Taha—who replaced al-Turabi as Islamic ideologue—remained committed to Sudan's status as an Islamic state and to the government's self-proclaimed jihad against non-Muslims, al-Bashir has managed in recent years to repair relations with several countries, including the United States. After the September 11 terrorist attacks against the United States, al-Bashir offered his country's cooperation in combating terrorism. Sudan had previously provided a safe haven for Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda, the terrorist network. In March 2004, al-Turabi was again placed under house arrest, this time on suspicion of plotting a coup with sympathizers of rebel groups in the western region of Darfur; Al-Turabi had been outspokenly critical of the government's tactics in the region. He remained in detention in 2005.

Sudan's international image remained tarnished in 2005 as violence in Darfur continued. The conflict began in February 2003 when the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), representing black farmers and villagers in Darfur, attacked Sudanese military garrisons in the region. Darfur residents had long complained of official discrimination, unfair economic and land rights, and occasional pogrom-type attacks by state-backed Arab militias, known as

"Janjaweed." By early 2004, government and Janjaweed attacks against villages in Darfur were well under way, creating mass casualties and an enormous refugee crisis. Sudanese jet fighters and helicopter gunships routinely bombed and strafed villages. Horse- and camel-mounted Janjaweed militiamen, in seeming coordination with airborne government forces, would often follow air strikes, massacring survivors, especially men and boys. These tactics continued to be employed in 2005. Hundreds of thousands of people, their villages torched, were forcibly displaced, relegated to makeshift, government-run refugee camps. Tens of thousands escaped westward to neighboring Chad. Attacks seemed to focus on three black tribal groups—the Fur, Massalit, and Zhagawa—leading to charges of racial discrimination, ethnic cleansing, and genocide by international human rights organizations.

In 2005, the African Union increased its force in Darfur to 7,000 troops. However, the troops lacked a civilian protection mandate authorizing the use of force, effectively rendering them eyewitness bystanders to the violence, able only to monitor and report on events on the ground. By November, the total number of people killed in the conflict ranged from 70,000 to 400,000, with at least 2 million displaced.

Government-run camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) set up throughout Darfur lacked adequate sanitation facilities, water, or feeding centers. The government also routinely blocked humanitarian workers from accessing the camps. Reports of hunger and malnutrition surfaced during the year as aid groups lost access to IDP camps. The government also cut off jet fuel to aid groups, hampering airdrops of food and relief materials. To discourage villagers from returning home, Janjaweed militiamen have at times dumped the corpses of executed civilians into village wells to poison the water. Male refugees generally avoided venturing outside refugee camps for fear of being murdered; women generally went out in search of firewood and water, often exposing themselves to rape by Janjaweed and government soldiers.

In July, the government and the SLA and JEM signed a declaration of principles to end the conflict, but a comprehensive deal was never achieved. Within two months, Janjaweed and government attacks resumed; 29 people were killed in one attack on an IDP camp.

In a separate conflict, fighting between people belonging to the Beja tribes and government forces erupted in the eastern region of Sudan in the beginning of the year. The Beja have long complained of marginalization and economic neglect. In January, 14 people were killed in Port Sudan when police dispersed demonstrators. More fighting erupted in June, as rebel groups known as the Beja Congress and the Rashaida Free Lions clashed with authorities. The rebellion grew in intensity in September, raising fears of a new violent front in the country.

The 23-year-long conflict in southern Sudan was officially brought to an end at the beginning of 2005. Sudan's government and the SPLA signed a permanent ceasefire and power- and wealth-sharing accords. The war had pitted government forces and government-backed, northern Arab Muslims against African animists and Christians in the country's oil-rich South. A convoluted mix of historical, religious, ethnic, and cultural tensions has made peace elusive, while competition for economic resources—most notably, oil—had fueled the conflict. Throughout the war, the government regularly bombed civilian targets in the south, including villages, churches, and humanitarian relief facilities. The government also denied hu-

humanitarian relief workers access to rebel-held areas or areas containing large concentrations of internal refugees. The SPLA also engaged in attacks on civilians and recruited child soldiers.

The peace agreement includes a six-year transition period that will culminate in a referendum on southern secession, during which time the government will withdraw 80 percent of its troops from the south. In July, SPLA leader John Garang was appointed top deputy to President al-Bashir, but less than a month later, Garang was killed in a helicopter crash. Mystery surrounding the cause of the crash sparked days of rioting in the south and in Khartoum by Garang supporters. At least 130 people were killed in the clashes and approximately 2,000 were arrested. The large political vacuum left by the death of the tough and charismatic Garang immediately called into question the SPLA's ability to influence national affairs. Salva Kiir, Garang's first deputy, took over the SPLA leadership.

While the United Nations has lifted sanctions against Sudan, the United States still maintains them because of Sudan's human rights record and its classification by the U.S. Department of State as a sponsor of terrorism.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Sudan cannot change their government democratically. December 2000 presidential and parliamentary elections cannot credibly be said to have reflected the will of the people. The major opposition parties, which are believed to have the support of most Sudanese, boycotted in protest of what they said were attempts by a totalitarian regime to impart the appearance of fairness. The European Union declined an invitation to monitor the polls to avoid bestowing legitimacy on the outcome. Omar al-Bashir, running against former president Jafar Numeiri and three relative unknowns, won 86 percent of the vote. NC candidates stood uncontested for nearly two-thirds of parliamentary seats. Voting did not take place in some 17 rebel-held constituencies, and government claims of 66 percent voter turnout in some states were denounced as fictitious.

In September 2005, in accordance with the peace agreement ending the civil war in the south, the ruling NC and the SPLA agreed on the formation of a transitional government. Per the breakdown of seats provided in the peace agreement, the presidency appointed 450 members to the National Assembly. The SPLA was given control over eight government ministries, including foreign affairs. According to the agreement, national elections must be held no later than July 2009.

Sudan ranked 144 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

There is scant press freedom in Sudan. Journalists practice self-censorship to avoid harassment, arrest, and closure of their publications. While there are several daily newspapers and a wide variety of Arabic- and English-language publications, which engage in some criticism of the government, all are subject to censorship. Radio and television stations are owned by the government, and broadcasts are required to reflect official policy. Penalties apply to journalists who allegedly harm the nation or economy or violate national security. A 1999 law imposes penalties for "professional errors." In recent years, several journalists have been detained without explanation, and the authorities have arbitrarily shut down newspapers. In May, police forcibly cancelled the printing of the English-language *Khartoum Monitor*

newspaper as editors prepared a front-page story on civilian deaths in Darfur. The same month, the editor-in-chief of the daily *Al-Wife* was put on trial for blasphemy after publishing an article questioning the prophet Muhammad's parentage. In June, the *Khartoum Monitor* was again targeted, this time forced to close after the Khartoum High Court withdrew the paper's operating license. It was banned after it published an interview with a former government official who accused the state of practicing slavery. The following month, however, after President Bashir ended the state of emergency and announced the lifting of censorship, the *Khartoum Monitor* was permitted to resume publishing. In August, police prevented the publication of two other newspapers, seizing tens of thousands of copies. Access to the internet is not restricted by the government but is limited by economic and social constraints.

Islam is the state religion, and the constitution claims Sharia (Islamic law) as the source of its legislation. The majority of Sudanese are Muslim, though most southern Sudanese adhere to traditional indigenous beliefs or Christianity. The overwhelming majority of those displaced or killed by war and famine in Sudan have been non-Muslims, and many have starved under a policy of withholding food pending conversion to Islam. Officials have described their campaign against non-Muslims as a holy war (in Darfur, however, the victimized tribes practice Islam). Under the 1994 Societies Registration Act, religious groups must register in order to legally gather. Registration is reportedly difficult to obtain. The government denies permission to build churches and sometimes destroys Christian schools, centers, and churches. Roman Catholic priests face random detention and interrogation by police.

Academic freedom is restricted. The government controls the administration of public universities and determines curriculums. Professors in both public and private institutions practice self-censorship.

While international nongovernmental organizations operate in Sudan, the government at times restricts their movement and ability to carry out their work, which often includes providing essential humanitarian assistance. In May, Sudanese police arrested a member of Doctors Without Borders after the group published a report describing systematic rape of women in Darfur by government and militia forces. The Sudanese army and police have also at times surrounded IDP camps in Darfur and have barred outside access to camp inhabitants. Humanitarian workers have also been targeted, and in some cases kidnapped and killed, by rebel groups.

There are no independent trade unions. The Sudan Workers Trade Unions Federation is the main labor organization, with about 800,000 members. Local union elections are rigged to ensure the election of government-approved candidates. A lack of labor legislation limits the freedom of workers to organize or bargain collectively.

The judiciary is not independent. The chief justice of the Supreme Court, who presides over the entire judiciary, is government-appointed. Regular courts provide some due process safeguards, but special security and military courts, which are used to punish political opponents of the government, provide none. "Special Courts" often deal with criminal matters, despite their use of military judges. Criminal law is based on Sharia and provides for flogging, amputation, crucifixion, and execution. Ten southern, predominantly non-Muslim, states are officially exempted from Sharia, although criminal law allows for its application in the future if the state assemblies choose to implement it. Arbitrary arrest, detention, and torture are wide-

spread, and security forces act with impunity. Prison conditions do not meet international standards.

Serious human rights abuses by nearly every faction involved in the country's longstanding civil war and in the Darfur conflict have been reported. Secret police reportedly have operated "ghost houses"—detention and torture centers—in several cities. Government forces are said to have routinely raided villages, burning homes, killing residents, and abducting women and children to be used as slaves in the North. Relief agencies have discovered thousands of people held captive in the North and have purchased their freedom so they could return to the South. In 2002, the International Eminent Persons Group—a fact-finding mission composed of humanitarian relief workers, human rights lawyers, academics, and former European and American diplomats—confirmed the existence of slavery in Sudan. The group also reported on abductions and forced servitude under the SPLA's authority. Although there has been no organized effort to compile casualty statistics in southern Sudan since 1994, the total number of people killed by war, famine, and disease is believed to exceed two million, with millions more displaced as refugees.

Women face discrimination in family matters such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance, which are governed by Sharia. Women are represented in parliament and hold 66 of the assembly's 450 seats. Public order police frequently harass women and monitor their dress for adherence to government standards of modesty. Female genital mutilation occurs despite legal prohibition, and rape is reportedly widespread in war zones. Rape of young girls and women in Darfur by Janjaweed forces was reported throughout 2005. In July, a UN report implicated Sudanese soldiers, militia members, and police in widespread sexual attacks, including gang rape, in Darfur. Doctors Without Borders reported that 500 rapes took place over a four-and-a-half month period, with 80 percent committed by Janjaweed or other government-backed forces. According to Sudanese law, women who charge rape can face prosecution if their case is unsuccessful before a court. Pregnant, unmarried women who cannot prove a rape charge, are subject to charges of adultery, a capital crime in Sudan. The testimony of four witnesses is also required in order to convict a man of rape. Sudan has not ratified the international Convention on Eradication of All Forms of Discrimination against Women because it "contradict[s] Sudanese values and traditions."

Suriname

Population: 400,000 **Political Rights:** 2*

GNI/capita: \$2,250 **Civil Liberties:** 2

Life Expectancy: 69 **Status:** Free

Religious Groups: Hindu (27.4 percent), Protestant (25.2 percent), Roman Catholic (22.8 percent), Muslim (19.6 percent), indigenous beliefs (5 percent)

Ethnic Groups: East Indian (37 percent), Creole (31 percent), Javanese (15 percent), other (17 percent)

Capital: Paramaribo

Ratings Change: Suriname's political rights score declined from 1 to 2 due to increased levels of political corruption and the government's continued failure to observe the political rights of the Amerindian minority.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	2,2F



Overview:

President Ronald Venetiaan's New Front for Democracy and Development (NF) coalition roared to victory in Suriname's May 25, 2005, parliamentary elections, winning 23 of 51 parliamentary seats. Venetiaan was subsequently confirmed as president by the People's Assembly. The year 2005 was marked by corruption scandals in the executive branch, as well the government's continued failure to observe the political rights of the country's indigenous peoples.

The Republic of Suriname achieved independence from the Netherlands in 1975, which had acquired it as a result of the Treaty of Breda with the British in 1667. Five years after independence, a military coup, which brought Desi Bouterse to power as the head of a regime that brutally suppressed civic and political opposition, initiated a decade of military intervention in politics. In 1987, Bouterse permitted elections that were won handily by the center-right New Front for Democracy and Development (NF), a four-party coalition of mainly East Indian, Creole, and Javanese parties. The National Democratic Party (NDP), organized by the military, won just three seats.

In 1990, the army ousted President Ramsewak Shankar, and Bouterse again took power, this time in a bloodless putsch popularly known as the "telephone coup." International pressure led to new elections in 1991. The NF won a majority, although the NDP increased its share to 12. The National Assembly selected the NF's candidate, Ronald Venetiaan, as president. Bouterse quit the army in 1992 to lead the NDP. In the May 25, 2000, legislative elections, the NF won the majority of 51 National Assembly seats—three times as many as its closest rival.

The May 2001 death of a labor leader, the star witness in a trial against Bouterse and others accused of 15 political killings committed in December 1982, initially appeared to rob the prosecution of key testimony. However, the government vowed that testimony given by the witness during a preliminary hearing would be submitted in the trial by the judge who questioned him. The death of the lone survivor of

the massacre came amid a renewed push by the Dutch to bring Bouterse to account for the murders and for his role in the 1980 coup. He had already been tried and convicted by a Dutch court in absentia on charges of having introduced more than two tons of cocaine into the Netherlands between 1989 and 1997. Suriname did not extradite Bouterse to the Netherlands because of a bilateral agreement not to extradite their own citizens to each other's country.

In October 2002, authorities from neighboring Guyana complained that Suriname was a major supply route for illegal arms used in a crime wave gripping the Guyanese capital of Georgetown. The spillover effects of narcotics trafficking and the drug trade's ties to top political leaders—including Bouterse—continued to make the news.

In 2004, the following year's legislative elections dominated Suriname's political debate, with Venetiaan's NF coalition appearing poised to capitalize on the country's newfound price and exchange-rate stability. However, a July public opinion poll by the Institute for Demographic Research in Suriname (IDOS) showed surprising strength for Bouterse's NDP, which placed less than 1 percentage point behind the NF. The relatively weak showing by the NF reflected voter discontent, in part, with the side effects of the government's fiscal austerity program, which helped to stabilize both prices and the economy generally.

In the 2005 election, the NF coalition managed to remain the country's single largest political force, winning 41 percent of the votes, compared to the NDP's 23.1 percent, which nevertheless was eight points higher than in the 2000 contest. However, the NF failed to win an absolute majority, falling far short of the two-thirds necessary to elect a president in the National Assembly either alone or in alliance with other parties. On August 3, a People's Assembly consisting of 891 members—made up of representatives of the National Assembly and district and local councilors—gave Venetiaan his third term as president, giving him 560 votes to 315 for the NDP candidate, Rabindre Parmessar.

Also in August, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed "deep concern" about information alleging that Suriname was actively disregarding the committee's recommendations on a revised version of the draft Mining Act, which was approved by Suriname's Council of State at the end of 2004. The government allegedly authorized additional resource exploitation and associated infrastructure projects that "pose substantial threats of irreparable harm to indigenous and tribal peoples, without any formal notification to the affected communities and without seeking their prior agreement or informed consent."

Corruption in government was a major problem in 2005. In May, the National Assembly lifted the immunity of former Minister of Public Works Dewanand Balesar due to allegations of forgery, fraud, and extortion related to his stint in government; sixteen other suspects were involved in the investigation. In addition, the director of fisheries was being investigated for corrupt practices, while police arrested a Ministry of Interior employee in July for embezzling pension benefit funds.

In 2005, Suriname's economy received a boost from strong commodity prices and significant direct foreign investment, with gross domestic product (GDP) expected to expand by an annual average of 4 percent in the 2005-2006 biennial. In October, however, Venetiaan announced a 2006 deficit of \$164 million, 9.3 percent of GDP and an increase of 43 percent over the 2005 deficit.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Suriname can change their government democratically. The 1987 constitution provides for a unicameral, 51-seat National Assembly, directly elected by proportional representation, which serves a five-year term and selects the state president. A Council of State (Raad van State), consisting of the president and representatives of the major political groupings—including unions, business, the military, and the legislature—has veto power over legislation deemed to violate the constitution.

Political parties largely reflect the cleavages in Suriname's ethnically complex society, although political-racial discord is much less than in neighboring Guyana. Suriname's major parties include the NDP, the National Party Suriname (NPS), and the People's Alliance for Progress (VW).

The Heritage Foundation/ *Wall Street Journal* 2005 Index of Economic Freedom, which ranked the country 140 out of 155 nations surveyed, found that corruption is rampant in Suriname, there is a generally high level of regulation, and that regulations are applied randomly. Favoritism, particularly at elite levels, is common in business and government. Suriname was ranked 78 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution provides for freedom of expression and of the press, and the government generally respects these rights. However, some media engaged in occasional self-censorship due to fear of reprisal from members of the former military leadership and in reaction to pressure by senior government officials and others on reporters producing critical stories about the administration. There are two privately owned daily newspapers, *De Ware Tijd* and *De West*. A number of small commercial radio stations compete with the government-owned radio and television broadcasting systems, and the mixture of viewpoints that results is generally pluralistic. Public access to government information is recognized in law; however, it is very limited in practice. The government does not restrict access to the internet.

The government generally respects freedom of religion and does not restrict academic freedom.

Freedom of assembly and association is provided for in the constitution, and the government respects these rights in practice. Although civic institutions remain weak, human rights organizations function freely. Workers can join independent trade unions, and the labor movement is active in politics. Collective bargaining is legal and conducted fairly widely. Civil servants have no legal right to strike.

The judiciary is weak and susceptible to political influence and suffers from ineffectiveness, a significant shortage of judges, and a large backlog of cases. The courts and the prisons are seriously overburdened by the volume of people detained for narcotics trafficking. The civilian police abuse detainees, particularly during arrests; guards mistreat prisoners; and prisons are dangerously overcrowded. Military personnel generally are not subject to civilian criminal law. In October, the government signaled its intention to move forward with the process of becoming a member of the appellate jurisdiction of the new Caribbean Court of Justice, to replace the London-based Privy Council.

Discrimination against indigenous and tribal peoples is widespread, and Suriname law offers no special protection for, or recognition of, indigenous peoples. As a result, Amerindians—who live mostly outside urban areas—have only marginal ability to participate in decisions affecting their lands, cultures, traditions and natural

resources. Tribal peoples, called Maroons, are the descendants of escaped African slaves who formed autonomous communities in the rain forest in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Their rights to their lands and resources, to cultural integrity, and to the autonomous administration of their affairs are not recognized in Surinamese law.

Constitutional guarantees of gender equality are not enforced. Several organizations specifically address violence against women and related issues. Despite their central role in agriculture and food production, 60 percent of rural women, particularly those in tribal communities, live below the poverty level. In the absence of a comprehensive law against trafficking in persons, the practice remains a problem.

Swaziland

Population: 1,100,000 **Political Rights:** 7
GNI/capita: \$1,350 **Civil Liberties:** 5
Life Expectancy: 35 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Zionist [a blend of Christianity and indigenous ancestral worship] (40 percent), Roman Catholic (20 percent), Muslim (10 percent), other (30 percent)

Ethnic Groups: African (97 percent), European (3 percent)

Capital: Mbabane

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
6,5NF	6,5NF	6,4NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	7,5NF	7,5NF	7,5NF



Overview:

Nine years after appointing a constitutional reform committee, King Mswati III signed into law a new national constitution in July 2005. While the new constitution includes some cosmetic concessions to democratic rule, it effectively maintains the monarchy's ultimate governing powers. Civic groups opposed to the constitution staged a series of demonstrations during the year. In October, the government blamed numerous firebomb attacks in Mbabane on state targets on the banned political group People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO).

Swaziland's King Mswati III is the latest monarch of the Dlamini dynasty, under which the Swazi kingdom expanded and contracted in conflicts with neighboring groups. Britain declared the kingdom a protectorate to prevent Boer expansion in the 1880s and assumed administrative power in 1903. Swaziland regained its independence in 1968, and an elected parliament was added to the traditional kingship and chieftaincies. In 1973, Mswati's father, Sobhuza II, repealed the 1968 constitution, ended the multiparty system in favor of the *tinkhundla* (local council) system, and declared himself absolute monarch. Sobhuza's death in 1982 led to a protracted power struggle and Mswati's eventual accession to the throne in 1986.

Voting in the October 1998 legislative elections was marked by a very low turn-

out and was neither open nor fair. It was based on the Swazi *tinkhundla* system, in which nominations and voting for 55 elected seats in the lower House of Assembly are tightly controlled by local chiefs allied with the monarchy. Security forces arrested and briefly detained labor and other prodemocracy leaders before the elections; the crackdown accelerated after a series of bomb blasts struck government targets.

Parliamentary elections in October 2003 were preceded by calls from critics of royal rule to boycott the polls. While the People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO) did not participate, other banned opposition parties ran candidates. The elections were not deemed credible by international observers. However, three opposition party members were elected.

In May 2003, the Constitutional Drafting Committee, chaired by Mswati's brother Prince David Dlamini, unveiled a draft constitution after three years of deliberations. The committee complemented the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC), formed in 1995 after a period of civic unrest and chaired by another of Mswati's brothers, Prince Mangaliso Dlamini. While the document—intended to replace the 1973 constitution annulled by Sobhuza II—removed the king's ability to rule by decree, it reaffirmed the king's absolute control over the executive cabinet, both houses of parliament, and the judiciary. It also maintained the ban on political opposition parties and the *tinkhundla* electoral system. Although the draft constitution includes a bill of rights that provides for limited freedom of speech, assembly, and association, as well as limited equality for women, the king may waive these rights at his discretion.

A subsequent period of "public debate" allowed individuals to submit their views to the CRC, although civic groups were shut out of the consultation process. The draft constitution was met with bouts of civic protest led by trade unions, banned political parties, and church groups. However, the government's use of force to break up demonstrations and threats against union members participating in a January 2005 general strike weakened the opposition. Approved by the rubber-stamp parliament in June 2005, the new constitution was rejected by Mswati the following month because of disagreeable clauses on dissolving parliament, women's rights, religious freedom, and taxation. On July 26, Mswati signed a revised version of the constitution into law, which is scheduled to go into effect in early 2006.

In October, unknown assailants firebombed a series of government-associated targets—including the Swazi National Court, the home of government spokesman Percy Simelane, and the homes of three police officers. The government blamed PUDEMO for the attacks, though no arrests were made by the end of November.

Swaziland saw slowed economic growth in 2005. Most Swazis remain engaged in subsistence agriculture; 80 percent of the population lives on communal Swazi Nation Land. Many families depend on income from men working in South African mines. The country has the world's highest rate of HIV infection, at 42.6 percent. Only an estimated 4.3 percent of infected Swazis receive antiretroviral drugs to combat the disease; in November, government hospitals reported a national shortage of the drugs.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Swaziland cannot change their government democratically. King Mswati III is an absolute monarch with ultimate authority over the executive cabinet, legislature, and the judiciary. Of the 65 members of the House of Assembly, 55 are elected by popular vote within the *tinkhundla* system, and the king appoints 10. The king also

appoints 20 members of the 30-seat Senate, with the remaining 10 selected by the House of Assembly. Members of both houses serve five-year terms. Traditional chiefs govern designated localities under the *tinkhundla* system and typically report directly to the king.

Political parties are banned, although there are political associations, the two largest being PUDEMO and the Ngwane National Liberatory Congress (NNLC). The NNLC ran candidates as independents in the 2003 legislative elections. In March 2005, the high court dismissed a case brought by PUDEMO, NNLC, and two labor unions seeking to prove the constitutional process illegal; instead, the court cited the 1973 ban on political parties as cause for dismissing the case, thereby reinforcing the ban itself.

Corruption is a major problem in Swaziland. Members of the palace spend lavishly (in 2005, King Mswati III purchased a \$500,000 Maybach car and a fleet of 10 BMW cars for his wives) while presiding over a largely impoverished population, and members of parliament engage in fraud and graft. In March, Finance Minister Majazi Sithole cited a private consultant's estimate that the government loses 40 million emalangeni (about US\$6.5 million) per month to corrupt practices. An Anti-Corruption Unit was established in 1998 but has failed to produce a single indictment. In 2005, Swaziland was assessed for the first time by Transparency International (TI); it ranked 103 out of 159 countries surveyed in TI's Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is severely restricted, especially regarding political issues or matters concerning the royal family. Legislation bans publication of any criticism of the monarchy, and self-censorship is widespread; journalists are subject to threats and intimidation from government officials. The new constitution provides for freedom of expression, but the king may waive these rights at his discretion. However, broadcast and print media from South Africa are received in the country, and both the state-owned (*Swazi Observer*) and independent (*Times of Swaziland*) newspapers occasionally criticize the government. In 2005, Prime Minister Absalom Themba Dlamini on several occasions stressed the importance of "positive" media coverage and threatened to monitor the press if it continued to cover the government in a sensationalist manner. There is one independent radio station, which broadcasts religious programming. The government does not restrict access to the internet, though few Swazis can afford access.

Freedom of religion is respected, although there are no formal constitutional provisions protecting the practice. Academic freedom is limited by self-censorship. While Swazis criticize the government in private discussions, they are less free to criticize the monarchy itself.

The government restricts freedom of assembly and association. Permission to hold political meetings, protests, or demonstrations is often denied by the government. Prodemocracy protests have been violently broken up by police, a trend that continued in 2005. In January, police used tear gas and a water cannon to disperse a PUDEMO demonstration commemorating the killing of a young girl during a 1998 strike. Similar tactics were employed to break up a Swaziland Youth Congress rally in August and a student march for government scholarships in September. In May, a protest organized by the Council of Swaziland Churches that delivered a petition opposing the constitution occurred without violence. However, the government

threatened to block a similar effort in September, leading to its cancellation. In November, the government passed guidelines governing the creation, registration, and operation of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), a longtime goal of local NGOs.

Swaziland has active labor unions, and the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU), the country's largest labor organization, has been a leader in demands for democratization. However, government pressure has greatly limited union activities. In January, a two-day national strike called by the SFTU and the Swaziland Federation of Labour elicited a poor response from union members after the government threatened to fire strikers and mobilized security forces. Jan Sithole, the SFTU general secretary, has been jailed several times in recent years, and he and his family have received death threats. Workers in all areas of the economy, including the public sector, can join unions, and 80 percent of the private workforce is unionized. Wage agreements are often reached by collective bargaining.

The judiciary is based on the dual system of Roman-Dutch courts—including magistrate courts, a high court, and a court of appeal—and traditional courts presided over by chiefs employing customary, often unwritten law. The judiciary is generally independent in most civil cases, although the king has ultimate judicial powers; the royal family and the government often refuse to respect rulings with which they disagree. Swaziland's judicial system became mired in crisis in November 2002, when the six South African judges on the court of appeals resigned after the prime minister declared that the government would ignore court judgments that curbed the king's power. The appeals court was reconstituted in November 2004, following assurances that the government would adhere to its decisions.

There are regular reports of police brutality, including torture, beatings, and suspicious deaths of suspects in custody. A January coroner's inquest into the much-publicized death of Mandla Ngubeni in police custody determined that the suspect had been tortured but did not name a specific cause of death; the report has led to no arrests. Indeed, security forces generally operate with impunity. Prison conditions are poor and overcrowded, and prisoners are subject to torture, beatings, rape, and a lack of basic hygiene. The spread and treatment of HIV/AIDS is a major problem in Swazi prisons.

The legal code provides some protection against sexual harassment, but Swazi women encounter substantial discrimination in both formal and customary law. Married women are considered legal minors, requiring spousal permission to enter into almost any form of economic activity, and they are allowed only limited inheritance rights. Only men can pass on Swazi citizenship to their children, and female children have no right to inheritance under traditional law. The new constitution grants women adult status and guarantees equality under the law, although it is unclear how these rights will be interpreted vis-a-vis traditional customs. Violence against women is common despite traditional strictures against it, and rape—regarded by many as a minor offense—frequently goes unpunished.

Sweden

Population: 9,000,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$28,910 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 80 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Lutheran (87 percent), other
[including Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Baptist, Muslim,
Jewish and Buddhist] (13 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Swedish (majority), Finnish, Sami
Capital: Stockholm



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In May 2005, the UN Committee against Torture ruled that Sweden had violated the absolute ban on torture by expelling two terrorist suspects to Egypt in 2001. Sweden had one of the highest casualty tolls of countries outside of Asia during the Asian tsunami in December 2004; in February 2005, Swedish police released a list of 565 people who were killed or who went missing in the tsunami. In December 2004, Mijailo Mijailovic, the confessed killer of Foreign Minister Anna Lindh, was sentenced to life in prison.

After a series of monarchical alliances with Finland, Denmark, and Norway in the eleventh through nineteenth centuries, Sweden emerged as a modern democracy. Its tradition of neutrality, beginning with World War I, was altered somewhat by its admission to the European Union (EU) in 1995 and was further eroded by a more pragmatic approach to security first presented in 2002. However, Sweden has retained its commitment not to join military alliances, including NATO.

The Social Democrats, led by Prime Minister Goran Persson, have dominated politics since the 1920s. During the last parliamentary elections in 2002, the Social Democrats won 39.8 percent of the vote; the Moderates, 15.2 percent; the Liberal Party, 13.3 percent; the Christian Democrats, 9.1 percent; the Left Party, 8.3 percent; the Center Party, 6.1 percent; and the Greens, 4.6 percent. With their partners, the Left (formerly Communist) Party and the Greens, the Social Democrats secured 191 out of the legislature's 349 seats, promising not to reduce the generous welfare system. Seventy-nine percent of eligible Swedes voted in the poll.

The population overwhelmingly rejected the adoption of the euro in a referendum in September 2003, despite strong support from government and business. The no vote was generally attributed to popular fears of deterioration in Sweden's generous welfare state benefits and damage to the Swedish economy. The no vote may also have been a reflection of skepticism about the EU as a whole.

On September 10, 2003, just days before the referendum, Foreign Minister Anna Lindh was mortally wounded in a knife attack in a Stockholm department store. The killing sparked considerable debate about security in Sweden, where such violence is very rare and politicians regularly travel without bodyguards in order to maintain

direct contact with citizens. Lindh's confessed killer, Mijailo Mijailovic, was sentenced to life in prison in December 2004; the sentence overturned an appeals court decision that had sentenced him to psychiatric care. The appeals court ruling had been met with general dismay by the Swedish population and had elicited widespread criticism of the Swedish psychiatric care system.

The UN Committee against Torture ruled in May 2005 that Sweden had violated the absolute ban on torture by expelling two suspected terrorists to Egypt in 2001. The United Nations stated that Sweden should have known Egypt often tortures detainees. In one of the first cases of extraordinary rendition, the suspects, Ahmed Agiza and Mohammed al-Zery, were flown to Egypt aboard a Gulfstream jet leased to the CIA. Both suspects were tortured by Egyptian officials despite assurances by the latter that they would be treated humanely. Agiza was eventually sentenced to 15 years in prison for being a member of an illegal organization, while al-Zery was freed by the military court that tried them.

Sweden had one of the highest casualty tolls of countries outside of Asia during the Asian tsunami in December 2004. Thailand is one of the most popular destinations for Swedish tourists during the winter months. In February 2005, Swedish police released a list of 565 people who were killed or had gone missing as a result of the tsunami. The controversial list, which the police did not release originally in order to protect the privacy of the victims' relations, was released only after a Supreme Administrative Court ruled that the information was not "invasive."

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Sweden can change their government democratically. The unicameral parliament, the Riksdag, has 349 members, 310 of whom are elected every four years in a proportional system. The remaining 39 seats are awarded on a national basis to further secure proportional representation. A party must receive at least 4 percent of the votes in the entire country or 12 percent in a single electoral district to qualify for any seats. The prime minister is appointed by the Speaker of the Riksdag and confirmed by the Riksdag. King Carl XVI Gustaf, crowned in 1973, is head of state, but royal power is limited to official and ceremonial functions.

The principal religious, ethnic, and immigrant groups are represented in parliament. Since 1993, the Sami community elects its own parliament, which has significant powers over community education and culture and serves as an advisory body to the government.

Corruption is very low in Sweden, which was ranked 6 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index. However, recent instances of corporate graft have stained Sweden's image. In December 2003, executives from the insurance group Skandia were investigated and found culpable of fraudulent accounting and of reaping millions of kroner in excessive bonuses. In December 2004, around 77 employees of the state-owned alcohol retail monopoly Systembolaget were formally charged with bribery.

Sweden has one of the most robust freedom of information laws in the world. According to the BBC, the country's law aims to ensure that all actions by public authorities that concern the citizenry are open to scrutiny.

Freedom of speech is guaranteed by law. However, hate-speech laws prohibit threats or expressions of contempt for people based on their race, color, national or

ethnic origin, religious belief, or sexual orientation. Sweden's media are independent. Most newspapers and periodicals are privately owned, and the government subsidizes daily newspapers regardless of their political affiliation. The Swedish Broadcasting Corporation and the Swedish Television Company broadcast weekly radio and television programs in several immigrant languages. The ethnic press is entitled to the same subsidies as the Swedish-language press. In August, the *Norrkopings Tidningar*, a daily newspaper, received a note threatening to bomb the newspaper's offices if it did not cease carrying reports about organized crime. There were no government restrictions on access to the internet.

Religious freedom is constitutionally guaranteed. Although the country is 87 percent Lutheran, all churches, as well as synagogues and mosques, receive some state financial support. Academic freedom is ensured for all.

Freedom of assembly and association is guaranteed, as are the rights to strike and participate in unions. Domestic and international human rights NGOs generally operate in the country without government restrictions. Trade union federations are strong and well organized and represent approximately 80 percent of the workforce.

Sweden's judiciary, which includes the Supreme Court, district courts, and a court of appeals, is independent. Swedish courts are allowed to try suspects for genocide committed abroad. In October, the BBC reported that Abdi Qeybdiid, a Somali colonel, was released from custody in Sweden because of insufficient evidence linking him to genocide in his country in the early 1990s; he had been arrested for his alleged involvement in attacks on U.S. forces in the 1990s. Prisons generally met international conditions, although overcrowding and lengthy pretrial detentions existed.

The government maintains effective control of the security and armed forces. However, in May, the UN Committee against Torture ruled that Sweden had violated the absolute ban on torture by expelling two terrorist suspects to Egypt in 2001, where they were eventually tortured. The late foreign minister, Anna Lindh, was eventually found by a parliamentary investigation to have approved of the deportations.

In its third report on Sweden, issued in June, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance lauded the country for making progress combating racism, particularly in terms of civil law provisions against discrimination, as well as increased funding of institutions and organizations working against racism and racial discrimination. In 2003, Sweden passed a hate crimes law that includes attacks against homosexuals and covers hate speech.

A report by the Swedish Integration Board issued in October demonstrated an increase in intolerance toward immigration, as well as growing racial harassment towards Muslims. However, the report also showed a decline in support for anti-immigrant parties in the country, the Sweden Democrats and National Democrats. The number of people seeking asylum in Sweden continued to drop, according to a report issued by the Migration Board in March. The drop is due to increasingly tighter immigration policies, which have led to 9 out of 10 applications for asylum being rejected on the first go-round. In September, the government agreed to change the immigration laws to allow a reevaluation of failed asylum seekers who remain illegally in the country.

Sweden is a leader in gender equality. At 45 percent, the proportion of females

in the Riksdag is the highest of any parliament in the world, and half of all government ministers are women. Although 79 percent of women work outside of the home, women still make only 70 percent of men's wages in the public sector and 76 percent in the private sector; the government has announced efforts to close this gap.

Sweden gave formal recognition to adoption by gay couples for the first time in February 2003. In 2005, Sweden amended its laws on artificial insemination allowing lesbian couples the same rights, including access to in vitro fertilization, as heterosexual couples.

Sweden is a destination and transit point for the trafficking in persons, particularly women and children, for sexual exploitation. Four Estonians were accused in January 2005 of running a major prostitution ring from December 2003 to April 2004. According to the U.S. State Department 2005 trafficking in persons report, the country has made significant efforts against trafficking, with the issue being one of the government's highest priorities in 2004. The Aliens Act, which was enacted in October 2004, helped to provide more assistance to trafficking victims.

In 2005, Sweden organized a conference on "honor killings" that was attended by key politicians in areas where such violence is suspected of taking place. In 2001, a 26-year-old girl of Kurdistan descent in Sweden was killed by her father for supposedly bringing shame on her family by going out with a Swedish man.

Switzerland

Population: 7,400,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$40,680 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 80 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (41.8 percent),
Protestant (35.3 percent), Muslim (4.3 percent),
Orthodox (1.8 percent), other (16.8 percent)
Ethnic Groups: German (65 percent), French (18 percent),
Italian (10 percent), Romansch (1 percent), other (6 percent)
Capital: Bern



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

In 2005, Switzerland finally signed an agreement with the European Union (EU) on the free movement of labor and cooperation in justice and home affairs. Domestic politics were marked by tensions between the right-wing Swiss People's Party (SVP), in government for the first time, and other parties.

Switzerland, which has been a loose confederation of cantons since 1291, emerged in its current borders after the Napoleonic wars, in 1815, where its tradition of neutrality was also sealed. The country's four official ethnic communities are based on language: German, French, Italian, and Romansh (the smallest community).

Switzerland has stayed out of international wars and only joined the United Nations after a referendum in 2002. For this reason, membership in international institutions has long been a controversial issue in Switzerland. The country is surrounded by members of the EU, but the Swiss, who fiercely value not only their military neutrality but their political independence, have resisted EU membership. The country has even resisted membership in the European Economic Area, a "half-way house" to EU membership that features a trade agreement with the EU.

Hostility not only to EU membership but also to immigration has been a hallmark of the right-wing SVP. The other main political parties are the center-left Social Democratic Party (SP), the right-wing Free Democratic Party (FDP), and the center-right Christian Democratic People's Party (CVP). Traditionally, these last three parties held two seats each in the seven-member Federal Council (cabinet), with the SVP holding just one. However, the SVP's vote share increased gradually over the 1990s—in correspondence with a rightward move by the party—as it poached voters initially from small far-right parties and then increasingly from the FDP.

During the October 2003 legislative election, the SVP made blatantly xenophobic appeals, including running a newspaper advertisement blaming "black Africans" for crime. The SVP insisted that it had nothing against legal immigrants, who make up a fifth of Switzerland's population, and that it was merely opposed to illegal immigration and abuse of the asylum policy. The SVP captured the largest share of the vote, while the SP finished just behind the SVP. The CVP received just under 15 percent of the vote, barely half the total of the SVP.

With this success, the SVP leader, Christoph Blocher, called for a second Federal Council seat for his party. Blocher demanded that he and another minister be appointed to the council, with a seat being taken from the CVP. After extensive negotiations, the other parties agreed. In late 2003, Blocher joined the cabinet as head of the Federal Department of Justice and Police, and the CVP lost a cabinet seat. The inclusion of the SVP has brought new tensions into the Swiss cabinet, for example, over a tightening of asylum laws pushed by Blocher and over justice and home affairs issues.

In June 2005, a package of bilateral accords with the EU finally passed in a referendum, approved by 55 percent of Swiss voters, after years of negotiation. Switzerland joined the Schengen area—a passport-free travel zone consisting of two other non-EU countries (Norway and Iceland) and 13 of 25 EU countries. The accord will also deepen Switzerland's cooperation with the EU in handling asylum seekers, as well as issues of justice and home affairs. In September, a second referendum passed with 56 percent approval, extending the free movement of labor to the 10 countries that joined the EU in 2004 (mostly post-Communist countries from Central and Eastern Europe). Although the SVP opposed both referendums, including running xenophobic advertising campaigns, Blocher as justice minister will have no choice but to go along with the new agreements.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Switzerland can change their government democratically. The constitution of 1848, significantly revised in 1874 and 2000, provides for two directly elected legislative chambers—the Council of States (in which each canton has two members and each half-canton, one) and the National Council, with 200 members serving four-year terms.

The Federal Council (cabinet) is a seven-person executive; the presidency is ceremonial and rotates annually among the Federal Council's members. Collegiality and consensus are hallmarks of Swiss political culture.

The Swiss institutional system is characterized by decentralization and direct democracy. The cantons and half-cantons have control over much of economic and social policy, with the federal government's powers largely limited to foreign affairs and some economic policy. The rights of cultural, religious, and linguistic minorities are strongly protected. Referendums are also a common feature; any measure that modifies the constitution must be put to a referendum. Any new or revised law must be put to a referendum if 50,000 signatures in favor of doing so can be gathered, and voters may even initiate legislation themselves with 100,000 signatures.

The main parties are the center-left SP, the right-wing FDP, the right-wing populist SVP, and the center-right CVP.

The government is free from pervasive corruption. However, the country has traditionally drawn criticism for its banking-secrecy laws, which financial watchdogs claim enable money laundering and other crimes. In the International Monetary Fund's 2004 report on its annual consultation with Switzerland, the fund praised Switzerland for toughening laws on money laundering and terrorist financing in 2003. Switzerland was ranked 7 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is guaranteed by the constitution. Switzerland has a free media environment, although the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation dominates the broadcast market. The penal code prohibits racist or anti-Semitic speech. Consolidation of newspapers in large media conglomerates has forced the closure of some small and local newspapers. Internet access is unrestricted.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitution, and most cantons support one or several churches. The country is split roughly between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, although there are now officially more than 300,000 Muslims (and perhaps many more undocumented), forming the largest non-Christian minority in Switzerland. Religion is taught in public schools, depending on the predominant creed in the canton. Students are free to choose their creed of instruction or opt out of religious instruction. In 2001, a cantonal court ruled that the Church of Scientology could not be a "real church" because it does not advocate belief in God. Scientologists face other legal obstacles, such as difficulty establishing private schools. Academic freedom is respected.

Freedom of assembly and association is respected in practice, and civil society is especially active in Switzerland. The right to collective bargaining is respected, and approximately one-third of the workforce is unionized.

The judiciary is independent, and the rule of law prevails in civil and criminal matters. Most judicial decisions are made at the cantonal level except for the federal Supreme Court, which reviews cantonal court decisions when they pertain to federal law. Refusal to perform military service is a criminal offense for males. Prison conditions are generally acceptable.

Women were only granted universal suffrage at the federal level in 1971, and the half-canton Appenzell-Innerrhoden denied women the vote until 1990. Abortion laws were liberalized to decriminalize abortion in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy following a referendum in 2002, which 72 percent of voters supported. The law gives women

10 weeks of maternity leave but no salary guarantee. The Swiss constitution guarantees equal pay to men and women for work of equal value, but pay differentials remain as a result of general inequality. The national council has 52 women among its 200 members, which is above the European average.

Syria

Population: 18,400,000 **Political Rights:** 7

GNI/capita: \$1,160 **Civil Liberties:** 7

Life Expectancy: 72 **Status:** Not Free

Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim (74 percent), other Muslim [including Alawite and Druze] (16 percent), Christian [various sects] (10 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Arab (90 percent), other [including Kurd and Armenians] (10 percent)

Capital: Damascus



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF

Overview:

Syrian president Bashar Assad's diplomatic isolation deepened in 2005 amid mounting evidence linking members of his inner circle to the February 14 assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafiq Hariri, while internal opposition to his rule grew more strident and unified. In an effort to defuse dissent at home and project a positive image abroad, the regime freed hundreds of political prisoners and slightly relaxed restrictions on some civil liberties, but it continued to brutally punish dissidents who contravene its "red lines" of acceptable public discourse.

Located at the heart of the Fertile Crescent, the Syrian capital of Damascus is the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world, once controlling a vast empire extending from Europe to India. The modern state of Syria was established by the French after World War I and formally granted independence in 1946. Syria's precarious democratic institutions functioned intermittently until the Arab Socialist Baath Party seized power in a 1963 coup and transformed the country into a one-party state governed perpetually by emergency law. During the 1960s, power shifted within the party from civilian ideologues to an ambitious group of army officers hailing mostly from Syria's Alawite minority (adherents of an offshoot Islamic sect comprising 12 percent of the population), culminating in General Hafez Assad's rise to power in 1970.

Although the regime cultivated a base of support from public sector employees, peasants, and select private sector beneficiaries that transcended sectarian and ethnic divisions, its grip on power rested squarely on Alawite domination of the military-security establishment and the suppression of dissent. In 1982, government forces stormed the northern town of Hama to crush a rebellion by the Muslim Broth-

erhood and killed as many as 20,000 insurgents and civilians. By the time of Assad's death in 2000, nearly four decades of stifling Baathist rule had made Syria one of the Arab world's poorest countries.

Assad's son and successor, Bashar, pledged to introduce sweeping political and economic liberalization in his inaugural speech. The first six months of his tenure witnessed the release of several hundred political prisoners, the return of many exiled dissidents, and a substantial expansion of civil liberties as informal reformist networks met openly to discuss the country's social, economic, and political problems. In February 2001, however, the regime abruptly halted the so-called Damascus Spring. Most of the country's leading reformists were arrested and sentenced to heavy prison terms; those who weren't grew accustomed to constant surveillance and frequent intimidation by the *mukhabarat* (secret police). Economic reform fell by the wayside, as dozens of reform laws remained unimplemented, were put into effect halfheartedly, or lacked supporting regulatory changes. Although Bashar Assad's Syria remains marginally freer than his father's in most respects (and significantly freer in a few respects), it has proven to be no less resistant to political change.

The toppling of Iraq's Baathist regime by the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 reinvigorated the Syrian opposition. For the first time, secular and Islamist dissidents began coordinating and pushing for a common set of demands, including the release of all political prisoners, the cancellation of the state of emergency, and legalization of political parties. Apparently inspired by the political empowerment of Iraqi Kurds, Syria's historically quiescent Kurdish minority erupted into eight days of rioting in March 2004. At least 30 people were killed as security forces suppressed the riots and arrested some 2,000 people.

Internal opposition to the regime was strengthened by growing international outrage over Syria's failure to combat terrorist infiltration into Iraq and its continuing occupation of Lebanon. In September 2004, UN Security Council Resolution 1559 explicitly called on Damascus to immediately end the occupation. As a result of widespread suspicions of Syrian involvement in the February 2005 assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafiq Hariri, international pressure for a Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon, including mass anti-Syrian demonstrations in Beirut, quickly intensified.

Although Assad pulled Syrian troops out of Lebanon in April, Syrian relations with Western and Arab governments alike remained strained by his refusal to fully cooperate with the UN International Independent Investigation Commission (UNIIC) probing the killing of Hariri. On October 20, the UNIIC issued an interim report containing circumstantial evidence and anonymous witness testimonies implicating Assad's brother-in-law and military intelligence chief General Assef Shawkat and other senior Syrian officials. Shortly afterward, the Security Council passed Resolution 1636, calling on Syria to cooperate unconditionally with the investigation under threat of "further action."

In the face of growing internal opposition, the regime released hundreds of political prisoners during the year, though none of the six remaining "Damascus Spring detainees" arrested in 2001 (Aref Dalilah, Riad Seif, Mamun al-Humsi, Walid al-Bunni, Habib Isa, and Fawaz Tello) were freed. Syrian officials repeatedly hinted that sweeping political reforms would be drafted at a major Baath Party conference

in June. According to state-run media reports, party leaders issued a set of vague recommendations to legalize political parties, reform the electoral system, permit greater press freedom, and relax emergency law, but no substantial measures were undertaken to implement the recommendations.

While the government allowed prodemocracy activists to speak freely with the international media—something that was very rare a few years ago—those who openly communicated with the Muslim Brotherhood courted danger. In May, prominent Kurdish cleric Sheikh Muhammad Mashuq al-Khaznawi was kidnapped and tortured to death after meeting with Muslim Brotherhood leader Ali Sadr al-Din al-Bayanouni in Belgium and publicly calling for the group's inclusion in Syrian political life. A few weeks later, security forces arrested nine members of the Jamal al-Atassi Forum for Democratic Dialogue, a secular nationalist political salon, after a statement by al-Bayanouni reiterating the Brotherhood's commitment to nonviolence and democracy was read aloud at one of its meetings (most were released several months later only after pledging to cut off communication with the group).

Rather than discouraging the opposition from uniting, however, the government's obstinacy encouraged secular liberal, Kurdish, and Islamist dissidents to work together. In October, representatives of all three opposition currents signed the Damascus Declaration for Democratic and National Change, which explicitly called for the regime to step down and endorsed a broad set of liberal democratic principles.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Syria cannot change their government democratically. Under the 1973 constitution, the president is nominated by the ruling Baath Party and approved by a popular referendum. In practice, these referendums are orchestrated by the regime, as are elections to the 250-member, unicameral People's Council, which holds little independent legislative power. The only legal political parties are the Baath Party and its six small coalition partners in the ruling National Progressive Front (NPF). All 167 of the NPF's candidates won seats in the 2003 parliamentary elections, while heavily vetted independent candidates took the remaining 83 seats. The ruling party pledged to legalize political parties not based on religious or ethnic identity (a condition that would exclude the Muslim Brotherhood and Kurdish opposition groups) at its June 2005 conference, but no legislation implementing this pledge was forthcoming.

Key regime officials and their offspring monopolize many lucrative import markets and benefit from a range of other illicit economic activities. Syria was ranked 70 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is heavily restricted. Vaguely worded articles of the penal code, Emergency Law, and 2001 press statute criminalize the publication of material that harms national unity, tarnishes the image of the state, or threatens the "goals of the revolution." Muhammad Raadun, the head of the Arab Organization for Human Rights-Syria was arrested in May 2005 and held for nearly six months on charges of "disseminating false information" about a government crackdown on Islamists. Habib Salih, one of the Damascus Spring detainees who had been released in September 2004, was arrested in May after writing two articles on the internet criticizing the government; he remained in detention throughout the year. Another previously released activist, Kamal al-Labwani, was arrested in November on charges

of spreading information "harmful to national unity" after meeting with U.S. officials in Washington.

Apart from a handful of non-news radio stations, all broadcast media are state owned. However, satellite dishes are widespread, giving many Syrians exposure to foreign news broadcasts. While more than a dozen privately owned newspapers and magazines have sprouted up in recent years, only one (owned by the son of Syria's defense minister) is allowed to publish serious criticism of the government. The 2001 press law permits the authorities to arbitrarily deny or revoke publishing licenses—at least four were rescinded in 2005—and compels privately owned print media outlets to submit all material to government censors. Syrians are permitted to access the internet only through state-run servers, which block access to a wide range of websites. E-mail correspondence is reportedly monitored by the intelligence agencies.

Although the constitution requires that the president be a Muslim, there is no state religion in Syria, and freedom of worship is generally respected. The Alawite minority dominates the officer corps of the military and security forces. The government tightly monitors mosques and controls the appointment of Muslim clergy. Two major outbreaks of violence between Alawites and Ismaili Shiites (a heterodox Islamic sect comprising roughly 1 percent of the population) erupted in the towns of Qadmous and Misyaf in mid-2005.

Academic freedom is heavily restricted. University professors have frequently been dismissed from state universities for expressing dissent, and some have been imprisoned.

Freedom of assembly is heavily circumscribed. Public demonstrations are illegal without explicit permission from the Interior Ministry, which is typically granted only to progovernment organizations. Several unlicensed demonstrations were forcibly dispersed by the authorities in 2005, though a few took place with little interference. Increasingly, the authorities have relied on plainclothes agents to intimidate activists. In March, activists staging a sit-in in Damascus were dispersed and beaten not by police, but by hundreds of progovernment "demonstrators" wielding clubs. When protests erupted in Kurdish regions following al-Khaznawi's death, the police stood by while Arab tribesmen looted shops belonging to Kurds.

Freedom of association is severely restricted. All nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) must register with the government, which generally denies registration to reformist groups. Although a handful of unlicensed human rights groups have been allowed to organize, they are prevented from publishing material inside Syria and placed under such heavy (and often visible) surveillance that most citizens who suffer abuses at the hands of the authorities are reluctant to communicate with them. Leaders of these organizations have frequently been jailed for publicizing government human rights abuses. Authorities closed down the Tharwa Project, an NGO focused on minority rights in the region, in October. Also in October, prominent human rights lawyer Anwar al-Bunni was beaten by two unidentified assailants.

All unions must belong to the General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU). Although nominally independent, the GFTU is used by the government to control all aspects of union activity in Syria. Strikes in nonagricultural sectors are legal, but they rarely occur.

While regular criminal and civil courts operate with some independence and generally safeguard defendants' rights, politically sensitive cases are usually tried by

the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC)—an exceptional tribunal established under emergency law that denies the right to appeal, limits access to legal counsel, tries many cases behind closed doors, and routinely admits as evidence confessions obtained through torture.

The state of emergency in force since 1963 gives the security agencies virtually unlimited authority to arrest suspects and hold them incommunicado for prolonged periods without charge. Many of the estimated 2,500 to 3,000 remaining political prisoners in Syria have never been tried for any offense. The security agencies, which operate independently of the judiciary, routinely extract confessions by torturing suspects and detaining members of their families. There were scores of credible reports of torture by the security services in 2005. According to local human rights groups, dozens of suspected Islamists who returned from exile in 2005 were arrested and detained on their arrival. At least 40 students at Tishrin University in Latakia were arrested between February and April 2005 for setting up an underground Islamist group called Sunaa al-Hayat (Makers of Life).

The Kurdish minority in Syria faces severe restrictions on cultural and linguistic expression. The 2001 press law requires that owners and editors in chief of publications be Arabs. Some 200,000 Syrian Kurds are deprived of citizenship and unable to obtain passports, identity cards, or birth certificates, which in turn prevents them from owning land, obtaining government employment, and voting. Suspected Kurdish activists are routinely dismissed from schools and public sector jobs. The authorities relaxed enforcement of cultural and linguistic restrictions in the wake of the 2004 riots. Once-unthinkable activities, such as blaring Kurdish music on car stereos and publicly celebrating Kurdish holidays, evoked relatively little attention from the authorities in 2005. In March, the government released 312 Kurds who had been detained since the 2004 riots, but continued to detain dozens of members of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) and arrested hundreds of other Kurdish activists during the year. At least 60 Kurds who took part in a June 5 demonstration protesting al-Khaznawi's death were detained for nearly two months on charges of "fomenting riots and sectarian rifts." On September 15, a Kurdish woman was beaten to death during clashes between police and demonstrators attempting to stop the demolition of illegally built, mostly Kurdish, homes in al-Dimas, west of Damascus. At least seven Kurdish activists were sentenced by the SSSC in 2005 to prison terms of two or more years for peaceful political activities. The government began taking a census of stateless Kurds in early 2005, but no formal measures were taken to naturalize them.

Although most Syrians do not face travel restrictions, prominent opposition figures and relatives of exiled dissidents are routinely prevented from traveling abroad, and stateless Kurds lack the requisite documents to leave the country. Equality of opportunity has been compromised by rampant corruption.

The government has promoted gender equality by appointing women to senior positions in government and providing equal access to education, but many discriminatory laws remain in force. A husband may request that the Interior Ministry block his wife from traveling abroad, and women are generally barred from leaving the country with their children unless they can prove that the father has granted permission. Violence against women is common, particularly in rural areas. Syrian law stipulates that an accused rapist can be acquitted if he marries his victim, and

the law provides for reduced sentences in cases of "honor crimes" committed by men against female relatives for alleged sexual misconduct. Personal status law for Muslim women is governed by Sharia (Islamic law) and is discriminatory in marriage, divorce, and inheritance matters.

Taiwan

Population: 22,700,000 **Political Rights:** 1*

GNI/capita: \$13,392 **Civil Liberties:** 1

Life Expectancy: 76 **Status:** Free

Religious Groups: Mixture of Buddhist, Confucian, Taoist (93 percent), Christian (4.5 percent), other (2.5 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Taiwanese [including Hakka] (84 percent), mainland Chinese (14 percent), Aboriginal (2 percent)

Capital: Taipei

Ratings Change: Taiwan's political rights rating improved from 2 to 1 due to a strengthening of the electoral process by way of extensive constitutional and electoral reforms.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	1,2F	1,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,1F	1,1F



Overview:

In 2004 and 2005, Taiwan launched ambitious constitutional reforms that have cut the size of the national parliament in half. The country also made an effort to reduce corruption and improve the quality of political representation through ambitious electoral reform. Taiwan's tense relationship with neighboring China took a turn for the worse during 2005 with Beijing's announcement of an anti-secession law, which authorizes the use of military force against Taiwan in the event "peaceful" attempts to unify with Taiwan prove ineffective. However, new channels of communication between Taiwanese and Chinese politicians emerged when then-Kuomintang (Nationalist) Party chairman Lien Chan accepted an invitation from Chinese president Hu Jintao to visit China.

Located some 100 miles off the southeast coast of China, Taiwan became the home of the Kuomintang (KMT) government-in-exile in 1949, when Communist forces overthrew the Kuomintang following two decades of civil war. While Taiwan is independent in all but name, Beijing considers it to be a renegade province of the People's Republic of China and has long threatened to invade if the island declares formal independence.

The breakthrough for Taiwan's transition to democracy occurred in 1987, when the KMT authoritarian ruler, Chiang Ching-kuo, ended 38 years of martial law, liberalized the media industry, and legalized opposition political parties. In 1988, Lee Teng-hui became the first native Taiwanese president, breaking a stranglehold on politics

by mainland Emigres, who, along with their descendants, made up less than 10 percent of Taiwan's population.

In his 12 years in office, Lee oversaw far-reaching political reforms including the holding of Taiwan's first multiparty legislative elections in 1991-1992 and the first direct presidential election in 1996. Lee also downplayed the KMT's historic commitment to eventual reunification with China and promoted a distinct Taiwanese national identity, undermining Beijing's claim that there is only "one China," which includes Taiwan.

With Lee barred by term limits from seeking reelection, Chen Shui-bian's victory in the 2000 presidential race, as a candidate of the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), ended 55 years of KMT rule. Chen and vice presidential running mate Lu Hsiu-lien won reelection in March 2004 by a margin of only 0.2 percent after the two were both injured in an apparent assassination attempt. Opposition candidates Lien Chan and James Soong alleged that the shooting was staged in order to gain sympathy votes. Two lawsuits were filed, challenging Chen's win and seeking a nullification of the entire election. Both cases were rejected by Taiwan's high court.

The DPP gained seats in the December 2004 legislative elections but failed to capture the majority, as the party's leadership had hoped. President Chen Shui-bian resigned from his post as chairman of the DPP to take responsibility for the "defeat," with the promise "From now on [I] will be a president for all the people."

On March 14, 2005, China promulgated an anti-secession law providing for the use of "non-peaceful means and other necessary measures" against Taiwan if efforts to achieve a peaceful reunification are "completely exhausted." Polls show that most Taiwanese do not favor unification with China, preferring instead the status quo of de facto independence or formal independence. Beijing's announcement of the anti-secession law sparked a demonstration by hundreds of thousands of people in the streets of Taipei. President Chen attended the demonstration but did not make a speech, not wanting to provoke Beijing.

Taking a decidedly different approach to improving relations across the Taiwan Strait, in late April and early May, the leaders of two major opposition parties in Taiwan, the KMT and the People First Party (PFP), traveled to China to meet with leaders in Beijing. KMT chairman Lien Chan and PFP chairman James Soong issued statements pledging to work with Beijing to end hostility. Chan's visit marked the first time leaders of the Nationalist and Communist parties have met since the end of the Chinese Civil War in 1949. The Taiwanese public responded to the Lien and Soong visits with mixed opinions about their impact on relations with China. Chen has extended invitations for a meeting with Beijing, but Chinese officials refuse to participate in talks with Chen until he accepts the "one-China policy," acknowledging that Taiwan is part of China.

A central focus of Chen's 2004 presidential reelection campaign concerned his plans to reform the constitution, making it "timely, relevant and viable." On August 23, 2004, the Legislative Yuan passed a resolution for constitutional amendments, and in May 2005, members of an ad hoc National Assembly were elected to vote on what Chen termed "the first phase" of constitutional reform. On June 7, 2005, both KMT and DPP members of the National Assembly approved the first set of constitutional changes, writing a national referendum into the constitution, cutting the

size of the 225-seat legislature in half, extending legislative terms to four years, and exchanging Taiwan's single-vote, multiple-member-district electoral system for a system of single-member districts with proportional representation (a two-vote system). The new electoral system will be put into use in 2008.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Citizens of Taiwan can change their government democratically. The 1946 constitution, adopted while the KMT was in power on the mainland, created a hybrid presidential-parliamentary system. The president, who is directly elected for a maximum of two 4-year terms, wields executive power, appoints the prime minister, and can dissolve the legislature. The prime minister is responsible to the national legislature, or Legislative Yuan, the members of which are elected to four-year terms in office. Constitutional amendments are subject to the approval of two-thirds of the legislature followed by a national referendum.

For the first time since it was founded 110 years ago, the KMT held democratically contested elections in July for the post of party chairman. Taipei mayor Ma Ying-jeou defeated the Legislative Yuan Speaker Wang Jin-pyng and was sworn in as the new party chairman in August. Ma has vowed to make reforms within the party itself, fighting internal corruption and recruiting new, younger members.

The administration of President Chen Shiu-bian has been successful in reducing incidents of vote buying and in attacking the links between politicians and organized crime, which flourished under KMT rule. The Ministry of Justice announced in March that since the establishment of the Black Gold Investigation Center in 2000, prosecutors have indicted 534 elected officials for taking bribes, buying votes, or being involved with gangs. Those prosecuted include 23 legislators, 8 city or county commissioners, 15 city or county speakers or vice speakers, 141 city councilors, and 347 township heads or councilors. In Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index, Taiwan was ranked 32 out of 159 countries surveyed, an improvement on last year's ranking of 35 out of 145 countries surveyed.

The Taiwanese press is "vigorous and active," according to the 2004 human rights report issued by the U.S. State Department in February 2005. Print media are completely independent, but electronic media and broadcast television stations are still subject to government influence through the authority of the Government Information Office (GIO) to regulate programming and the radio and television licensing process. Given that most Taiwanese can access approximately 100 cable television stations, the state's influence on the media is, on balance, minimal. Moreover, legislation approved in 2003 bars the government, political parties, and political party officials from owning or running media organizations. The legislation also orders the creation of a National Communications Commission (NCC) to replace the GIO in overseeing the operations of the broadcast media. The legislation to create the NCC as an independent body under the Executive Yuan was passed on October 26. According to DPP legislator Ker Chien-ming, who serves as the director of the DPP's Policy Committee, in order to ensure that the NCC is entirely free from government influence, the caucus will consult legal experts and the Presidential Office on the possibility of filing for a constitutional interpretation of this new legislation.

Taiwanese of all faiths can worship freely. Religious organizations can choose

to register with the government; those that do so may operate tax free. Taiwanese professors and other educators write and lecture freely.

Freedom of assembly and association are well respected. Permits are required for public meetings outdoors, but these are routinely granted. All civic organizations must register with the government, although registration is freely granted. Taiwanese human rights, social welfare, and environmental nongovernmental groups (NGOs) are active and operate without harassment. Trade unions are independent, and most workers in Taiwan have enjoyed the right to free association for many years. However, government employees do not have associational rights, and all teachers, civil servants, and defense industry workers are barred from joining unions or bargaining collectively.

Taiwan's judiciary is independent, and trials are public and generally fair. There is no trial by jury; judges decide all cases. Recent judicial reforms have reduced corruption and political influence over the courts. In August 2004, the Ministry of Justice established a task force to investigate corruption in the judiciary, and since then, several officials have been brought under investigation as part of the Chen administration's continued crackdown on organized crime, corruption, and bribery. Arbitrary arrest and detention are not permitted, and police generally respect this ban.

Police occasionally committed acts of physical abuse against detainees, and a "historical and cultural tradition of corruption hindered police effectiveness," according to the U.S. State Department report. Still, police remain under civilian control, and human rights abuses are not considered a problem. Suspects are allowed attorneys during interrogations specifically to prevent abuse during detention. The government is in the process of installing video-recording technology in all interrogation rooms in order to document the processes used. Prison conditions are generally adequate and conform to international norms. Because overcrowding is the biggest problem, expansion projects are in progress at a number of prisons.

Taiwan's constitution provides for the equality of all citizens. The rights of descendants of speakers of Malayo-Polynesian languages are protected by law, and the government has instituted social and educational programs to help the population assimilate into mainstream Taiwanese society. Companies wishing to compete for government contracts are subject to a quota system for the employment of Aborigines and people with physical disabilities. In a measure to increase a sense of community among Taiwanese Aborigines, the first Aboriginal television station was launched in July; it broadcasts a mix of news and features focusing on Aboriginal communities.

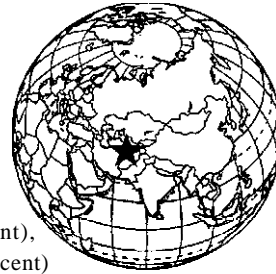
Laws protecting privacy are generally followed. Searches without warrants are allowed only in particular circumstances, and a 1999 law imposes strict punishments for illicit wiretapping. With the exception of civil servants and military personnel traveling to China, freedom of movement is generally not restricted. During the Lunar New Year holidays, direct airline flights between Taiwan and mainland China commenced for the first time in 55 years, with nearly 50 flights from Beijing and Shanghai to Taipei. The possibility of opening up these routes permanently is still being discussed. Presently, flights between Taiwan and China must touch down in a third country.

Taiwanese women have made impressive gains in recent years in business but

continue to face job discrimination in the private sector. Rape and domestic violence remain problems despite government programs to protect women and numerous NGOs working to improve women's rights. Although the law allows authorities to investigate complaints of domestic violence and to prosecute rape suspects without the victims formally pressing charges, cultural norms inhibit many women from reporting these crimes. The Taiwan National Police Agency of the Ministry of the Interior recorded 2,101 cases of rape. According to a U.S. State Department report, experts estimate the actual number of rapes at 10 times the official number.

Tajikistan

Population: 6,800,000 **Political Rights:** 6
GNI/capita: \$210 **Civil Liberties:** 5
Life Expectancy: 63 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim (85 percent),
 Shia Muslim (5 percent), other (10 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Tajik (79.9 percent), Uzbek (15.3 percent),
 Russian (1.1 percent), Kyrgyz (1.1 percent), other (2.6 percent)
Capital: Dushanbe



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,7NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview:

The overwhelming political dominance of President Imomali Rakhmonov's ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) ensured it an easy victory in the February 2005 parliamentary elections. Throughout the year, the government continued to consolidate its power by clamping down on the media and working to sideline perceived and actual political rivals. Meanwhile, Russia strengthened its foothold in the region following Dushanbe's ratification of a bilateral agreement on a number of strategic and economic matters, including the establishment of a permanent Russian military base in Tajikistan.

Conquered by Russia in the late 1800s, Tajikistan was made an autonomous region within Uzbekistan in 1924 and a separate socialist republic of the USSR in 1929. Tajikistan declared independence from the Soviet Union in September 1991, and two months later, former Communist Party leader Rakhman Nabiyev was elected president.

Long-simmering, clan-based tensions, combined with various anti-Communist and Islamist movements, soon plunged the country into a five-year civil war for central government control. In September 1992, Communist hard-liners forced Nabiyev's resignation; he was replaced later that year by Imomali Rakhmonov, a leading Communist Party member. The following month, Rakhmonov launched attacks against antigovernment forces that caused tens of thousands to flee into neighboring Afghanistan.

As the fighting continued, Rakhmonov was elected president in November 1994 after most opposition candidates either boycotted or were prevented from competing in the poll. The March 1995 parliamentary elections, in which the majority of seats were won by progovernment candidates, were boycotted by the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), a coalition of various secular and Islamic opposition groups that emerged during the war as the main opposition force fighting against Rakhmonov's government.

Following a December 1996 ceasefire, Rakhmonov and UTO leader Said Abdullo Nuri signed a formal peace agreement in Moscow on June 27, 1997, officially ending the civil war, which had claimed tens of thousands of lives and left several hundred thousand as refugees. The accord called for the merger of opposition forces into the regular army; granted an amnesty for UTO members; provided for the UTO to be allotted 30 percent of senior government posts; and established a 26-member National Reconciliation Commission, with seats evenly divided between the government and the UTO. The commission was charged with implementing the peace agreements, including preparing amendments for a referendum on constitutional changes that would lead to fair parliamentary elections.

During the next two years, the government and the UTO took steps toward implementing the peace accord. In a September 1999 referendum, voters approved a series of constitutional amendments permitting the formation of religion-based political parties. This move paved the way for the legal operation of the Islamic opposition, including the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), which constituted the backbone of the UTO. The referendum also included an amendment extending the president's single term in office from five to seven years. In November, Rakhmonov was re-elected with a reported 97 percent of the vote in a poll criticized by international election observers for widespread irregularities.

As the final stage in the implementation of the 1997 peace accord, Tajikistan held elections in February 2000 for the 63-seat lower house of parliament. Rakhmonov's People's Democratic Party (PDP)—which he joined in 1998—received nearly 65 percent of the vote, followed by the Communist Party with 20 percent, and the ERP with 7 percent. Although the participation of six parties and a number of independent candidates in the poll provided some political pluralism, international election observers, including a joint mission by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations, cited serious problems, including the exclusion of certain opposition parties, biased state media coverage, and a lack of transparency in the tabulation of votes. In the March elections to the 33-seat upper house of parliament, in which local assemblies elected 25 members and Rakhmonov appointed the remaining eight, the PDP obtained the overwhelming majority of seats.

After the elections, the National Reconciliation Commission was formally disbanded, and a UN observer mission withdrew in May 2000 after nearly six years in Tajikistan. However, important provisions of the peace accord remained unimplemented, with demobilization of opposition factions incomplete and the government failing to meet the 30 percent quota of senior government posts to be awarded to the UTO.

Rakhmonov's already substantial powers as president were further consolidated in a June 22, 2003, constitutional referendum. Voters approved by a reported 93 per-

cent a package of 56 constitutional amendments, the most controversial of which permits the president to serve two additional seven-year terms beyond the next presidential election in 2006. (The constitution previously limited the president to a single seven-year term.) Rakhmonov, who argued that this change would better reflect post-civil war circumstances and bring the country continued stability, could theoretically remain in office until 2020. Critics charged that most voters were not fully aware of the proposed changes, which were not printed on the ballot papers and had not been given much media coverage. The opposition Democratic Party (DP) urged its supporters to boycott the vote, while the opposition Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the IRP adopted less openly confrontational positions.

With parliamentary elections due in February 2005 and presidential elections a year later, the government increased its pressure on opposition figures and other perceived potential challengers to the president's power. The authorities targeted former Rakhmonov allies, including Drug Control Agency head Ghaffor Mirzoyev, who was arrested in August 2004 on numerous criminal charges, including murder. In December, DP leader Mahmudi Iskandarov was arrested in Moscow after Tajik authorities issued a warrant for his extradition on criminal charges. After Russian authorities released him in April 2005, Iskandarov was apparently abducted and forcibly repatriated to Tajikistan, where he was put on trial. He was convicted in October on six charges, including terrorism, and sentenced to 23 years in prison. Other members of the political opposition who were targeted during the year included SDP members Nizomiddin Begmatov and Nasimjon Shukurov, who were sentenced to prison on charges of hooliganism after allegedly addressing a judge with foul language during a court hearing.

In the February 2005 election to the lower house of parliament, the PDP secured an easy victory, winning 52 of 63 seats. The Communist Party and the IRP captured 4 and 2 seats, respectively, and independent candidates won 5. The opposition SDP and DP—which, along with the IRP, had formed a tactical coalition the previous year to challenge the PDP—failed to capture a single seat. Election monitors from the OSCE concluded that "despite some improvement over previous elections, large-scale irregularities were evident" and that the election "failed to meet many of the key OSCE commitments for democratic elections." Among the problems noted were multiple voting, lack of politically balanced election commissions, inadequate implementation of positive election law amendments, and official interference with press coverage of the campaign. In March, the Central Election Commission, which is appointed by the authorities, rejected an appeal by several opposition parties challenging the results in the capital, Dushanbe.

On the international front, Tajikistan's parliament in early 2005 ratified a 2004 agreement solidifying Russia's military presence in Tajikistan and increasing bilateral economic relations. The terms of the agreement included the upgrading of Russia's 201st Motorized Rifle Division in Tajikistan to a full military base; the transfer of control of a space-monitoring system in Tajikistan to Russia; the forgiving of Dushanbe's massive debts to Russia; and Russia's investment in infrastructure projects in Tajikistan, including a hydropower plant. Also included was the transfer of responsibility for guarding the Tajik-Afghan border from Russian to Tajik jurisdiction (most of the border guard officers were Russian, while the troops were Tajik conscripts). By mid-2005, Russian troops had been withdrawn from their last border post.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Tajikistan cannot change their government democratically. The 1994 constitution provides for a strong, directly elected executive who enjoys broad authority to appoint and dismiss officials. Amendments to the constitution adopted in a 1999 referendum further increased the powers of the president by extending the term in office from five to seven years. The amendments also created a full-time, bicameral parliament: in the Assembly of Representatives (lower chamber), 63 members are elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms; and in the National Assembly (upper chamber), 33 members are indirectly elected, 25 by local assemblies and 8 by the president, all for five-year terms. Constitutional amendments adopted in a 2003 referendum allow the president to run for two additional seven-year terms in office. Neither the presidential polls in 1994 and 1999 nor the parliamentary elections of 1995, 2000, and 2005 were free and fair.

Patronage networks and regional affiliations are central to political life, with officials from the Kulyob region—the home of President Imomali Rakhmonov—dominant in government. The pro-Rakhmonov PDP is the dominant political party. Secular opposition parties, including the DP and SDP, are weak and enjoy minimal popular support. The IRP, currently the only legal religion-based party in Central Asia, has limited political influence within government structures but has also faced opposition criticism of having been co-opted by the authorities.

Corruption is reportedly pervasive throughout society, with payments often required to obtain lucrative government positions. According to the 2005 U.S. State Department human rights report, the government took steps to combat corruption, including trying officials and judges for taking bribes. Tajikistan was ranked 144 out of 159 countries in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Despite constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech and the press, independent journalists continue to face harassment and intimidation, selective tax audits, and denial of access to state printing facilities. The penal code criminalizes publicly defaming or insulting a person's honor or reputation. Consequently, journalists often avoid reporting on sensitive political issues, including corruption, and directly criticizing the president and other senior officials. The government controls most printing presses, newsprint supplies, and broadcasting facilities. Most television stations are state owned or only nominally independent, and the process of obtaining broadcast licenses is cumbersome. According to the U.S. State Department, the government blocked access to several internet sites in 2005, including one belonging to Dodojon Atoulloev, an opposition journalist based in Moscow.

Dozens of journalists were murdered during the country's five-year civil war in the 1990s, and most of the cases have not been solved. In January 2004, the prosecutor-general's office announced that it had established a special group to investigate the killings. However, according to the press freedom watchdog group Committee to Protect Journalists, the group had not achieved any results as of late 2005.

Independent and opposition journalists and media outlets faced growing government pressure in advance of the February 2005 parliamentary elections. In January, the authorities shut down the printing house Kayhon—which had published opposition newspapers, including *Ruzi Nav* and *Nerui Sukhan*—for alleged license violations. The editor of the defunct *Nerui Sukhan* was convicted in August of illegally using electricity for his press advocacy group's printing house; he was sen-

tenced to two years of corrective labor. The authorities ordered the closure of two private television stations, Guli Bodom and Somonien, in April and May, respectively; Guli Bodom resumed broadcasting in July, but Somonien remained closed. Press freedom advocates regarded the closures of the stations—which were among the few that had provided opposition candidates airtime—as politically motivated. Independent reporter Jumaboy Tolibov was sentenced in July to two years in prison on charges including hooliganism and trespassing; although his sentence was partially overturned in October, he remained in custody as of November 30.

The government generally respects religious freedom in this predominantly Muslim country, although it imposes some restrictions. Religious communities must register with the State Committee on Religious Affairs, a process sometimes used to control religious and political activities. The authorities monitor the activities of religious institutions to keep them from becoming overtly political. There were reportedly no arrests of high-profile Muslims during the year. According to the U.S. State Department, the Tajik government does not restrict academic freedom.

The government at times restricts freedom of assembly and association. Local government committee approval is required to hold public demonstrations. Unapproved protests are rare because of the fear of reprisal from the authorities and concerns about a return to the political unrest of the civil war period. All nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) must register with the Ministry of Justice. A number of NGOs operate in the country without restrictions. However, following the recent political upheavals in several post-Soviet countries, which the Tajik government perceived to have been at least partly the result of intervention by foreign-backed organizations, the authorities became increasingly wary of foreign-funded NGOs in 2005. As of April, all foreign embassies and international NGOs were required to notify the Tajik government about any meetings with local political and civil society activists.

Citizens have the legal right to form and join trade unions and to bargain collectively, which they do in practice. Although the law does not restrict the right to strike, no strikes occurred during the year, reportedly because workers fear government retaliation.

The judiciary is strongly influenced by the executive branch, as well as by some criminal groups. Many judges are poorly trained and inexperienced, and bribery is reportedly widespread. The government took some steps to address the problem during the year by arresting some corrupt judges and prosecutors. Police often conduct arbitrary arrests and beat detainees to extract confessions. Detainees are often refused access to legal counsel, and they frequently face lengthy pretrial detention. Conditions in prisons—which are overcrowded, unsanitary, and disease-ridden—are often life-threatening.

Most of the population live in poverty and survive on subsistence agriculture, remittances from relatives working abroad, mainly in Russia, and foreign humanitarian aid. Widespread corruption, patronage networks, regional affiliations, limited privatization of land and industry, and the narcotics trade restrict equality of opportunity and limit economic growth. Child labor, particularly on cotton farms, remains a problem.

Women are often sexually harassed in the workplace and continue to face traditional societal discrimination. Violence against women, including spousal abuse, is

reportedly common, but cases reported to the authorities are rarely investigated. Tajikistan is a source and transit country for persons trafficked for prostitution. A 2004 law against human trafficking addresses prevention, protection of victims, and the prosecution of traffickers. According to the International Organization for Migration, 58 people were convicted of trafficking in 2005.

Tanzania

Population: 36,500,000 **Political Rights:** 4
GN/capita: \$300 **Civil Liberties:** 3
Life Expectancy: 45 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Christian (30 percent), Muslim (35 percent), indigenous beliefs (35 percent); Zanzibar: Muslim (more than 99 percent)
Ethnic Groups: African (99 percent), other [including Asian, European, and Arab] (1 percent)
Capital: Dar-es-Salaam



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
5,5PF	5,5PF	5,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,3PF	4,3PF	4,3PF	4,3PF

Overview:

Presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled for November 2005 on the Tanzanian mainland were postponed until December because of the death of an opposition vice presidential candidate. By contrast, polling took place for president and parliament of the semiautonomous islands of Zanzibar and Pemba. Some violence occurred in the run-up to these elections; the postelection atmosphere was tense as the opposition Civic United Front (CUF) alleged fraud in the victory of the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party. Foreign Minister and longtime CCM stalwart Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete was elected president.

Three years after mainland Tanganyika gained independence from Britain in 1961, the Zanzibar and Pemba Islands were merged with Tanganyika to become the United Republic of Tanzania. The ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party, under longtime president Julius Nyerere, dominated the country's political life. For much of his presidency, Nyerere espoused a collectivist economic philosophy known in Swahili as *ujamaa*. While it may have been useful in promoting a sense of community and nationality, this policy resulted in significant economic dislocation and decline. During Nyerere's tenure, Tanzania also played an important role as a "front-line state" in the international response to white-controlled regimes in southern Africa. Nyerere retained strong influence after he officially retired in 1985 until his death in 1999. His successor, Ali Hassan Mwinyi, held the presidency from 1985 to 1995 and presided over a carefully controlled political liberalization process.

The CCM's landslide legislative victory in the 1995 parliamentary elections was seriously tainted by poor organization of the electoral process, fraud, and adminis-

trative irregularities. In addition, extensive use of state broadcasting and other government resources during the campaign favored the ruling party. The CCM won 80 percent of the 232 directly elected seats in the National Assembly. The voting in Zanzibar was plainly fraudulent, with the island's high court summarily rejecting opposition demands for fresh polls.

Tanzania held legislative and presidential elections in October 2000, the second since the reintroduction of multiparty politics. Incumbent president Benjamin Mkapa was reelected with about 70 percent of the vote, and the CCM won an overwhelming victory in the parliamentary election. Although the conduct of these elections represented a modest improvement over that of the 1995 vote, the elections were nonetheless marred by fraudulent polls biased in favor of the ruling party in the federated semi-autonomous islands of Zanzibar and Pemba; the status of these islands in relation to the mainland has long provoked tension. The opposition Civic United Front (CUF) and independent observers convincingly demonstrated that the ruling CCM had engaged in fraud to retain power. Subsequent rioting in Zanzibar in early 2001 resulted in the deaths of more than 40 people. In October 2001, the CCM and the CUF announced a reconciliation agreement designed to resolve the political crisis and allow for a more transparent government.

Significant progress occurred in 2003 regarding Zanzibar, with elections that resulted in a parliamentary victory for the CUF. These elections raised hopes that the 2005 parliamentary and presidential elections would represent a positive step forward.

The CCM emerged victorious in the November 2004 local elections. Opposition parties claimed that the legitimacy of the polls had been affected by violence from progovernment supporters and a biased election administration. Meanwhile, there were delays in the implementation of reforms regarding Zanzibar and Pemba, which the opposition CUF and CCM had agreed on in 2001. These reforms related to government jurisdiction of the electoral process, police oversight, publicly owned media institutions, and the function and structure of the Zanzibar Electoral Commission. Delays included the postponement of voter registration on Zanzibar. The CUF also complained that mainland Tanzanians were being fraudulently included in the Zanzibari voting rolls.

The death from natural causes of an opposition vice presidential candidate caused the postponement of presidential and parliamentary elections on the mainland until December 2005. Prior to the elections in Zanzibar, some violence was reported. Subsequent to the elections, the opposition and some observers vociferously cried foul over alleged CCM strong-arm tactics to ensure victory in Zanzibar's presidential and parliamentary contests. However, this did not degenerate into widespread unrest, as many had feared. Complaints included phantom voters and the use of the military in election operations, multiple voting, underage voting, illegal voting by military personnel, and failure by electoral authorities to release the voter register to the public before election day. Outgoing president Mkapa's handpicked successor, Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, was elected president, and the CCM retained its huge majority in Tanzania's parliament.

Tanzania is one of the poorest countries in the world. According to World Bank statistics, per capita income in 2004 was estimated at about \$290. The country hosts some 400,000 refugees, mostly from Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Some Burundian refugees have begun to return to their country after successful elections and the installation of a majority-backed government.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Citizens of Tanzania cannot choose their government democratically. Although opposition parties were legalized in 1992, the ruling CCM continues to dominate the country's political life. Executive power rests with the president, who is elected by direct popular vote for a five-year term and can serve a maximum of two terms; the constitution provides for universal adult suffrage. Legislative power is held by a unicameral National Assembly, with members serving five-year terms. The legislative body, the Bunge, has 274 members, with 232 elected for a five-year term in single-seat constituencies. The remaining seats are reserved for women elected on the basis of proportional representation among the political parties represented in the National Assembly.

Seventeen opposition parties have formal status. Some of them are active, but they tend to be divided and ineffectual. The opposition CUF has sought to establish significant support on the Tanzanian mainland. Another major opposition party, the National Convention for Constitution and Reform (NCCR-Mageuzi)—whose former leader, Augustine Mrema, was runner-up to Benjamin Mkapa in the 1995 presidential election—subsequently split. Parties with parliamentary representation receive government subsidies, but they criticize the low level of funding and the formula by which it is allocated. In 2003, most opposition parties came together in an electoral alliance, which the CUF did not join. The opposition fielded several different presidential candidates in the 2005 polls.

Corruption remains a serious problem, although the government has made some attempts to address it, including developing a national anticorruption action plan. Tanzania was ranked 88 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Although the constitution provides for freedom of speech, it does not specifically do so for the freedom of the press. Print and electronic media are active, but media impact is largely limited to major urban areas. The country has more than 50 regular newspapers, including 17 dailies. The growth of the broadcast media has been hindered by the lack of capital investment needed to set up television and radio stations, both public and private. Nevertheless, a number of private FM radio stations have gone on the air, most of them in urban areas. The number of journalists has also increased from only 230 in 1991 to more than 4,000, but journalists in general have serious concerns about press laws that could limit freedom of expression. Progress for independence in the media was "encouraging," according to a 2004 report of the Tanzania chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa. Internet access, while limited to urban areas, is growing.

Press freedom rights are especially constrained in Zanzibar by the semiautonomous Zanzibar government. Press reforms contained in a 2001 media bill did not apply to the island. In recent years, the government has not permitted private broadcasters or newspapers on Zanzibar, though many islanders can receive mainland broadcasts and read the mainland press. The Zanzibari government often reacts to criticism in the independent press by accusing it of being a "threat to national unity." In 2005, it banned leading columnist Jabir Idrissa. The weekly newspaper *Dira* was banned in November 2003, with no reason given.

Freedom of religion is generally respected, and relations between the various faiths are mainly peaceful. In recent years, however, religion-based tensions have increased. In addition, on Zanzibar, the 2001 Mufti Law allowed the Zanzibari government to appoint a *mufti*, or a professional jurist who interprets Islamic law, to oversee Muslim organizations. Some Muslims are critical of this law, contending that it permits an excessive government role in the religious sphere. Academic freedom is respected.

Constitutional protections for the rights of freedom of assembly and association are generally, but not always, respected. Laws allow rallies only by officially registered political parties, which may not be formed on religious, ethnic, or regional bases and cannot oppose the union of Zanzibar and the mainland. Many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are active, and some have been able to influence the public policy process. However, an NGO act passed by parliament in 2002 contains many serious flaws, including compulsory registration backed by criminal sanctions, lack of appeal to the courts, alignment of NGO activities with government plans, prohibition of national networks and coalitions of NGOs, and inconsistencies with other related existing legislation. The International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights and the World Organization against Torture have criticized the legislation on the grounds that it contravenes the Tanzanian constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Less than 5 percent of the Tanzanian labor force is unionized. Workers' rights are limited. Essential workers are barred from striking, and other workers' right to strike is restricted by complex notification and mediation requirements. A labor law was passed in 2004, which the government states will help safeguard the rights and welfare of workers. Approximately 85 percent of Tanzania's people survive through subsistence agriculture.

Tanzania's judiciary has displayed signs of autonomy after decades of subservience to the one-party, CCM regime, but it remains subject to considerable political influence. Arrest and pretrial detention laws are often ignored. Prison conditions are harsh, and police abuses are said to be common. According to government estimates, there are approximately 45,000 inmates in the country's prisons, although the prisons' collective capacity is only 21,000. Questions have been raised regarding the safety and health of prisoners, including minors and women, who have been subjected to sexual harassment and human rights abuses.

The 2002 Prevention of Terrorism Act, which some NGOs have criticized for containing inconsistencies and anomalies, gives the government considerable latitude by not clearly defining the term "terrorism." Rather, the act merely lists acts of terrorism, which include, among other things, attacks upon a person's life, kidnapping, and serious damage to property. It gives the police and immigration officials sweeping powers to arrest suspected illegal immigrants or anyone thought to have links with terrorists.

Compared with many of its neighbors, Tanzania has enjoyed relatively tranquil relations among its many ethnic groups. The presence of refugees from conflicts in Burundi, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, however, has in the past raised tensions.

Women's rights guaranteed by the constitution and other laws are not uniformly

protected. Traditional or Islamic customs discriminating against women prevail in family law, especially in rural areas and in Zanzibar, and women have fewer educational and economic opportunities. Domestic violence against women is reportedly common and is rarely prosecuted. Human rights groups have sought laws to bar forced marriages, which are most common among Tanzania's coastal peoples.

Thailand

Population: 65,000,000 **Political Rights:** 3*
GNI/capita: \$2,190 **Civil Liberties:** 3
Life Expectancy: 71 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Buddhist (94.6 percent),
 Muslim (4.6 percent), Christian (0.7 percent),
 other (0.1 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Thai (75 percent), Chinese (14 percent),
 other (11 percent)
Capital: Bangkok



Trend Arrow: Thailand's political rights score declined from 2 to 3, and its status from Free to Partly Free, due to a progressive weakening of opposition political parties and a lack of political competitiveness.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
3,3PF	3,3PF	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	3,3PF

Overview:

As Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party strengthened its already strong hold on power in the February 2005 legislative elections, Thaksin began to build on his political majority during the year by incorporating smaller parties into the TRT. Meanwhile, the regime was increasingly troubled by the Muslim insurgency in the south. Toward the end of the year, martial law, which gave security forces sweeping powers to deal with insurgents, was extended and expanded. The government also renewed its "war on drugs" in early 2005.

Known as Siam until 1939, Thailand is the only Southeast Asian nation never colonized by a European country. Beginning with a 1932 coup that transformed the kingdom into a constitutional monarchy, the army ruled periodically for the next six decades. The military last seized power in 1991. Thailand returned to civilian rule the following year, when the country's revered monarch, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, convinced the military to appoint a civilian prime minister.

Thailand's export-led economy experienced strong growth in the decade prior to 1997, before being dragged down by the regional financial crisis. Amid street protests by middle class Thais in Bangkok against corruption and economic mismanagement, the parliament voted no confidence in Prime Minister Chavalit Yongchaiyudh and replaced him with Democrat Party leader Chuan Leekpai, a former prime minister with a clean reputation. The parliament also approved a reformist

constitution, which created independent election and anticorruption bodies and introduced direct election of the Senate.

Criticizing the government for favoring the urban middle class over ordinary Thais, Thaksin Shinawatra, a former deputy prime minister who built his fortune in telecommunications, unseated Chuan in the January 2001 elections. Thaksin pledged to help poorer Thais hurt by the financial crisis by introducing inexpensive health care, a debt moratorium for farmers, and investment funds for each village. Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party won 248 of parliament's 500 seats despite a December 2000 ruling by Thailand's new National Counter-Corruption Commission that Thaksin, then a cabinet minister, had falsified wealth-disclosure statements in 1997. In what critics considered a controversial move, the Constitutional Court reversed this ruling and cleared Thaksin in August 2001.

Thaksin's government won praise from many Thais for introducing programs to help small businesses and the poor. Low interest rates and populist spending programs fueled a consumption-driven economic growth spurt. Wanting to portray Thailand as a well-ordered country safe for foreign investors and tourists, the government clamped down on negative news, such as the possible presence of terrorists in the country. The government long maintained that Thailand was safe from the deadly avian flu sweeping Asia. However, by February 2004, officials confessed that six million chickens had been culled and numerous human flu cases were confirmed. The revelations led to international bans on Thai chicken and widespread questions about government priorities.

Many of Thaksin's moves undercut the reformist spirit of the country's new constitution. While the constitution requires the prime minister and cabinet members to divest themselves of all business interests, many officials simply transferred these holdings to family members. Critics coined the phrase "policy corruption" to describe alleged efforts by Thaksin and his associates to use government power to enrich themselves. For example, Shin Satellite, a subsidiary of the Shin Corporation, in which Thaksin's family holds a significant stake, won an eight-year tax holiday worth \$401 million from Thailand's Board of Investment. In 2005, similar allegations of corruption emerged surrounding tender procedures in the construction of the new Suvarnabhumi International Airport.

Thailand's four southernmost provinces, home to most of the country's four million Muslims, erupted into violence in 2004. In January, more than 100 attackers raided a military depot, killing four soldiers and making off with 400 firearms in an operation whose meticulous planning and execution led to suspicions of outside involvement. In a series of coordinated attacks on 11 bases and checkpoints in April, insurgents killed five members of the Thai security forces, which responded with attacks that left more than 100 people dead. The most notorious incident thus far in the insurgency came in October 2004, when 78 of 1,300 people arrested for demonstrating suffocated in security trucks while they were being transported to a detention center.

The government declared martial law in most of Narathiwat, Pattani, and Yala provinces shortly thereafter; the martial law declarations were extended and broadened in October 2005. At that point, government sources reported that 722 violent incidents had occurred between insurgents and security forces between May and October 2005. Many fear that the government's hard-line approach will backfire and

create fertile recruiting ground for the international terrorist groups Jemaah Islamiyah and al-Qaeda, both of which have past links to Thailand. More than 1,000 people have been killed since the insurgency began in January 2004.

In the February 2005 parliamentary elections, the TRT party captured 377 seats in the 500-seat lower house and formed a government without entering into a coalition.

In October 2005, Thaksin announced what would be the country's fourth "war on drugs" campaign. The first three such campaigns relied heavily on repression and extrajudicial killings, with as many as 2,500 killed. This latest effort marked a welcome departure and was said to rest more on programs of education and rehabilitation. Thai health officials report that more than three million Thais are addicted to drugs, primarily to methamphetamines manufactured in Burma, Thailand's northern neighbor.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Thailand can change their government democratically. Thailand's constitution created a parliamentary system with a bicameral legislature. The House of Representatives includes 400 seats chosen by first-past-the-post balloting and 100 chosen by proportional representation, all directly elected for four-year terms. The Senate has 200 members, who are directly elected for six-year terms. Thailand's head of state, King Bhumibol Adunyadet, is an unelected hereditary leader with little responsibility in day-to-day politics but tremendous moral and symbolic influence, particularly in times of national or constitutional crisis. The prime minister is not elected; rather, after national parliamentary elections, the head of the party that forms a majority in parliament becomes prime minister.

Thailand's multiparty democracy is dominated by Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai party (TRT, Thais Loves Thais party), which is generally described as populist and draws important support from rural voters. Three other important political parties are: The Phak Prachatipat (Democratic Party), the country's oldest political party with strong middle class support, particularly in Bangkok; the conservative Phak Chart Thai (the Thai Nation Party, an original member of the TRT coalition government in 2001); and the smaller Phak Machacon (Great People's Party). By late 2005, all three of these parties had begun to take increasingly strong opposition stands against the TRT party. Still, as the TRT party has consolidated its political dominance—partly by sweeping electoral victories and partly by absorbing formerly independent parties, such as the Chart Pattana and the New Aspiration Party—the opposition has lost many tools to check the central leadership. With 377 of 500 parliamentary seats, the TRT party has deprived the opposition of the requisite 200 votes necessary to introduce a motion of censure against the prime minister (long an important symbolic measure, even when such resolutions failed). Opposition representatives have also lost their seats on important parliamentary committees, and the government now shows less patience for the basic procedures of democratic consultation and debate.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that official corruption is widespread, including both bureaucrats demanding bribes in exchange for routine services and law enforcement officials being paid off to ignore trafficking and other illicit activities. Many critics allege that the nexus between politics and big business is strong and growing. Thaksin has responded to conflict-of-interest charges made by an opposition politician by filing criminal charges against him. According to the Associated Press,

Jaruvan Maintaka, a civil servant who exposed corruption in the Thai government, was pressured to leave her post in September after being locked out of her office and having her salary frozen. Thailand was ranked 59 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Thailand's 1997 constitution contains 67 provisions protecting freedom of speech, making it arguably the strongest constitution on this point in Southeast Asia. However, a number of laws promulgated since then, such as defamation provisions in the 2004 Thai penal and criminal code, as well as government action, have undermined those legal protections. Thaksin's access to state-controlled media combined with the Shinawatra family's Shin Corporation's 50 percent interest in ITV—a formerly independent television station that was established specifically to offer an alternative to state-dominated broadcast media—has narrowed the spectrum of opinion aired on television. The outspoken Nation Group lost its contract to produce news for ITV and was further pressured with advertising boycotts and spurious asset investigations, according to the *Nieman Reports*. Thaksin associate and current minister of industry Suriya Jungrungeangkit purchased 30 percent of the Nation Group's shares in 2004, leading many to fear that this economic stake will be used to suppress Thailand's most outspoken media.

The print press also comes under attack, not through formal censorship, but through political intimidation, libel suits, and the threat of lost corporate and government advertising revenues—a potent threat to media companies that still carry large debts from the 1997 economic crisis. In February 2005, the editor of the *Bangkok Post* lost his job when government officials pressured the paper's management about publishing stories deemed too critical of Thaksin. Three editors of the *Thai Post* and media reformer Supinya Klangnarong are currently being sued by the Shin Corporation for alleging that the corporation has benefited from the Thaksin administration. In early 2005, Thaksin took measures to ensure more pliable media when he purchased *The Nation*, Thailand's most influential newspaper. Foreign journalists are not immune to pressure from a government that increasingly uses approval of work permits and visa renewals as leverage. Four *Far Eastern Economic Review* journalists were named in a lese majesty case, *The Economist's* annual report on Thailand was banned, and a reporter for the *International Herald Tribune* came under vocal attack for articles critical of Thaksin's economic programs. In 2005, Thailand had 786,226 internet providers and 8.42 million internet users; the internet is not censored.

Thais of all faiths have traditionally worshipped freely in this predominantly Buddhist society, although Muslims in the south have long complained of discrimination in jobs, education, and business opportunities. Recently, a heightened security interest in Islamic institutions has been deterring Muslims from visiting mosques. This discrimination is not limited to southern Thailand; Muslims in Chiang Mai Province have complained that Thai security forces have been entering mosques for what locals claim are heavy-handed and religiously insensitive inspections. Professors and other educators can generally lecture and publish freely.

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly and association, and the government generally respects these rights in practice. Permits are not required for gatherings unless they are held on public property or organized by foreign nationals, and these are granted routinely. Thailand has numerous nongovernmental organizations representing farmers, laborers, women, students, and human rights more

broadly. Private associations must register with the government, and such registrations are granted routinely. With the imposition of martial law in southern Thailand, the rights of assembly and association there have been severely circumscribed.

Thai trade unions are independent, though fewer than 2 percent of Thai workers are unionized. Private employers often breach the country's poorly enforced labor laws with violations that include using child and sweatshop labor and paying workers less than the minimum wage.

Although the judiciary is generally regarded as independent, it is sometimes subject to corruption, according to anecdotal evidence. Suspects frequently spend long periods in detention before trial because of heavy case backlogs, and trials often take years to complete. Security forces have been accused of using excessive force in dealing with unrest in the south. Thailand's poorly trained police often are implicated in wrongful killings of criminal suspects, as well as abuse of suspects and prison inmates. According to the U.S. State Department's 2005 human rights report, conditions in prisons and some provincial immigration detention facilities are poor. Prolonged pretrial detention, including of aliens, is also a problem. Attacks on civilians and government officials continue to occur almost daily, according to Amnesty International. During 2004, a number of prominent activists, including a Muslim lawyer campaigning against martial law in the south, were killed or disappeared.

Many of the estimated one million members of hill tribes have never been fully integrated into society. Reportedly, half of hill tribe members lack citizenship, which renders them ineligible to vote, own land, attend state schools, or be protected under labor laws. In 2000, the government made it easier for hill tribe members to gain citizenship, but corruption and inefficiency reportedly have slowed citizenship processing.

Reversing its long-standing policy of harboring refugees from neighboring Southeast Asian nations, in January 2005, Thailand suspended screening of new refugee applicants from Burma by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, according to Human Rights Watch. This followed a July 2003 decision to send all of the estimated 4,000 Burmese refugees and asylum seekers living in urban areas to border camps, despite the fear of cross-border violence and political and ethnic conflict in those camps. The government, which regularly expels as many as 10,000 Burmese migrants a month, also launched a new campaign to round up and deport more of the estimated one million Burmese migrant workers in Thailand. Citing systemic abuses in Burma, rights groups have criticized Thailand's toughened stance toward Burmese fleeing their country who are likely to face reprisals once they return.

Experts worry that gender equality in Thailand has deteriorated. Forty-four percent of married women report having been abused, and reports of rape are also on the rise. Some 200,000 or more Thai women and children work as prostitutes, according to government and private estimates. Many prostitutes work under debt bondage, forced to repay loans by traffickers to their parents. Authorities prosecute relatively few traffickers, and many police, soldiers, local officials, and immigration officers reportedly either are involved in trafficking or take bribes to ignore it. One percent of adult Thais are infected with HTV/AIDS; aggressive prevention and treatment policies have reduced both the number of new HTV/AIDS cases and the number of deaths from the disease. HTV-related deaths fell from over 5,000 in 2004 to around 1,600 in 2005, largely because of a new government program, started in 2004, to provide HIV positive people with anti-retroviral drugs.

Togo

Population: 6,100,000 **Political Rights:** 6
GNI/capita: \$310 **Civil Liberties:** 5
Life Expectancy: 54 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Indigenous beliefs (51 percent),
 Christian (29 percent), Muslim (20 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Native African (99 percent), European
 and Syrian-Lebanese (1 percent)
Capital: Lome



Trend Arrow: Togo received a downward trend arrow after holding presidential elections that were not deemed free and fair and for waging a postelection crackdown on government opponents that left hundreds dead.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview:

President Gnassingbe Eyadema, Africa's longest-serving leader, died in February 2005, after 38 years in power. The military unconstitutionally installed his son, Faure Gnassingbe, but international pressure forced him to hold elections. Gnassingbe's victory, which was disputed by members of the opposition and some international observers, triggered violence that claimed hundreds of lives and forced tens of thousands of Togolese to flee to neighboring countries. Efforts to form a government of national unity failed.

Togoland, a German colony for more three decades until France seized it at the outset of World War I, gained independence in 1960. The country's founding president, Sylvanus Olympio, was murdered in 1963 as Gnassingbe Eyadema, then a demobilized sergeant who had served in France's colonial wars, led an army coup to topple the country's democratically elected government. After assuming direct power in 1967, Eyadema suspended the constitution and extended his repressive rule through mock elections and a puppet political party.

In 1991, the organizing of free political parties was legalized, and multiparty elections were promised. The transition faltered, however, as soldiers and secret police harassed, attacked, or killed opposition supporters. The October 2002 legislative elections, in which the ruling Rally of the Togolese People party captured 72 of 81 parliamentary seats, were neither free nor fair. Leading opposition parties boycotted the vote to protest preparations for the polls, which they said would prevent the holding of a free and fair election.

Eyadema, who won fraudulent elections in 1993 and 1998, secured another five-year term as president in 2003 with 57 percent of the vote, compared with 34 percent for Emmanuel Bob-Akitani of Olympio's Union of Forces for Change (UFC). Four other candidates shared the remainder of the vote. The European Union (EU) declined to send observers, saying it was unlikely that the vote would be fair. Monitors from the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African

States (ECOWAS), however, claimed that the elections were free and fair. In April 2004, the government pledged to undertake 22 democratic reforms, including launching talks with the political opposition and amending press and communications laws.

Eyadema's death in February 2005 prompted the military to install his son, Faure Gnassingbe. Gnassingbe, who studied in France and the United States and has a background in business, had served as minister for telecommunications prior to his father's death. ECOWAS and the AU condemned the succession as a military coup and pushed for elections. Gnassingbe relented, and the poll was held in April. Four candidates contested the election, which became a race between Emmanuel Bob-Akitani, deputy leader of the UFC—the largest party in the opposition alliance—and Gnassingbe. The opposition, in a rare sign of unity, rallied behind Bob-Akitani. The favored challenger, Gilchrist Olympio, son of Sylvanus Olympio, was barred from running because he had lived in exile since 1992. Gnassingbe was declared the winner of the poll with 60 percent of the vote, compared with 38 percent for Bob-Akitani.

Western diplomats cited incidents of fraud, including allegations that there were almost a million phantom voters, swelling the ranks of those eligible to vote by a third; irregularities in the revising of the electoral rolls; and many cases of the military snatching ballot boxes ahead of the ballot count. Numerous instances of intimidation and repression by security forces and members of the ruling party were also cited. The Constitutional Court rejected an opposition challenge that the election had been rigged.

Opposition supporters immediately took to the streets to protest the results, clashing with ruling party supporters and security forces. The resulting violence claimed between 400 and 500 lives, according to a report by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNCHR). Thousands of others were wounded. Some 40,000 people fled to neighboring countries. The United Nations said that most of those killed in Togo were attacked in their homes, and that security forces bore the greatest responsibility for the violence and human rights violations.

Many expressed disappointment that African leaders backed the poll results because the leaders' stand on Togo was seen as a test for their commitment to safeguard good governance and democracy on the continent. In the end, the African leaders sought a compromise solution: the formation of a unity government. However, talks between the ruling party and main radical opposition parties broke down. The leader of a moderate opposition party, Edem Kodjo, was named prime minister; Kodjo, an economist, had served in the position under Eyadema in the 1990s. Most key cabinet posts went to the ruling party. Kpatcha Gnassingbe, Faure's brother, was named defense minister.

The EU imposed sanctions on Togo more than a decade ago because of the government's resistance to democratic reform. Togo's economy is suffering from the EU sanctions, as well as from corruption and mismanagement. Corruption, military spending, and large, inefficient state-owned companies impede economic growth; 80 percent of Togolese are engaged in subsistence agriculture. In May 2005, the AU lifted the sanctions it had imposed on Togo after the military installed Gnassingbe as president. Sanctions imposed by the ECOWAS were removed as soon as Gnassingbe stepped down and agreed to hold elections.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Citizens of Togo cannot change their government democratically. Presidential elections in 1993 and 1998 were blatantly fraudulent. Gnassingbe Eyadema's supporters in the National Assembly began setting the stage in 2002 for his victory in the June 2003 presidential election by changing the constitution to allow him to run for a third term. Lawmakers amended the electoral code, reducing the power of the electoral commission and compromising its impartiality. To help assure Eyadema's win, the Constitutional Court barred the president's main rival and opposition leader, Gilchrist Olympio, from participating in the polls. Members of the unicameral National Assembly are elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms.

Corruption in Togo has been a serious impediment to development. Togo was not ranked by Transparency International in its 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech and of the press is legally guaranteed, but these rights are not always respected in practice. At least 15 private newspapers publish in Lome. More than a dozen independent newspapers publish sporadically, and there are many private radio stations, most of which operate as pirate stations. Most of the independent broadcast media outlets, however, offer little vibrant local news coverage or commentary. The National Assembly in 2004 amended the press and communications laws to remove prison terms for most offenses. International press freedom groups welcomed the move but said that they would watch to see how the amended laws are applied. Prison sentences could still be imposed in cases of journalists found guilty of advocating theft, murder, or racial hatred, or subverting security forces from "their duty to the country." Reporting about corruption has often landed Togolese journalists in jail. Internet access is unrestricted.

Constitutionally protected religious freedom is generally respected. Academic freedom is not respected, and government informers and security forces maintain a presence on campuses. Informers report on the activities of suspected opponents of the government.

Freedom of assembly and association is often restricted for the government's political opponents. Demonstrations are often banned or violently halted. Human rights groups are closely monitored and sometimes harassed. Authorities banned public rallies for about two weeks after Eyadema's death in 2005.

Togo's constitution includes the right to form and join unions, except for "essential" workers such as security forces. Nevertheless, only 20 percent of the labor force is unionized. Unions have the right to bargain collectively, but this right is restricted in practice.

The judiciary is heavily influenced by the president. Traditional courts handle many minor matters. Courts are understaffed and inadequately funded, pretrial detentions are lengthy, and prisons are severely overcrowded. Extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, and torture continue. Security forces commit abuses with impunity, and illegal detention is common.

Antigovernment protesters and security forces clashed several times between the time of Eyadema's death and the election. According to a report by the UNCHR, commando units within the army had been tasked with stopping demonstrators and militants, collecting bodies, and then "systematically [disposing] of them so that they could not be counted." In addition to killings, there were reports of abduction, torture, and rape. The UN report said that opposition militants also perpetrated at-

tacks and looted and destroyed property belonging to suspected members of the ruling party. The report recommended overhauling the military, which is weighted with members of the ruling family's northern Kabiye ethnic group. Most of the refugees who fled to Benin and Ghana are young men from the south of the country.

Ethnic discrimination is rife among the country's 40 ethnic groups. Political and military power is narrowly held by members of a few ethnic groups from northern Togo, especially Eyadema's Kabiye ethnic group. Southerners dominate the country's commerce, and violence occasionally flares between the two groups.

Despite constitutional guarantees of equality, women's opportunities for education and employment are limited. A husband may legally bar his wife from working, or he may legally choose to receive her earnings. Customary law bars women's rights in divorce and denies inheritance rights to widows. Violence against women is common. Female genital mutilation is widely practiced by the country's northern ethnic groups, and a law prohibiting the practice is not enforced. Several organizations promote the rights of women.

Child trafficking for the purpose of slavery is a problem in Togo. The National Assembly passed a law in 2005 providing tough sentences for child traffickers. The legislation, which was pending promulgation, stipulates that child traffickers and their collaborators could face up to 10 years in prison and heavy fines. The U.S. State Department, which in 2005 named Togo as the only country in West Africa that was not doing enough to end child trafficking, threatened sanctions.

Tonga

Population: 100,000 **Political Rights:** 5
GN/capita: \$1,830 **Civil Liberties:** 3
Life Expectancy: 71 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Christian (Free Wesleyan Church claims over 30,000 adherents)
Ethnic Groups: Polynesian, European (about 300)
Capital: Nuku'alofa



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
5,3PF	5,3PF	5,3PF	5,3PF	5,3PF	5,3PF	5,3PF	5,3PF	5,3PF	5,3PF

Overview:

Parliamentary elections were held in March 2005, and for the first time "people's representatives" were appointed to the cabinet. A new consumption tax was introduced in April, sparking the country's first public workers' strike. When neither the government nor the king appeared responsive to negotiating with the workers, demands for wage increases expanded to include calls for greater government accountability and democracy.

Tonga consists of 169 islands that King George Tupou I united under his rule in 1845. The country became a constitutional monarchy in 1875 and a British protec-

torate in 1900. In 1970, Tonga gained independence; it is a member of the Commonwealth and the only remaining Polynesian monarchy.

King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV has reigned since 1945. The crown prince, at 58 years old, remains single and childless. The February 2004 passing of Prince Fatafehi Alaivahamama'o Tuku'aho, the king's second son, puts Prince 'Ulukalala Lavaka Ata, the king's third son and youngest child, in line for succession after the crown prince.

Tonga's politics and the economy are dominated by the monarchy, hereditary nobles, and a few prominent commoners. The first strong show of public support for democratic reform was the election of prodemocracy candidates for seven of the nine directly elected seats reserved for commoners in the March 2002 parliamentary elections. Soon afterwards, the government initiated some public and economic sector reforms, although critics charged that they were insufficient. A prodemocracy advocate from within the monarchy is the king's nephew, Prince Tu'ipelehake, who has openly called on Australia to pressure Tonga to expand democracy. His proposal for a referendum to allow the popular election of all representatives won narrow approval in the parliament in October 2004.

In the March 17, 2005, parliamentary election, a record 64 candidates competed for nine seats in the 30-member parliament, and 65,000 people registered to vote (up from 59,000 in the March 2002 election). There were no reports of serious fraud or other voting irregularities. For the first time, elected representatives served in the cabinet; the prime minister appointed two "people's representatives" to head the labor and forestry ministries. By-elections were held in May to replace legislators who were appointed to the cabinet. Prince Tu'ipelehake won a noble's seat, and former minister of police Clive Edwards won a people's seat. Edwards, who had broken with the government in 2004 when he openly called for restraints on the powers of the crown prince, was dismissed in August 2004 for allegedly plotting a coup. The king reappointed his third son, Prince 'Ulukalala Lavaka Ata, as prime minister.

A new 15 percent consumption tax, which applies to all persons and organizations except the Palace Office, was introduced on April 4, 2005. This development sparked Tonga's first ever public workers' strike in July. The striking civil servants were joined by 1,400 teachers. The strikers' demand for salaries increases of up to 80 percent was rejected by the government. About 10,000 people—among them Prince Tu'ipelehake—marched to the Royal Palace to petition for the king's intervention to settle the strike and expand democracy; the government ignored their demands. During the fifth week of the strike, one of the king's palaces was burned down and 15 students were arrested for vandalizing school property, which they claimed to do in the name of supporting their teachers. In another march on September 6, demonstrators called not only for a salary hike, but also for the dismissal of the prime minister and his cabinet, for the creation of a commission to review the constitution within 12 months and make the government more open and accountable, and for the return of government assets claimed by the royals and nobles. The king ordered an independent audit to review salaries of public servants. Eventually, workers accepted a 12.5 percent increase, and almost all returned to work in September.

In a special session of parliament, the Speaker refused to put the people's peti-

tion for greater democracy on the legislative agenda on the grounds that there were issues more pressing than democracy. Prodemocracy elected representatives responded by saying that they would hold their own unofficial referendum.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Tonga cannot change their government democratically. The king, 33 hereditary nobles, and a few prominent commoners dominate politics and the economy through their majority in parliament and their substantial land holdings. King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV appoints his cabinet without election and for life terms, and the cabinet holds 12 of 30 seats in the unicameral legislature. Another nine parliament seats are reserved for the nobles, who are chosen by their peers, and cabinet members and nobles usually vote as one bloc. The remaining nine representatives are chosen through general elections. The king appoints the prime minister and presides over the Privy Council, which makes major policy decisions. Prince 'Ulukalala Lavaka Ata, the king's third son, was appointed prime minister in 2000 and again in 2005.

The number of seats held by prominent commoners has been shrinking in recent years in favor of prodemocracy candidates. While the prodemocracy movement began in 1992, the election of seven prodemocracy movement members to fill nine of the people's seats in the legislature in 2002 was the movement's first major victory. In September 2004, prodemocracy representatives proposed a referendum on directly electing all 30 representatives, while still allowing the king to appoint the prime minister and his cabinet from those elected. The parliament rejected this proposal but approved a similar one proposed by Prince Tu'ipelehake. The continuing success of prodemocracy advocates in the March 2005 parliamentary elections and the appointment of two people's representatives to the cabinet marked another milestone. In April, the People's Democratic Party was launched, and Tesina Fuko was elected its first president.

Corruption is a major source of public dissatisfaction with the government and a hindrance to economic growth. The royals, the nobles, and a few people with connections to these political elites use state assets for their personal benefit, from taking land and granting themselves monopoly licenses to securing government loans and guarantees. In 2005, Crown Prince Tupouto'a attempted to establish an airline monopoly, and about 50 people demonstrated in March to protest the sale of the state electrical company to the crown prince (and a subsequent price hike). The government appears unwilling to address these problems; in July, the parliament temporarily suspended two prodemocracy elected members from attending sessions for allegedly disrupting legislative proceedings with their questions about official corruption and abuses. Tonga was not ranked in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Despite constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech and of the press, the government has a long history of suppressing criticism in the media. The government owns shares in several private media companies and runs the country's television and radio stations. In 1996, the government banned New Zealand journalist Michael Field from entering the country because of his critical reports on the royals and the government. In December 2003, the government approved amendments to the constitution that—along with the controversial Newspaper Act and Media Operators Act—allow the government to regulate all publications in the kingdom, including foreign publications that circulate in Tonga. The Newspaper Act requires

licenses for publishers, sellers, and importers of newspapers, with violations carrying a \$10,000 fine or imprisonment for a maximum of one year. The Media Operators Act limits to 20 percent foreign ownership of publications published in Tonga. The government has also repeatedly tried to silence the *Tonga Times*, a vocal critic of the government, banning circulation of the paper and arresting its owner in February 2004 for entering the kingdom with 20 copies of the paper. Under the Media Operators Act, the *Tonga Times* and the opposition's *Ko e Kele'a* were both denied licenses. In October 2004, the Supreme Court ruled that the Media Operators Act, Newspaper Act, and parts of the constitutional amendment restricting freedom of speech were void and invalid. In 2005, the election of prodemocracy candidates to the parliament, along with public pressure for accountability, have resulted in more lively political news reporting in the press, and the government lifted its 1996 ban on the journalist Field. Internet diffusion in Tonga is limited by cost and technical access challenges, but there have been no political attempts to restrict internet access.

Freedom of religion is generally respected in this predominantly Christian society. However, the Tongan Broadcasting Commission requires that any references to religion on radio and television must conform to mainstream Christian beliefs. As such, there are limits on broadcasts about non-Christian religions as well as those, such as Mormonism, not considered mainstream. There were no reports of government restrictions on academic freedom, but academics practice self-censorship to avoid conflicts with the government.

Freedom of assembly and association is generally respected for groups not involved in politics and not critical of government policies. However, the government appears increasingly unable or unwilling to crack down on protestors and marchers. Many civil society organizations are active in promoting education, public health, and children's and women's welfare. The 1963 Trade Union Act gives workers the right to form unions and strike, but regulations for union formation were never promulgated.

The judiciary is generally fair, efficient, and independent of the king and the executive branch. Traditional elders in villages also exercise considerable authority and frequently adjudicate local disputes. Suspects may exercise the right to an attorney and a court hearing. In an attempt to deny its critics another favorable court ruling, the Tongan parliament abolished the use of the British Civil Liberty Law by Tongan courts as part of a parcel of bills in December 2003; this law had been used to cover matters, like adoption, not addressed by Tongan law. Prisons are spartan, but there are no reports of prisoner abuse.

Citizens enjoy freedom of travel, movement, and migration. Immigration laws were tightened after the illegal sale of Tongan passports (particularly to persons from China and Taiwan) became a sore point in bilateral relations with major aid donors. Relations between Tongans and Chinese immigrants have worsened in recent years as evidenced by attacks against Chinese-owned shops.

Women enjoy equal access to education and health and face fairly equal treatment in employment. Women hold several senior government posts, including cabinet positions, and the majority of commissioned officers in the police are women. However, the support of nobility is important for women to rise to positions of leadership. Women can lease, but not own, land. Domestic violence against women is not uncommon.

Trinidad and Tobago

Population: 1,300,000 **Political Rights:** 3

GN/capita: \$7,790 **Civil Liberties:** 2*

Life Expectancy: 71 **Status:** Free

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (26 percent), Hindu (22.5 percent), Anglican (7.8 percent), Baptist (7.2 percent), Pentecostal (6.8 percent), Seventh Day Adventist (4 percent), other Christian (5.8 percent), Muslim (5.8 percent), other (14.1 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Indian [South Asian] (40 percent), African (37.5 percent), mixed (20.5 percent), other (2.0 percent)

Capital: Port-of-Spain

Ratings Change: Trinidad and Tobago's civil liberties rating improved from 3 to 2, and its status from Partly Free to Free, because of improvements in economic policies that enhanced equality of opportunity.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	2,2F	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,3PF	3,2F



Overview:

Amid an improving economy, the government of Prime Minister Patrick Manning failed to make headway during 2005 in the struggle against dramatic increases in violent crime in Trinidad and Tobago. Despite improvements in economic policies that enhanced equality of opportunity, the country remains captive to tense racial politics characterized by frictions between the African- and Indian-descendent populations. In July, several people were injured by a bomb explosion in the capitol city of Port-of-Spain, followed by three other bombing incidents through the fall, which prompted the government to propose new counterterrorism measures.

Trinidad and Tobago, a member of the Commonwealth, achieved independence from Britain in 1962. In July 1991, Jamaat-al-Muslimeen, a small radical Muslim group, staged a coup attempt in Port-of-Spain. The prime minister and eight cabinet members were held hostage for four days, and 23 people died in bombings at the police headquarters, the state television station, and the parliamentary building.

After disputed elections in December 2001, Patrick Manning was appointed prime minister. An ensuing stalemate in parliament, with 18 members of each party in a nine-month deadlock, led to street demonstrations and a legal challenge. Manning eventually called for legislative elections in October 2002. The polling was generally peaceful and saw the participation of six parties representing more than 100 candidates contesting the 36 open seats. Manning's People's National Movement (PNM) won 20 seats, while the United National Congress (UNC) had a strong showing, which reinforced the dominance of these two parties. Manning was sworn in for the third time since 1991 as the seventh prime minister of independent Trinidad and Tobago. In previous elections, there were concerns over the impartiality of the Elections and Boundaries Commission, but no major improprieties surfaced during the

recent national or local polls. However, the UNC is opposed to the redrawing of electoral districts as being partisan and favoring the PNM.

In local elections held in July 2003, the PNM won a majority of seats and took control of two districts that had been strongholds of the UNC, which won just 5 of 14 councils. Also during the year, the UNC became increasingly confrontational, forcing Manning's government to compromise when legislation required a two-thirds majority in parliament. Basdeo Panday, leader of the UNC, refused to step down despite promising to do so when he turned 70 in May 2003. In 2005, the government indicted Panday on corruption charges, and he was temporarily jailed, which added to the country's racial and political tensions. However, Trinidad and Tobago's strong economic performance has led to reduced poverty and improved social equity in the country.

Yasin Abu Bakr, the leader of Jamaat al-Muslimeen, was arrested in August 2003 on charges of conspiracy to commit murder, but was released on bail. He was rearrested in July 2004 on charges of conspiring to murder two former members of his group, including his son-in-law. The jury deadlocked, and he was released pending retrial, but police detained him and several followers once again following the explosion of four bombs that injured nine people in October 2005. They were later released, and it remained unclear whether the bombers were merely engaged in criminal mischief or if the terrorism campaign had a broader political agenda.

In August, a parliamentary integrity commission was established, an indication of the continuing effort to fight corruption. Meanwhile, growing crime was a critical problem throughout 2005; as of October, there had been 314 murders, up from 222 as of that point in 2004. From 2001 to 2004, the number of kidnappings increased exponentially from 10 to more than 150 a year—out of a population of 1.3 million—and Trinidad and Tobago now has the second-highest rate of abductions in the world after Colombia.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Trinidad and Tobago can change their government democratically. The 1976 constitution established the two-island nation as a republic, with a president, elected by a majority of both houses of parliament, replacing the former governor-general. Executive authority remains vested in the prime minister. Parliament consists of the 36-member House of Representatives, elected for five years, and the 31-member Senate, with 25 senators appointed by the prime minister and 6 by the opposition.

Political parties are free to organize, but in practice, the dominance of the PNM and UNC has led to a two-party system.

In July 2001, then Prime Minister Basdeo Panday of the UNC lashed out at a Transparency International report that rated Trinidad and Tobago, for the first time, as a country with high levels of official corruption. Panday, who was engaged in a long-running feud with prominent members of the local press, denied that there was corruption in his administration. An Integrity Commission, established under the 2000 Integrity in Public Life Act, has the power to investigate the financial and ethical performance of public functionaries; Panday was the first person to be investigated by the commission. He has been charged with receiving a \$41,000 bribe for an airport improvement project, and his trial has been postponed until early 2006. Trinidad and Tobago was ranked 59 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Press outlets are privately owned and vigorous in their pluralistic views. There are four daily newspapers and several weeklies. There are both private and public broadcast media. Panday refused, in 1998, to sign the Inter American Press Association's Declaration of Chapultepec on press freedom until it addressed the media dissemination of "lies, half-truths and innuendoes." Under Prime Minister Patrick Manning, the government did not interfere with freedom of speech and the press. There is free access to the internet.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed under the constitution, and the government honors this provision. Foreign missionaries are free to operate, but the government limits representatives of a denomination to 35. Academic freedom is generally respected.

Freedom of association and assembly is respected. Civil society in Trinidad and Tobago is relatively robust, with a range of interest groups engaged in the political process. Labor unions are well organized, powerful, and politically active, although union membership has declined. Strikes are legal and occur frequently.

The judicial branch is independent, although subject to some political pressure and corruption. As a result of rising crime rates, the court system is severely backlogged, in some cases for up to five years, with an estimated 20,000 criminal cases awaiting trial. However, the government permits human rights monitors to visit prisons, which are severely overcrowded.

Street crime is on the rise, and many Indo-Trinidadians, who are disproportionately targets of abduction, blame the increase in violence and kidnappings on government corruption and police collusion. By contrast, the police force has downplayed the threat to average Trinidadians, insisting that most murders and kidnappings are related to the narcotics trade. Drug corruption extends to the business community, and a significant amount of money is believed to be laundered through front companies. The Proceeds of Crime Act of 2000 provides severe penalties for money laundering and requires that major financial transactions be strictly monitored. The government works closely with U.S. law enforcement agencies to track drug shipments in and out of the country. In an indication of the seriousness of the country's crime wave, in January 2004 the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce asked the government to strictly enforce laws, including the execution of convicted murderers. In 2005, the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation deepened its presence in the country to assist in the prosecution of crime.

Corruption in the police force, which is often drug related, is endemic, and law enforcement inefficiency results in the dismissal of some criminal cases. The police have won praise, however, for establishing a branch of Crime Stoppers, an international organization that promotes community involvement in preventing and informing on crime through a hotline. In August 2005, the government sent a controversial antiterrorism bill to parliament; critics say the bill infringes on the right against self-incrimination and may lead to police brutality.

The population is divided into three communities: Afro-Trinidadians, Indo-Trinidadians, and those of mixed race. The Indian community continues to edge towards numerical, and thus political, advantage. Accusations of racial discrimination are often leveled in parliament, and racial disparities persist, with Indo-Trinidadians composing a disproportionate percentage of the country's upper class. However, the country's leadership does alternate among the two dominant parties, and voting does not occur on strict ethnic lines.

Violence against women is extensive and remains a low priority for police and prosecutors. While serious crimes such as murder and rape are reported, other instances of abuse go unreported. Gender discrimination is forbidden under the constitution, and women participate in high-level politics. As of 2005, women held 18 of 67 parliament seats and 9 cabinet-level positions. Women are present in the public and private sector, but men still dominate most leadership positions and salary differentials continue to favor men. In June, the government introduced a bill to make it a crime to knowingly spread HIV, but opponents feared that this may discourage people from getting tested and set back prevention efforts.

Tunisia

Population: 10,000,000 **Political Rights:** 6
GNI/capita: \$2,240 **Civil Liberties:** 5
Life Expectancy: 73 **Status:** NotFree
Religious Groups: Muslim (98 percent),
 Christian (1 percent), Jewish and other (1 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Arab (98 percent), other (2 percent)
Capital: Tunis



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview:

The government of Tunisian president Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, who has ruled Tunisia for 18 years, continued in 2005 to be marked by a poor human rights record, a restricted press, and attacks on and detentions of political opponents. During the year, a journalist who started an independent journalists' syndicate was harassed, and an imprisoned journalist began a hunger strike to protest his conditions. At the same time, Tunisia promised Human Rights Watch that it would cease its policy of prolonged periods of solitary confinement for political prisoners.

Tunisia had been a protectorate of France for more than seven decades by the time it gained full independence in 1956. For the next 30 years, the country was ruled by Habib Bourguiba, a secular nationalist who had been imprisoned several times by the French government for opposing France's rule over Tunisia. During his reign, Bourguiba worked toward modernizing Tunisia, both socially and economically, and this era was marked by great development in the area of women's rights. However, Bourguiba's rule was autocratic, and political and civil rights took a backseat to economic development. Diplomatically, Bourguiba was able to maintain positive relations with the West without alienating his Arab counterparts.

Bourguiba was deposed and marginalized in a bloodless coup led by Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali in 1987, in what became known as "the change." The leadership of Ben Ali has earned praise over the years for its sensible economic policies and the advancement of women's rights. However, while Ben Ali initially pledged more

openness in the political arena, his promises soon proved to be futile, as his rule (to a large degree) came to mirror that of his predecessor. Opposition movements suffered from periodic crackdowns, and the space for political dissent narrowed. Ben Ali's main initial foes were Islamists, who were summarily detained or imprisoned after sham trials in the early 1990s. However, it soon became apparent that Ben Ali would not tolerate any other opposition dissidents, who continued to face detention and harassment in 2005.

International human rights organizations, as well as a small group of brave local activists, have relentlessly attacked Tunisia's human rights record. Because of Tunisia's position as an economic trading partner and its strategic importance as a pro-Western ally in the fight against Islamic extremism, criticism from some of Tunisia's most important diplomatic and trade partners has been embarrassingly muted. However, recently the United States has taken a more public line in criticizing Tunisia's record, specifically referring to press freedoms and civil liberties as areas that the government needs to develop. The European Union (EU) has also been quietly lobbying Tunisia to reform its human rights record. Nevertheless, victories for human rights and civil liberties in Tunisia are few and far between. One positive development was Tunisia's promise to Human Rights Watch in 2005 that it would cease its policy of prolonged periods of solitary confinement for political prisoners.

Considering Ben Ali's ties to the West and his victory in the October 2004 election with 95.42 percent of the vote, it is unlikely that the situation will change dramatically in Tunisia in the coming years. The election itself was marred by allegations of manipulation and boycotts. To local observers, it was basically rigged to provide Ben Ali with the veneer of a democratic win. Ben Ali enjoyed the unqualified support of the local media, as well as that of business interests. The two candidates who opposed him garnered a miniscule number of votes. Ben Ali's political party, the Constitutional Democratic Rally party (RCD), currently controls more than 80 percent of the seats in the parliament.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Tunisia cannot change their government democratically. Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, who has ruled the country unopposed for 18 years, has the right to appoint the prime minister, the cabinet, and governors of the provinces, and he can rule by decree when the parliament—which is a rubber-stamp institution—is not in session. In 2002, in anticipation of the 2004 presidential elections, the Tunisian government held a referendum where the public voted on whether or not to remove the three-term limit on presidential terms. The referendum passed with 99.52 percent of voters in support of the change, thus allowing Ben Ali to run for reelection; he won easily, taking 94.5 percent of the votes in an election that was neither free nor fair. The government approves the powerless opposition parties that are permitted to field candidates in parliamentary elections, but Ben Ali's party dominates the legislature, which is a bicameral system comprised of a 189 member Chamber of Deputies, or Majlis al-Nuwaab, and a Chamber of Advisors. Both houses of the parliament are dominated by Ben Ali's party.

Although the government announced the creation of a body tasked with reducing corruption, it remains unclear what the role of this body is and what work it has

done. Tunisia was ranked 43 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

In a region—the Arab world—where free press is a rare commodity, Tunisia's press ranks among the worst. The private print press is hardly independent, benefiting from government subsidies. All the major dailies toe the government line and contain lavish praise of Ben Ali. Over the years, journalists and editors who challenge Ben Ali's leadership have been harassed, fired from their jobs, imprisoned, and physically assaulted. In August 2005, police detained and questioned Lotfi Hajji, the head of the independent Tunisian Journalists Syndicate (SJT), telling him that his newly formed organization was not to have its first scheduled congress. The harassment stemmed from a critical report that the SJT had released in May. Journalist Hamadi Jebali, who worked for *Al-Fajr*, the mouthpiece of the Islamist Al-Nahda party, went on a hunger strike in 2005 to protest his continued imprisonment; he has been in jail since 1991. The broadcast media are mostly government owned and reflect the government's positions. The few private broadcast media are owned by people close to Ben Ali and are mostly entertainment networks. Like some other Arab states, Tunisian authorities are resisting attempts by the pan-Arab station Al-Jazeera to open a bureau in Tunis, fearful of critical coverage.

One of the last places of refuge for critical voices in Tunisia is the internet, which is also severely restricted by the authorities. Since 2002, Tunisian authorities have arrested and severely punished critical internet journalists and web loggers. In April 2005, lawyer Mohamed Abou was sentenced to a year and a half in prison for writing an article published on the internet that criticized the government. He was found guilty of insulting the judiciary and disturbing the public order because of an article published in *Tunisnews*; the piece criticized Ben Ali and accused him of corruption for having invited Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon to attend a conference in Tunis scheduled to take place in November. According to Human Rights Watch, observers suspected that this article was what prompted Abou's arrest, though he was officially charged for another online piece, published in August 2004, which compared conditions in Tunisian prisons to the U.S.-run prison at Abu Ghraib, in Iraq.

Islam is the state religion in Tunisia, but religious minorities are by and large free to practice their religions. The authorities' main interest, where religion is concerned, is Islamist movements. Mosques are monitored, controlled, and subsidized by the state, with imams receiving their salaries from the government. A 1988 law on mosques stipulates that only those imams appointed and paid by the government may lead activities in the mosques, which are required to remain closed except during prayer times.

Tunisian authorities also fear Islamist activity on university campuses and severely restrict and monitor universities. Open debates, or even courses about the role of government, are avoided. Authorities review academic journals prior to publication, and sensitive material can, like sensitive newspaper articles, be censored.

Freedom of association and assembly, although guaranteed in Tunisia's constitution, is sharply controlled. Politically oriented nongovernmental organizations remain unauthorized. The government refuses to legalize most independent human rights organizations, which function in a precarious state. Late last year, on international Human Rights Day, the police used force to break up a demonstration, according to Human Rights Watch. Independent human rights activists are often ha-

rassed by the authorities, who routinely monitor their telephone conversations and e-mail correspondence, prevent them from leaving the country, and sometimes arrest and beat them.

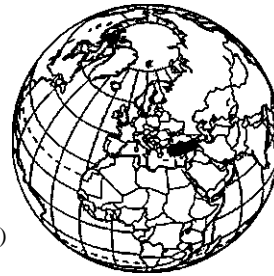
The General Union of Tunisian Workers is the country's only labor group. According to the U.S. Department of State, the union's current board of directors includes some former dissidents and has promised to be more involved in political life in Tunisia.

Tunisia's judiciary is a tool of the government, and it is used as a blunt weapon to punish critics. Trials are neither fair nor free. International human rights groups, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have for years criticized the treatment of political prisoners, many of whom are tortured and, until recently, were held in solitary confinement for years. Most of the country's political prisoners are members of the banned Islamist Al-Nahda Party. Following pressure from human rights groups, particularly Human Rights Watch, Tunisia agreed in April 2005 to move all prisoners out of solitary confinement and invited Human Rights Watch to visit Tunisian prisons—something that no independent human rights group has done since 1991.

Compared with women in other Arab states, Tunisian women enjoy many rights and legal protections. Despite some societal challenges to women's equality, the overall trend is toward improvement. While some Arab countries have been recently changing their laws regarding nationality, Tunisia for years has allowed the children of Tunisian women to receive citizenship automatically. Also, the 1956 Personal Status Code grants both men and women the right to request legal divorces. One remaining area of discrimination is in inheritance laws, where men receive preferential treatment over women.

Turkey

Population: 72,900,000 **Political Rights:** 3
GNI/capita: \$2,800 **Civil Liberties:** 3
Life Expectancy: 69 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Muslim [mostly Sunni] (99.8 percent),
 other (0.2 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Turkish (80 percent), Kurdish (20 percent)
Capital: Ankara



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
4,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	4,5PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,3PF	3,3PF

Overview:

Turkey continued in 2005 to implement the many reforms that it had passed in recent years as part of its effort to join the European Union (EU). However, outside observers agreed that the pace of reform slowed during the year. Meanwhile, violence increased in the southeast as the separatist Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) fought Turkish security forces.

Turkey emerged as a republic following the breakup of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I. Its founder and the author of its guiding principles was Kemal Mustafa Ataturk ("Father of the Turks"), who declared that Turkey would be a secular state. Ataturk sought to modernize the country through measures such as the pursuit of Western learning, use of the Roman alphabet instead of Arabic script for writing Turkish, and abolition of the Muslim caliphate.

Turkey stayed out of most of World War II, but joined the Allies in February 1945. After the war, the republic joined NATO in 1952 to guarantee its protection from the Soviet Union. However, modern Turkish political history has been unstable, and the army has overthrown civilian governments in three coups. The army, which sees itself as a bulwark against both Islamism and Kurdish separatism, has traditionally expressed very influential opinions on the functioning of government.

The role of political Islam has been one of the defining questions of Turkish politics in the 1990s and early twenty-first century. In 1995, an Islamist party, Welfare, won the general election but failed to obtain a majority. Initially, two other parties formed a majority coalition without it, but the breakup of that coalition in 1996 led the True Path Party (DYP) to form a coalition with Welfare. The following year the army—ever protective of Turkey's secular roots—forced the coalition to resign. Welfare prime minister Necmettin Erbakan was replaced by a member of the Motherland Party. The Welfare party was banned in 1998 on the grounds that it was seeking to introduce Islamic rule.

The governments that followed failed to stabilize a shaky economy, which culminated in an economic crisis in 2001. Voters wanted change, and in November 2002, the Justice and Development (AK) Party, whose roots lay in the then-disbanded Welfare, won a sweeping majority in the general election by promising to end governmental corruption and put the country on a firm path toward European Union (EU) membership. The AK sought to distance itself from political Islamism, but its leader, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a former mayor of Istanbul, had previously been banned from politics after he was convicted of crimes against secularism for reading a poem seeming to incite religious intolerance. Abdullah Gul served as prime minister until parliament changed the constitution to allow Erdogan to replace him in March 2003.

Erdogan has used his party's large parliamentary majority to push through successive wide-reaching reforms that are crucial to Turkey's application to join the EU. In December 2004, the EU gave Turkey a long-awaited pledge to begin accession negotiations on October 6, 2005. After much last-minute haggling, negotiations began as scheduled. Turkey still faces considerable EU resistance to its membership, however. Especially contentious is Turkey's nonrecognition of Cyprus, which as of 2004 is an EU member. The increase in anti-Turkey rhetoric in the EU after the rejection of the EU constitution in France and the Netherlands made it clear that Turkey will face an uphill battle to membership. Moreover, the EU stated that the pace of reform in Turkey slowed in 2005. Meanwhile, while the Turkish population remains in favor of membership, support dropped in 2005 according to polls. The change has raised fears of a rise in Turkish nationalism.

The year was also marked by a rise in violence in the southeast, where Kurdish separatists fought a 15-year guerrilla war against Turkish forces that ended after the capture of their leader, Abdullah Ocalan, in 1999. The Kurdish separatist Kurish Workers Party (PKK) ended its five-year ceasefire with the government in June 2004, be-

cause, it claimed, not enough had been done to meet its demands. Clashes between separatists and security forces have worsened, with deaths on both sides.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Turkey can change their government democratically. The 1982 constitution provides for a 550-member parliament, the Grand National Assembly, which is elected to five-year terms. The prime minister is the head of government, but the Assembly chooses a mostly symbolic president as head of state—currently Ahmet Necdet Sezer. Democratic choice has been undercut by the army in the past, the last time being in a "soft coup" that forced the government of the religious Welfare party out of office in 1997. Recep Tayyip Erdogan of the AK became prime minister in March 2003. The November 2002 elections were widely judged as free and fair.

A party must win at least 10 percent of the votes cast nationwide to have representation in parliament. As a result, although a large number and variety of parties participated in active campaigning in 2002, only two parties—the AK and the Republican People's Party (CHP)—won seats. Nevertheless, both of these parties had been in the opposition, thus attesting to the ability of the electorate to precipitate change. Several members of parliament changed their party affiliations in 2005, bringing the total number of parties in parliament to six. The Motherland Party, which was voted out in the last election, now holds more than 20 seats; no other party besides the AK and CHP holds more than five seats. The AK, which holds more than 350 parliamentary seats, appears to have abandoned its former Islamist aspirations, but much of its base is very religious. Although the party has supported some loosening of restrictions on religious activity, it has not made any attempt to undermine Turkey's secular underpinnings, but instead has steadfastly pursued a start to EU negotiations.

In 2003, legal amendments loosened restrictions on party names and candidates and circumscribed the reasons for closure of a political party. However, a party can still be shut down if its program is not in agreement with the constitution, and this criterion is broadly interpreted. The Communist Party and parties representing Kurdish interests face court cases threatening their closure and can function only minimally.

Recent reforms have increased civilian oversight of the military. The National Security Council, once dominated by the military, had its policy-setting role downgraded to a purely advisory one in 2003, and a civilian was chosen to head the council for the first time in 2004. Significantly, the military did not intervene when Erdogan was chosen prime minister, despite its known reservations. Nevertheless, the opinions of the top generals on subjects much broader than military concerns continue to generate press attention, and the possibility remains of military meddling in controversial policy making.

Turkey struggles with corruption in government and in daily life. The AK Party—"ak" means "pure" in Turkish—came to power amid promises to clean up governmental corruption, and it has adopted some anticorruption measures, including ones aimed at combating corruption in public procurement. However, enforcement is lacking, and a culture of tolerance of corruption pervades the general population. Parliamentary immunity prevents prosecution. Transparency has improved through EU reforms, although implementation lags. Turkey was ranked 65 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Impediments remain to freedom of the media, although recent reforms are having some positive effect. New legislation allows (somewhat restricted) broadcasts in minority languages. Journalists continue to be jailed and are sometimes prosecuted under the penal code instead of being sued according to the press law. However, prosecutions and, in particular, convictions are less common. In 2005, an Austrian journalist who covered the cases of political prisoners was temporarily jailed for belonging to a terrorist organization about which she had often reported; she was ultimately acquitted for lack of evidence. Prime Minister Erdogan launched defamation suits against several members of the media in 2005, including two cartoonists who were sentenced to pay fines. Turkey's Supreme Council of Radio and Television (RTUK) continues to sanction broadcasters if they are not in compliance with a broadly defined set of principles. Nearly all media organizations are owned by giant holding companies with interests in other sectors, which contributes to self-censorship. The government does not restrict the internet beyond the same censorship policies that apply to other media.

Vaguely worded laws that were not changed with the reform of the penal code allow journalists to be prosecuted for coverage of controversial subjects such as the division of Cyprus and the 1915 mass killings of Armenians by Turks. Most prominently, Orhan Pamuk, an internationally renowned Turkish author, will go before a court in December 2005 for comments he made to a Swiss newspaper earlier in the year. Pamuk's views on the 1915 mass killings have resulted in death threats and protests against him.

Turkey is a predominantly Muslim country, and much of its population is very devout. Three non-Muslim groups—Greek and Armenian Orthodox Christians, and Jews—are officially recognized. Other groups lack legal status, and their activities are subject to legal challenges. While the constitution protects freedom of religion, the Turkish republic was set up on the premise of secularism, in which state and religious affairs are separated. In practice, this has meant considerable government control of religion. Women wearing headscarves are not allowed in public universities and government offices, and observant men are dismissed from the military. There are periodic protests against the headscarf ban, and a March law gave amnesty to students expelled since 2000, including those expelled for wearing a headscarf. Meanwhile, the European Court of Human Rights has ruled repeatedly in favor of the ban as legal, and the AK dropped its attempt to introduce an easing of the ban in the 2004 penal code reforms. The government does not restrict academic freedom, although self-censorship on sensitive topics, such as the role of Islam and the Kurdish problem, are common.

Restrictions on public demonstrations have been relaxed, but police sometimes monitor public meetings of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). In March, police used excessive force against a peaceful demonstration for International Women's Day; several policemen involved were subsequently suspended. A 2004 law on associations should reduce state interference in civil society, but 2005 implementing legislation allows the state to restrict groups that might oppose its interests. Members of local human rights groups sometimes receive death threats. Nevertheless, civil society plays an increasing role in Turkish politics.

Trade union activity remains restricted in practice, although laws to protect unions are in place. In May, a high court overruled two previous decisions in favor

of the teachers' union, whose statute calls for education in mother tongue languages in potential violation of the constitution. The union had to withdraw the clause from their statute to avoid being closed down.

The Turkish constitution establishes an independent judiciary, but the government can influence judges through its control of appointments, promotions, and financing. The judiciary continues to be strengthened by structural reforms. The 2004 overhaul of the penal code along with implementing legislation, which largely brings criminal law in line with European standards, was due to take effect on April 1, 2005. However, this was delayed until June 1 as a result of vocal protests by press groups concerned about provisions such as increased fines for crimes when they are committed through the media. The latter provisions were removed just before the code went into force, though journalists can still be sentenced to jail time, in contravention of the press code. Despite these and other residual problems, if it is fully implemented, the new code will have wide-reaching positive effects on the criminal justice system.

The death penalty was fully abolished in 2004, as were State Security Courts, where many human rights abuses occurred. Still, some trials last so long as to become an inconvenience and financial burden to the defense; in cases against security forces, trials might last beyond the statute of limitations, and therefore by default the accused is acquitted.

A retrial is ongoing in the case of Leyla Zana and three other Kurdish former members of parliament who were convicted of belonging to the PKK in 1994 in what was widely condemned as an unfair trial; they are no longer in custody. The four were considered by many to have been political prisoners, and the trial is considered symbolic both of Turkey's flawed judicial system and of the push for Kurdish rights.

The Erdogan government has a "zero tolerance" policy concerning torture, backed up by new laws and training to improve implementation. However, while there continue to be reports that torture has decreased, particularly in its harshest forms, rights groups still cite cases and highlight the fact that perpetrators are not consistently punished. The government has established a variety of bodies to investigate and field complaints on human rights, but so far, impact has been limited. Prison conditions, including overcrowding, are improving but can still be harsh. Most controversial are the F-type prisons, which are criticized for isolation of prisoners. An especially contentious imprisonment is that of Abdullah Ocalan, former leader of the Kurdish guerrilla movement, who is serving a life sentence in solitary confinement on an island off the Turkish coast; Ocalan allegedly has not had adequate access to his lawyer and to visitors. In May, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that Ocalan did not receive a fair trial; he will most likely be retried.

The legacy of the 1990s conflict in the southeast, in which more than 35,000 people were killed, remains in the form of discrimination and lingering tensions. Since the PKK ended the ceasefire in June 2004, violent fighting between the PKK and the government has increased, with deaths on both sides. There are allegations of violations, including extrajudicial killings, by security forces. In November 2005, a bomb explosion in a bookstore was linked to members of the Turkish security forces; violent clashes between civilians and police erupted almost immediately and continued for several days, resulting in some deaths. The government launched investigations into the bombing and charged three security officials.

Turkey claims that all Turkish citizens are treated equally, but its unwillingness to recognize Kurdish differences results in de facto unequal treatment under the law. Because minorities are defined solely by religion, Kurds are denied recognition, and a traditional emphasis on Turkish identity over multiculturalism has left the Kurds facing restrictions on their language, culture, and freedom of expression. The situation has improved with the EU harmonization reforms, but official and informal discrimination remains. Although recent laws have allowed for Kurdish-language courses in private schools, those courses that had opened were shut down in summer 2005 because of a lack of enrollment that was very likely caused by bureaucratic and financial obstacles.

Property rights are generally respected in Turkey. The most significant problem is the tens of thousands of Kurds who were driven from their homes by government forces during the conflict in the 1990s. The government has initiated a project to compensate these people and return them to their villages. However, local paramilitary "village guards" have allegedly used intimidation and violence to prevent some from returning to their homes. Turkey has not fully complied with European Court of Human Rights rulings on investigations of cases and right of return.

Constitutional amendments in the spring of 2004 included a provision granting women full equality before the law, but women face discrimination in employment and are underrepresented in government. Domestic abuse and honor crimes are found predominantly among rural populations. However, honor killings have reportedly increased as conservative families from rural areas move to large cities, where their daughters are exposed to a more liberal lifestyle. The new penal code contains many provisions designed to improve women's rights, including increased penalties for crimes against women and the elimination of sentence reductions in cases of honor killing and rape. In October 2005, two brothers were convicted for the murder of their sister after she had a child out of wedlock; one was sentenced to life in prison, but the other, who was a minor at the time of the shooting, received a lesser sentence. Homosexuals in Turkey face discrimination in Turkey, but their relationships are legal. A new law on the disabled was adopted in July 2005.

Turkmenistan

Population: 5,200,000 **Political Rights:** 7
GNI/capita: \$1,120 **Civil Liberties:** 7
Life Expectancy: 63 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Muslim (89 percent), Eastern Orthodox (9 percent), other (2 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Turkmen (85 percent), Uzbek (5 percent), Russian (4 percent), other (6 percent)
Capital: Ashgabat



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF

Overview:

While rumors of President Saparmurat Niyazov's failing health circulated, the government of Turkmenistan continued its campaign against real and perceived political opponents throughout 2005, including dismissing a number of senior state officials. In the December 2004 legislative elections, the country's sole legal party was the only one permitted to field candidates. Meanwhile, the president enacted further isolationist and frequently bizarre policies, including the signing of a decree forbidding the playing of recorded music at public events, on television, and at weddings.

The southernmost republic of the former Soviet Union, Turkmenistan was conquered by the Mongols in the thirteenth century, seized by Russia in the late 1800s, and incorporated into the USSR in 1924. Turkmenistan gained formal independence in 1991, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Saparmurat Niyazov, the former head of the Turkmenistan Communist Party, was the sole candidate in elections to the newly created post of president in October 1990. After the adoption of a new constitution in 1992, he ran unopposed again and was reelected for a five-year term with a reported 99.5 percent of the vote. The main opposition group, Agzybirlik, which was formed in 1989 by leading intellectuals, was banned. In a 1994 referendum, Niyazov's tenure as president was extended for an additional five years, until 2002, which exempted him from having to run again in 1997 as originally scheduled. In the December 1994 elections to the National Assembly (Mejlis), only Niyazov's Democratic Party of Turkmenistan (DPT), the former Communist Party, was permitted to field candidates.

In the December 1999 Mejlis elections, every candidate was selected by the government, and virtually all were members of the DPT. The Central Election Commission (CEC) claimed that voter turnout was 98.9 percent. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), citing the lack of provision for nongovernmental parties to participate and the executive branch's control of the nomination of candidates, refused to send even a limited assessment mission. In a further consolidation of Niyazov's extensive powers, parliament unanimously voted in late December to make Niyazov president for life. With this decision, Turkmenistan be-

came the first country in the Commonwealth of Independent States to formally abandon presidential elections.

Although Niyazov continued to exercise widespread power throughout the country, cracks in his regime became more visible during 2002. Several high-level government defections, along with a purge by Niyazov of Turkmenistan's intelligence service, highlighted growing political tensions and challenges to the government. On November 25, Niyazov survived an alleged assassination attempt in Ashgabat when gunmen fired at the president's motorcade. The incident sparked a widespread crackdown against the opposition and perceived critics of the regime, drawing condemnation from foreign governments and international organizations, including the OSCE and the United Nations.

While some observers speculated that Niyazov himself had planned the shooting as an excuse to increase repression of his political enemies, others maintained that it was a failed attempt by certain members of the opposition to oust the president from power. According to the government, former foreign minister and prominent opposition leader Boris Shikhmuradov, along with three other former high-ranking officials living in exile, had organized the attack. He was alleged to have returned to Turkmenistan from exile in Russia with the help of the Uzbek authorities, an accusation which soured already strained relations with Uzbekistan. Shikhmuradov was arrested on December 25 and made a televised confession four days later that critics maintain had been coerced. On December 30, he was sentenced to life in prison following what human rights groups condemned as a Soviet-style show trial. Two of the alleged co-conspirators received life sentences in absentia, while many other suspects were given lengthy prison sentences.

The president subsequently announced early elections for the Halk Maslahaty (People's Council) in April 2003. Observers noted that the decision to hold the poll two years ahead of schedule was most likely intended to eliminate any remaining opposition to Niyazov's government through a redistribution of legislative posts. There was no election campaign, and the state media did not provide information about the candidates, all of whom were nominated by the presidential administration. The CEC announced voter turnout of 99.8 percent, although the true figure is believed to be much lower.

In the run-up to the December 19, 2004, Mejlis polls, the list of candidates was reportedly personally approved by Niyazov. The government refused to invite any international observers to monitor the election, which most analysts described as little more than a staged vote. As in previous elections, only the DPT was allowed to field candidates. Voter turnout was officially listed as 77 percent.

A series of high-profile government reshuffles continued in 2005, highlighting ongoing political tensions and Niyazov's concerns about potential challengers to his leadership. Among those who were dismissed from their positions—and in some cases were arrested or sentenced to prison on charges including corruption—were the director of the central bank, the head of the presidential administration, and the director of the state oil company. Niyazov also dismissed several governors and district heads for failing to meet projected cotton harvest targets.

Rumors about Niyazov's failing health grew in 2005, although independent verification of his medical condition remained nearly impossible. During the year, Niyazov reportedly received treatment for undisclosed illnesses from a team of German doc-

tors, including a group of medical specialists who traveled to Ashgabat in June. Meanwhile, stories of his illness touched off speculation about his successor and the possibility of a destabilizing battle for power.

The tense relationship between Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, particularly after Ashgabat accused Tashkent of complicity in the 2002 assassination attempt against Niyazov, continued to show some modest signs of improvement during the year. A bilateral summit in late 2004—the first in four years—led to the signing of several treaties of friendship and an agreement on a framework for sharing regional water resources. In January 2005, Uzbekistan appointed a new ambassador to Turkmenistan; the post had been vacant since the expulsion of the previous ambassador more than two years earlier.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Turkmenistan cannot change their government democratically. President Saparmurat Niyazov enjoys virtually absolute power over all branches and levels of government. In recent years, the government has undergone a rapid turnover of personnel as Niyazov has dismissed many officials whom he suspects may challenge his authority.

The country has two parliamentary bodies, neither of which enjoys genuine independence from the executive branch: the unicameral Mejlis (National Assembly), composed of 50 members elected by popular vote for five-year terms, and the approximately 2,500-member Halk Maslahaty (People's Council), composed of various elected and appointed members, which was officially made the country's supreme legislative body in 2003.

None of the country's legislative elections have been free or fair. Only one political party, the Niyazov-led DPT, has been officially registered. Opposition parties have been banned, and their leading members face harassment and detention or have fled abroad.

Niyazov has established an extensive cult of personality, including erecting monuments to his leadership throughout the country. In 1994, he renamed himself Turkmenbashi, or "leader of the Turkmen." He has enacted bizarre decrees, including ordering the renaming of the days of the week and months of the year after himself and his mother. As part of a stated attempt to fend off foreign influences in the country, he has banned opera and ballet performances. In August 2005, he signed a decree forbidding the playing of recorded music at public events, on television, and at weddings.

Corruption is widespread, with public officials often forced to bribe their way into their positions. The authorities have used anticorruption campaigns as a way to remove potential rivals. Turkmenistan was ranked 155 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech and the press is severely restricted by the government, which controls all radio and television broadcasts and print media. Reports of dissenting political views are banned, as are even mild forms of criticism of the president. Subscriptions to foreign newspapers and magazines are forbidden, and foreign journalists have few opportunities to visit Turkmenistan. In 2004, the government shut down broadcasts of Russia's Radio Mayak, the last foreign media outlet to reach Turkmenistan, ostensibly for technical reasons regarding the station's transmission equipment. The state-owned Turkmen Telekom is the only authorized internet ser-

vice provider in the country. Few international correspondents work in Turkmenistan, and many have been expelled from the country. In early 2005, journalist Viktor Panov of the Russian news agency RIA-Novosti was deported from Turkmenistan to Russia after having reportedly been charged with espionage.

The government restricts freedom of religion, and independent religious groups continue to face persecution. A 2003 law on religion criminalized the practice of religious groups not officially registered and prescribed up to one year of corrective labor against violators. The law effectively applied to all religions other than Sunni Islam and Russian Orthodoxy, the only two faiths that had successfully achieved registration at the time. Under mounting international pressure, the government lifted some of its restrictions against religious organizations in 2004, including lowering from 500 to 5 the number of members required in each locality in which a group wished to register. In May 2004, Niyazov decreed that practicing an unregistered religion would no longer be a criminal offense, although it remains illegal, with violators subject to fines. While Seventh Day Adventist, Baha'i, Hare Krishna, Baptist, and several Protestant communities have subsequently achieved formal registration, other groups have experienced difficulties in attempting to register. Furthermore, members of independent religious congregations—including those legally registered by the government—continue to face pressure from the authorities. In 2005, Baptist groups experienced raids on their services, detentions, fines, and confiscation of their religious materials, despite the fact that they belonged to the nationally registered Baptist Church. Jehovah's Witnesses have been beaten, fined, and threatened.

The government controls access to Islamic education and restricts the number of mosques throughout the country. In June 2005, Niyazov issued a decree eliminating as a separate department the Islamic Theology Faculty at the main university in Ashgabat; the faculty had been the only institution remaining in the country authorized to train imams. The authorities coerce Christian and Muslim houses of worship to display a copy of the *Rukhnama*, a quasi-spiritual guide allegedly authored by Niyazov.

The government places significant restrictions on academic freedom, with schools increasingly being used to indoctrinate, rather than educate, students. The *Rukhnama* is required reading throughout the school system and has largely replaced many other traditional school subjects. Textbooks must meet the government's strict ideological requirements. In 2004, Niyazov issued an order invalidating most higher education degrees received outside the country since 1993, dismissing holders of such degrees from state jobs. Analysts viewed this decree as part of a broader effort to eliminate foreign influences from Turkmen society. Bribes are commonly required for admission to various schools and institutes. In early 2005, Niyazov announced a decision to close most libraries in the country on the grounds that most books that Turkmen citizens need—many allegedly written by the president himself—should already be present in homes, schools, and workplaces.

The state security services regularly monitor the activities of citizens and foreign nationals, limiting open and free private discussion. Security officers use such surveillance techniques as wiretapping, the interception of mail, and the recruitment of informers. After the November 2002 assassination attempt, Niyazov reportedly directed law enforcement bodies to carefully monitor people's conversations in public places and called on people to assist the police by informing on their fellow citizens. In February 2004, Niyazov ordered the government to intensify video sur-

veillance, including at all strategic economic facilities, public buildings, and government offices.

While the constitution guarantees peaceful assembly and association, these rights are severely restricted in practice. Public demonstrations against state policies are extremely rare. A 2003 law on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) effectively criminalized the activities of unregistered organizations and imposed penalties that included heavy fines, the confiscation of property, and imprisonment. In an apparent reversal, a new law was adopted the following year abolishing criminal penalties for unregistered NGOs. However, most observers suspected that the law was designed primarily to counter international criticism of the country's poor human rights record, rather than to genuinely improve the environment for Turkmenistan's civil society sector.

The government-controlled Colleagues Union is the only central trade union permitted. There are no legal guarantees for workers to form or join unions or to strike, although the constitution does not specifically prohibit these rights. Strikes in Turkmenistan are extremely rare.

The judicial system is subservient to the president, who appoints and removes judges without legislative review. The authorities frequently deny rights of due process, including public trials and access to defense attorneys. Police abuse and torture of suspects and prisoners, often to obtain confessions, is reportedly widespread. Those arrested and sentenced for complicity in the assassination attempt against Niyazov suffered ill-treatment or torture, had no access to legal counsel of their own choosing, and were convicted in closed trials; many of their friends and relatives were targeted for harassment and intimidation. In early 2003, the government broadened the definition of treason to cover a wide range of activities, including attempting to undermine the public's faith in the president's policies and failing to inform the authorities of a wide range of crimes. Prisons suffer from overcrowding and inadequate nutrition and medical care, and international organizations are not permitted to visit prisons.

Employment and educational opportunities for ethnic minorities are limited by the government's policy of promoting Turkmen national identity and its discrimination against those who are not ethnic Turkmen. Following the 2002 assassination attempt against Niyazov, which Turkmenistan openly accused Uzbekistan of supporting, the Turkmen authorities took a harder line against ethnic Uzbeks in Turkmenistan. The government reportedly ordered the forced relocation of part of the Uzbek population living along the Uzbekistan border and their replacement with ethnic Turkmen. Many ethnic Uzbek imams (Muslim religious leaders) have been dismissed and replaced by ethnic Turkmen, as have Uzbeks in other leadership positions in the country. In March 2004, the country's former chief mufti, Nasrullah ibn Ibadullah, an ethnic Uzbek, was sentenced to 22 years in prison on charges of treason; he had been removed from his post in January 2003 and was succeeded by an ethnic Turkmen. The authorities have ordered the closure of a variety of Russian-language institutions, including schools, throughout the country.

Freedom of movement, particularly overseas, is severely restricted. In 2004, Niyazov formally abolished the country's exit-visa requirement—which had been eliminated in January 2002 but reintroduced the following year—to stave off trade restrictions by the United States. However, travel abroad remains extremely difficult for most

Turkmen citizens and often requires the payment of bribes to government officials. In addition, the government is believed to maintain a lengthy blacklist of possibly thousands of people who are not permitted to travel outside the country, including those suspected of opposition to the authorities. The State Service for the Registration of Foreign Citizens monitors foreign visitors, whose activities are strictly regulated.

A continuing Soviet-style command economy and widespread corruption diminish equality of opportunity. The government sets extremely high production targets for farmers, who must then sell their crops at very low prices set by the state monopoly grain purchaser. Profits from the country's extensive energy exports rarely reach the general population, most of whom live in poverty. According to the Vienna-based International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, the Turkmen government has engaged in "widespread violations of property rights" as part of a dramatic urban reconstruction project in Ashgabat that was launched in 2001. Hundreds of residents have reportedly been forced to vacate their homes on extremely short notice and have received little or no financial compensation or equivalent accommodation from the authorities. Employees working in the dominant public sector are tested on their knowledge of the *Rukhnama* as a condition of their employment. In January 2005, Niyazov announced a ban on the practice of child labor. However, there are concerns that the practice is so widespread and central to the country's economy, particularly during the annual fall cotton harvest, that the ban will not be enforced.

The government restricts various personal social freedoms, including the wearing of long hair or beards by men. Traditional social and religious norms and a lack of employment prospects limit professional opportunities for women, and anecdotal reports suggest that domestic violence is common. In March 2005, Niyazov eliminated a required payment of \$50,000 from foreign citizens wishing to marry Turkmen women; the money was ostensibly designed to provide for the couple's children if the marriage ended in divorce.

Tuvalu

Population: 10,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: na **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 64 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Church of Tuvalu [Congregationalist]
 (97 percent), other (3 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Polynesian (96 percent),
 Micronesian (4 percent)
Capital: Funafuti



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

Prime Minister Maatia Toafa consolidated his majority in parliament in 2005, setting aside public fears of further political stability in Tuvalu. Former prime minister Faimalaga Luka died in August.

The Gilbert and Ellice Islands, situated in the central South Pacific Ocean, became a British protectorate in 1892 and a British colony in 1916. During World War II, the United States used the northernmost atoll of the Ellice Islands as a base to fight the Japanese. In 1974, as Britain was preparing the colony for independence, the Polynesian Ellice Islanders voted to separate themselves from the Micronesian Gilbertese. The Ellice Islands became an independent country on October 1, 1978, under the precolonial name of Tuvalu. (The Gilbert Islands, a group of 16 islands, form part of Kiribati.) The threats of climate change and rising sea levels continue to worry the population of these low-lying islands.

In February 2001, Faimalaga Luka became prime minister after the sudden death from a heart attack of Ionatana Ionatana two months earlier. In December 2001, Luka was ousted in a no-confidence vote and replaced by Kolou Telake. In the July 2002 general elections, in which Telake failed to win a seat, Saufatu Sopoanga was elected prime minister.

Intense political competition brought Tuvalu's parliament to a virtual standstill in 2003. Prime Minister Sopoanga's government lost its majority following a by-election in May, and Sopoanga refused to concede or allow the parliament to convene. The impasse ended in October after another by-election gave Sopoanga a new majority in parliament. However, less than 10 months later, the parliament ousted Sopoanga with a vote of no confidence. In October 2004, the parliament chose Maatia Toafa as the new prime minister by a vote of eight to seven.

In April 2005, Toafa risked losing his slim majority when Nanumaga island's representative, a member of his government, resigned citing ill health. Fortunately for Toafa, the new Nanumaga representative chose to join his government and kept him in power, allowing the parliament to reconvene to pass the budget and deal with other state matters. Frequent changes of government as a result of no-confidence votes in parliament have sustained a debate in the last decade over whether citizens should be allowed to choose their prime minister directly rather than through parliament. In August, former prime minister Luka died.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Tuvalu can change their government democratically. Tuvalu is a member of the Commonwealth, and the head of state, Queen Elizabeth II, is represented by a governor-general who must be a citizen of Tuvalu. The prime minister, chosen by parliament, leads the government. The unicameral, 15-member parliament is elected to four-year terms. A six-person council administers each of the country's nine atolls. Council members are chosen by universal suffrage to four-year terms.

There are no formal political parties, although there are no laws against their formation. Political allegiances revolve around geography and personalities.

Tuvalu is one of the few places in the Pacific Islands where corruption is not a serious problem. The country was not ranked in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and the press, and the government generally respects these rights in practice. In 2001, the country's sole radio station, Radio Tuvalu, was privatized. The government runs a television station, but financial constraints limit broadcast time and variety of programs. Many residents use satellite dishes to access foreign programs. There is one fortnightly newspaper,

Tuvalu Echoes. The government does not restrict internet access, but penetration is largely limited to the capital because of cost-of-access and connectivity issues. Religious freedom is generally respected in practice. The vast majority of the population, some 97 percent, is Congregational Protestant. Religion is a major part of life, and Sunday service is typically considered the most important weekly event. Academic freedom is also generally respected.

Nongovernmental groups across all levels of society provide a variety of health, education, and other services for women, youths, and the population at large. Public demonstrations are permitted, and workers are free to organize unions and choose their own representatives for collective bargaining. Being a largely subsistence economy with tiny service and manufacturing sectors, Tuvalu has only one registered trade union; the Tuvalu Seaman's Union has about 600 members who work on foreign merchant vessels. Workers have the right to strike, but no strikes have occurred in the country's history. Public sector employees, who total fewer than 1,000, are members of professional associations that do not have union status.

The judiciary is independent and provides fair trials. Tuvalu has a two-tier judicial system. The higher courts include the Privy Council in London, the court of appeal, and the high court. The lower courts consist of senior and resident magistrates, the island courts, and the land courts. The chief justice, who is also the chief justice of Tonga, sits on the high court about once a year. A civilian-controlled, 70-member constabulary force maintains internal order. Prisons are spartan, but there were no reports of abuses.

Two-thirds of the population engages in subsistence farming and fishing. Main sources of revenue for the state include funds generated from the sale of coins and stamps, sale of tuna fishing licenses to foreign fisheries, and lease of the country's internet domain name, ".tv," to foreign firms. Another 10 percent of its annual budget is derived from the Tuvalu Trust Fund, a well-run overseas investment fund set up by the United Kingdom, Australia, and South Korea in 1987 to provide development assistance.

There is general respect for human rights, but traditional customs and social norms condone discrimination against women and limit their roles in society. Violence against women is rare. Rape is a crime punishable by law, but spousal rape is not included in this definition. No law specifically targets sexual harassment. Women enjoy equal access to education, although they remain underrepresented in positions of leadership in business and government.

Uganda

Population: 26,900,000 **Political Rights:** 5
GNI/capita: \$250 **Civil Liberties:** 4
Life Expectancy: 48 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (33 percent),
 Protestant (33 percent), Muslim (16 percent),
 indigenous beliefs (18 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Baganda (17 percent), Basogo (8 percent),
 Ankole (8 percent), Iteso (8 percent), Bakiga (7 percent), Langi (6 percent),
 Rwanda (6 percent), other (40 percent)

Capital: Kampala



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	5,5PF	6,5PF	6,5PF	6,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF

Overview:

Ugandans voted in a constitutional referendum in July 2005 to lift a two-decades-old ban on political parties. They also voted to repeal the proviso limiting presidents to two terms in office, which will allow President Yoweri Museveni to run for a third term in the next elections scheduled for March 2006. Former president and longtime opposition leader Milton Obote died in exile in October. Another leading opponent to Museveni, Dr. Kizza Besigye, returned from exile and announced his intention to run for president.

In the years following its independence from Britain in 1962, Uganda experienced considerable political instability. Former president Milton Obote, an increasingly authoritarian leader, was overthrown by Idi Amin in 1971. Amin's brutality made world headlines as hundreds of thousands of people were killed. His 1978 invasion of Tanzania finally led to his overthrow, as Tanzanian forces and Ugandan exiles routed Amin's army. After Obote returned to power in 1980 in fraudulent elections, he and his backers from northern Uganda savagely repressed his critics, who were primarily from southern Ugandan ethnic groups.

Obote was ousted for a second time in a 1985 army coup. Conditions continued to worsen until the National Resistance Army, led by Yoweri Museveni, entered the capital of Kampala in January 1986 and assumed power. The new government imposed a ban on most formal political party activities, including the sponsoring of candidates for elections and the staging of political rallies. In June 2000, a referendum was held on whether to lift the ban. Almost 90 percent of those voting supported continuation of the de facto single-party system; however, opposition parties had called for a boycott, and overall voter turnout was just over 50 percent.

Museveni and his National Resistance Movement (NRM) comfortably won presidential and legislative elections in 2001. However, the elections were held under conditions that called their legitimacy into question. Reports by human rights groups and donor countries concerning the presidential election noted that state media and other official resources were mobilized in support of Museveni's candi-

dacy, and that the ban on most formal party activities further hindered the opposition. Most observers believe, however, that Museveni would have won in an open contest and described the actual balloting and vote-tabulation processes as largely transparent. The opposition, which claimed that the elections were rigged, boycotted the subsequent parliamentary elections in June; the NRM's comfortable majority was buttressed by dozens of special-interest representatives nominated by the president.

In 2002, parliament passed the Political Parties and Organizations Act, putting forth the conditions under which political parties could be registered and could fully function. In 2003, the Constitutional Court ruled that parts of the law were unconstitutional, as they effectively prevented political parties from carrying out their activities. Despite the Constitutional Court's ruling, the NRM continued to dominate the nation's political life through direct and indirect means.

During 2004, the Constitutional Court voided restrictions on the freedom of political parties to function. In a July 2005 constitutional referendum, Ugandans voted to end the party ban and to repeal the proviso limiting presidents to two terms in office. As a result, Museveni could be a candidate for the presidency, for a third time, in elections scheduled for March 2006. Former authoritarian president and longtime opposition leader Milton Obote died in exile in Zambia in October 2005. Reflecting his controversial standing amongst Ugandans, his passing was both mourned and celebrated inside the country. Another leading opponent to Museveni, Dr. Kizza Besigye, returned from exile and announced his intention to run for president. Besigye was subsequently arrested on charges of treason, terrorism, rape, and unlawful possession of firearms.

Regional tensions have continued in recent years, as Ugandan military forces have withdrawn from the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). These units had been sent to suppress rebels who had been perpetrating attacks across the border into Uganda. International human rights groups, however, criticized Uganda for continuing to support armed militias in the eastern DRC in 2004. Tensions with Rwanda over influence in the region have also remained high.

A cult-based guerrilla movement with no clear agenda, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), continued its gruesome insurgency in northern Uganda. In 2005, a move by the LRA to bases in the DRC also heightened regional tensions. Intermittent violence in the north continued throughout the year, with human rights violations committed on both sides. Uganda's army commander claimed that his troops had been given unlimited access to fight Ugandan rebels based in Sudan. Five LRA rebels were indicted by the International Criminal Court.

Uganda has more than 500,000 people infected with AIDS. According to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Uganda has declined in recent years. The overall prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the country is 6 percent, which represents a more than 50 percent reduction since 1992.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Uganda cannot change their government democratically. The only open, multiparty elections were held in 1961 in preparation for the country's independence from Britain. In 1986, arguing that majoritarian democracy exacerbates religious and ethnic tensions in Africa, President Yoweri Museveni substituted a "no party" system with

only one, supposedly nonparty political organization—the NRM—allowed to operate unfettered. This situation was changed in 2005 with the repeal of the ban on political parties.

The president and the single-chamber National Assembly are elected for a five-year term. As of 2006, the Assembly will be composed of 319 members. Of these, 215 will be directly elected and 94 indirectly elected from special interest groups, including women, the army, youth, the disabled, and trade unions. Additionally, 69 of these seats must be filled by women. There will also be a maximum of 10 ex-officio seats filled by cabinet ministers, who will be neither elected members of parliament nor have voting rights. Parliament asserts some independence vis-a-vis the executive branch. High-level government officials have been censured, and several government actions and policies have been influenced or altered as a result of parliamentary oversight.

Significant concerns exist regarding the ability of opposition parties to compete on a relatively level playing field with Museveni's ruling NRM. Opposition parties have protested restrictive party registration requirements and the predominant status of the NRM. Other controversial issues include federalism, voter and candidate eligibility, the use of government resources to support NRM candidates, and the use of illegal paramilitary groups, such as the Kalangala Action Plan, to intimidate voters.

In 2005, Human Rights Watch protested the arrest and detention of two opposition Assembly members. It criticized the government's use of capital charges to detain political opponents for prolonged periods of time, often for more than a year without trial. The army also occupies a position in politics incompatible with democratic principles; its representatives sit in parliament and have openly campaigned in support of Museveni.

Some governmental corruption has been reported in the media. In 2005, The Global Fund for AIDS suspended disbursement of more than \$200 million in assistance because of evidence of "inappropriate expenditure and improper accounting" in the Ugandan government project management unit. Under the 1995 constitution, new institutions were set up to investigate corruption and human rights violations and promote the return to democratic governance. These have made some headway in the fight against corruption and abuse of office by public officers, although a number of alleged corrupt acts by government officials have not been fully pursued and prosecuted. In 2005, the Assembly passed a provision creating special anticorruption courts to try government officials. Uganda was ranked 117 out of 159 countries surveyed in the 2005 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index.

There is some freedom of expression in Uganda. Independent print media outlets, including more than two dozen daily and weekly newspapers, are often highly critical of the government and offer a range of opposition views. Several private radio and television stations report on local political developments. Buttressed by legislation limiting press freedoms, however, the government at times selectively arrests or harasses journalists. A sedition law remains in force and is applied selectively to journalists and others who hold views that are at variance with those of the NRM. For example, in August, Andrew Mwenda, a prominent journalist and host of a live talk show on FM radio, was arrested on charges of sedition, and his radio station was temporarily closed after he alleged that the government was complicit in

the death of Sudanese vice president John Garang and was planning to attack Rwanda. Museveni has threatened to close down independent newspapers that report on sensitive regional security issues. The largest newspapers and broadcasting facilities that reach rural areas remain state owned. Journalists have asked parliament to enact a freedom-of-information act. In 2004, Reporters Without Borders ranked Uganda 86 out of 167 countries in terms of press freedoms, a significant drop from the last two years. The internet industry in Uganda has experienced a rapid growth over the last two years in terms of number of service providers, although access remains limited mostly to major urban centers.

There is no state religion, and freedom of worship is constitutionally protected and respected. Various Christian sects and the country's Muslim minority practice their creeds freely. The 2004 U.S. State Department Report on International Religious Freedom noted the significant extent to which religious freedom is promoted in Uganda. Academic freedom is also generally respected.

Freedom of association and assembly is officially recognized. The government has demonstrated increased respect for these rights in the constitution but continues to place some restrictions on them in practice. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) currently make a significant contribution to Uganda's social, economic, cultural, and political life. They encourage the expression of different views and, significantly, have been willing to address politically sensitive issues. Local human rights organizations have shown an increasing interest in monitoring abuses and in conducting advocacy activities in comparison with their past focus on less controversial human rights education activities. The existence and activities of NGOs are, however, subject to legal restrictions, including manipulation of their registration requirements. Security forces have halted numerous political rallies, some through force, and leading opposition activists have been harassed and sometimes subjected to arbitrary arrest.

The National Organization of Trade Unions, the country's largest labor federation, is independent of the government and political parties. However, various essential workers are barred from forming unions. Strikes are permitted only after a lengthy reconciliation process.

The judiciary is still influenced by the executive despite some autonomy, as demonstrated by the Constitutional Court's interpretation that parts of the Political Parties and Organizations Act were unconstitutional. However, sensitive human rights issues, such as police brutality, rape, domestic violence, and vigilante justice, remain serious concerns. Prolonged pretrial detention, inadequate resources, the army's occasional refusal to respect civilian courts, and poor judicial administration combine to impede the fair exercise of justice.

Prison conditions are difficult, especially in local jails. A census conducted in 2003 showed there were 17,523 inmates in Uganda, even though prison capacity was estimated at 8,600. The number of inmates was estimated to have reached 20,000 by July 2005. More than 500 prisoners die annually as a result of poor diet, sanitation, and medical care. Although there is registered progress towards the improvement of conditions in the prisons, conditions in both local administration and centrally administered prisons are poor. Pretrial detainees constitute more than half of the prison population.

The 2002 Suppression of Terrorism Act, which defines any act of violence or

threat of violence for political, religious, economic, or cultural ends as a terrorist act, imposes harsh penalties on suspected terrorists and has raised fears that it could be used against political opponents. The unlawful possession of arms is also defined as terrorism. Publishing news that is "likely to promote terrorism" can result in up to 10 years' imprisonment.

Both the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) in its annual report and Human Rights Watch highlighted serious human rights violations related to the ongoing guerrilla war in the northern part of the country by the LRA and the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF). Torture by the security forces has continued despite the government's assurance that there is no institutionalized sanction of its use. The UHRC report also commended security forces for their role in protecting displaced persons' camps. It is estimated that around 20,000 children have been kidnapped by the group since 1987 for use as soldiers and sex slaves. Up to 12,000 people have been killed in the violence, with many more dying from disease and malnutrition as a direct result of the conflict. Nearly two million civilians have been forced to flee their homes.

Northern ethnic groups complain of official neglect. Manipulation and exploitation of ethnic divisions pose a serious and continuing threat to peace in Uganda. Baganda people in the country's south continue to demand more political recognition of their traditional kingdom.

Although the constitution enshrines the principle of equality between women and men, discrimination against women remains pronounced, especially in rural areas. Incidences of domestic violence and sexual abuse, including rape, are often not registered with police and are rarely investigated. Polygamy remains legal. There are no laws protecting women from domestic violence; draft laws, such as the Domestic Relations Bill and the Sexual Offenses Bill, have languished in the National Assembly. Cultural practices like female genital mutilation continue to exist. The UHRC and other NGOs indicate that sexual abuse of minors is increasing. According to the International Labor Organization, more than 2.7 million children are employed as workers.

Uganda has legislated quotas for women officials in all elected bodies, from village councils to the national parliament. Almost 20 percent of Uganda's parliament is female. One-third of local council seats must, by law, go to women. Formal succession laws give women inheritance rights over land, but customary patrilineal practices mean that the formal legal provisions are often ignored. Abortion is permitted in cases where the mother's mental or physical health would be seriously affected.

Ukraine

Population: 47,100,000 **Political Rights:** 3*

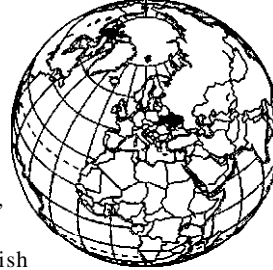
GNI/capita: \$970 **Civil Liberties:** 2*

Life Expectancy: 68 **Status:** Free

Religious Groups: Ukrainian Orthodox [Kyiv Patriarchate (19 percent), Moscow Patriarchate (9 percent)], Ukrainian Greek Catholic (6 percent), Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox (1.7 percent), Protestant, Jewish

Ethnic Groups: Ukrainian (78 percent), Russian (17 percent), other (5 percent)

Capital: Kyiv



Ratings Change: Ukraine's political rights rating improved from 4 to 3, its civil liberties rating from 3 to 2, and its status from Partly Free to Free, due to the annulment of fraudulent presidential elections and the subsequent free and fair revote in December 2004, as well as the removal of restrictions on independent political and social activities and free speech following the Orange Revolution.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,3PF	3,2F

Overview:

The triumph of the "Orange Revolution," a series of massive, nonviolent public protests against voter fraud in the second round of Ukraine's November 2004 presidential election, led to the Supreme Court's annulment of the rigged ballot. The rerun of the elections on December 26, 2004, resulted in victory for opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko, who was installed as president in January 2005. However, disputes among elements of the Orange Revolution's political alliance, particularly over a series of economic issues, led to its fracturing; Yushchenko dismissed his entire government—including then-Prime Minister Yuliya Tymoshenko—in September.

In December 1991, Ukraine's voters ratified a declaration of independence from the USSR and elected Leonid Kravchuk president. Communists won a plurality in parliamentary elections in 1994, and Leonid Kuchma, a former director of the USSR's largest missile production facility, defeated Kravchuk in the presidential poll. Over time, Kuchma's government became the target of domestic and international criticism for extensive and high-level corruption and for the erosion of political and free speech rights.

The 1999 presidential election—won in the second round by Kuchma with 56.21 percent of the vote over Communist Party challenger Petro Symonenko's 37.5 percent—was marred by harassment of independent media, biased coverage by state media, intimidation of candidates and their supporters, and illegal campaigning by state officials. The murder in 2000 of independent journalist Heorhiy Gongadze, credible evidence that appeared to implicate Kuchma in the journalist's abduction, and scandalous revelations contained in secretly recorded conversations of the

president's conversations all contributed to mass public demonstrations and calls for the president's dismissal.

In the March 2002 parliamentary elections, Our Ukraine, the bloc headed by reformist former prime minister Viktor Yushchenko, emerged as the single largest political force in the party-list vote, marking the first electoral success for the democratic opposition since independence. However, the propresidential For a United Ukraine bloc received enough postelection support from the United Social Democratic Party of Ukraine, as well as from independent candidates and even some members of Our Ukraine, to create a parliament majority. Nevertheless, the success of Yushchenko's electoral bloc in the party-list vote signaled the growing strength of democratic forces in the country and galvanized thousands who took to the streets during the year to demonstrate against Kuchma's growing authoritarianism and corruption.

After the election, Ukraine continued to be plagued by pervasive corruption and ongoing violations of basic rights. In 2003, Ukraine's reintegration with Russia appeared to be strengthened with the signing on September 19 of an agreement to create a Common Economic Space that could eventually link the two countries with Belarus and Kazakhstan in a common market and customs union. In April 2004, amid street protests, Ukraine's parliament ratified the agreement.

As the 2004 presidential election approached, Kuchma's entourage became increasingly concerned about preserving its power, wealth, and influence after Kuchma's second term in office expired. Although the Constitutional Court ruled in 2004 that Kuchma was eligible to run for a third term, his extremely low popularity induced the ruling elite to search for alternatives. One possibility was amending the constitution to shift the balance of power towards the parliament and, by extension, the oligarchic groups that controlled the major pro-regime parties. This "constitutional reform," however, had been stalled in the parliament for years, prompting a search for Kuchma's presidential successor. The choice eventually fell on Viktor Yanukovich, a former convicted felon and representative of the Russian-speaking Donbas region, where economic oligarchs tightly controlled the local media and political life.

Opposition candidates were virtually banished from the airwaves, while major independent print and electronic media outlets were either shut down or persecuted by the courts and tax inspectors. Once the election campaign moved into high gear in July, opposition front-runner Yushchenko encountered harassment and obstacles to campaigning; in September, he took ill after a meeting with high-ranking State Security officials. His illness was life-threatening and debilitating, forcing the candidate off the campaign trail for several weeks. Forensic tests later determined that the candidate had been poisoned with a large dose of dioxin in what was deemed an assassination attempt.

In the first-round vote on October 31, 2004, which included significant evidence of voting irregularities, Yushchenko came in first among 24 candidates with 39.7 percent of the vote; Yanukovich, who enjoyed strong official backing from Russian president Vladimir Putin, won 39.3 percent. In the November 21 runoff, Yushchenko faced off with Yanukovich. Independent exit polls found Yushchenko had won comfortably by a 10 percent margin. However, the results from the Central Election Commission (CEC) showed Yanukovich the winner by less than 3 percent. The

CEC's results, moreover, showed a near 100 percent voter turnout in Yanukovich's home region of Donetsk (well above the national average of 78 percent) as well as massive last-minute infusions of absentee ballots in southern and eastern Ukraine. Opposition politicians went public with tapes of high-ranking executive-branch officials indicating a conspiracy to commit massive voter fraud by tampering with the CEC's computer server. Domestic opposition and international monitors denounced the results as tainted and the putative winner, Yanukovich, as "not legitimate."

In what became known as the "Orange Revolution," millions amassed peacefully in Kyiv and other major Ukrainian cities to protest evidence of fraud in the second-round vote. Although the forceful dispersal of protests was apparently contemplated, major confrontation was averted. The attempts of pro-Yanukovich regional leaders in the east, with the support of some Russian officials, to confront the revolution by staging a separatist movement in the east quickly fizzled. The Supreme Court agreed to reexamine the results on Yushchenko's appeal, and on December 4, it struck down the second round and ordered it rerun on December 26, thus acknowledging the claims of the opposition. In the middle of the crisis, the parliament ratified the constitutional reform that will turn Ukraine into a parliamentary republic as of January 1, 2006.

The rerun of the second round of presidential elections was carried out in a new political and social atmosphere devoid of fear of political repression. The growing independence of the media, the parliament, the judiciary, and local governments allowed for a fair and properly monitored ballot. As a result, Yushchenko won easily with 52 percent of the vote to Yanukovich's 44 percent, with 75 percent of the votes cast. After several weeks of unsuccessful appeals by Yanukovich (who by that time had resigned the office of prime minister), Yushchenko was duly inaugurated as president on January 23, 2005. Yuliya Tymoshenko, a former deputy prime minister briefly imprisoned in 2001 and Yushchenko's chief aide in the Orange Revolution, was approved as prime minister in February.

Yushchenko was inaugurated as president amid high expectations in Ukrainian society of a new beginning with a clean, responsible, and efficient government. His administration took bold steps in areas including reestablishing good relations with Western governments and institutions, fighting corruption, improving media freedom, and introducing reform of the state administration. Progress in the investigation of the Gongadze murder led to the suicide of Kuchma's interior minister, Yury Kravchenko, who emerged as the primary suspect in the investigation. An independent parliamentary commission found Kuchma complicit in Gongadze's murder, and a criminal investigation against the former president began. The new authorities also began inquiries into the dealings of Kuchma's top associates, including his chief of staff, Viktor Medvedchuk.

Yushchenko's honeymoon ended quickly, however, as the new administration was forced to deal with the legacies inherited from the previous administration, such as mismanagement of the economy, corruption, and the unreformed institutional structure of the state. The government was particularly divided over how to deal with its promises of revising the last-minute privatization of Ukraine's most lucrative assets, such as the Kryvorizhstal metallurgy works, which had been sold to Kuchma's cronies just months before his rule ended, as well as more than 3,000 privatizations conducted under Kuchma where the law was allegedly violated.

The Orange Revolution brought to power a motley and hardly manageable alliance of political parties, movements, and individuals divided by ideologies, ambitions, and personal interests that was primed to disintegrate once the change of power was accomplished. Within months of Yushchenko's ascendancy to the presidency, two groups emerged: the populists of Prime Minister Yuliya Tymoshenko and the Socialist Party of Ukraine on the one hand, and the alleged free-market proponents grouped around Petro Poroshenko, secretary of the National Security and Defense Council, on the other hand. Tymoshenko was accused of ruining the economy for the benefit of her own popularity, as economic growth was virtually stalled in the middle of 2005 owing to populist spending on social programs and wages administered by her government. Both sides, however, were motivated by more than ideologies in their internal fights. The feuding sides began to resort to the old methods of behind-the-scenes fighting over economic control and lucrative assets, such as Ukraine's natural monopolies and energy transportation networks.

Consequently, the Orange alliance was set to break apart in the run-up to the March 2006 parliamentary elections, whose importance had increased enormously since constitutional reform had shifted much of the power from the president to the parliament and prime minister. The conflict inside the Yushchenko team thus *de facto* turned into the early start of the parliamentary campaign. Meanwhile, political wars of words and the agonizingly slow progress of the economy took a toll on the popularity of the leaders of the revolution, including Yushchenko, as public dissatisfaction with failed expectations and unfulfilled promises replaced the initial enthusiasm and hopes.

The exchanges of accusations and recriminations between the two camps developed into a major political crisis. On September 2, Chief of Presidential Staff Oleksandr Zinchenko tendered his resignation, citing increasing corruption in the presidential inner circle and singling out Poroshenko as the principal culprit. Deputy Prime Minister Mykola Tomenko tendered his resignation on September 8, saying that Poroshenko had created a parallel, "oligarchic" cabinet in Ukraine, obstructing the work of the lawful one. On September 8, Yushchenko got rid of both sides of the squabble, dismissing the entire government—including Prime Minister Tymoshenko—and Poroshenko.

In his statement to the nation, Yushchenko accused his allies of betraying the ideals of the Orange Revolution and resorting to the old politics of the government it had ousted. He also promised a return to clean government and honest politics. His choice of a new prime minister, governor of Dnipropetrovsk region Yury Yekhanurov, however, marked more of a return to old-style, post-Soviet, personnel politics, as the new head of government was a purely technocratic figure dominated by the president. Yekhanurov is expected to be a transitional figure in the run-up to the 2006 parliamentary elections that will redefine the composition of power that has emerged after the Orange Revolution. Although both Yushchenko and Tymoshenko vowed unity during the celebration of the first anniversary of the revolution on November 22, 2005, their parties failed to unite, giving Yanukovich's Party of Regions a good chance to stage a political comeback.

Russian gas monopoly Gazprom announced in November a drastic increase in the price of gas for Ukraine in a move perceived by most observers as a Kremlin-inspired, politically motivated reprisal for the Orange Revolution. The resulting price

hikes may result in the public's increasing dissatisfaction with living standards and overall direction of the country following the democratic change and hurt the chances of the prodemocratic and pro-Western camp in the March 2006 parliamentary elections.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Ukraine can change their government democratically, a right they gained following the massive nonviolent public protests of late 2004 now known as the Orange Revolution. The bitterly disputed 2004 presidential election did not offer a level playing field—in terms of legal protections, media access, and equal campaigning opportunities for opposition candidates—in the first two rounds of voting. The elections were monitored by more than 4,000 foreign observers, and 10,000 domestic monitors were deployed by the Committee of Voters of Ukraine. While some faced impediments and hostility, monitors were generally able to collect significant data on election abuses. Despite the falsification of several million ballots and the rigging of the data coming to the computer server of the CEC, massive citizen protests doomed the attempt at voter fraud and ensured that a democratically elected president, Viktor Yushchenko, would emerge from the process in the third round of the elections mandated by Ukraine's Supreme Court.

Citizens elect the president and delegates to the Verkhovna Rada (Supreme Council), the 450-seat unicameral parliament. Under a 2001 election law, half of parliament is elected in proportional voting and half in single-mandate constituencies. The president serves as the head of state and can appoint and dismiss the prime minister, who in turn appoints most other cabinet members in consultation with the president. The constitutional reform approved by the Verkhovna Rada in December 2004 shifted the balance of power toward the parliament. Starting January 1, 2006, the parliament will appoint the prime minister proposed by the president on recommendation of the parliamentary majority, while the president loses the right to dismiss the cabinet. The reform also changes the election of the parliament to a purely proportional electoral system.

Ukraine has a number of political parties and coalitions, the most important of which are the pro-Yushchenko Our Ukraine bloc (including the Ukrainian People's Party); the Yuliya Tymoshenko bloc; the Agrarian Party (linked to Speaker of Parliament Volodymyr Lytvyn); the Socialist Party of Ukraine; the Party of Regions (linked to Viktor Yanukovich); the Communist Party of Ukraine; and the United Social Democratic Party (headed by former president Leonid Kuchma's chief of staff, Viktor Medvedchuk).

Corruption was believed to be widespread at the highest levels of the Kuchma administration, and there is significant petty corruption at the lower levels of authority. The Yushchenko government aggressively introduced a series of anticorruption initiatives in 2005, including dismantling or reforming several of the most bribery-prone government agencies, such as the state road police and the customs office. Ukraine was ranked 107 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The 1996 constitution guarantees freedom of speech and expression, but the Kuchma government frequently violated these rights through direct and well-documented interference in media content. In October and November 2004, journalists

organized protests and hunger strikes against state control of media content. After the second-round presidential vote and amid massive street protests, controls over journalists were removed at private national television channels 1+1, Novy Kanal, and ICTV. During the months leading up to the 2004 presidential election, two small independent television broadcasters—cable station Channel Five and Era-TV—were crucial independent sources of news and information. Independent and opposition newspapers were published throughout 2004 and appeared in enlarged editions during the weeks leading up to the presidential vote.

Journalists who report on corruption or criticize the government were particularly subject to harassment and violence under the Kuchma administration. Nearly 40 journalists have been murdered since 2000, and the killing of investigative journalist Heorhiy Gongadze remained unresolved amid significant evidence of a government cover-up. Under a law in effect since 2001, libel is no longer a criminal offense.

The press became increasingly free after the Orange Revolution. As the new government has abstained from direct political interference and does not use media outlets as tools for political propaganda and slander against its opponents, the media has grown increasingly independent, and a far broader range of opinions is available to the public. The media sharply criticized Yushchenko for the improper business dealings and flamboyant lifestyle of his son, for which the president was forced to apologize publicly. Nevertheless, the oligarchic control over the press remains in place, which means that media coverage often follows the will of an owner who might at the same time be an influential political figure. Offshoots of the old regime, such as Kuchma's son-in-law Viktor Pinchuk and Donetsk-based oligarch Rinat Akhmetov, remain in control of hundreds of broadcasting licenses. The use of the internet is growing rapidly in Ukraine: the number of internet users grew from 200,000 in 2000 to 3.9 million in 2003.

The constitution and the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religion define religious rights in Ukraine, and these are generally well respected. There are limited restrictions on the activities of foreign religious organizations, and all religious groups with more than 10 members must register with the state. Acts of anti-Semitism are consistently investigated and condemned by state authorities. Religious affiliations in Ukraine often follow political and ethnic divides, particularly between Ukrainian-speaking and Russian-speaking parts of the society. Many hierarchs and clerics from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) actively campaigned for the ruling elite's candidate for president, former prime minister Viktor Yanukovich. Muslims are occasionally subjected to document checks by local police, particularly in the eastern parts of Ukraine. Under Kuchma's presidency, the Ministry of Education failed to register a single Muslim school in the country.

Academic freedom is generally respected in most disciplines. The repression of students who engaged in opposition political activity during the Kuchma administration ended in 2005. New private universities played an important role in augmenting state-supported higher education, and their students played a key role as volunteers in election-monitoring efforts and in protests of voter fraud.

Ukraine has several thousand nongovernmental organizations and an increasingly vibrant civil society. The constitution guarantees the right to peaceful assembly but requires advance notification to government authorities. Civic groups—many of them led by young activists—became increasingly active in nonpartisan voter-

education efforts and in preparations for election monitoring in 2004. The strength of civil society was demonstrated in the massive protests of voter fraud in which the authorities did not use force to interfere.

Trade unions function, but strikes and worker protests are infrequent. The leader of the country's largest national labor federation was forced to withdraw from an opposition parliamentary faction as the result of an orchestrated threat to his union leadership organized by allies of the presidential administration. A smaller independent labor federation that includes miners and railway workers is closely linked with democratic opposition parties.

The judiciary consists of the Supreme Court, regional courts, and district courts, as well as a Constitutional Court. The constitution guarantees equality before the law, but the president, members of parliament, and judges are immune from criminal prosecution unless parliament consents. The judiciary is inefficient and subject to corruption. Although the Constitutional Court as a rule has often functioned independently, the retirement in 2003 of its well-regarded chief justice raised questions about its ongoing independence. The Supreme Court took an objective look at the massive array of evidence suggesting voting fraud and a stolen election in December 2004, and its ruling authorizing the repeat of the second round of presidential election marked a huge step forward in emancipating the judiciary from political control.

In 2002, the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture issued a report that criticized the Ukrainian police for using certain methods of interrogation, including electric shocks, cigarette burns, asphyxiation, and suspension by the arms or legs.

While the country's Roma population suffers from discrimination, the government has actively interceded to protect the rights of most ethnic and religious minorities, including the Jewish minority and the Turkic Crimean Tatar community.

The government generally respects personal autonomy and privacy, and the constitution guarantees individuals the right to own property, to work, and to engage in entrepreneurial activity. However, crime, corruption, and the slow pace of economic reform have effectively limited these rights. In 2001, the Constitutional Court struck down the country's Soviet-era *propiska* system, which had required individuals to register with the Interior Ministry in their place of residence. Opponents of the provision had long argued that the regulation violated freedom of movement. Property rights are generally respected, unless the interests of oligarchic clans are involved. In such cases, cronyism and protection of insider interests prevail.

Gender discrimination is prohibited under the constitution, but women's rights have not been a priority for government officials. In some settings, women face discrimination in employment, but there is little effective redress through existing anti-discrimination mechanisms. The sexual trafficking of women abroad for the purpose of prostitution remains a major problem and a threat to women's rights and security.

United Arab Emirates

Population: 4,600,000 **Political Rights:** 6

GNI/capita: \$20,217 **Civil Liberties:** 6

Life Expectancy: 77 **Status:** Not Free

Religious Groups: Muslim [Shia (16 percent)]
(96 percent), other (4 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Emirati (19 percent), other Arab and
Iranian (23 percent), South Asian (50 percent), European
and East Asian (8 percent)

Capital: Abu Dhabi



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF

Overview:

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) experienced no major changes on political rights and civil liberties, despite the emergence of a new leader in November 2004 after the death of the UAE's longtime president, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahayan. The UAE took some initial steps to address major problems with its record on human trafficking in 2005, including implementing a ban on the use of children as jockeys in camel races.

For most of its history, the territory of the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—a federation of seven separate emirates formerly known as the Trucial States—was controlled by various competing tribal forces. Attacks on shipping in waters off the coast of this territory led British forces to conduct raids against the tribes in the nineteenth century. In 1853, the tribal leaders signed a treaty with the United Kingdom agreeing to a truce, which led to a decline in the raids on shipping. Though never formal British colonies, the territories were provided protection by the British, and tribal leaders of the emirates often referred their disputes to the United Kingdom for mediation.

In 1971, the United Kingdom announced that it was ending its treaty relationships with the seven emirates of the Trucial States, as well as with Bahrain and Qatar. Six of the seven states entered into a federation called the United Arab Emirates, and Ras al-Khaimah, the seventh state, joined in 1972. The 1971 provisional constitution kept significant power in the hands of each individual emirate.

In contrast to many of its neighbors, the UAE has achieved some success in diversifying its economy beyond dependency on the petroleum sector, building a leading free trade zone in Dubai and a major manufacturing center in Shaijah, as well as investing resources to develop its profile as a leading center for tourism in the region. The UAE is one of the most economically diverse countries in the Gulf region.

In 2001, the government cracked down on corruption with arrests of some senior officials. In the wake of the September 11, 2001, attacks in the United States, the government introduced reforms in its financial services and banking sectors to cut down on the financing of terrorism.

Economic reform has not been matched by political reform in the UAE, which has a

closed political system in which the views of citizens are not taken into account. Recent reforms undertaken in the governance sector are generally more closely related to issues of trade, commerce, and the economy than to the enhancement of political rights and civil liberties. Political power remains in the hands of traditional tribal leaders.

After the death of President Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan in 2004, the UAE's Supreme Council of Rulers selected Zayed's oldest son, Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, as president. Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan replaced Khalifa as crown prince. This shift to the new generation did not result in any meaningful and substantive changes in the UAE's power structure, with the ruling family maintaining a firm grip on its monopoly of political power.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of the UAE cannot change their government democratically. The UAE has never held an election. All decisions about political leadership rest with the dynastic rulers of the seven separate emirates of the UAE in what is known as the Supreme Council of Rulers, the highest executive and legislative body in the country. These seven leaders select a president and vice president, and the president appoints a prime minister and cabinet. The UAE has a 40-member Federal National Council with delegates appointed by the seven leaders every two years. However, the council serves only as an advisory body, reviewing proposed laws and questioning federal government ministers.

The UAE does not have political parties. Rather, the allocation of positions in the government is largely determined by tribal loyalties and economic power. Abu Dhabi, the major oil producer in the UAE, has controlled the presidency of the UAE since its inception. Citizens have a limited opportunity to express their interests through traditional consultative sessions.

The UAE is considered among the least corrupt countries in the Middle East region; it was ranked 30 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Although the UAE's constitution provides for some freedom of expression, in practice the government severely restricts this right. The Printing and Publishing Law (No. 15 of 1980) applies to all media and prohibits "defamatory material and negative material about presidents, friendly countries, [and] religious issues, and [prohibits] pornography." Laws prohibit criticism of the government, ruling families, and friendly governments, and they also include vague provisions against statements that threaten society. As a consequence, journalists commonly practice self-censorship, and the leading media outlets in the UAE frequently publish government statements without criticism or comment. However, Dubai has a "Media Free Zone," where few restrictions have been reported on print and broadcast media produced for audiences outside of the UAE. Internet access is widely available, though there were reports that a leading internet service provider, the government-owned Etisalat, blocked sites deemed morally objectionable from time to time.

The UAE's constitution provides for freedom of religion. Islam is the official religion, and the majority of citizens are Sunnis. However, Shiite minorities and non-Muslims are free to worship without interference. The government controls content in nearly all Sunni mosques. Academic freedom is limited, with the Ministry of Education censoring textbooks and curriculums in both public and private schools.

The government places limits on freedom of assembly and association. Small

discussions on politics in private homes are generally tolerated, but there are limits on citizens' ability to organize broader gatherings. Public meetings require government permits. All nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) must register with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, and registered NGOs reportedly receive subsidies from the government.

The UAE has no labor unions, although the government has mediated labor disputes. Foreign nationals, who make up the vast majority of the UAE's workforce, are generally not offered labor protections. In July 2003, the government issued a ban on the long-standing practice of employers' forcing foreign employees to surrender their passports as a condition of employment.

The judiciary is not independent, with court rulings subject to review by the UAE's political leadership. The UAE has a dual system of Sharia (Islamic law) courts that handle family and criminal matters and secular courts that cover civil law. An estimated 40 to 45 percent of judges in the court system are noncitizen foreign nationals. Although the constitution bans torture, Sharia courts sometimes impose flogging sentences for individuals found guilty of drug use, prostitution, and adultery. In July 2004, the UAE passed new legislation setting stricter punishments for crimes involving terrorism, including financing terrorism and harboring terrorists. The federal Ministry of Interior oversees police forces in the emirate, but each police force in each emirate enjoys a great deal of autonomy. The UAE criminal procedures code sets out specific guidelines for arrests and detentions. Prison conditions vary from emirate to emirate, with reports of overcrowding in some prisons in Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

Discrimination against noncitizens, who make up the vast majority of the population and at least half of the workforce, occurs in many aspects of life, including employment and access to education, housing, and health care. Fewer than 20 percent of residents are UAE citizens.

The constitution provides for equality before the law but does not specifically mention gender equality. In practice, women's social, economic, and legal rights are not always protected because of incomplete implementation of the law and traditional biases against women. Women are forbidden to marry non-Muslims, and according to the interpretation of Sharia in the UAE, a brother inherits double what a sister inherits when a parent dies. Women are underrepresented in government, although there are small signs of limited openings for women, with women receiving appointments at various levels of government in recent years. Sheikha Lubna al-Qasimi became the first woman minister in the UAE when she was appointed minister of the economy and planning in 2004. In addition, Sheikh Sultan al-Qasimi, the ruler of Shaija, one of the seven emirates, appointed five women to Sharja's consultative council.

Human trafficking and forced labor remain problems in the UAE. According to the U.S. State Department 2005 Trafficking in Persons Report, the UAE has a serious problem with trafficking in persons, including foreigners lured into the country by employment opportunities but subjected to harsh working conditions, physical abuse, and the withholding of passports.

The UAE has received a great deal of attention for the country's use of young children from South Asia as jockeys in camel races. The country took a major step forward in addressing this problem by passing a new law banning the employment of children as camel jockeys. In April, the government announced a new law that banned jockeys under the age of 16 from participating in camel races. According to

figures from the Ministry of Interior, around 3,000 children had been involved in camel racing, with 2,800 of them under the age of 10. In August, UNICEF reported that the UAE had begun implementing the law by repatriating a group of young Bangladeshi camel jockeys. In September, the Ministry of Interior issued new guidelines requiring camel farm owners to validate the ages of jockeys participating in races.

United Kingdom

Population: 60,100,000 **Political Rights:** 1

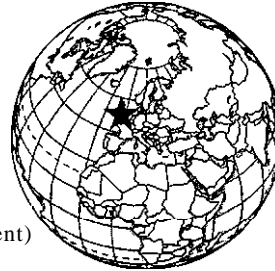
GNI/capita: \$28,320 **Civil Liberties:** 1

Life Expectancy: 78 **Status:** Free

Religious Groups: Christian [Anglican, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist] (71.6 percent), Muslim (2.7 percent), Hindu (1 percent), other (24.7 percent)

Ethnic Groups: White [English (83.6 percent), Scottish (8.6 percent), Welsh (4.9 percent), Northern Irish (2.9 percent)] (92.1 percent), black (2 percent), Indian (1.8 percent), Pakistani (1.3 percent), mixed (1.2 percent), other (1.6 percent)

Capital: London



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F

Overview:

The Labour Party won its third straight election in May 2005, but with its majority in the House of Commons significantly reduced. Tony Blair remained prime minister, amid widespread speculation that he would leave office this term and be replaced by Gordon Brown, the chancellor of the exchequer. A terrorist attack in London in July led to efforts to strengthen antiterrorism legislation, as well as to improve the integration of Britain's Muslims. However, these efforts gave rise to concerns about the erosion of civil liberties.

The English state emerged before the turn of the first millennium and was conquered by Norman French invaders in 1066. Celtic-speaking Wales and Ireland were incorporated into the kingdom over the course of the centuries; Scotland joined on more favorable terms with the creation of Great Britain in 1707. The Glorious Revolution of 1688-1689 began a gradual—but eventually total—assertion of the powers of Parliament, as Britain became one of the world's first democracies, with a significant extension of voting rights in 1832.

Separatism has persisted in the Celtic lands: most of Ireland won independence after World War I, with Protestant-majority Northern Ireland remaining part of the United Kingdom. Most of Britain's global empire, the most important portion of which was India, became independent in the decades after World War II, although many of Britain's former colonies maintain links with the country through the Commonwealth. Significant powers were devolved to a Scottish parliament (and fewer to a Welsh

assembly) established by the current Labour Party government. Peace negotiations restored home rule to Northern Ireland in 1998, but home rule has since been suspended because of breakdowns in the peace process.

After nearly two decades of Conservative Party rule, Tony Blair's "New Labour," so called because of its radical shift from its socialist past, adopted Conservative-style positions on a number of issues and swept general elections in May 1997. In the June 2001 parliamentary elections, the Labour Party secured a second term in office with another landslide victory, trouncing the opposition Conservative Party.

Despite a promise to focus on public services, particularly the ailing health and transport systems, Blair's second term as prime minister was dominated by his support of the U.S.-led war in Iraq, notwithstanding anger within his own Labour Party and demonstrations on the streets. After the end of the initial hostilities in Iraq, the government suffered renewed criticism surrounding the case it had made for the war in the run-up to the conflict. In particular, the government clashed with the BBC over a report that the government had exaggerated the threat from Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. Although a report cleared the government of deception, the suicide of a government scientist who had been a source for the BBC damaged the government's reputation.

In 2004, the European Union (EU) completed negotiations on a new draft constitution. The British government claimed that it had successfully negotiated Britain's relatively Euroskeptic views into the draft, in particular, thwarting efforts to increasingly Europeanize taxes and foreign policy, but still suffered criticism that it had given in too much to other EU countries. Frustration with Labour's EU policy led to the Conservative Party winning the June 2004 European Parliament elections; the virulently anti-EU UK Independence Party came in third place with a surprising 16 percent of the vote.

A combination of the slow progress in improving public services, the continuation of the war in Iraq, and frustration with Europe led to Labour winning its third election as expected in May 2005, but with a much reduced parliamentary majority, from a margin of 165 seats to 66. Labour took just 36 percent of the vote, the smallest total of a majority-winning party in Britain's democratic history. Blair remained prime minister, but speculation grew over when, not merely if, he would be replaced as prime minister in his third term by Gordon Brown, the chancellor of the exchequer. Michael Howard, the leader of the Conservatives who had been seen as ineffective in capitalizing on Blair's weakness, promised to resign pending the outcome of a Conservative leadership election.

Shortly after the 2005 election, Britain's worries about the EU constitution were allayed when French and Dutch voters rejected the draft constitution in referendums. These rejections in effect killed the constitution and prevented Blair and Labour from facing—and potentially losing—a referendum at home. However, Britain's sometimes-troubled relationship with the EU remained in the spotlight at a summit in Luxembourg in June, when a group of EU countries led by France demanded an end to Britain's annual rebate from the EU budget. (Margaret Thatcher had negotiated the annual refund in the early 1980s, claiming that Britain was unfairly taxed by the EU's Common Agricultural Policy.) The argument left Britain further embittered with France and forestalled agreement on the budget.

On July 7, three bombings in London's Underground railway system and one in

a bus killed more than 50 people and wounded hundreds. The bombers, also killed in the attacks, were British Muslims, three of Pakistani descent and one a convert to Islam. The attacks began a public soul searching about the failure of many immigrants and racial and religious minorities to become integrated into British society. Shortly after the attacks, British police shot dead an innocent Brazilian man, believing he was a terrorist suspect. Police claims that he acted suspiciously later unraveled: he had been followed because he lived in the house of a suspected terrorist and may have been shot as he ran to catch his train.

The aftermath of the attacks led to government proposals to toughen terrorism laws, but these have caused concerns about civil liberties. The proposals, first introduced on August 5, are wide-ranging. They would, for example, ban certain Islamist organizations; close mosques believed to be sources of terrorist agitation and recruitment; create a crime of "indirect incitement" to terrorism for those who glorify terrorism anywhere in the world; streamline the process by which clerics deemed to be radical would be deported, potentially to countries that practice torture; strip radicals who have been naturalized of their British citizenship; and create closed pretrial hearings at which secret evidence could be introduced. None of these had yet become law by the end of November. However, in a rare legislative defeat for Blair, a proposal to extend the time terrorism suspects could be held without detention from 14 to 90 days was voted down in the House of Commons in November. The Commons instead extended the period to 28 days.

Northern Ireland's peace process saw progress in 2005, though home rule has yet to be restored to the province. The Good Friday agreement of 1998 called for a locally elected assembly to be in charge of much of the province's governance. However, the assembly was suspended in 2002 after Sinn Fein, a hard-line Catholic nationalist party allied to the Irish Republican Army (IRA), was caught spying on ministers of the Northern Ireland government and on other parties. In new elections for the Northern Ireland Assembly in December 2003, Sinn Fein and the Protestant and loyalist Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) did best, edging out their more moderate rivals on both sides. The two parties have not been able to work together to restore home rule to the province, leaving it to be run from London.

Nevertheless, in July, after the Islamist terrorist attacks earlier in the month, the IRA formally pledged to "end the armed campaign," saying that it would now engage in purely political struggle. In October, an international commission verified that the IRA had put a large amount of weapons (guns and bomb-making materials) "beyond use." The commission could not verify that this was the IRA's entire arsenal, nor was it permitted to take photographs or other records. The DUP leadership remains skeptical, but there is nonetheless some chance that the two sides will return to negotiations that could restore home rule in coming years.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of the United Kingdom can change their government democratically. Each of the 646 members of the House of Commons is elected in a single-member district. This procedure multiplies the power of the two largest parties—Labour and the Conservative Party—at the expense of third parties. The Liberal Democrats are the most disadvantaged; although they won 22.1 percent of the vote in the 2005 election, they received only 9.4 percent of the seats in the House of Commons. The separation of

powers is weak, with the prime minister and all members of his cabinet also being members of the legislature. The executive has in recent years become more powerful at the expense of the House of Commons. The opposition party plays a crucial role in the Commons; although it is unable to block legislation, it holds ministers accountable in parliamentary debates that are widely covered in the press.

The House of Lords can delay but ultimately not block legislation. Its membership (currently 725) has been reformed under Tony Blair's Labour government. Nearly all hereditary peers (nobles) have been removed from the body, with 92 remaining pending further reform. The remainder are "life peers," appointed by governments to serve for life, and a small number are bishops and archbishops. As the head of state, the monarch, currently Queen Elizabeth II, plays only a ceremonial role.

The center-left Labour party and the center-right Conservative Party dominate the political scene—one or the other has governed without coalition partners since World War II. The Liberal Democratic Party, now somewhat to the left of Labour, is the third-largest party. The other chief parties are mainly regional. These include the Welsh-nationalist Plaid Cymru and the Scottish National Party. They also include several parties in Northern Ireland: Sinn Fein and the Social Democratic and Labour party (both Catholic and republican), and the Ulster Unionist Party and the Democratic Unionist Party (both Protestant and unionist).

After a period of centralization under Conservative governments from 1979 to 1997, the Labour Party made constitutional reform a key part of its 1997 election platform. In government, it has delivered a far-reaching (though asymmetrical) devolution of power to Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. The first elections to the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly were held in 1999. The Scottish body has more power (including some tax-raising powers) than its Welsh counterpart, largely because of stronger separatist sentiment in Scotland. Welsh nationalism is largely cultural; with official protection and encouragement, the number of Welsh-language speakers actually grew 17 percent from 1991 to 2001. The Northern Ireland Assembly was suspended in October 2002 after complications in the peace process.

The government is largely free of pervasive corruption. However, in November 2005, the home secretary, David Blunkett, was forced to resign from the cabinet a second time, after failing to report according to parliamentary rules that he had taken paid work while he was out of the cabinet. The United Kingdom was ranked 11 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The media market in Britain is free, lively, and competitive. Many daily newspapers across a broad spectrum of political opinions compete for readers. Although broadcasting is dominated by the state-owned BBC, the corporation is editorially independent of the government. In 2003, the BBC claimed that the government exaggerated evidence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, which led to an extensive inquiry that eventually exonerated the government. While the episode tarnished the reputations of both the government and the BBC, more generally, it was a sign of the healthy political debate that is possible in Britain. Internet access is not restricted by the government.

Although the Church of England and the Church of Scotland are established churches, the government both prescribes freedom of religion in law and protects it in practice. Scientology is not recognized as an official religion for charity purposes. Muslims and other religious minorities complain of discrimination. In 2005, the gov-

eminent proposed banning Hizb ut Tahrir, an Islamist group that advocates the creation of a Muslim caliphate in the Middle East and is opposed to democracy. The government sees the party as a source of violent extremism. The government respects academic freedom.

Civic organizations and nongovernmental organization (NGOs) are allowed to operate freely. Freedom of assembly is respected, as demonstrated by massive protests against the government's participation in the Iraq war in February 2003. The right to organize in unions is protected. Trade unions have traditionally played a strong role in the Labour Party, though this is weakening as the party moves to the center and seeks a larger role for the private sector in traditional public sector areas, such as health care.

An historical oddity in the justice system was removed in 2003 when the post of Lord Chancellor was abolished. The position, the second-oldest office in Britain after the monarchy, combined a legislative seat in the House of Lords, a senior executive position in the cabinet, and a powerful judicial position as, effectively, the top judge in the country. As such, it was a serious breach of the separation of powers (already weak in Britain), and the Labour government abolished it in 2003, creating the cabinet position of secretary for constitutional affairs. However, the top judges in the land remain the Law Lords, a combination of legislative and judicial authority that weakens judicial independence. The police maintain high professional standards, and prisons generally meet international standards.

Britain has large numbers of immigrants and second-generation children of immigrants, who receive equal treatment under the law. In practice, their living standards are lower than the national average, and they complain of having come under increased suspicion since the July terrorist attacks in London. Women receive equal treatment under the law, but are underrepresented in politics and top levels of business.

United States of America

Population: 296,500,000 **Political Rights:** 1

GNI/capita: \$37,870 **Civil Liberties:** 1

Life Expectancy: 77 **Status:** Free

Religious Groups: Protestant (52 percent), Roman Catholic (24 percent), Mormon (2 percent),

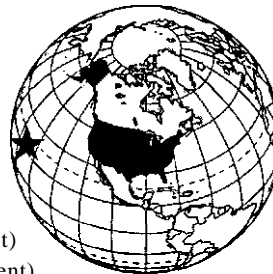
Jewish (1 percent), Muslim (1 percent), other (20 percent)

Ethnic Groups: White (66.9 percent), Hispanic (14.4 percent), black (12.2 percent), Asian (4.2 percent), Native American and Hawaiian (0.9 percent), more than one race (1.3 percent)

Capital: Washington, DC

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F



Overview:

Political developments in the United States in 2005 were dominated by controversy over nominations for two vacant positions on the Supreme Court, the country's highest

judicial body; angry debates over the apparent ineffectiveness of the federal government's response to the devastation of Hurricane Katrina; several high-profile cases of alleged corruption involving, among others, the leader of the Republican caucus in the House of Representatives; and a criminal indictment of the most senior aide to Vice President Dick Cheney, as well as heated debate over the premises of the intervention in Iraq. The year also saw continuing debate over the counterterrorism policies adopted by the administration of President George W. Bush.

The United States of America was founded in 1776 during a revolution against British colonial rule. The current system of government began functioning in 1789, following the ratification of the country's constitution. Because the founders of the United States distrusted concentrated government power, they set up a system in which the federal government has three competing centers of power—executive, legislative, and judicial branches—and they left many powers with the state governments and the citizenry.

The important role of the judiciary in the U.S. system was highlighted in 2005 by the protracted debates over nominees proposed by President George W. Bush for Supreme Court vacancies created by the death of Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist and the resignation of Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. To succeed Rehnquist, Bush nominated Judge John G. Roberts, Jr., a judge in the federal court system and an official in the Justice Department during the administration of Republican president Ronald Reagan. The vote by the Senate to confirm Roberts followed a lengthy process and a debate that broke along ideological and partisan lines. Republicans strongly championed the nomination, believing that Roberts would support positions they favored on such issues as abortion, property rights, affirmative action for minorities, and federal versus state power. Democrats, on the other hand, generally opposed Roberts, fearing that in a closely divided Supreme Court, he might tip the balance on these and other highly polarized issues. Democrats considered, but ultimately rejected, an effort to block the appointment through a filibuster, a tactic occasionally employed in the American system whereby members of the Senate use nonstop debate to prevent a vote from being taken. In the final confirmation vote, Democrats were divided equally on the Roberts nomination.

For the second Court slot, Bush first appointed the presidential legal counsel, Harriet Miers. He subsequently withdrew the appointment in the wake of a groundswell of opposition led by conservatives within his own Republican Party. He then nominated Judge Samuel Alito, Jr., a federal court judge with a reputation as a judicial conservative. The Senate scheduled hearings on the Alito nomination for January 2006. Even before the formal hearings got under way, pressure groups of both the left and right were mobilized to either oppose or support Alito's confirmation. Organizations supporting abortion rights, racial minorities, and citizens who believe in the strict separation of church and state lined up against the nominee, while conservative Evangelicals and critics of "judicial activism" urged support for Alito.

In a year in which Bush's approval ratings declined to their lowest point of his five years in office, an issue that loomed especially large was the federal government's seeming ineptitude in its response to the devastation of Hurricane Katrina in summer 2005. One of the most deadly natural disasters in U.S. history, Katrina laid waste to swathes of Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana, and destroyed large sections of

New Orleans. Although many evacuated New Orleans prior to the storm, those who remained—mainly poor African Americans—caught the full brunt of the hurricane and ensuing flood. In the first days of the storm's aftermath, the media carried story after story of death, homelessness, anarchy, and lawlessness in which poor blacks suffered while an incompetent federal government stood by. Although many of the more horrifying stories proved to be inaccurate or exaggerated, the perception was widespread that all levels of government in the world's most powerful country were unprepared to cope with a natural catastrophe.

The president and the governing Republican Party suffered a further setback as a result of the criminal investigation and indictment of I. Lewis Libby, Jr., Vice President Dick Cheney's chief of staff, in what is known as the Valerie Plame case. This case involved allegations that government officials might have leaked the fact that the wife of Ambassador Joseph Wilson, a critic of the administration's Iraq policies in early 2003, was an undercover employee of the CIA. Libby was not indicted on charges of leaking information, but rather for lying to federal agents and a grand jury about his conversations with journalists on the issue. Complicating the case was the special prosecutor's insistence that several journalists provide testimony and notes about their contacts with confidential sources. A *New York Times* reporter, Judith Miller, served 85 days in jail for initially refusing to provide information to the grand jury.

In addition to the Plame case, the Republican Party was further embarrassed by the indictment of Tom DeLay, the leader of the Republican delegation in the House of Representatives. DeLay was charged with having violated campaign-funding laws in Texas. He was also criticized for having encouraged a "pay to play" environment in Washington, in which business executives with interests in government policy understand that their corporations are expected to make contributions to a particular political party in order to gain access to influential officials. In a further scandal involving prominent Republicans, a well-connected lobbyist, Jack Abramoff, was indicted on charges of having misused money from Indian tribes that were seeking his assistance in obtaining licenses for gambling casinos. A former aide to DeLay pleaded guilty in November to conspiracy to bribe members of Congress and agreed to repay \$19.6 million to clients he had defrauded.

The United States continued to grapple with the constellation of issues raised by counterterrorism policies adopted since the September 11, 2001, attacks on Washington and New York City and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. As the year drew to a close, Congress was considering legislation that would modify several of the more controversial provisions of the USA Patriot Act, a law enacted in the aftermath of the attacks. Civil libertarians have criticized the Patriot Act for enhancing the surveillance capacity of law enforcement agencies and for eroding judicial oversight in antiterror investigations. Critics of the Patriot Act were generally disappointed with the modest adjustments incorporated into congressional legislation.

Likewise, Congress mounted an effort to deal with the problems stemming from allegations that U.S. military officers or intelligence agents had engaged in the torture of terrorism suspects in Iraq and Afghanistan and in the special prison facility operated by the United States in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. A measure with strong bipartisan support that would bar the use of torture, including the "soft" torture techniques that U.S. security officials are said to have used against terrorism suspects, was overwhelmingly passed by the Senate. The bill was opposed by the Bush

administration, which sought a compromise that would exempt officers of the CIA from the torture ban. Although there has been no systematic government investigation of torture charges, several members of the military accused of mistreating detainees in Iraq have been prosecuted in military courts, and several members of the military have been arrested on charges of prisoner abuse in Afghanistan.

Another controversy involved "ghost prisoners"—alleged terrorists detained in various parts of the world and held in unspecified locations outside any judicial system or congressional oversight. An investigative report in *The Washington Post* alleged that prisoners were being sent to locations in Eastern Europe, Asia, and the Middle East for detention and questioning. This issue also reflected differences between the administration—which claims that existing laws and international covenants are inadequate instruments in cases of terrorism—and civil libertarians, who contend that the administration is routinely violating American and international law. The administration has also drawn fire for its policy of "renditions," in which foreign nationals accused of involvement in terrorism are sent to foreign countries that have a reputation for tolerating the torture of prisoners.

The legal status of prisoners detained at Guantanamo remained unresolved in 2005. The Bush administration has labeled these detainees "enemy combatants" and taken the position that, as such, they do not merit the protections guaranteed prisoners of war by the Geneva Conventions. The question of the Guantanamo detainees is being considered by the federal court system. The Supreme Court and lower federal courts have issued rulings asserting jurisdiction over prisoners held at Guantanamo and elsewhere.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of the United States can change their government democratically. The United States has a bicameral federal legislature. The upper chamber, the Senate, consists of 100 members—two from each of the 50 states—directly elected to six-year terms. The lower chamber, the House of Representatives, consists of 435 members directly elected for two-year terms. All national legislators are elected directly by the voters in the districts or states they represent. The president and vice president are elected for four-year terms. By constitutional provision, the president is limited to two terms in office.

In the U.S. federal political system, a great deal of government responsibility rests with the 50 individual states. Most law enforcement matters are dealt with at the state level, as are education, family matters, and many land use decisions, and states have been given wide powers to raise revenues through various forms of taxation. Some states give citizens wide-ranging ability to influence legislation through institutions of direct democracy, such as referendums, which have been used on such diverse issues as gay marriage, tax rates, and immigrant rights. Although hailed by some as a reflection of the openness of the U.S. system, direct democracy has come under criticism by others, who contend that making government policy through referendum or recalling democratically elected officeholders midway through their terms weakens the party system and the institutions of indirect democracy in the executive and legislative branches.

In electing a president, the United States uses a unique system that combines a popular vote and the ballots cast by an electoral college. The Electoral College apportions votes to each state on the basis of population and congressional represen-

tation. In most cases, all of the electors in a particular state then cast their ballots for the candidate who won the popular vote in that state, no matter what the margin. Two states, Maine and Nebraska, have chosen to apportion their electoral votes between the candidates according to the percentage of the state's votes each receives, and other states are considering similar systems. The Electoral College vote determines the winner of the election. Thus, it is possible for a candidate to win the presidency even though an opposing candidate may have won a greater number of popular votes nationwide. Such was the anomalous situation in 2000, when the winning candidate, George W. Bush, actually received fewer popular votes than his main opponent, Democratic nominee and former vice president Al Gore.

Bush and his running mate, Vice President Dick Cheney, won election to a second term in 2004, with 51 percent of the national popular vote to 48 percent for the Democratic ticket of Senator John Kerry and his running mate, Senator John Edwards. According to the Electoral College system, Bush won with 286 electoral votes to Kerry's 252.

In addition to retaining the presidency, the Republican Party maintained control of both the House of Representatives and the Senate. In the Senate, the Republicans control the 100-seat chamber by a 55-44 margin, with one independent. In the House, the Republicans hold 232 seats, compared with the Democrats' 202. One seat is held by an independent, who usually votes with the Democrats.

The United States has an intensely competitive political system dominated by two major parties, the Republicans and the Democrats. The U.S. electoral system is based on a "first past the post," or majoritarian, system for legislative seats, which tends to discourage a multiplicity of parties. In addition, the U.S. system is characterized by specific legal and other hurdles that act to discourage the rise of new, independent parties. Yet, on occasion, independent candidates or those representing third parties or particular causes have had a significant impact on presidential politics or at the state level. At the local level in recent years, a number of new parties, such as the Greens, have made a modest impact on politics in a number of municipalities.

Presidential election campaigns in the United States are long and expensive. Candidates often begin campaigning two years prior to the election. Because of the high cost of U.S. election campaigns, serious candidates often find themselves involved in what has been called a "permanent campaign" revolving around a never-ending process of fund-raising. In 2001, Congress passed the McCain-Feingold bill, intended to limit the effect of moneyed interests on presidential politics. Nevertheless, the two parties and the constituency and interest groups that support them have drawn on various methods to circumvent the spirit of the legislation. The 2004 race was the most expensive ever, with a total expenditure of \$1.2 billion, much of which was spent by advocacy groups supporting or opposing the major candidates, rather than by the parties or candidates themselves.

A serious and increasing problem for American democracy is the widespread practice of drawing districts for the House of Representatives and for state legislatures that are designed to maximize the election of a particular party or to protect incumbent legislators of either party. The practice, known as gerrymandering, has been a part of the American system since its inception. Recently, however, sophisticated computer techniques have strengthened the ability of the dominant party in

a state to carve out districts that considerably limit the competitive nature of legislative elections. In the 2004 election for the House of Representatives, only five incumbents were defeated, and in only 35 races did the winner receive 55 percent or less of the total vote. Although a number of prominent voices, both liberal and conservative, have called for a reform of redistricting procedures, the reform movement suffered a setback in November 2005, when voters in Ohio and California rejected proposals to hand authority over the drawing of district lines to nonpartisan commissions.

Corruption is a complex phenomenon in the United States. American society has a tradition of intolerance towards corrupt acts by government officials, corporate executives, or labor leaders. In recent years, executives from a number of large corporations have been given lengthy prison sentences for various illegal acts, and officials at the local, state, and federal levels are regularly prosecuted for corrupt acts. The United States also has in place a variety of strict measures to reduce the level of corruption in the private sector. The most recent corporate governance legislation, the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, was enacted after a series of scandals involving inflated earnings reports by major corporations. The U.S. media are aggressive in reporting on and publicizing cases of corporate and official corruption; newspapers often publish investigative articles that delve into questions of private or public malfeasance. At the same time, the ever-expanding influence of interest groups on the legislative and policy-making process has given rise to public perceptions of enhanced corruption in Washington. The 2005 indictment of Jack Abramoff, a lobbyist with influence in Republican circles, focused press attention on the growing symbiosis between interest groups, lobbyists, and elected officials. The role of interest groups has become crucial in campaign fund-raising, which has given rise to suspicions that the influence of interest groups is distorting the legislative process. The United States was ranked 17 out of 159 countries in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The federal government has a high degree of transparency. A substantial number of auditing and investigative agencies function independently of party influence or the influence of incumbent officials. The press also plays a major role in investigating and publicizing allegations of improprieties by officials at all levels and often prompts official bodies to pursue inquiries. Federal agencies regularly place information relevant to their mandate on websites to broaden public access.

The United States has a free, diverse, and constitutionally protected press. In recent years, a debate has arisen over the impact of media consolidation, accomplished through the purchase of large press entities—television networks, newspapers, and weekly magazines—by giant corporations with little or no previous interest in journalism. Controversy has also arisen over attempts by federal prosecutors to compel journalists to divulge the names of confidential sources. This issue emerged most vividly in the case of the CIA analyst Valerie Plame, whose identity was revealed in the press in possible violation of federal law. However, reporters have been threatened with contempt-of-court citations in several other cases as well. In response, a bipartisan group in Congress sponsored legislation that would shield journalists from prosecution for refusing to identify confidential sources in most federal cases.

Criticism was directed at the Bush administration for having given grants to several journalists, who in turn gave favorable publicity to administration education and social programs in news columns. The administration was also criticized for the

widespread dissemination of government-produced videos that were then aired by local television stations without identification of the government as the program source. In another incident, the chairman of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting was forced to resign from the network's board of directors after an investigation suggested that he had misused his authority in an effort to "politicize" the agency, which governs public radio and television broadcasting. Internet access is widespread, and internet journalists and "bloggers" (writers of web logs, or "blogs," many of whom are unaffiliated with media outlets) have become an increasingly important force in political coverage and commentary.

The United States has a long tradition of religious freedom. Adherents of practically every major religious denomination, as well as many smaller groupings, can be found throughout the country, and religious belief and religious service attendance is high. There is an ongoing debate over the role of religion in public life, often centered on the question of whether government subsidies to schools sponsored by religious denominations meet constitutional standards. Issues such as gay marriage and abortion as well as the place of the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance are heavily loaded with religious overtones and serve to mobilize Evangelical Christians—and their political counterparts—to engage in the political process. There are no direct government subsidies to houses of worship.

Although a contentious debate has emerged over the university's role in society, academic life is notable for a healthy level of intellectual freedom. There are ongoing debates on university campuses over such issues as the war in Iraq, the global economy, and alleged politicization of curriculums on Middle East affairs. A number of the country's prestigious universities have adopted policies of "political correctness" intended to combat harassment against traditionally marginalized groups. However, such policies are controversial as they may restrict the expression of opinions, usually voiced by political conservatives, that diverge from mainstream campus views. In 2005, a debate emerged over the incorporation of what is called "intelligent design," a controversial theory that questions the validity of the traditional scientific theory of evolution, into the science curriculum of public schools in several states.

Private discussion and public debate are vigorous. In general, the right to public protest is respected by public officials. Protest demonstrations directed at government policies are frequently held in Washington, New York, and other major cities. The United States gives wide freedom to trade associations, nongovernmental organizations, and issue-oriented pressure groups to organize and argue their case through the political process.

Trade unions by law are guaranteed the right to organize workers and engage in collective bargaining with employers. The right to strike is also guaranteed. Over the years, however, the strength of organized labor has declined, to the point where less than 9 percent of the private workforce is represented by unions, one of the lowest figures among stable, economically advanced democracies. An important factor in labor's decline is the country's labor code, which is regarded as an impediment to organizing efforts. Union organizing efforts are also impeded by strong resistance from employers and the federal government's failure to strictly enforce the law against labor code violators. Several attempts to modify core labor laws have been defeated in Congress over the years. Labor may be further weakened by the

withdrawal of some unions, including several of the country's largest, from the national labor federation.

Judicial independence is respected. The influence of the court system has become a source of sometimes bitter contention, with critics claiming that judicial authority has expanded into areas of governance that are best left to the legislative branch. The growing polarization over the judiciary's role was reflected by the intense debate over the administration's 2005 Supreme Court nominations. Despite a strong rule-of-law tradition, a number of controversies have emerged over the treatment of poor and especially minority defendants in criminal law cases. African Americans and Hispanics constitute a large portion of defendants in criminal cases involving murder, rape, assault, and robbery.

Civil liberties defenders and other groups have advanced a broad critique of the criminal justice system, contending that there are too many Americans (especially minority group Americans) in prison, that prison sentences are often excessive, and that too many people are prosecuted for minor drug offenses. There are movements in several states towards shorter prison sentences and earlier release for convicted felons. Some have also criticized so-called three strikes and you're out laws, under which criminal defendants receive life sentences, even if the offenses were for minor crimes. The most recent survey showed that more than 2.2 million Americans were in federal, state, or local prisons. The large prison population, combined with lengthy sentences handed out to many criminals, has led to a new phenomenon of imprisoned senior citizens, many of whom are expected to die in prison. Concern has also been raised about prison conditions, especially the disturbing levels of violence and rape. Meanwhile, the United States has the highest rate of legal executions in the democratic world. As evidence of a growing controversy over the death penalty, several states have announced a moratorium on capital punishment while studies are undertaken on the death penalty's fairness.

The United States is one of the world's most racially and ethnically diverse societies. In recent years, the country's population dynamics have shifted in important ways, as Americans of Latin American ancestry have replaced African Americans as the largest minority group, and the percentage of whites in the population has declined somewhat. A complex variety of policies and programs are designed to protect the rights of minorities, including laws to prevent discrimination on the job, affirmative action plans for university admissions, quotas to guarantee representation in the internal affairs of some political parties, and policies to ensure that minorities are not treated unfairly in the apportionment of government-assistance efforts. Minorities also benefit from an unemployment rate that is low by global standards and a high percentage of home ownership. African Americans, however, continue to lag in economic standing, education, and other social indicators. Black Americans are more likely to live in poverty, less likely to own businesses, less likely to have a university degree, and much more likely to have served time in prison than members of other groups, including many recent immigrant groups.

Since its immigration laws underwent major changes during the 1960s, the United States has maintained a record of liberal immigration policies. In recent years, there has been some debate over the degree to which new immigrants are assimilating into American society. Most observers, however, believe that the country has struck a

balance that both encourages assimilation and permits new legal immigrants to maintain certain religious or cultural customs.

The U.S. government has been less successful in devising a policy for dealing with undocumented immigrants, several millions of whom live and work in the country at any given time. Many immigrants' rights advocates assert that the country would not be able to meet labor needs if illegal immigration were curbed. At the beginning of his first presidential administration, Bush indicated that he was prepared to reach an agreement with Mexico to establish policies to regulate the flow of migrant workers who cross the border into the United States. After the events of September 11, 2001, negotiations with Mexico were dropped, and the administration adopted a tougher stance towards undocumented workers and visitors whose visas have expired. In 2004, the administration introduced legislation that would grant amnesty to many undocumented workers and establish a guest-worker program aimed primarily at immigrants from Mexico. The legislation, however, has met with opposition from both political parties in Congress, and prospects for serious change in immigration policy are unclear. At the same time, the United States has not reduced the number of legal immigrants allowed into the country, which is high by global standards. Concern has been expressed about the federal government's policy of holding asylum seekers in detention facilities while their applications are being assessed.

Citizens of the United States enjoy a high level of personal autonomy. The right to own property is protected by law and is a jealously guarded part of the American way of life, and business entrepreneurship is encouraged as a matter of government policy. In 2005, a ruling by the Supreme Court that gave the state the right to compel the sale of private property to private developers involved in projects deemed in the public interest was sharply criticized by advocates of individual property rights.

The United States prides itself as a society that offers wide opportunity for economic and social advancement and has favored government policies that enhance equality of opportunity and social mobility. Historically, the opportunities for economic advancement have played a key role in the society's successful assimilation of new immigrants. Recently, however, concern has been expressed in the wake of studies that show a widening of inequality in income and wealth and a narrowing of opportunities for upward mobility. Among the world's prosperous, stable democracies, the United States is unique in having a large underclass of poor people who have at best a tangential role in economic life.

Women have made important strides towards equality over the past several decades. Women are heavily represented in the law, medicine, and journalism, and predominate in university programs that train students for these professions. Although the average compensation of female workers is 80 percent of that for male workers, women with recent university degrees have effectively attained parity with men. Nonetheless, there remain many female-headed families that live in conditions of chronic poverty.

Legalized abortion remains an intensely debated issue in U.S. politics. Abortion was legalized not through an act of legislation, but by a 1973 Supreme Court decision, *Roe v. Wade*. In recent years, several states have passed restrictions on the accessibility of abortion, including requirements that minors inform their parents before undergoing an abortion. The Supreme Court has nullified many of these measures.

Uruguay

Population: 3,400,000 **Political Rights:** 1
GNI/capita: \$3,820 **Civil Liberties:** 1
Life Expectancy: 75 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (66 percent),
Protestant (2 percent), Jewish (1 percent),
other (31 percent)

Ethnic Groups: White (88 percent), mestizo (8 percent),
black (4 percent)

Capital: Montevideo

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F	1,1F



Overview:

The first left-wing government in Uruguay's history, whose election in 2004 brought to an end 170 years of domination by the country's two traditional parties, took office in March 2005. The government promptly set about calming investor fears by announcing its commitment to an economic stability package negotiated by the outgoing government with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). At the same time, the ruling Broad Front coalition, which ranges from Christian Democrats to former left-wing Tupamaro guerrillas, signaled its determination to circumvent a 1986 amnesty and prosecute civilian and military officials involved in the killings and "disappearances" of dozens of Uruguayans exiled in neighboring countries in the 1970s.

After gaining independence from Spain, the Oriental Republic of Uruguay was established in 1830. The Colorado Party dominated a relatively democratic political system throughout the 1960s. However, from 1973 to 1985, the country was under the control of a military regime whose viciousness and reputation for incarcerating the largest per capita number of political prisoners in the world earned Uruguay the nickname "The Torture Chamber of Latin America." A 1986 amnesty law, promoted by the new civilian president Colorado Julio Sanguinetti, himself the military's favored candidate in the elections held to restore democratic rule, granted members of the military immunity for human rights violations committed during the years of dictatorship. The law was extracted from the democratic transition's civilian leadership by the military as its price for returning to the barracks a year earlier.

In 1998, the country's other traditional party, the centrist National Party, which was wracked by mutual accusations of corruption, joined the opposition Colorado Party in supporting the latter's presidential nominee, Jorge Batlle Ibanez, a five-time presidential candidate and scion of a famous Colorado Party family. Faced with dismal economic prospects and a choice between presidential candidates representing the moderate right or an eclectic left, in 1999, Uruguayans gave Batlle 52 percent of the vote, to 40 percent obtained by Broad Front coalition standard-bearer Tabare Vazquez, an oncologist. The new president incorporated several National Party members into his cabinet.

Batlle immediately sought an honest accounting of the human rights situation under the former military regime, while showing equally firm determination to reduce spending and taxes and to privatize state monopolies. In 2001, crises in the rural sector and an increase in violent crime set off alarms in what was still one of Latin America's safest countries, as did growing labor unrest.

A currency devaluation and default in Argentina at the end of 2001 shrank Uruguay's international reserves 80 percent in six months, with the country losing its coveted investment-grade status on Wall Street. By mid-2002, the government was forced to impose a weeklong bank holiday, Uruguay's first in 70 years, to staunch a run on the country's banks. The spillover effect from Argentina's economic crisis led to rioting and union-backed antigovernment protests in August that brought much of Montevideo to a standstill. In October, the National Party withdrew its members from Batlle's government.

Disputes with neighboring Brazil over regional free trade, and with Argentina over specific human rights issues festering since the 1970s, dominated Uruguay's political debate in 2003. The economy had shrunk by 11 percent in two years, and one of every three Uruguayans was left living below the poverty line in the worst economic crisis in the country's history. By 2004, average household income had shrunk about 30 percent in the previous five years. A bond restructuring that year avoided a potentially catastrophic economic default and was accompanied by a small economic rally.

On October 31, 2004, Uruguayans elected Vazquez—who captured over 50 percent of the vote in the first round of voting—president. The elections proved to be a crushing defeat for the Colorado Party, whose presidential candidate, Guillermo Stirling, won just 10 percent of the vote, as well as for the National Party and its standard-bearer, Jorge Larranaga, who garnered 34 percent. Vazquez's coalition also captured a majority of seats in both houses of congress in concurrent legislative elections, the first time in nearly 40 years that the president's party enjoyed a parliamentary majority; the results aligned Uruguay with a regional shift to the left.

As a candidate, Vazquez fiercely opposed the privatization of state companies and the shrinking of the state's role in Uruguay's economy while promising moderate economic policies and an emphasis on helping the poor. Faced with the challenge of creating a stable macroeconomic framework and attracting foreign capital, he chose as finance minister the economist Danilo Astori, who sought to reassure the private sector by promising clear rules for investors, a free-floating exchange rate, fiscal discipline, and an inflation-targeted monetary policy in a once-again growing economy. At the same time, the government attempted to bring business, unions, and other civil society organizations into the policy-making process in an attempt at "social inclusion." Government spending on education was increased to 4.5 percent of gross domestic product, and a \$100 million "social emergency" program was enacted to aid the indigent and unemployed. However, tensions between the moderates dominating the economic team and the more radical wing of the Broad Front—former Tupamaros make up about one-third of the 68 deputies and senators of the parliamentary alliance—threatened to slow structural reform. Some analysts also worried about Uruguay's growing political and economic ties to Venezuelan strongman Hugo Chavez and the renewal of diplomatic relations with Cuba, which Batlle severed in 2002 on human rights grounds.

More problematic was the government's willingness to reopen the issue of some 200 Uruguayans who disappeared during the military's political dominance in the 1970s, with some 170 of those having been abducted while in exile in Argentina. Unlike its neighbors, who also were ruled by military dictatorships during that time, Uruguay never had a legal accounting for the disappearances and other rights violations, nor was there an official effort to assay moral responsibility. During his inaugural address, Vazquez stated that neither the abduction of the daughter-in-law of famous Argentine poet Juan Gelman nor the murders of two Uruguayan political leaders and two Tupamaro sympathizers in Argentina were covered by the 1986 amnesty.

Following Vazquez's inauguration, human rights groups pressed to have the amnesty law strictly enforced to the letter, opening up the possibility for prosecutions for rights crimes committed before the 1973 coup, as well as for those done by Uruguayan security forces outside the country. In June 2005, charges of "aggravated homicide" were filed against former president Juan Maria Bordaberry, a military-backed puppet, and his foreign minister, for the 1976 kidnapping and murder of the two prominent exiled congressional leaders in Buenos Aires. Shortly thereafter, a military officers' group warned that attempts to upend the amnesty risked "exacerbating positions that translate into a confrontation that nobody desires and with unforeseeable eventual consequences." Government efforts to find the remains of missing activists were also stymied by instances of misinformation about their whereabouts offered by former and serving military officers.

In May 2005, the Broad Front extended its influence into important rural provinces for the first time, winning local elections in eight of the country's 19 provinces.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Uruguay can change their government democratically. The 2004 elections were free and fair despite isolated acts of violence registered against several parties' local headquarters. The 1967 constitution established a bicameral congress consisting of the 99-member Chamber of Representatives and the 31-member Chamber of Senators, with every member serving a five-year term. The president is also directly elected for a five-year term. In 1999, for the first time, Uruguayan parties selected a single presidential candidate in open primary elections. Previously, the parties had fielded a number of candidates, and the candidates with the most votes then accumulated the votes cast for the others.

Major political parties and groupings include the Colorado Party; the Independent Party; the Movement of Popular Participation (MPP); the National (or Blanco) Party; the New Sector/Space Coalition; the Progressive Encounter/Broad Front coalition (EP-FA); the Socialist Party of Uruguay, and the Uruguayan Assembly.

The Transparency Law (*Ley Cristal*), which entered into force in January 1999, criminalizes a broad range of potential abuses of power by governmental officeholders, including the laundering of funds related to public corruption cases. It also requires financial disclosure statements to be filed by high-ranking officials. Public officials who know of a drug-related crime or incident and do nothing about it may be charged with a "crime of omission" under the Citizen Security Law. In September, the government announced that it had reached an important antinarcotics agreement with the United States, including tight controls on money laundering in

what traditionally has been a bank secrecy haven. Uruguay was ranked 32 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Constitutional guarantees regarding free expression are generally respected, and violations of press freedom are rare in Uruguay. According to the Inter American Press Association, "After a year and a half of prosecutorial accusations and court rulings against journalists and the media, the higher courts have revoked almost all the lower court decisions against press freedom. Even more important than the actual decisions were the court arguments, which were based on cutting-edge legal writings on freedom of the press." The association goes on to say that President Tabare Vazquez's government "has not taken any actions against press freedom, other than verbal harassment by some members of his administration concerning news and criticism by the media and journalists." The press is privately owned, and broadcasting is both commercial and public. Numerous daily newspapers publish, many associated with political parties; there are also a number of weeklies. There are no government restrictions on the internet.

Freedom of religion is a cherished political tenet of democratic Uruguay and is broadly respected. The government does not restrict academic freedom.

Freedom of assembly and association is provided for by law in Uruguay, and the government generally respects these rights in practice. Civic organizations have proliferated since the return of civilian rule. Numerous women's rights groups focus on violence against women, societal discrimination, and other problems. Workers exercise their right to join unions, bargain collectively, and hold strikes. Unions are well organized and politically powerful. Strikes are sometimes marked by violent clashes and sabotage.

The judiciary is relatively independent but has become increasingly inefficient in the face of escalating crime, particularly street violence and organized crime. The court system is severely backlogged, and suspects under arrest often spend more time in jail than they would were they to be convicted and serve the maximum sentence for their crime. Allegations of police mistreatment, particularly of youthful offenders, have increased. However, prosecutions of such acts are also occurring more frequently. Prison conditions do not meet international standards.

The small black minority continues to face discrimination. Uruguay's continuing economic crisis has forced thousands of formerly middle-class citizens to join rural migrants in the shantytowns ringing Montevideo.

Violence against women continues to be a problem. Women enjoy equal rights under the law but face traditional discriminatory attitudes and practices, including salaries averaging about two-thirds those of men. As of the end of 2005, no gender discrimination cases had ever reached a courtroom. On a positive note, 60 percent of public university students are women. The government generally protects children's rights and welfare and has made the education and health of children a top priority.

Uzbekistan

Population: 26,400,000 **Political Rights:** 7
GNI/capita: \$420 **Civil Liberties:** 7*
Life Expectancy: 67 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Muslim [mostly Sunni] (88 percent),
 Eastern Orthodox (9 percent), other (3 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Uzbek (80 percent), Russian (6 percent),
 Tajik (5 percent), Kazakh (3 percent), other (6 percent)
Capital: Tashkent



Ratings Change: Uzbekistan's civil liberties rating declined from 6 to 7 due to the government's violent response to a popular uprising in May and a subsequent crackdown against independent media and the civil society sector.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,7NF

Overview:

Uzbekistan's poor human rights record deteriorated further in 2005 following the government's violent suppression of a mass public demonstration in the city of Andijon in May in which hundreds of largely unarmed civilians were reportedly killed. The aftermath of the uprising saw an intensified crackdown by the government of President Islam Karimov against independent media, civil society organizations, and human rights activists, particularly those with ties to Western governments or groups regarded as posing a potential challenge to the regime. On the international front, the Andijon events sparked condemnation from the European Union (EU), brought support from Russia and China, and further strained relations with the United States and neighboring Kyrgyzstan.

Located along the ancient trade route of the famous Silk Road, Uzbekistan was incorporated into Russia by the late 1800s. The Uzbekistan Soviet Socialist Republic was established in 1924, and its eastern region was detached and made the separate Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic five years later.

On December 29, 1991, more than 98 percent of the country's electorate approved a popular referendum on Uzbekistan's independence. In a parallel vote, Islam Karimov, former Communist Party leader and chairman of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the successor to the Communist Party, was elected president with a reported 88 percent of the vote. The only independent candidate to challenge him, Erk (Freedom) Party leader Mohammed Solih, charged election fraud. Solih fled the country two years later, and his party was forced underground. The opposition group Birlik (Unity) was barred from contesting the election and was later refused legal registration as a political party, and the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) and other religious-based groups were banned entirely. Only progovernment parties were allowed to compete in elections to the first post-Soviet legislature in December 1994 and January 1995. A February 1995 national referendum to extend Karimov's first five-year term in office until the year 2000 was allegedly approved by 99 percent of the country's voters.

The government's repression of members of the political opposition and of Muslims not affiliated with state-sanctioned religious institutions intensified following a series of deadly bombings in Tashkent in February 1999. The authorities blamed the attacks, which they described as an assassination attempt against Karimov, on the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), an armed group seeking the overthrow of Uzbekistan's secular government and its replacement with an Islamic state.

Of the five parties that competed in the December 1999 parliamentary election, which was strongly criticized by international election observers, all supported the president and differed little in their political platforms. In the January 2000 presidential poll, Karimov defeated his only opponent, Marxist history professor Abdulhasiz Dzhahalalov, with 92 percent of the vote. The government refused to register genuinely independent opposition parties or permit their members to stand as candidates.

In August 2000, the IMU engaged in armed clashes with government troops. As part of its declared effort to prevent renewed invasions by the IMU, Uzbekistan subsequently placed land mines along portions of its borders with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which led to protests by both governments and reports of accidental deaths of civilians in the region.

After the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C., Uzbekistan became a key strategic ally of the United States in its military operations in Afghanistan. Tashkent's decision to permit the deployment of U.S. troops on its territory for search-and-rescue and humanitarian operations was widely seen as an effort to obtain various concessions from the West, including economic assistance, security guarantees, and reduced criticism of its poor human rights record. In March 2002, the United States and Uzbekistan signed the Declaration on the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework, in which both countries agreed to cooperate on economic, legal, humanitarian, and nuclear proliferation matters. Uzbekistan's continued collaboration with the U.S.-led antiterrorism campaign led to American commitments of financial assistance in exchange for promises from Karimov of political reforms.

The fragile state of Uzbekistan's political stability was highlighted by a series of suicide bomb attacks and related violent clashes in late March and early April 2004 in Bukhara and Tashkent, in which some 50 people lost their lives. Most media outlets provided limited coverage of the events and focused almost exclusively on official government accounts, which led to widespread rumors about the identities and motives of the attackers. The fact that police appeared to be the main targets of the violence prompted speculation that the bombings were acts of revenge carried out by relatives of those imprisoned for alleged religious extremism. The authorities maintained that the bombings were the work of radical international Islamist groups—singling out the banned Hizb-ut-Tahrir (Islamic Party of Liberation) and the IMU—and dismissed charges of any links between the violence and the government's repressive political and economic policies. Meanwhile, a previously unknown Islamist group called Jamoat, a successor to the IMU, claimed responsibility.

In the days following the attacks, law enforcement agencies detained and arrested hundreds of alleged suspects and increased security measures in the capital and other large cities. According to Human Rights Watch, they targeted Muslims, including women, practicing outside of state-controlled mosques. Dozens of defendants were convicted in the second half of the year for their alleged roles in the

attacks, and all received lengthy prison sentences in trials that did not meet basic standards of due process. On July 30, several people were killed when suicide bombers struck again, in coordinated attacks on the U.S. and Israeli embassies and the office of Uzbekistan's prosecutor-general. Several Islamic groups, including the IMU and Jamoat, claimed responsibility.

Elections for the lower house of a new bicameral parliament were held on December 26, 2004. Only the country's five legal parties, all of which are considered to be pro-presidential, were granted registration to participate in the elections. Several opposition groups, including Erk and Birlik, announced in November that they would boycott the vote after being unable to register candidates. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which sent only a limited observer mission over concerns regarding the poor electoral law framework and lack of registered opposition parties, criticized the vote as falling "significantly short of OSCE commitments and other international standards for democratic elections."

The city of Andijon in Uzbekistan's Ferghana Valley, an area that has suffered both from the government's continued repression of Islamic groups and from high poverty and unemployment, was the scene of a violent crackdown by armed forces against a popular uprising in May 2005. The events took place against the backdrop of the trial of 23 local businessmen charged with involvement in a banned Islamic extremist group, accusations that the defendants denied. Some observers of the case maintained that the trial was actually motivated by the government's concern over the economic success and growing power of the 23 defendants, all wealthy businessmen. On May 10 and 11, family members and supporters of the businessmen staged a peaceful demonstration in anticipation of the trial verdict. During the next two days, the situation turned violent, as armed supporters of the businessmen attacked a police station and army barracks. They stormed the prison, freeing inmates—including the 23 businessmen—and captured the local government administration building. Thousands of local residents, among them women and children, subsequently gathered in the center of Andijon, where people were making speeches on political and economic issues, including antigovernment statements.

Government forces responded by opening fire on the demonstrators and storming the occupied building. The authorities moved to cut off all communications with Andijon and expel foreign journalists from the town. The unrest spread quickly to the eastern border town of Karasu on May 14, when protestors demanded that a border crossing to Kyrgyzstan closed by the Uzbek authorities two years earlier be reopened to allow for cross-border trade. Angry crowds chased out the local authorities before government forces reclaimed control of the town five days later.

By May 14, the authorities had regained control of Andijon and driven the gunmen out of the local government administration building. Scores of people were subsequently arrested in connection with the uprising. Although the authorities maintained that the protestors were the first to open fire, eyewitness accounts reported that the armed forces began shooting indiscriminately, including at people who were fleeing from the scene or were already injured. Official figures reported that some 180 people had been killed, a number disputed by unofficial sources that put the death toll at nearly 800, most of them unarmed civilians. The government accused Islamic extremists of orchestrating the demonstrations, though most of the protestors appeared to be motivated by economic and social grievances. On No-

vember 14, a Tashkent court sentenced 15 alleged organizers of the violence in Andijon, including three Kyrgyz nationals, to between 14 and 20 years in prison.

Reaction from the international community to the events in Andijon were mixed. While the European Union (EU) condemned the "excessive, disproportionate, and indiscriminate use of force" in Andijon, China strongly supported the Uzbek government actions and Russia alleged widespread terrorist involvement in the unrest. Meanwhile, Karimov repeatedly rejected calls from the United Nations, EU, OSCE, and United States for an independent international inquiry into the violence. Instead, an Uzbek parliamentary commission that was established to investigate the events confirmed the official account of the events.

At the height of the unrest, hundreds of Uzbeks fled across the border to Kyrgyzstan, seeking international protection and finding shelter in hastily constructed refugee camps. Uzbekistan repeatedly sought the extradition of large numbers of refugees, claiming that there were terrorists and criminals among them. In June, the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) condemned the deportation of four Uzbek men from Kyrgyzstan to Uzbekistan—one of whom was reportedly subsequently tortured to death—and called on Kyrgyzstan not to agree to any further extradition requests from Uzbekistan. In July, the UNHCR transferred more than 400 Uzbek refugees to Romania, a move that the Uzbek government harshly criticized. Other refugees were subsequently accepted by other foreign countries, some remained in refugee camps or detention centers in Kyrgyzstan, and some were believed to be in hiding in other areas of Kyrgyzstan.

In the wake of the violence in Andijon, the government of Uzbekistan intensified its already harsh repression of dissent and opposition to the regime. The authorities targeted foreign media outlets, which they accused of producing biased and slanderous reports about the Andijon events, and civil society groups. Among the media representatives facing arrest or deportation were employees of the international media organization Internews, a journalist for the Norwegian religious freedom group Forum 18, and a correspondent for the Uzbek language service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. The government also engaged in a crackdown against the country's independent nongovernmental organization (NGO) sector, leaving it on the verge of being eliminated entirely. The government also renewed its attacks on those suspected of links with Islamic groups, reportedly arresting and detaining hundreds.

On the international front, the repercussions of Andijon led to a notable deterioration in Uzbek-U.S. relations. Washington's call for an independent investigation into the unrest in Andijon, coupled with U.S. assistance in evacuating Uzbek refugees from Kyrgyzstan, appeared to have led the Uzbek government to request that the United States withdraw its troops from the Karshi-Khanabad air base—which Washington had been using since 2001 to support military operations in Afghanistan—by the end of January 2006. Karimov denied a direct link between the events in Andijon and the decision to ask the United States to leave Uzbekistan, claiming that it was the result instead of inadequate financial compensation by the United States for use of the air base.

Relations with Kyrgyzstan, already soured by the refusal of the Kyrgyz government to extradite most of the Uzbek refugees fleeing Andijon, were further damaged by Uzbek assertions that extremist groups involved in the Andijon events had been

trained in Kyrgyzstan, charges that the Kyrgyz authorities strongly denied. In September, the EU imposed sanctions against Uzbekistan for its refusal to permit an independent inquiry into the violence in Andijon. Meanwhile Tashkent's ties with China and Russia—both of which dismissed the need for an independent inquiry—were strengthened during the year.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Uzbekistan cannot change their government democratically. President Islam Karimov and the executive branch dominate the legislature and judiciary, and the government severely represses all political opposition. The national legislature largely confirms decisions made by the executive branch. The 1994-1995, 1999, and 2004 parliamentary elections and the 2000 presidential poll, in which only progovernment candidates could participate, were neither free nor fair. In a January 2002 nationwide referendum, 91 percent of voters allegedly approved amending the country's constitution to extend the presidential term from five to seven years. Karimov's current term in office will therefore end in 2007, rather than in 2005.

In a parallel vote, 93 percent of voters officially supported replacing the country's 250-member, single-chamber legislature with a bicameral parliament consisting of a 120-seat lower house (with members elected by popular vote for five-year terms) and a 100-member upper house, or Senate (with 84 members elected by regional councils and 16 appointed by the president). Independent observers raised serious doubts about the validity of the referendum, citing the presence of police in polling stations and the fact that some people had been able to vote on behalf of several individuals. In April 2003, the parliament adopted legislation providing former presidents immunity from prosecution and lifelong, state-funded security for them and their immediate family.

Parties based on ethnic or religious affiliations and those advocating subversion of the constitutional order are prohibited. Only five parties, all pro-government, have been registered, and no genuine political opposition groups function legally or participate in the government. Members of unregistered secular opposition groups, including Birluk and Erk, are subject to discrimination, and many are in exile abroad. In October, the authorities arrested Sanjar Umarov, the head of the Sunshine Uzbekistan opposition movement and a prominent businessman, on charges of embezzlement. The group, which was formed earlier in the year, had been unusually critical of the authorities, which led to the speculation that it had been established with the support of the government.

Corruption is reportedly widespread throughout various levels of government, with bribery a common practice to obtain lucrative positions. Uzbekistan was ranked 137 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The state imposes strict limits on freedom of speech and the press, particularly with regard to reports on the government and Karimov. The government controls major media outlets and newspaper printing and distribution facilities. The country's private broadcast and print media outlets generally avoid political issues, are largely regional in scope, and suffer from administrative and financial constraints. Although official censorship was abolished in May 2002, the responsibility for censoring material was transferred to newspaper editors, who were warned by the State Press

Committee that they would be held personally accountable for what they publish. Self-censorship is widespread, while the few journalists who dare to produce probing or critical reports of the authorities face harassment, physical violence, and closure of their media outlets. The government has blocked a number of non-Uzbek news websites, and access to controversial information on the internet remains extremely difficult.

In the aftermath of the violence in Andijon in May 2005, the authorities intensified their attacks on independent and foreign media representatives still operating in the country. In August, two employees of Internews, an international media training and support organization, were convicted of illegally producing materials; the following month, a court in Tashkent ordered Internews to shut down its office in Uzbekistan. The BBC closed its bureau in Tashkent in October following continued government harassment since its reporting on the violence in Andijon. Igor Rotar, a journalist with the Norwegian religious freedom organization Forum 18, was deported from Uzbekistan in August. In the same month, Nosir Zokirov, a Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty correspondent, was sentenced to six months in prison for slandering a state official. Journalist Sobijon Yakubov, of the weekly *Hurriyat*, was imprisoned for "undermining the constitutional order" and religious extremism. His colleagues maintain that the charges were politicized and that Yakubov was being punished for advocating democratic reforms in an article published in March. Meanwhile, the country's state media produced reports about the Andijon unrest that supported the official government version.

The government permits the existence of certain mainstream religions, including approved Muslim and Jewish communities, as well as the Russian Orthodox Church and some other Christian denominations. However, the activities of other congregations are restricted through legislation that requires all religious groups to comply with burdensome state registration criteria. Involvement in religious activities carried out by unregistered groups is punishable by fines or imprisonment, and meetings held by such groups have been raided and participants interrogated and arrested. The 1998 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations prohibits activities including proselytizing and private religious instruction, and requires groups to obtain a license to publish or distribute materials.

The government exercises strict control over Islamic worship, including the content of imams' sermons, and is suspicious and intolerant of followers of Muslim organizations not sanctioned by the state. Many members of such groups have been arrested or imprisoned on charges of anticonstitutional activities, often under the pretext of the government's fight against militant Islamists. Muslim prisoners are frequently tortured for their religious convictions or to compel them to renounce their beliefs. Authorities have targeted members of the banned Hizb-ut-Tahrir, an international movement calling for the creation of an Islamic caliphate throughout the Muslim world. Suspected members have been forced to give confessions under torture, and their family members have been subjected to interrogation, arrest, and extortion. According to Forum 18, the authorities followed the wave of 2004 suicide bomb attacks with a new crackdown against religious Muslims, as well as believers of other faiths, including Protestants and Jehovah's Witnesses. This policy of repression accelerated after the May 2005 killings in Andijon; Human Rights Watch documented 194 religious believers convicted by November 2005.

The government limits academic freedom, according to the 2005 U.S. State Department's human rights report. While professors generally are required to have their lectures pre-approved, implementation of this restriction varies. Nevertheless, university professors reportedly practice self-censorship. Corruption is widespread throughout the educational system, with bribes commonly required to gain entrance into exclusive universities and to obtain good grades.

Open and free private discussion is limited by the *mahalla* committees, traditional neighborhood organizations that the government has turned into an official system for public surveillance and control. According to Human Rights Watch, mahalla committee members went door to door to warn residents not to speak with journalists or foreigners about the 2005 Andijon killings.

Freedom of association is restricted. Unregistered NGOs, including the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan (HRSU), do not exist as legal entities and can face difficulties operating. In the wake of the unrest in Andijon, the government intensified its crackdown against civil society organizations and human rights activists in order to suppress any possible challenges to the regime. The Uzbek authorities have been particularly interested in closing NGOs that receive funding or other support from the United States and Western Europe—groups that the Karimov regime associates with the popular protests that led to the recent overthrow of the leaders of Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan. According to a November 2005 report by the Soros Foundation's Open Society Institute, "the authorities took decisive and direct measures to eliminate any and all NGOs, regardless of their loyalty to the regime or their missions" and "the independent local NGO sector in Uzbekistan is on the verge of being wiped out." NGOs have reportedly been forced to report to the Justice Ministry to close down "voluntarily" or face legal action and more repressive measures. During the months of August and September alone, some 200 domestic NGOs, including branches of foreign-based groups, were reportedly forcibly closed by the authorities. In September 2005, the activities of the U.S.-based International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX) were suspended by court order for six months on charges that the board had engaged in activities that did not comply with its charter.

At the end of May, two unknown men beat Sotvoldi Abdullaev of the Uzbek branch of the International Human Rights Society; he suffered a severe concussion. In August, Yelena Urayeva, a prominent human rights activist, was arrested on charges of trying to organize an antigovernment protest; she was sentenced to a psychiatric hospital. Mukhtabar Tojibaeva, the head of a human rights organization based in the Ferghana Valley, was arrested in October as she was preparing to leave for a human rights conference in Ireland; she was a strong critic of the killings in Andijon.

Despite constitutional provisions for freedom of assembly, the authorities severely restrict this right in practice. Law enforcement officials have used force to prevent demonstrations against human rights abuses in the country, and participants have been harassed, detained, and arrested. In May, the government cracked down harshly on demonstrators in the town of Andijon. Troops opened fire indiscriminately on the protestors, reportedly killing hundreds, most of whom were unarmed civilians. The Council of the Federation of Trade Unions is dependent on the state, and no genuinely independent union structures exist. Organized strikes are extremely rare.

The judiciary is subservient to the president, who appoints all judges and can remove them from office at any time. Police routinely physically abuse and torture suspects to extract confessions, which are accepted by judges as evidence and often serve as the basis for convictions. Law enforcement authorities reportedly often plant narcotics, weapons, and banned religious literature on suspected members of Islamic groups or political opponents to justify their arrest. According to Human Rights Watch, the trial of those accused of organizing the May 2005 unrest in Andijon "violated international fair-trial standards." The similarity of the confessions of the defendants—all of whom pleaded guilty—and their consistency with the prosecutor's indictment raised serious concerns that they had been coerced or tortured into confessing. The defendants were denied access to effective legal counsel, and the prosecution failed to present credible evidence in support of the indictment.

Prisons suffer from severe overcrowding and shortages of food and medicine. The Jaslyk prison camp is notorious for its extremely harsh conditions and ill-treatment of religious prisoners. Inmates, particularly those sentenced for their religious beliefs, are often subjected to ill-treatment or torture, and Human Rights Watch has documented a number of torture-related deaths in custody during the last few years.

Although racial and ethnic discrimination is prohibited by law, the belief that senior positions in government and business are reserved for ethnic Uzbeks is widespread.

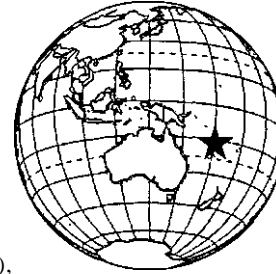
The government severely limits freedom of movement and residence within the country and across borders. There are restrictions on foreign travel, including the use of a system of exit visas, which are often issued selectively. Permission is required from local authorities to move to a new city, and the authorities rarely grant permission to those wishing to move to Tashkent. Bribes are often paid to obtain the necessary registration documents.

Widespread corruption, bureaucratic regulations, and the government's tight control over the economy limit most citizens' equality of opportunity. There has been little reform in the country's large and predominantly centrally planned agricultural sector, in which the state sets high production quotas and low purchase prices for farmers. A series of government regulations and decrees over the last few years have placed increasing restrictions on market traders and their ability to continue to operate.

Women's educational and professional prospects are restricted by traditional cultural and religious norms and by ongoing economic difficulties throughout the country. Victims of domestic violence are discouraged from pressing charges against their perpetrators, who rarely face criminal prosecution. The trafficking of women abroad for prostitution remains a serious problem. According to a 2005 investigation conducted by journalists from the London-based Institute for War and Peace Reporting, women have been forced to undergo hysterectomies and contraception implants as the result of a secret order from the Health Ministry to reduce the birth rate among rural women. Local authorities frequently use schoolchildren as free or cheap labor to harvest cotton; many children work long hours under unhealthy conditions, often receiving inadequate food and water.

Vanuatu

Population: 200,000 **Political Rights:** 2
GNI/capita: \$1,340 **Civil Liberties:** 2
Life Expectancy: 67 **Status:** Free
Religious Groups: Presbyterian (31.4 percent),
 Anglican (13.4 percent), Roman Catholic (13.1 percent),
 Seventh-Day Adventist (10.8 percent), other
 Christian (13.8 percent), indigenous beliefs (5.6 percent),
 other (11.9 percent)



Ethnic Groups: Ni-Vanuatu (98.5 percent), other (1.5 percent)

Capital: Port Vila

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,3F	1,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F

Overview:

Ham Lini replaced Serge Vohor as prime minister in December 2004. The government rejected multiple applications in 2005 by the National Worker's Union to stage a demonstration. Meanwhile, President Kalkot Matas Kelekele asked the nation to consider choosing one language to unite the population divided by linguistic and tribal identities.

Vanuatu is an archipelago of 83 islands, some with active volcanoes, lying 1,300 miles northeast of Sydney, Australia. The British and French jointly governed it as an Anglo-French "condominium" in 1906 until it achieved independence in 1980. The Anglo-French legacy continues to split society along linguistic lines in all spheres of life, from politics to religion and economics. Around 75 percent of the population lives in rural areas and engages in subsistence agriculture. Remittances from workers overseas account for about 30 percent of export earnings.

The left-leaning Vanua'aku Party (VP) led the country from 1980 through 1991. A split within the party allowed Maxime Carlot Korman, leader of the francophone Union of Moderate Parties (UMP), to become Vanuatu's first French-speaking prime minister in 1991. Serge Vohor, who headed a dissident faction of the UMP, replaced Carlot Korman in 1995. Barak Sope of the Melanesian Progressive Party took power in 1999 when Vohor was ousted by a no-confidence vote. Edward Natapei of the VP became prime minister in 2001.

Faced with an imminent no-confidence vote, Natapei called for a snap election in June 2004, and the election was held a month later. No party won a clear mandate, reflecting widespread public frustration with party and factional politics. The parliament elected Matas Kelekele, a former Supreme Court justice and a drafter of the constitution, as president, and Vohor was chosen prime minister to lead a coalition government. Vohor pushed to pass several controversial constitutional amendments, including barring no-confidence votes for 12 months before and after a parliamentary term, requiring a by-election in any constituency where the member crossed the floor, and extending parliamentary terms from four to five years. These proposals

aimed to restore stability to the government, which had been severely compromised by political rivalries and the frequent use of no-confidence votes to topple governments as power alignments shifted. The parliament approved these proposals for a constitutional referendum in 2005, although by year's end it had not held the required national referendum on ratification.

Vohor also pushed to restore ties with Taiwan without first consulting with members of the parliament. The parliament responded by ousting him in a no-confidence vote in December 2004 and replacing him with Ham Lini, a brother of Father Walter Lini, a founding father of Vanuatu. Lini underscored that economic reform and strengthening the rule of law would be his top priorities.

Politics in Vanuatu is driven by linguistic and tribal identities. In 2005, President Matas Kelekele encouraged the nation to adopt Bismala (a pidgin used throughout the islands) as the national language and to accept English and French as both official languages and use them as principal languages in education.

Although there is only one confirmed case of HIV/AIDS in Vanuatu, public health experts are worried that high rates of sexually transmitted diseases in the country and high rates of HIV/AIDS infection in neighboring countries make Vanuatu highly vulnerable.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Vanuatu can change their government democratically. The constitution provides for parliamentary elections every four years. The prime minister, who appoints his own cabinet, is chosen from within the 52-member parliament to head the government. Members of parliament and the heads of the six provincial governments also form an electoral college to select the president for a five-year term. The president is the head of state, a largely ceremonial post. The National Council of Chiefs works in parallel with the parliament and exercises authority mainly over language and cultural matters.

No-confidence votes have forced several changes of government in recent years. Parliamentary coalitions have been formed and dissolved with increasing frequency since the 1990s, and fraud and bribery have become widespread in elections.

Many political parties are active. However, party loyalty is weak, individual rivalries are intense, and politicians frequently switch affiliations. The leading parties are the VP, the National Union Party, and the UMP.

Corruption is a growing problem at all levels of government. In 2001, then-prime minister Barak Sope was forced to resign after allegations of corruption caused him to lose a parliamentary vote of no confidence. While Sope was sentenced in 2002 to three years in prison for forging government guarantees, he was subsequently pardoned by President Fr. John Bani. Alfred Maseng Nalo was elected president in April 2004, as he was serving a two-year suspended sentence for corruption, but he was forced to step down when his criminal record was revealed. Vanuatu was not ranked in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The government generally respects freedom of speech and of the press. The state-owned Television Blong Vanuatu broadcasts in English and French. Radio Vanuatu is the only radio station. The weekly *Port Vila Press* and the privately owned *Vanuatu Daily*, *Nasara*, and *Port Vila News* supply international, national, and local news. Most media outlets deliver information in Bismala, English, or French. The

number of mobile phone and internet users, although rising, remains small because of high costs and limited access outside the capital of Port Vila.

The government generally respects freedom of religion in this predominantly Christian country. There were no reports of restrictions on academic freedom. Port Vila hosts the Emalus Campus of the University of the South Pacific.

The law provides for freedom of association and assembly, and the government generally respects these rights. Civil society groups are active in a variety of issues. Many receive support from foreign private foundations and bilateral aid donors. There are five independent trade unions organized under the umbrella Vanuatu Council of Trade Unions, which represents about 40 percent of the country's 25,000-person workforce. Workers can organize unions, bargain collectively, and strike. Public demonstrations are permitted by law and generally respected by the government in practice. However, in 2005, the police repeatedly rejected applications by the National Worker's Union to stage a demonstration to support 26 workers dismissed by Air Vanuatu. The police did not give clear reasons for the rejection, and protesters were arrested.

The judiciary is generally independent, but it is weak and inefficient. Lack of resources has kept the government from hiring and retaining qualified judges and prosecutors. Criminal defendants are often held for long pretrial detentions. Vanuatu has no armed forces. The Vanuatu Mobile Force is a paramilitary wing of the small police force; both are under the command of a civilian police commissioner. There have been reports of police abuse, but such incidents appear to be infrequent and not widespread or severe. Prisons, built mostly in the colonial period, were said to be overcrowded and in disrepair. In September, several inmates escaped, citing poor prison conditions as the main reason.

Most people engage in subsistence farming or fishing. In 2004, parliament passed a new law to stop all mixed-race and naturalized citizens from farming kava to protect indigenous farmers. Kava is a native herb that has gained popularity among health supplement consumers in the West. Tourism, the civil service, and offshore banking provide employment in the service sector. In September 2004, the National Council of Chiefs adopted a motion to require people to carry permits for movement between provinces because of concerns about crime in the capital.

Violence against women is common and particularly severe in rural areas. Spousal rape is not a crime, and no law prohibits wife beating or sexual harassment. Most cases go unreported because the victims fear reprisal or are discouraged by family pressure, and the police and courts generally hesitate to intervene or impose stronger punishment for offenders. Women's rights leaders consider village chiefs to be major obstacles to improving conditions for women. The traditional practice of "bride payment," or dowry, is still widely used, which critics charge encourages the view of women as property. Men and women are supposed to enjoy equal rights, and divorce was approved in 1986. However, the government has yet to pass a family law bill to provide protections to women and children despite multiple readings in parliament. Abortion is permitted only to save the life of a woman or to preserve the woman's physical and mental health. Abortion is not available on request, nor for pregnancies due to rape or incest. There is a general lack of women in positions of authority in government and in the private sector.

Venezuela

Population: 26,700,000 **Political Rights:** 4*
GNI/capita: \$3,490 **Civil Liberties:** 4
Life Expectancy: 73 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (96 percent),
Protestant (2 percent), other (2 percent)
Ethnic Groups: Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Arab,
German, African, indigenous people
Capital: Caracas



Ratings Change: Venezuela's political rights rating declined from 3 to 4 due to an increase in intimidation of opposition groups.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
2,3F	2,3F	2,3F	4,4PF	3,5PF	3,5PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	3,4PF	4,4PF

Overview:

In 2005, President Hugo Chavez continued promoting his anti-U.S., anti-free trade, policies while stressing his close ties to Cuba and left-wing groups in the hemisphere. Chavez expanded his political base during the year by denying opponents state jobs and services. Meanwhile, the government strengthened its control over sectors of Venezuelan life, including the content of broadcast media programs.

The Republic of Venezuela was established in 1830, nine years after independence from Spain. Long periods of instability and military rule ended with the establishment in 1961 of civilian rule and the approval of a constitution. Until 1993, the social-democratic Democratic Action Party (AD) and the Social Christian Party (COPEI) dominated politics. Former president Carlos Andres Perez (1989-1993) of the AD was nearly overthrown by Lieutenant Colonel Hugo Chavez and other nationalist military officers in two 1992 coup attempts in which dozens were killed. Perez was subsequently impeached as a result of corruption and his inability to stem the social consequences of a pattern of economic decline that coincided with a softening of oil prices in the 1980s. Rafael Caldera, a former president (1969-1974) and founder of the COPEI, was elected president in late 1993 as head of the 16-party National Convergence, which included Communists, other leftists, and right-wing groups. With crime soaring, public corruption unabated, oil wealth drying up, and the country in its worst economic crisis in 50 years, popular disillusionment with politics deepened.

In 1998, Chavez made his antiestablishment, anticorruption, populist message a referendum on the long-ruling political elite—famous for its interlocking system of privilege and graft, but also for its consensual approach to politics—in that year's presidential contest. As the country's long-ruling political parties teetered at the edge of collapse, last-minute efforts to find a consensus candidate to oppose Chavez were unsuccessful. In February 1999, Chavez won with 57 percent of the vote, taking the reins of the world's fifth-largest oil-producing country.

A constituent assembly dominated by Chavez followers drafted a new constitu-

tion that strengthened the presidency, introducing a unicameral National Assembly. After Venezuelans approved the new constitution in a national referendum on December 15, 2000, congress and the Supreme Court were dismissed and new national elections were called. Although Chavez was reelected president, opposition parties won most of the country's governorships, about half the mayoralties, and a significant share of power in the National Assembly. Nevertheless, that November, Chavez's congressional allies granted him special fast-track powers that allowed him to decree a wide range of laws without parliamentary debate.

In April 2002, following the deaths of 19 people in a massive protest against the government, dissident military officers attempted to remove him from office with backing from some of the country's leading business groups. The provisional government appointed by the military over-reached, however, by seeking to dismiss the National Assembly in addition to the president and his elected vice president, engendering a reaction from troops still loyal to Chavez and an outburst of protests from pro-Chavez loyalists. Chavez was reinstated and moved swiftly to regain control of the military by dismissing as many as 60 generals and placing unconditional supporters throughout the upper reaches of the armed forces.

Following the coup attempt, the country was wracked by protests by a broad spectrum of civil society. In October, an estimated one million Venezuelans marched in Caracas demanding that Chavez call either early elections or a referendum on his rule. When Chavez did not respond, the opposition called for a general strike that, while lasting 62 days, failed to force Chavez from office and weakened the opposition. Nevertheless, they succeeded in garnering enough signatures to force a recall vote on the president's tenure in office. While fending off his opponents with legal maneuvers and intimidation tactics, Chavez introduced a bold program of government social service initiatives, including urban health care and literacy programs, many with direct support from the Cuban government.

Chavez consolidated his hold on power following the defeat of the recall referendum held on August 15, 2004, amid charges of ballot rigging. Although the opposition had garnered more than four million recall petitions, Chavez won in the country's first-ever referendum to recall a president, with 58 percent of the vote. After the referendum, which was conducted in relative peace and characterized by a high turnout, domestic opposition groups continued to insist that there was a large discrepancy between the official results and their own exit polls. Independent observers said that there were credible reports of voter harassment, including physical intimidation, the reassignment of thousands of voters to faraway polling stations, and vote tampering; it was an open question, however, if these materially affected the overwhelming outcome. In the October 2004 regional and municipal elections, voters overwhelmingly backed pro-Chavez candidates.

Although he faced an economy in ruins and high levels of street crime and unemployment, Chavez continued to devote considerable attention to advancing his influence over the judicial system, the media, and other institutions of civil society. The National Assembly, controlled by Chavez supporters, approved a measure allowing it to remove and appoint judges to the Supreme Court, which controls the rest of the judiciary. The Organic Law of the Supreme Court allowed Chavez to limit the tribunal's independence, while the body was expanded from 20 to 32 justices—appointed by a simple majority vote of the progovernment majority in the legisla-

ture. In December 2004, a law giving the government control over the content of radio and television programs went into effect, with Chavez claiming that the "Venezuelan people have begun to free themselves from . . .the dictatorship of the private media."

In 2005, tens of thousands of Cubans sent by the Cuban government, which received heavy subsidies in the form of Venezuelan oil, worked in Venezuela's booming social services sector and staffed key law enforcement and intelligence billets. Chavez also announced that he would bankroll a new Latin American television network, Telesur, with help from Argentina, Cuba, Brazil, and Uruguay, to counteract "the media dictatorship of the big international news networks." In September, Chavez signed a trade pact with nine Caribbean governments that will give them oil under favorable credit terms for the next 25 years, one of a series of such agreements he made in the region in 2005. That same month, the United States decertified Venezuela, a major point of transshipment of illegal drugs, for its failure to live up to anti-narcotics agreements.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Citizens can change their government democratically. However, conditions under which the anti-Hugo Chavez opposition is forced to labor have become increasingly difficult.

In 2005, tens of thousands of people who signed petitions for a referendum on Chavez's recall found they could not get government jobs or contracts, qualify for public assistance programs, or receive passports; they were identified by an alleged "blacklist" of Chavez's political opponents. Chavez also appeared to signal his plans to remain in power for the foreseeable future; when swearing in his party's candidates for the December 2005 National Assembly elections, he told them that, if they were elected, they might be called upon to participate in an effort to amend the constitution.

Venezuela's unicameral National Assembly is composed of 165 seats, with members elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms; three seats are reserved for indigenous peoples. On the national level, Chavez' strong majority support in the Assembly allows him to curb the independence of governmental institutions, which increasingly serve his interests. In the armed forces, the president has made significant headway in assuring personal loyalty, increasingly isolating those skeptical of his appointment of hundreds of officers in nonmilitary posts.

Chavez's party, the Fifth Republic Movement, controls the National Assembly (though narrowly), as well as the Supreme Justice Tribunal and the intelligence services. It also controls the Citizen Power branch of government created by the 1999 constitution to fight corruption. This branch is made up of the offices of the ombudsman (responsible for compelling the government to adhere to the constitution and laws), the comptroller-general (who controls the revenues and expenses incurred by the government), and the public prosecutor (who provides opinions to the courts on the prosecution of criminal cases and brings to the attention of the proper authorities cases of public employee misconduct and violations of the constitutional rights of prisoners or accused persons). Although there are more than 30 registered parties in Venezuela, many have been eclipsed by those supporting Chavez; once-dominant parties have seen their bases erode as Chavez uses state resources to ensure loyalty. Accion Democratica continues to have a considerable following

throughout the country by comparison with COPEI, which has seen its fortunes wane significantly. A new movement, the *Primero Justicia*, is led by young political leaders opposed to Chavez who have made headway by capturing local governments. The Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) and the Venezuela Project (PV) also garner some popular support.

The Chavez government, which now enjoys a virtual stranglehold on the economy, has done little to free the government from excessive bureaucratic regulations, registration requirements, and other forms of control that increase opportunities for corruption. It has relied instead on attacking persons and social sectors it considers to be corrupt and selectively enforcing good-government laws and regulations against its opponents. At the same time, Chavez has replaced the old meritocracy at the state oil company, PDVSA, with his own directorate. New regulations and controls over the economy have ensured that public officials have retained ample opportunities for personal enrichment enjoyed under previous governments. Protection of private property is also weak. In 2005, the expropriation of large, idle landholdings and industrial installations was accompanied by the creation of tens of thousands of rural and urban cooperatives, many of which received government seed money.

On April 7, 2003, the Law against Corruption was put into effect. It established a citizen's right to know, and set out the state's obligations to provide a thrice-yearly rendition of public goods and expenses, except those security and national defense expenditures as exempted by law. The law's provisions, however, appeared to be observed mostly in the breach: Venezuela was ranked 130 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Although the constitution provides for freedom of the press, exercise of that right is difficult in practice. A climate of intimidation and hostility, including physical attacks, exists in a climate of strong anti-media rhetoric by the government and a significant anti-Chavez slant on the part of media owners. July 2004 saw the ratification of a new law that regulates the work of journalists, provides for compulsory registration with the national journalism association, and punishes reporters' "illegal" conduct with prison sentences of three to six months. A Supreme Court ruling upheld censorship laws that effectively declared that laws protecting public authorities and institutions from insulting criticism were constitutional. The Law on the Social Responsibility of Radio and TV went into effect in December 2004, giving the government control over the content of radio and television programs. According to the Inter American Press Association, the government "uses official advertising as an instrument of coercion and has become the country's 'main communicator.'" The government does not restrict internet access.

Freedom of religion, which the constitution guarantees on the condition that its practice not violate public morality, decency, or the public order, is generally respected by the government. Academic freedom is generally respected. However, government funding has been withheld from the country's universities, and the rectors of those institutions charged that the government did so to punish them; all of the major public university rectors were elected on antigovernment platforms.

Freedom of peaceful assembly is guaranteed in the constitution, and the government generally respects this rights in practice. Public meetings and marches, the latter of which require government permits, are generally permitted without impedi-

ment, although government supporters often seek to disrupt these, frequently using violence. In 2000, the Supreme Court ruled that nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that receive funding from foreign governments or whose leaders are not Venezuelan are not part of "civil society." As a result, they may not represent citizens in court or bring their own legal actions. The Chavez government has also made an effort to undermine the legitimacy of reputable human rights and other civil society organizations by questioning their ties to international groups. In 2005, the leaders of the civic organization Sumate, which received support from the U.S.-based National Endowment for Democracy, were brought up on charges of conspiracy against the government.

The president and his supporters have sought to break what they term a "stranglehold" of corrupt labor leaders on the job market, a move that labor activists say tramples on the rights of private organizations. Opposition and traditional labor leaders say that challenges by insurgent workers' organizations mask Chavez's intent to create government-controlled unions; the president's supporters maintain that the old labor regime amounted to little more than employer-controlled workers' organizations. Security forces frequently break up strikes and arrest trade unionists, allegedly under the guidance of Cuban security officials.

Until Chavez took power, the judicial system was headed by a nominally independent Supreme Court that was nevertheless highly politicized, undermined by the chronic corruption (including the growing influence of narcotics traffickers) that permeates the entire political system, and unresponsive to charges of rights abuses. Under Chavez, the effectiveness and impartiality of the judicial branch remains tenuous. An unwieldy new judicial code, which has helped to reduce the number of people jailed while awaiting arraignment, has hampered some law enforcement efforts, resulting in low rates of conviction and shorter jail terms even for convicted murderers. Police salaries are inadequate.

Widespread arbitrary detention and torture of suspects, as well as dozens of extrajudicial killings by the often-corrupt military security forces and the police, have increased as crime continues to soar. Since the 1992 coup attempts, weakened civilian governments have had less authority over the military and the police, and overall rights abuses are committed with impunity.

Since Chavez's election, Venezuela's military, which is largely unaccountable to civilian rule, has become an active participant in the country's social development and the delivery of public services. The 1999 constitution assigns the armed forces a significant role in the state but does not provide for civilian control over the military's budget or procurement practices, or for related institutional checks. A separate system of armed forces courts retains jurisdiction over members of the military accused of rights violations and common criminal crimes, and decisions cannot be appealed in civilian court. The military's massive participation in nontraditional public works projects and community development assistance has helped to reduce official accountability for acts of corruption.

Venezuela's indigenous peoples belong to 27 ethnic groups. The formal rights of Native Americans have improved under Chavez, although those rights—specifically the groups' ability to make decisions affecting their lands, cultures, and traditions, and the allocation of natural resources—are seldom enforced, as local political authorities rarely take their interests into account. Indigenous communities

typically face deforestation and water pollution. Few Indians hold title to their land; many say that they do not want to, as they reject market concepts of individual property, preferring instead that the government recognize those lands traditionally held by them as native territories. At the same time, indigenous communities trying to defend their legal land rights are subject to abuses, including murder, by gold miners and corrupt rural police. The constitution creates three seats in the National Assembly for indigenous people and also provides for "the protection of indigenous communities and their progressive incorporation into the life of the nation." The lack of effective legal rights, however, has created an unprecedented migration by Indians to poverty-stricken urban areas.

Women are more active in politics than in many other Latin American countries and comprise the backbone of Venezuela's sophisticated grassroots network of NGOs. However, there is substantial institutional and societal prejudice on issues of domestic violence and rape, and work-related sexual harassment is common.

Vietnam

Population: 83,300,000 **Political Rights:** 7

GNI/capita: \$480 **Civil Liberties:** 5*

Life Expectancy: 72 **Status:** Not Free

Religious Groups: Buddhist (9.3 percent), Catholic (6.7 percent), Hoa Hao (1.5 percent), Cao Dai (1.1 percent), Protestant (0.5 percent), Muslim (0.1 percent), other (80.8 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Kinh [Viet] (86.2 percent), Tay (1.9 percent), Thai (1.7 percent), Muong (1.5 percent), Khome (1.4 percent), Hoa (1.1 percent), Nun (1.1 percent), Hmong (1 percent), other (4.1 percent)

Capital: Hanoi

Ratings Change: Vietnam's civil liberties rating improved from 6 to 5 due to slight improvements in religious freedom.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,5NF



Overview: Prime Minister Phan Van Khai made a state visit to the United States in June 2005, the first such official visit by a Vietnamese head of state since the end of the Vietnam War. Meanwhile, the government appeared to allow slightly greater religious freedom during the year.

Vietnam won independence from France in 1954. At independence, the country was divided into the Western-backed Republic of South Vietnam and the Communist-ruled Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the north. A war erupted between the two sides, and U.S. military support for South Vietnam persisted for more than a decade. The two sides signed a peace treaty in 1973, officially ending the war, and

the United States agreed to immediate and total withdrawal of troops. The last U.S. troops left on March 29, 1973. In 1975, North Vietnam claimed victory over the South and united the country the following year.

Poor economic policies on the heels of decades of war left the tattered country in deep poverty. In 1986, the government began economic reforms, and the country has since been on a steady path of economic growth. Tourism is a major source of revenue, as is the export of foodstuff and manufactured products, and a stock market opened in 2000. Nevertheless, Vietnam's leadership continues to be divided over the pace and depth of privatization and other market reforms. Also, political reform has not followed economic change: official corruption and abuses are widespread, despite the prosecution of a few high-ranking officials, and the government continues to suppress religious freedom, the media, and any criticism of the state.

In 2001, the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) elected Nong Due Manh as its new leader. The following year, Phan Van Khai was chosen as prime minister and Tran Due Luong as state president. The appointment of these three men from northern, central, and southern Vietnam preserved the leadership troika's traditional regional balance. In the May 2002 parliamentary elections, all three were appointed to second five-year terms.

The United States has been pressuring Hanoi to improve its human rights record through high-profile government reports, and the U.S. Congress even attempted to link economic aid to the release of political and religious prisoners. Apparently in response to this pressure, in 2005, the government stopped disrupting open celebration of Catholic masses with more than 1,000 congregants. Priests were reportedly able to travel freely in the country. Vietnam, with an estimated 5 million to 8 million followers, has the second largest Roman Catholic population in Southeast Asia, after the Philippines. The number of religious prisoners is estimated to have dropped from 45 to 6, and a new religious ordinance relaxed many restrictions on religious groups, including allowing charitable activities and freer movement of clergy across the country.

During a trip by Prime Minister Khai in June to the United States—the first such official visit by a Vietnamese head of state since the end of the Vietnam War—a bilateral agreement to expand religious freedom was signed. The visit was well publicized in Vietnam and highlighted by the government media as a new page in bilateral relations.

As the number of private entrepreneurs continues to increase—and many more CPV members and their families become involved in business—the CPV will consider allowing membership for private entrepreneurs at the 10th party congress in April 2006.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Vietnam cannot change their government democratically. Politics and the government are controlled by the CPV, the sole political party, and its Central Committee is the top decision-making body in Vietnam. The National Assembly, consisting of 498 members elected to five-year terms, generally follows the party's dictates in legislation. Delegates to the parliament can speak about grassroots complaints, influence legislation, question state ministers, and debate legal, social, and economic issues—within limits set by the party. In 1999, a former high-ranking party member,

Tran Do, was expelled from the CPV after openly calling for more democracy and freedom of expression.

Although senior party and government officials have publicly acknowledged growing public discontent with official abuses and corruption, the government has mainly responded with a few high-profile prosecutions of government officials and private persons. Thousands of people seek redress each year by writing letters to or personally addressing officials. Citizens generally complain about official corruption, economic policies, governmental inefficiency, opaque bureaucratic procedures, and unreasonable land seizures. Vietnam was ranked 107 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The government tightly controls the media. Journalists who overstep the bounds of permissible reporting—for example, by writing about sensitive political and economic matters and the CPV's dictatorship—are brought to court, sent to prison, or harassed. Publications deemed offensive or inaccurate are subject to official bans. A 1999 law requires journalists to pay damages to groups or individuals found to be harmed by press articles, even if the reports are accurate. At least one suit was filed under this law, although it was later withdrawn. Media reports on high-level governmental corruption and mismanagement provide a small outlet for public grievances.

Television is the dominant medium. Vietnam Television broadcasts to the whole country, and there are many provincial television stations. Satellite television is officially restricted to senior officials, international hotels, and foreign businesses, but many Vietnamese homes and businesses pick up some foreign stations via satellite. Some foreign channels, including CNN and the Discovery Channel, are broadcast via cable. About two million Vietnamese have access to the internet, which is tightly controlled by the government. A 2003 law bans the receipt and distribution of anti-government e-mail messages, websites considered "reactionary" are blocked, and the government requires owners of domestic websites to submit their web content for official approval. In July 2005, the director of a publishing company was reportedly told to resign for his plans to publish a memoir, written by former deputy prime minister Doan Duy Thanh, that is critical of the CPV.

Religious freedom is restricted. All religious groups and most individual clergy must join a party-controlled supervisory body. One such body exists for each religion that the state officially recognizes—Buddhism; Roman Catholicism; Protestantism; Islam; Cao Daiism, a synthesis of several religions; and the Hoa Hao faith, a reformist Buddhist church. Religious groups must obtain permission to build or refurbish places of worship; run religious schools or do charitable work; hold conventions, training seminars, and special celebrations; and train, ordain, promote, or transfer clergy. Appointments for Catholic bishops must be approved by the state. A Protestant seminary was reopened in 1973. Cao Daiists have largely been barred since 1975 from ordaining new priests.

Academic freedom is limited. University professors must adhere to party views when teaching or writing on political topics and refrain from criticizing government policies. In July 2004, a former academic was given a 19-month prison sentence for "abusing the right to democracy and freedom" and breaking a house arrest order made in October 2001. Also in July 2004, Pham Que Duong, a 73-year-old military historian, faced trial for signing a petition calling for reforms and measures against graft.

Freedom of association and assembly is limited. Human rights organizations and

other private groups with rights-oriented agendas are banned, but a small number of nongovernmental groups promote environmental conservation, women's development, and public health. The leadership increasingly allows farmers and others to hold small protests to voice local grievances. The Vietnam General Conference of Labor (VGCL) is the only legal labor union, and it is closely tied to the CPV. All trade unions are required to join the VGCL and must obtain government approval to be created. In recent years, the government has permitted hundreds of independent "labor associations" to represent workers at individual firms and in some service industries. However, enforcement of child labor, workplace safety, and other labor laws is poor.

Vietnam's judiciary is subservient to the CPV, which controls courts at all levels. Defense lawyers cannot call or question witnesses and sometimes are permitted only to appeal for leniency for their clients. While defendants have a constitutional right to counsel, scarcity of lawyers often makes this right impossible to enforce. Many lawyers reportedly are reluctant to take on human rights and other sensitive cases because they fear harassment and retribution by the state.

The police are known to abuse suspects and prisoners, and prison conditions are poor. The death penalty is applied mainly for violent crimes, but it has been handed down in cases involving economic and drug-related offenses. Vietnam has a number of persons in prisons for their political and religious beliefs. Fewer arrests and the release of religious prisoners in the past year reflect a small improvement.

Ethnic and religious minorities face unofficial discrimination in mainstream society, and some local officials restrict minority access to schooling and jobs. Minorities generally have little input into development projects that affect their livelihoods and communities. For example, 70 Montagnards ("mountain dwellers" in French) are serving long jail sentences for participating in demonstrations to protest land seizures and to demand greater religious freedom (many are Catholic). Vietnam is fast becoming the top producer of coffee beans in the world, and lands seized from the highland Montagnards are often turned over to lowland Vietnamese to grow commercial crops like coffee beans.

Ordinary Vietnamese, particularly those living in major cities, are increasingly free of government intrusion into their daily lives, including their choice of work, place of residence, and participation in economic and religious activities.

Economic opportunities have grown for women, but they continue to face discrimination in wages and promotion. Many women are victims of domestic violence, and thousands are trafficked internally and externally each year and forced into prostitution.

Yemen

Population: 20,700,000 **Political Rights:** 5
GNI/capita: \$520 **Civil Liberties:** 5
Life Expectancy: 61 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Muslim [including Sunni and Shia],
 other
Ethnic Groups: Arab [majority], Afro-Arab, South Asian
Capital: Sanaa



Trend Arrow: Yemen received a downward trend arrow due to governmental restrictions on press freedoms, including several instances of intimidation and arrests of journalists by security forces.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
5,6NF	5,6NF	5,6NF	5,6NF	5,6NF	6,6NF	6,5NF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF

Overview:

Yemen continued to suffer from a crackdown on press freedom at the hands of its government in 2005, with several prominent journalists intimidated, beaten, and arrested by government security forces. Continued conflict in the northern region of the country and summer riots over the lifting of fuel subsidies made for a volatile year.

As part of the ancient Minaean, Sabaean, and Himyarite kingdoms, Yemen has a long history stretching back nearly 3,000 years. For centuries, a series of imams controlled most of northern Yemen and parts of southern Yemen. The Ottoman Empire ruled many of the cities from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, and the British Empire controlled areas in the southern part of the country, including the port of Aden, in the first part of the twentieth century. Yemen was divided into two countries—the Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen) and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen)—that ultimately became unified in 1990 after decades of conflict and tension. In the face of widespread poverty and illiteracy, tribal influences that limit the central government's authority in certain parts of the country, a heavily armed citizenry, and the threat of radical Islamist terrorism, Yemen has managed to take some limited steps to improve its record on political rights and civil liberties in the 14 years since unification.

In 1999, President Ali Abdullah Saleh won a five-year term in the country's first nationwide direct presidential election, gaining 96.3 percent of the vote. Saleh's only opponent came from within the ruling General People's Congress (GPC), and his term in office was extended from five to seven years in a 2001 referendum.

Yemen's April 2003 parliamentary election, its third in the last decade, took place despite concerns that popular unrest resulting from the war in Iraq might lead to a postponement. International election observers noted that Yemen had made substantial improvements in electoral management and administration. On the surface, the elections were competitive, with the opposition Islah party taking seats in constituencies that were former strongholds of the ruling party. However, voter regis-

tration was characterized by widespread fraud, and underage voting was a pervasive problem.

In July 2005, President Saleh, in a speech marking 27 years since he came to power, shocked the country by announcing that he would stand down when his current term of office expires. However, by the end of November, Saleh had shifted his stance and was positioned to secure the GPC's nomination for the 2006 presidential elections.

Yemen continues to be plagued by serious economic problems, including widespread poverty. More than 40 percent of Yemenis live below the poverty line, and economic growth has been slow. In March 2005, Yemen experienced two days of demonstrations over the introduction of a sales tax. In July, dozens of Yemenis were killed in riots when the price of fuel increased by nearly 150 percent because fuel subsidies were lifted as part of an International Monetary Fund (IMF) reform program.

Yemen has faced challenges from terrorist and secessionist movements over the past decade. Throughout 2005, Yemen continued to experience unrest in the northern region of Saada, as part of an uprising led by members of Yemen's Shiite Zaidi community. Hundreds have been killed in clashes since fighting broke out in 2004. Fighting was temporarily stemmed after the September 2004 death of Hussein Badruddin Al-Houthi, a Shiite cleric who organized the Zaidi community; a second round of violence broke out in the spring of 2005.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Yemen cannot change their government democratically. On the surface, Yemen appears to have a relatively open democratic system, with citizens of Yemen voting for president and members of parliament. In reality, Yemen's politics is monopolized by the ruling party, the GPC, which has increased the number of parliament seats it holds from 145 in 1993 to 237 in the current parliament. Yemen's government suffers from the absence of any real system of checks and balances of power and any significant limits on the executive's authority.

Yemen is headed by a popularly elected president, with a bicameral parliament composed of a 301-seat, popularly elected House of Representatives and a 111-member Majlis al-Shura, or Consultative Council, appointed by the president. The House of Representatives, elected for six-year terms, has legislative authority, and the Majlis al-Shura serves in an advisory capacity. Although local council members are popularly elected—the most recent local election was held in 2001—President Ali Abdullah Saleh appoints all local council chairpersons, who wield most of the decision-making authority.

Yemen is one of the few countries in the Arab world to organize regular elections on national and local levels, with limited competition among the ruling GPC party, two main opposition parties (Islah and the Yemeni Socialist Party), and a handful of other parties.

Corruption is an endemic problem at all levels of government and society. Despite recent efforts by the government to increase efforts to fight corruption and institute a civil service reform program, Yemen lacks most legal safeguards to protect against conflicts of interest. Chief auditing and investigative bodies charged with fighting corruption are not sufficiently independent of the executive authorities. In October, the Ministry of Justice began an investigation into alleged corrup-

tion in the Ministry of Oil and Minerals. Yemen was ranked 103 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The state maintains a monopoly over the media that reach the most people—television and radio. Access to the internet is not widespread, and the government reportedly blocks websites it deems offensive. The government pursued a concerted campaign to restrict press freedom, continuing a negative trend from 2004. Journalists continue to face threats of violence, death, and arbitrary arrest, and often encounter unclear judicial processes. In December 2004, five journalists received suspended prison sentences for various offenses, including publishing articles that criticized the royal family of Saudi Arabia and articles that detailed corruption among Yemeni political leaders.

Article 103 of the Press and Publications Law outlaws direct personal criticism of the head of state and publication of material that "might spread a spirit of dissent and division among the people" or "leads to the spread of ideas contrary to the principles of the Yemeni Revolution, [is] prejudicial to national unity or [distorts] the image of the Yemeni, Arab, or Islamic heritage." Although President Saleh called for an end to imprisonment penalties for press offenses in June 2004, government authorities continued to use the Press and Publications Law to restrict press freedom. In October 2005, two journalists with *Al-Hurriya* newspaper, Abdulkareem Sabra and Abdulqawi al-Qubati, were convicted of publishing an article that criticized Saleh. By the end of the year, the Ministry of Information had presented a new draft press law to the Majlis al-Shura. The Yemeni Journalist Syndicate objected to the draft law, saying that it aimed to place more restraints on the press and further restrict press freedom in Yemen.

In the spring of 2005, several journalists in Ta'izz and Ad Dali' governorates were beaten by government security forces, including Mohammad Abdu Sufian, editor of the newspaper *Taiz*, Mohammad Mohsen al-Hadad, general manager of Taiz Radio and Television, Abu Bakr al-Arabi, general manager of Taiz Media Center, and Abdulqader Abdullah Sa'ad of the weekly paper *Al-Wahdah*. In August, Jamal Amer, editor of the newspaper *Al-Wasat*, was abducted and beaten by armed men who said they were acting on behalf of military officers. Government security forces ransacked the office of Associated Press journalist Ahmed al-Haj, taking files and a computer. In October, Yemeni police beat a television crew from the Arab satellite channel Al-Arabiya covering a strike by textile workers in Sanaa. *Al-Thawra*, the government-run daily newspaper, ran several editorials in 2005 accusing reporters critical of the government of being foreign intelligence agents.

Article 2 of the constitution states that Islam is the religion of state, and Article 3 declares Sharia (Islamic law) to be the source of all legislation. Yemen has few religious minority groups, and their rights are generally respected in practice. Strong politicization of campus life, including tensions between supporters of the ruling GPC and opposition Islah parties, places limits on academic freedom.

Yemenis have the right to form associations, according to Article 58 of the constitution. Yemen has several thousand nongovernmental organizations, although some observers question the viability and independence of these groups. Yemenis also enjoy some freedom of assembly, though the government restricts this from time to time. In January, dozens of journalists staged a demonstration in front of the presidential palace to protest the continued detention of Abdulkareem al-Khaiwani,

editor of the opposition weekly newspaper *Al-Shoura*, who had been jailed in September 2004 on charges of incitement, insulting the president, publishing false news, and contributing to tribal and sectarian tensions for the newspaper's reporting on Hussein Badreddin al-Hawthi's rebellion in Saada. In May, several journalists held a public demonstration to protest attacks on journalists in the Taiz and Ad Dali' governorates. Hundreds of journalists staged a sit-in protest at the Yemeni Journalist Syndicate in August to protest the beating of *Al-Wasat* editor Jamal Amer. The National Authority for Defending Rights and Freedoms criticized the government's treatment of demonstrators who protested against the decrease in fuel subsidies in July, saying that government security forces used excessive force.

The government respects the right to form and join trade unions, but some critics claim that the government and ruling party elements have stepped up efforts to control the affairs of these organizations.

The judiciary is nominally independent, but in practice it is weak and susceptible to interference from the executive branch. Government authorities have a spotty record of enforcing judicial rulings, particularly those issued against prominent tribal or political leaders. The lack of a truly independent judiciary impedes progress in all aspects of democracy and good governance; without an independent arbiter for disputes, people often resort to tribal forms of justice or direct appeals to the executive branch of government.

In January, the Higher Judicial Council, which oversees the judiciary and is headed by President Saleh, appointed 25 new judges, dismissed 22 judges without compensation and benefits, ordered more than 100 judges into early retirement, and moved several judges to different positions in an attempt *to* further advance judicial reforms. In addition, the Higher Judicial Council appointed 24 people to the Judicial Inspection Commission, a body that monitors the performance of judges. The new appointees included Abdullah Farwan, former chairman of the Central Organization for Control and Audit. These changes represented one of the largest shifts in a judicial reform program begun with support from the World Bank in 1997. Arbitrary detention occurs, sometimes because of a lack of proper training of law enforcement officials and at other times because of a lack of political will at the most senior levels of government. Security forces affiliated with the Political Security Office (PSO) and the Ministry of Interior torture and abuse detainees, and torture remains a problem in PSO prisons, which are not closely monitored.

Yemen is relatively homogenous ethnically and racially. The Akhdam, a small minority group, lives in poverty and faces social discrimination.

Women are afforded most legal protections against discrimination and provided with guarantees of equality. In practice, women continue to face pervasive discrimination in several aspects of life. A woman must obtain permission from her husband or father to receive a passport and travel abroad. Unlike men, women do not have the right to confer citizenship on a foreign-born spouse, and the process of obtaining Yemeni citizenship for a child of a Yemeni mother and a foreign-born father is in practice more difficult than that for a child born of a Yemeni father and a foreign-born mother. Yemen's penal code allows for lenient sentences for persons guilty of "honor crimes"—assaults or killings committed against women for alleged immodest or immoral behavior. Laws requiring that a wife obey her husband were abolished by presidential decree in 2004.

Women are vastly underrepresented in elected office. Despite the best efforts of women's rights groups to increase the number of women in parliament, only one woman won a seat in the 2003 parliamentary elections, out of 301 total seats. The number of women registered to vote increased nearly sevenfold in the past decade, from half a million in the 1993 parliamentary elections to more than three million in the 2003 parliamentary elections. A study produced by the National Committee of Women found that women represented less than 3 percent of all government employees. According to the United Nations Development Program, Yemen has one of the largest gaps in the world between boys' and girls' primary school attendance rates.

Zambia

Population: 11,200,000 **Political Rights:** 4
GNI/capita: \$380 **Civil Liberties:** 4
Life Expectancy: 37 **Status:** Partly Free
Religious Groups: Christian (50-75 percent),
 Muslim and Hindu (24-49 percent), indigenous
 beliefs (1 percent)
Ethnic Groups: African (99 percent), other
 [including European] (1 percent)
Capital: Lusaka



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	5,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF	4,4PF

Overview:

In 2005, civil society organizations and opposition political parties continued to challenge—however unsuccessfully—the government of President Levy Mwanawasa and his ruling Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD). Zambia's constitutional reform process was the source of much political friction, spurring large protests in December 2004 and November 2005. The detention of a prominent opposition leader and harassment of several journalists warned of a potential deterioration of political and civil rights ahead of next year's general elections. In March, the government filed a corruption case in the United Kingdom against former president Frederick Chiluba.

Formerly known as Northern Rhodesia, Zambia gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1964. President Kenneth Kaunda and his United National Independence Party (UNIP) ruled Zambia as a de facto one-party state from independence until the transition to a multiparty system in 1991. Kaunda's regime grew increasingly repressive and corrupt as it faced security and economic difficulties during the long guerrilla wars against white rule in neighboring Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and Portuguese-controlled Angola and Mozambique. UNIP's socialist policies, combined with a crash in the price of copper—Zambia's primary export—precipitated an economic decline unchecked for two decades.

In the face of domestic unrest and international pressure, Kaunda agreed to a new constitution allowing for multiparty democracy in 1991. Free elections were held in October 1991; former labor leader Frederick Chiluba and his Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD) won convincingly, capturing both the presidency and the National Assembly by wide margins. However, the November 1996 presidential and parliamentary polls lacked legitimacy, largely because of a series of repressive measures instituted by the government. State resources and media were mobilized extensively to support Chiluba and the ruling MMD, and serious irregularities plagued election preparations. Voter lists were incomplete or otherwise suspect; independent monitors estimated that more than two million people were effectively disenfranchised. Candidate eligibility requirements were changed, which resulted in the exclusion of Kaunda, the most credible opposition candidate. Most opposition parties boycotted the polls, in which the MMD renewed its parliamentary dominance. International observer groups that did monitor the polls, along with independent domestic monitors and opposition parties, declared the process and the results to be fraudulent.

Prior to the December 2001 presidential elections, the incumbent Chiluba supported a move within his party to change the constitution so that he could run for a third term. Dissension within his party, as well as substantial protests by opposition parties and civil society, forced him to retreat from that plan. Instead, the MMD nominated Levy Mwanawasa, who narrowly won the vote by only 29 percent against a divided opposition; Anderson Mazoka of the United Party for National Development (UPND) won 27 percent. During concurrent parliamentary elections, the MMD captured 69 out of 150 elected seats. Both domestic and international election monitors cited serious irregularities with the campaign and election, including vote rigging, flawed voter registration, unequal and biased media coverage, and the MMD's improper use of state resources. In January 2002, three opposition candidates petitioned the Supreme Court to overturn Mwanawasa's victory. While the court agreed that the poll was flawed, it ruled in February 2005 that the irregularities did not affect the results and declined the petition.

Although widely perceived as former president Chiluba's handpicked successor, Mwanawasa has backed inquiries into alleged corruption by Chiluba and his senior associates while they were in power. Mwanawasa has shaken up the MMD leadership in an effort to assure his nomination to run in the 2006 presidential elections. After sidelining potential rivals in a January 2005 cabinet reshuffle, Mwanawasa spurred the party's National Executive Committee to abolish the position of party vice president and expel presidential challengers such as Captain Austin Chewa and former state vice president Nevers Mumba. In July, Mwanawasa easily defeated a challenge by his major rival Enoch Kavindele—sacked as vice president in 2003—to the leadership of the MMD.

Despite promises of greater transparency and inclusiveness in the country's constitutional reform process, the government has relied on a Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) whose members were mostly appointed by Mwanawasa, who has final authority over its proposals. A coalition of religious and civil society groups called the Oasis Forum—as well as several opposition parties—is seeking the creation of a more representative Constituent Assembly to steer the review process, which would involve a national referendum. In December 2004 and January

2005, civic groups and opposition politicians held demonstrations calling for a Constituent Assembly and the enactment of a new constitution before the 2006 elections; 68 protestors—including members of the UPND and some journalists—were briefly detained in December for participating in an "illegal" protest. In November 2005, the Oasis Forum coordinated a protest of thousands of Zambians to push for a Constituent Assembly. The following day, Mwanawasa rejected a draft constitution presented by the CRC, primarily because of provisions mandating that the president be elected by an absolute majority of voters, that a vice presidential candidate run alongside the president, and that the president devolve certain powers to parliament. In late November, the MMD used its parliamentary majority to defeat a UPND motion to create a Constituent Assembly.

The country is among those suffering most from the AIDS pandemic. UNAIDS estimated infection rates in 2002 at 21.5 percent, and government figures indicate that Zambia already has nearly 700,000 AIDS orphans. While Zambia's efforts to provide antiretroviral medication to people suffering from HIV/AIDS have made progress, it remains difficult to access the drugs in rural areas.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Zambia cannot change their government democratically. While Zambians' constitutional right to change their government freely was honored in the 1991 elections, both the 1996 and 2001 elections won by the ruling MMD featured substantial flaws and were subjects of intense controversy. While a February 2005 Supreme Court ruling held that irregularities in the 2001 presidential poll did not sufficiently affect the result to require a recount, the Supreme Court raised concerns about opposition access to the media and the inappropriate use of state resources and accused the Electoral Commission of Zambia of negligence and incompetence.

The president and parliament are elected to serve concurrent five-year terms. The National Assembly includes 150 elected members, as well as eight members appointed by the president and the Speaker of the Assembly. The next presidential and parliamentary elections will be held in 2006; in November 2005, opposition parties called for the already-begun voter registration campaign to be overhauled, citing the potential for fraud. Five parliamentary by-elections in 2005 were marred by the irregularities noted above, as well as by vote buying.

The opposition—including the UPND; the United National Independence Party; the Forum for Democracy and Development; and the Patriotic Front—is fragmented. In July, Patriotic Front leader Michael Sata—a former MMD stalwart—was arrested and charged with spying and sedition, accused of inciting a costly copper mine workers strike that month.

President Levy Mwanawasa's campaign to tackle the country's major corruption problem continued in 2005. However, a lack of concrete results has started to erode public confidence in the process, and the government is still widely considered to suffer from pervasive corruption. While the corruption trials of officials from the administration of former president Frederick Chiluba proceeded, none were completed; indeed, only one official, Chiluba's former aide Richard Sakala, has gone to prison for corruption (in 2003). After the director of public prosecutions decided to drop a corruption case against former minister of health Kashiwa Bulaya in May 2005, public protests forced the case to be reinstated.

Nevertheless, Mwanawasa has earned praise for banning cabinet ministers and senior officials from bidding on government contracts and for sacking his own vice president, Enoch Kavindele, for involvement in an irregular oil contract. In March, the government filed a long-awaited corruption case against Chiluba himself, accusing the former president of defrauding Zambia of almost \$35 million. The case was filed in a British high court because efforts to try Chiluba in Zambia failed and because the allegedly stolen assets are located in Europe. Zambia was ranked 107 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of speech is constitutionally guaranteed, but the government often restricts this right in practice. While the government controls two widely circulated newspapers and the state-owned, progovernment Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation dominates broadcast media, the independent media continued to criticize the government. The Public Order Act (POA), among other statutes, has at times been used to harass journalists. Other tools of harassment have included criminal libel suits and defamation suits brought by ruling party leaders in response to stories on corruption; several such cases were brought against journalists in 2005.

In June, Anthony Mukwita was summoned by police and warned of potential sedition charges after he read a facsimile critical of the government during his talk show on the independent Radio Phoenix. In November, police arrested (and later released) Fred M'membe—editor in chief of *The Post*, Zambia's only private daily—after accusing him of criminally defaming Mwanawasa in a series of vitriolic editorials; M'membe had been formally warned in July after protesting the constitutional review process. Mwanawasa later apologized for the harassment. Reporters continued to face threats and physical assaults at the hands of police and ruling party supporters, and newspaper vendors selling *The Post* were also attacked during the year. In November, police detained at least six journalists and beat others covering a demonstration. As a result of prepublication review at government-controlled newspapers, journalists commonly practice self-censorship. The government does not restrict internet access.

Constitutionally protected religious freedom is respected in practice. The government does not restrict academic freedom.

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) engaged in promoting human rights, such as the Zambian Independent Monitoring Team, the Zambian Civic Education Association, the Law Association of Zambia, and the Legal Resources Fund, operate openly. All NGOs, however, are required to register with the government. Under the POA, the police must be notified of all demonstrations seven days in advance; while the law does not require demonstrators to acquire a permit, the police have frequently broken up "illegal" protests because the organizers lacked permits. Authorities used force to disperse demonstrations and detained protestors in 2005, resulting in one death.

Zambia's trade unions remain among Africa's strongest, and union rights are constitutionally guaranteed. The Zambia Congress of Trade Unions, an umbrella organization for Zambia's 19 largest unions, operates democratically without governmental interference. About two-thirds of the country's 300,000 formal (business) sector employees are union members. While the 1993 Industrial and Labor Relations Act protects collective bargaining rights, it also requires a labor organization to have

at least 100 members to be registered, a potentially burdensome requirement. In July, a weeklong strike by workers at Konkola Copper Mines resulted in violent riots and the two-week detention of several strikers; the government deemed the strike illegal and arrested opposition leader Michael Sata for "inciting" the workers.

Judicial independence is guaranteed by law. While courts do act independently and have staked out adversarial positions vis-a-vis the government, capacity issues, corruption, and political influences all undermine the efficacy of the judiciary. The court system is severely overburdened, and many accused persons do not have access to legal aid owing to limited resources. A lack of qualified personnel (in part because of poor working conditions) contributes to significant trial delays, and pre-trial detainees are sometimes held for years under harsh conditions. In rural areas, customary courts of variable quality and consistency, whose decisions often conflict with both national law and constitutional protections, decide many civil matters.

Prison conditions are very harsh. Severe overcrowding, poor nutrition, and limited access to health care have led to many deaths in prison and—along with unsafe sex, tattooing, and drug use—make inmates more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. Allegations of police brutality and the use of torture are widespread, though security forces have generally operated with impunity. In 2005, tensions arose between the police and the Police Public Complaints Authority amid accusations that the police were trying to impede investigations of abuse. While the government Human Rights Commission (HRC) investigated complaints against police and denounced the torture of suspects in a 1997 coup attempt, it has no power to bring charges against alleged perpetrators.

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, tribe, gender, place of origin, marital status, political opinion, color, or creed. However, societal discrimination remains a serious obstacle to women's rights. Domestic violence and rape are major problems, and traditional norms inhibit many women from reporting such assaults. An October 2004 survey by the U.S. Agency for International Development found that 48 percent of Zambian women have been subjected to physical or emotional abuse by their spouse or partner. Women are denied full economic participation and usually require male consent to acquire credit. Discrimination against women is especially prevalent in customary courts; women are considered subordinate with respect to property, inheritance, and marriage. In September, an amended penal code declared illegal the traditional practice of "sexual cleansing," in which a widow has sex with relatives of her deceased husband.

Zimbabwe

Population: 13,000,000 **Political Rights:** 7
GNI/capita: \$490 **Civil Liberties:** 6
Life Expectancy: 41 **Status:** Not Free
Religious Groups: Syncretic [part Christian, part indigenous beliefs] (50 percent), Christian (25 percent), indigenous beliefs (24 percent), other [including Muslim] (1 percent)



Ethnic Groups: Shona (82 percent), Ndebele (14 percent), other (4 percent)
Capital: Harare

Ratings Change: Zimbabwe received a downward trend arrow due to increased violations of democratic norms and human rights offenses.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	6,5PF	6,5PF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF

Overview:

Zimbabwe's descent into the ranks of the world's most repressive states continued unabated in 2005, the result of a significant decline in both political rights and civil liberties for Zimbabweans. The government of long-time president Robert Mugabe persisted in cracking down on independent media, civil society, and political opponents. Mugabe's ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) won an overwhelming victory in a deeply flawed parliamentary election held in March, allowing the passage of a heavy-handed Constitutional Amendment Bill in September. Beginning in May 2005, the government ordered the destruction of tens of thousands of shanty dwellings and street stalls in urban townships across the country. The implementation of this policy—labeled Operation Murambatsvina—left an estimated 700,000 people homeless, deprived of their livelihood, or both, and adversely affected some 2.4 million additional people. Low voter turnout and a severely fractured opposition marked elections to a new Senate in November; ZANU-PF virtually swept the elections, fortifying its control of the already pliant legislature. The country's economic crisis worsened, with rampant inflation, massive unemployment, near expulsion from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and potentially severe shortages of basic foodstuffs.

In 1965, a white-minority regime led by Prime Minister Ian Smith unilaterally declared independence from Britain in what was then South Rhodesia; the resultant state of Rhodesia was considered illegal and was sanctioned extensively by the United Nations. Sanctions, Anglo-American diplomatic pressure, and a guerrilla war led by black nationalist groups contributed to the end of white-minority rule in 1979 and an independent Zimbabwe in 1980. Robert Mugabe and the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), brought to power in a relatively democratic election, have ruled the country since then.

For a few years, Zimbabwe was relatively stable, although from 1983 to 1987, the government violently suppressed resistance from the country's largest minority

group, the Ndebele, to dominance by Mugabe's majority ethnic Shona group. Severe human rights abuses—including the deaths of between 10,000 and 20,000 civilians—accompanied the struggle, which ended with an accord that brought Ndebele leaders into the government. The 1990s saw widespread civil unrest spurred by opposition to Mugabe's government; in 1999, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), an alliance between trade unionists and other civil society groups, was created to lead the political opposition.

In February 2000, the MDC helped defeat a referendum on a draft constitution that would have greatly expanded executive power. Parliamentary elections in June 2000 were deemed by observers to be fundamentally flawed prior to balloting. Candidates and supporters of the MDC faced violence and intimidation, including the use of rape as a weapon. A constitutional provision empowering Mugabe and allied traditional leaders to appoint one-fifth of the members of parliament helped to further ensure ZANU-PF's majority in the legislature. Voter registration, identification procedures, and tabulation of results were judged highly irregular by independent observers. The state-controlled media offered limited coverage of opposition viewpoints, and ZANU-PF used substantial state resources in campaigning. After the poll, Mugabe issued a pardon for thousands of people—most associated with ZANU-PF—for crimes committed during the election campaign, including assault, arson, forced evictions, kidnapping, torture, rape, and attempted murder. According to the Zimbabwe Human Rights Forum, the rights of more than 18,000 people were violated.

In March 2002, after months of political violence aimed at MDC supporters, Mugabe claimed victory in a deeply flawed presidential election that failed to meet minimum international standards for legitimacy. The election pitted Mugabe against the MDC's Morgan Tsvangirai, a popular trade union leader. Following the election, the government was subjected to travel and arms sales sanctions by the United States and the European Union and was suspended from the Commonwealth. Mass protests and strikes called by Tsvangirai in 2003 were crushed by security forces.

Parliamentary by-elections held in 2002 and 2003 were marred by violence and intimidation against the MDC, which nonetheless won the polls in two districts near the capital, Highfield and Kuwadzana. Party members were prevented from undertaking normal campaign activities and were detained, beaten, and harassed. The MDC announced in August 2004 that it would suspend its participation in parliamentary and local elections because it believed there was no hope of a fair poll. Partially as a result, in September 2004, ZANU-PF increased its parliamentary majority after the MDC boycotted a series of by-elections.

Prior to the March 2005 parliamentary elections, the government enacted two new electoral laws—the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) Act and the Electoral Act—in order to adhere to Southern African Development Community (SADC) protocols. However, the ostensibly independent ZEC was not only highly partisan but also did not begin operating until two months before the election, leaving much of the electoral process to already discredited institutions. Furthermore, despite some improvements, the Electoral Act granted the ZEC powers to employ security forces, retained biased residency requirements for voters, denied most expatriates the right to vote, and created an Electoral Court staffed by a deeply compromised judiciary. The MDC did participate in the March 2005 parliamentary poll but won only 41 of 120 elected seats in the parliament; ZANU-PF garnered 78 elected seats, which, along

with the 30 seats effectively appointed by Mugabe, gave the ruling party a two-thirds majority and the ability to amend the constitution.

Despite the enactment of new electoral laws designed to meet the democratic protocols of the SADC and a decrease in political violence, the run-up to and execution of the elections did not allow for a free and fair contest. Reports by local and international human rights groups asserted that MDC candidates and supporters were subjected to violent intimidation and harassment—including arbitrary arrest—throughout the country, and were restricted from campaigning openly in rural areas dominated by ZANU-PF (particularly parts of Mashonaland and Manicaland). Security forces and ZANU-PF youth militias also restricted opposition assemblies and rallies in Harare and Bulawayo. As in previous elections, access to government food stocks was used as a political weapon, denied to some MDC supporters and promised to citizens in exchange for votes. In addition, according to Human Rights Watch, "the processes of registering voters, delimiting electoral districts, and providing for inspection of voters' rolls were conducted in a non-transparent and discriminatory way." Though the opposition's access to the media had improved from that of previous elections, equal and fair coverage was denied. Finally, among international monitoring groups, only African monitors believed to be sympathetic to ZANU-PF were allowed to observe the elections.

While observers from the SADC, the African Union, and South Africa deemed the election reflective of the will of the people, local observers such as the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights and the Zimbabwe Election Support Network were very critical of the elections. The MDC claimed to have discovered major discrepancies in vote tallies in over 30 constituencies. Citing 11 of these constituencies and claiming to have won 94 elected seats, the MDC challenged the ZEC's results and threatened a court battle; however, no legal petition was filed. According to the International Crisis Group, the government escalated its crackdown on opposition supporters and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) after the election.

Mugabe and ZANU-PF leveraged their two-thirds parliamentary majority to enact a 22-clause Constitutional Amendment Bill in September 2005. The bill is far-reaching in both its scope and its potential to further undermine basic rights in Zimbabwe. Among other restrictions, the bill abolishes freehold property titles by nationalizing all land, denies landowners any legal recourse regarding expropriated land, brings all schools under state control, and empowers the government to seize the passports or travel documents of people deemed a threat to national interests. Furthermore, the bill reintroduced an upper legislative house, the Senate; Mugabe had abolished the original Senate in 1987 along with the post of prime minister. Elections to the new Senate—consisting of 50 directly elected seats, 6 presidential appointees, and 10 traditional chiefs—were held in November 2005 and resulted in ZANU-PF's securing 59 out of 66 seats; the MDC, deeply split over participating in the election, fielded only 26 candidates and won 7 seats. Only 15 to 20 percent of voters turned out for the election; the Senate—estimated to cost about \$60 million annually—is widely considered to be a superfluous body created to reward Mugabe's supporters within ZANU-PF.

The question of who will succeed Mugabe, aged 81 and pledged to retire in 2008, has proven to be a source of contention within ZANU-PF. In December 2004, Water Minister Joyce Mujuru was named vice president, and Information Minister

Jonathan Moyo was sacked after campaigning against Mujuru at a ZANU-PF congress. Moyo was allied with Parliamentary Speaker Emmerson Mnangagwa, the pre-congress favorite for the vice president position.

Operation Murambatsvina (variously translated as "Operation Restore Order" and "Operation Clear the Filth") began on May 19, 2005, with unannounced police actions against informal vendors in and around Harare, including the immediate arrest of some 10,000 people and the destruction of many street stalls and informal dwellings. The operation soon spread to almost every urban area and rural business center in Zimbabwe, resulting in the destruction (mostly via bulldozer) of tens of thousands of informal businesses and dwellings—including entire suburbs of Harare (for example, Hatcliff Extension, Mbare, Joshua Nkomo, Porta Farm, and White Cliff Farm) and Bulawayo (Killarney and Ngozi Mine).

Domestic and international human rights groups accused the security forces of arresting and fining people arbitrarily and using excessive force—at least three people were directly killed. First moved into transit camps outside of the cities, many displaced residents were forced to return to the rural areas "from which they came," as designated on national identity cards. According to the United Nations, approximately 700,000 people were made homeless by the operation, and another 2.4 million people have been affected directly or indirectly. Wintry conditions, large transportation expenses, lack of medicines, and national food shortages exacerbated the crises faced by the displaced, particularly children, the old and infirm, and those suffering from HIV/AIDS. In addition, the government actively inhibited civic groups and aid agencies from gaining access to the displaced.

The motivation behind Operation Murambatsvina is a topic of debate. The government defended the action as necessary to restore law and order to the country's cities by enforcing licensing requirements and city by-laws, and by removing sources of "illegal activities." Government officials announced ambitious (and as yet stalled) plans to build new housing projects for the urban poor in place of the destroyed dwellings. In addition, because only about 25 percent of Zimbabweans are employed in the formal sector, and the informal sector and parallel markets are estimated to account for some 60 percent of Zimbabwe's gross domestic product (GDP), the operation deprived the formal banking sector of a substantial amount of scarce foreign exchange. However, many of the destroyed vendor stalls, flea markets, and informal settlements had in fact been approved by government officials. As a result, some analysts believe that the operation was intended to exert control over urban areas that had proven to be MDC strongholds during past elections and the source of antigovernment agitation. However, many of the townships targeted by the operation were built on land confiscated from evicted white landowners and populated with ZANU-PF supporters.

The government's seizures of white-owned farmland, which began in 2000, precipitated the collapse of Zimbabwe's economy, particularly in the commercial farming sector that accounted for the majority of the country's exports, foreign exchange, and jobs. Much of the seized land has gone to ZANU-PF officials, Mugabe loyalists, and war veterans without a farming background. As a result, the country's GDP has fallen over 30 percent since the land reform began, which has made Zimbabwe one of the world's fastest shrinking economies. Unemployment exceeds 70 percent, and in September 2005, inflation reached a peak of 360 percent, one of the highest

rates in the world. That same month, Zimbabwe was nearly expelled from the IMF because it was \$295 million in arrears on a \$4.5 billion loan; however, a last-minute payment of \$120 million—officially (and questionably) gleaned from export revenues and foreign exchange purchases—staved off expulsion.

The government controls the prices of many major commodities and food staples, and state-linked companies dominate many sectors, which leads to shortages of key imports, most notably fuel. In September 2004, Mugabe announced that the government would seize half of the country's private mining companies, and the 2005 Constitutional Amendment Bill nationalized all land. The country's dire political and economic situation has resulted in the recent emigration of hundreds of thousands of Zimbabweans.

In November 2005, the UN World Food Program warned that more than 4 million of the country's 12 million people require emergency food aid; Zimbabwe—once one of Africa's major sources of agricultural exports—began a massive program to import 1.8 million tons of maize in July of that year. While the government has historically blamed food shortages on droughts, Deputy Agricultural Minister Sylvester Nguni told a November meeting of the Zimbabwe Farmers' Union that distributing seized land to incompetent farmers was also to blame. Party officials have manipulated the dispersal of food aid, withholding relief from suspected opposition supporters. Fears of food shortages have led many urban dwellers to ignore a government prohibition on growing crops in urban areas. Severe shortages of drugs and equipment have pushed hospitals and clinics close to ruin. Infant mortality rates have risen, and the resource-starved health system cannot cope with an HIV epidemic—one of the worst in the world—that has infected one in four adults.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Zimbabwe cannot change their government democratically. Recent presidential and legislative elections have been marred by political violence and intimidation (perpetrated by both security forces and ZANU-PF youth militias), a discriminatory electoral framework, biased media coverage, and the unscrupulous use of state resources. President Robert Mugabe and ZANU-PF have dominated the political landscape since independence. Since 1980, at least 16 amendments to the constitution—including the elimination of the post of prime minister in favor of an executive president—have expanded executive power. Mugabe has on several occasions invoked the Presidential Powers Act, which enables him to bypass normal governmental review and oversight procedures. Presidential elections are held every six years.

Until recently, Zimbabwe had a unicameral legislature. In September 2005, an upper house Senate—previously disbanded via a 1987 constitutional amendment—was created by yet another such amendment and consists of 50 directly elected seats, 6 presidential appointees, and 10 traditional chiefs. The lower House of Assembly includes 120 elected seats and 30 seats filled by Mugabe appointees; elections are held every five years. ZANU-PF loyalists make up 72 percent of the House of Assembly and over 89 percent of the Senate.

The rise of the MDC had until recently represented a significant oppositionist force in Zimbabwe. However, the party's electoral defeat in March was followed by a major internal crisis, catalyzed by a debate over whether the MDC should contest elections for the newly created Senate in November. Defying party leader Morgan

Tsvangirai's call for a boycott, 26 MDC members registered as candidates; the crisis was marked by serious discord among the party's leadership and the expulsion of the 26 dissident members from the party. As a result, the MDC no longer poses a serious threat to ZANU-PF's hold on power.

Corruption is rampant throughout the country, including at the highest levels of government. A profound lack of transparency in government tenders and other operations has allowed corruption to thrive. Patronage is crucial to ZANU-PF's grip on power, and the party owns a wide range of businesses that profit party elites; ruling party and government officials have been allocated many of the properties seized from white farmers. Anticorruption prosecutions are almost exclusively motivated by political vendettas. Reports of extensive corruption and nepotism have contributed to the stark decline in public and investor confidence in Zimbabwe's economy. Zimbabwe was ranked 107 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression and of the press deteriorated still further in 2005. Zimbabwe's already draconian legal framework was worsened by the enactment in January of an amendment to the 2002 Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) and a new Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Bill in June. Whereas the original AIPPA required all journalists and media companies to register with the government-controlled Media and Information Commission (MIC) and gave the information minister sweeping powers to decide who can work as a journalist, the amended version introduced prison sentences of up to two years for journalists working without accreditation. The *Daily News*—the country's only independent daily shuttered in 2003 for not adhering to the AIPPA—continued to be denied a license by the MIC in 2005. Constitutional challenges to the AIPPA by the affiliates of the *Daily News* have proven unsuccessful; the Supreme Court upheld the law for the second time in March. However, a Harare magistrate acquitted former *Daily News* journalist Kelvin Jakachira of working without accreditation; at least eight of his colleagues are facing similar charges.

The MIC ordered the closure of the independent *Weekly Times* in March for violating the AIPPA after only eight weeks of publication, and denied Africa Tribune Newspapers—publishers of the previously shuttered weekly *Tribune* (2004)—a license to resume publication in July. Authorities use a range of restrictive legislation—including the Official Secrets Act, the AIPPA, and the Public Order and Security Act (POSA)—to harass journalists. Section 15 of POSA and Section 80 of AIPPA criminalize the publication of "inaccurate" information, and both laws have been used to intimidate, arrest, and prosecute journalists. The new Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Bill increases prison sentences for similar violations to a maximum of 20 years.

The government dominates the print and broadcast media; coverage in state-controlled dailies such as *The Chronicle* and *The Herald* consists of favorable portrayals of Mugabe and the ruling ZANU-PF party and attacks on government critics. The state-controlled Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) runs all broadcast media, which are seen as mouthpieces of the regime, and the prohibitive costs of satellite services that provide international news programming place them out of reach for most Zimbabweans. While the MDC was granted relatively greater access to these media in the run-up to the March 2005 elections, that month the

government—using Chinese technology—began jamming the shortwave signal of the London-based oppositionist radio station SW Radio Africa, forcing it to switch frequencies. A similar fate befell the independent radio station Voice of the People in September.

Journalists are routinely subjected to verbal intimidation, physical attacks, arrest and detention, and financial pressure at the hands of the police, authorities, and supporters of the ruling party. Foreign journalists are regularly denied visas to file stories from Zimbabwe, and local correspondents for foreign publications, particularly those whose reporting has portrayed the regime in an unfavorable light, have been refused accreditation or threatened with lawsuits and deportation. In February, three such correspondents—Angus Shaw, Brian Latham, and Jan Raath—fled the country after extensive harassment by authorities, while another, Cornelius Nduna, was forced into hiding and hunted by the Central Intelligence Organization (CIO) for possessing video footage of paramilitary activities at youth training camps. Internet access is relatively free, although the government does monitor e-mail content.

Freedom of religion is generally respected, but academic freedom is limited. Security forces and ruling party thugs harass dissident university students, who have been arrested or expelled from school for protesting against government policy. In 2004, the president of the Zimbabwe National Students Union, Philani Zamchiya, claimed to have been kidnapped and assaulted by police. The Constitutional Amendment Bill passed in September 2005 brings all schools under state control.

The nongovernmental sector is small but active; however, NGOs—particularly those dealing with human rights issues—have faced increasing legal restrictions and extralegal harassment. As a result, mass action campaigns organized by the MDC after the March 2005 elections and by the umbrella National Constituent Assembly and the MDC following Operation Murambatsvina failed to gain much traction. Public demonstrations and protests are severely restricted under the 2002 POSA, which requires police notification—in practice, police permission—to hold public meetings and demonstrations. Such meetings are often deemed illegal and broken up, subjecting participants to arbitrary arrest by security forces (including intelligence officers) and attacks perpetrated by ZANU-PF militias. POSA also allows police to impose arbitrary curfews and forbids criticism of the president.

In 2005, security forces continued to disrupt demonstrations by the Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) group and arrest demonstrators; in two years of protests, some 500 WOZA activists have been detained for violating the POSA. The Private Voluntary Organizations (PVO) Act, originally introduced by the Rhodesian government and revived in 2002, sets out restrictive registration and funding requirements for NGOs. In December 2004, the parliament passed the Non-Governmental Organizations Act. The NGO Act retains the PVO Act's more repressive provisions while increasing scrutiny of groups that "promote and protect human rights" and explicitly prohibiting these groups from receiving foreign funding. Following the model of the MIC, the act also establishes an NGO Council with which organizations must register or risk criminal charges. While Mugabe has yet to sign the legislation, in 2005 the government threatened several NGOs with sanctions if they did not account for \$88 million in donor funds received in 2004.

The right to collective action is limited under the Labor Relations Act, which allows the government to veto collective bargaining agreements that it deems harm-

fill to the economy. Strikes are allowed except for industries declared "essential" under the act. Because the labor movement provides the most organized resistance to Mugabe's authoritarian rule, it has become a particular target for repression. Mugabe has used his presidential powers to declare strikes illegal, and labor organizers are common targets of government harassment. In 2003, security forces arrested more than 400 people in response to a two-day general strike; many were beaten or tortured while in police custody. In November 2005, the leadership of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU)—among at least 80 union activists—was detained by security forces in Harare and Bulawayo for violating the POSA. The government has created a rival trade union umbrella organization, the Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions, to try to undermine the ZCTU.

While some courts have struck down or disputed government actions, increasing pressure by the regime has substantially eroded the judiciary's capacity to act independently. The accused are often denied access to counsel and a fair, timely trial. However, several journalists have recently been acquitted of criminal charges by magistrates, as have several MDC activists. MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai was acquitted of treason charges in December 2004 by the high court, and another set of treason charges was dropped in August 2005. Nonetheless, the government has repeatedly refused to enforce court orders and has replaced senior judges or pressured them to resign—including former Chief Justice Anthony Gubbay—by stating it could not guarantee their security. The judicial system has been burdened by the vacancy of nearly 60 magistrate posts, which has caused a backlog of some 60,000 cases that require processing. In October, the head of the magistrates' association, Enias Magate, stated that judges' low pay was exacerbating already substantial judicial corruption.

In general, security and military forces are accountable to the government but not to civilians. Security forces often ignore basic rights regarding detention, search, and seizure. The government has taken no clear action to halt the rising incidence of torture and mistreatment of suspects held by police or security services. War veterans and ZANU-PF militants operate as *de facto* enforcers of government policies—including land redistribution—and have committed a litany of human rights abuses, such as assault, torture, rape, extralegal evictions, and extralegal executions, within an environment of almost total impunity. The military has assumed increased roles in food distribution and "securing" elections. In June 2004, the government passed the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Amendment Act, which allows police to hold suspects accused of economic crimes for up to four weeks without bail; human rights activists contend this act contravenes the constitutional right to the presumption of innocence.

Prison conditions are harsh and life threatening. The country's 47 prisons house about 22,000 inmates, 6,000 above the nominal 16,000-person capacity. Such overcrowding has contributed to a rise in HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis infections and to food shortages. Deaths in prisons are often caused by disease, poor sanitation, or beatings by guards. Women and juveniles are housed separately from men, and pretrial detainees are generally held in separate, common cells.

The state has extensive control over travel and residence, and property rights are not respected in Zimbabwe. Operation Murambatsvina saw the eviction of hundreds of thousands of urban dwellers from their homes and the destruction of thou-

sands of homes and businesses, many of which had been approved by the government. Fewer than 500 white-owned farms remain out of the 4,500 that existed when the land invasions started in 2000; any avenues of legal recourse for expelled farmers were closed with the enactment of the Constitutional Amendment Bill in September. The same bill formalized travel restrictions for regime opponents. Foreign critics are routinely expelled or prevented from entering the country.

The ruling party, which is dominated by the Shona majority ethnic group, continues to encourage political and economic discrimination against the minority Ndebele people. A clash between the two ethnic groups in the 1980s culminated in the government's massacre of thousands of Ndebele. Today, the Ndebele tend to be marginalized politically, and their region (Matabeleland, which is an opposition stronghold) lags behind in economic development. According to the U.S. State Department 2005 Human Rights Report, the disproportionate number of Shona-speaking educators in Matabeleland schools is a sensitive issue. In addition, restrictive citizenship laws discriminate against Zimbabweans whose origins are in neighboring African countries. Despite government efforts to the contrary—including explicitly racist justifications for land seizures—relations between the remaining white minority and the black majority are relatively peaceful.

Women enjoy extensive legal protections, but de facto societal discrimination and domestic violence persist. Women serve as ministers in national and local governments, and hold seats in parliament; Joyce Mujuru is vice president of Zimbabwe and a possible successor to Mugabe. ZANU-PF youth militias use rape as a political weapon. The prevalence of customary laws in rural areas undermines women's rights and access to education. Traditional practices such as polygamy and *lobola*—the negotiated price a groom must pay to marry a bride—remain legal, and there were reports of girls being offered as settlements in interfamily disputes. The Supreme Court declared that women who marry under customary law must leave their original families and therefore cannot inherit their property, and married women cannot hold property jointly with their husbands. A December 2004 report from UNICEF noted the lacuna between the litany of laws relating to women's and children's rights and the weak implementation of those laws. Homosexuality—decried as un-African by Mugabe—is illegal in Zimbabwe.

Armenia/Azerbaijan*

Nagorno-Karabakh

Population: 145,000 **Political Rights:** 5
Religious Groups: Armenian **Civil Liberties:** 5
 Apostolic [majority], other **Status:** Partly Free
Ethnic Groups: Armenian [majority], other



* *The designation of two countries is intended to reflect the international consensus on the status of Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as the de facto authority over the territory.*

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
6,6NF	5,6NF	5,6NF	5,6NF	5,6NF	5,6NF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF

Overview:

The year 2005 saw no major thawing of relations over the contested region of Nagorno-Karabakh region. There was, however, increased dialogue between Azerbaijan and Armenia, giving some hope that international efforts to bring about a political resolution to the disputed territory could move forward in the foreseeable future. The ruling Democratic Union Artsakh (ZhAM) captured the most seats in the June parliamentary election.

The Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region, which is largely populated by ethnic Armenians and is located inside the former Soviet republic of Azerbaijan, was established in 1923. In February 1988, Nagorno-Karabakh's regional legislature adopted a resolution calling for union with Armenia. The announcement triggered a violent chain of events that led to successive battles and counteroffensives over the next several years between various Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Nagorno-Karabakh forces.

At its inaugural session in January 1992, Nagorno-Karabakh's new legislature adopted a declaration of independence, which was not recognized by the international community. By the time a Russian-brokered ceasefire was signed in May 1994, Karabakh Armenians, assisted by Armenia, had captured essentially the entire territory, as well as seven Azerbaijani districts surrounding the enclave. Virtually all ethnic Azeris had fled or been forced out of the enclave and its surrounding areas, and the fighting had resulted in thousands of casualties and an estimated one million refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

In December 1994, the head of Nagorno-Karabakh's state defense committee, Robert Kocharian, was selected by the territory's parliament for the newly established post of president. Parliamentary elections were held in April and May 1995, and Kocharian defeated two other candidates in a popular vote for president in November of the following year.

In September 1997, Foreign Minister Arkady Ghukasian was elected to replace Kocharian, who had been named prime minister of Armenia in March of that year. In

the territory's June 2000 parliamentary vote, 123 candidates representing five parties competed for the assembly's 33 seats. The ruling Democratic Union Artsakh (ZhAM), which supported Ghukasian, enjoyed a slim victory, winning 13 seats. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaktsutiun won 9 seats, the Armenakan Party captured 1 seat, and formally independent candidates, most of whom supported Ghukasian, won 10. International observers described the electoral campaign and voting process as calm and largely transparent, although problems were noted with the accuracy of some voter lists.

In February 2001, former defense minister Samvel Babayan was found guilty of organizing a March 2000 assassination attempt against Ghukasian and sentenced to 14 years in prison. His supporters insisted that the arrest was politically motivated, as Babayan had been involved in a power struggle with Ghukasian. Others, however, welcomed the arrest and conviction of Babayan, who had been accused of corruption and reportedly wielded considerable political and economic power in the territory.

Ghukasian was reelected to a second term as president on August 11, 2002, with 89 percent of the vote. His closest challenger, former Speaker of Parliament Artur Tovmasian, received just 8 percent. Voter turnout was close to 75 percent. Observers from countries including the United States, the United Kingdom, and France reported no serious violations. While a number of domestic and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) concluded that the elections marked a further step in Nagorno-Karabakh's democratization, they did voice some criticisms, including the limited access for the opposition to state-controlled media. Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry described the election as a violation of international norms, insisting that a legitimate vote could be held only after a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

With both Armenia's president, Robert Kocharian, and Azerbaijan's president, Heydar Aliyev, poised to seek reelection in 2003—and the domestic political risk associated with either leader's making significant public concessions over the territory during a campaign year—few observers expected any breakthroughs in the conflict during 2003. An upsurge in shooting incidents along the ceasefire line that summer, which both Armenian and Azerbaijani officials accused the other side of instigating, fueled concerns of a further and more widespread escalation of violence. Nagorno-Karabakh held local elections in August 2004, ignoring calls from the Council of Europe to cancel the balloting. The Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry issued a protest at the holding of these elections in the territory, which is internationally recognized as being part of Azerbaijan.

Parliamentary elections were held on June 19, 2005. The opposition criticized the vote, claiming that the authorities used state administrative resources to influence the vote. Azerbaijani officials likewise criticized the election, insisting that any vote in the region would be illegal until the many Azerbaijanis who fled Nagorno-Karabakh were allowed to return. According to results issued by the Central Election Commission in Stepanakert, President Ghukasian's ZhAM received 12 seats. The Free Motherland Party, allied with the DPA, received 10 seats. Another 8 seats went to unaffiliated candidates, who are believed to be loyal to Ghukasian. Only 3 seats were received by candidates opposed to the president. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) does not recognize the Nagorno Karabakh Republic and therefore did not monitor the election.

The OSCE's Minsk Group—which was established a decade earlier to facilitate dialogue on a political settlement on Nagorno-Karabakh's status—convened a number of confidence-building meetings in 2005 under its auspices in order to continue a dialogue between the principal parties. Kocharian and Ilham Aliyev, Azerbaijan's current president, met on two separate occasions in 2005—in May in Warsaw, Poland, and August in Kazan, Russia. There is, however, considerable negotiating distance between these parties, and prospects for a comprehensive resolution of the dispute remained remote at year's end.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Nagorno-Karabakh has enjoyed de facto independence from Azerbaijan since 1994 and retains close political, economic, and military ties with Armenia. Parliamentary elections in 1995 and 2000 were regarded as generally free and fair, as were the 1996 and 1997 presidential votes. Parliamentary elections, which the opposition claimed were marred by fraud and other irregularities, were held in June 2005. The elections, however, were considered invalid by the international community, which does not recognize Nagorno-Karabakh's independence. According to an International Crisis Group report issued in September 2005, all Nagorno-Karabakh permanent residents, including IDPs from Azerbaijan, as well as inhabitants of the former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast and parts of the occupied districts, are allowed to vote. International observers have observed considerable obstacles to IDPs voting for candidates of their choice.

The territory of Nagorno-Karabakh officially remains under martial law, which imposes restrictions on civil liberties, including media censorship and the banning of public demonstrations. However, the authorities maintain that these provisions have not been enforced since 1995, a year after the ceasefire was signed.

The government controls many of the territory's broadcast media outlets, and most journalists practice self-censorship, particularly on subjects dealing with policies related to Azerbaijan and the peace process. Under-resourced public television broadcasts only several hours a day. In 2004, *Demo*, the first independent nongovernmental publication, appeared in Nagorno-Karabakh. Printed in Armenian and Russian and provided with support by a British NGO, *Demo*, however, reaches a very limited audience. Internet access in the territory is limited.

The registration of religious groups is required under Nagorno-Karabakh's 1997 law on religion. The Armenian Apostolic Church, which is the territory's predominant religion, is the only faith registered with the territory. According to Forum 18, a religious-freedom watchdog group based in Norway, members of various minority faiths, including Pentecostals, Adventists, Baptists, and Jehovah's Witnesses, have faced restrictions on their activities.

Freedom of assembly and association is limited, although trade unions are allowed to organize.

The judiciary, which is not independent in practice, is influenced by the executive branch and powerful political and clan forces. In 2003, the republic's authorities announced the replacement of the death penalty with life imprisonment.

The majority of Azeris who fled the fighting continue to live in dreadful conditions in IDP camps in Azerbaijan. International aid organizations, meanwhile, are reducing direct assistance to the IDPs. Land mine explosions continue to result in

casualties each year, with children and teenagers among the most vulnerable groups. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, at least 50,000 anti-personnel mines were laid during the war, although in many cases, records of minefield locations were never created or were lost.

Nagorno-Karabakh's fragile peace has failed to bring significant improvement to the economy, particularly in the countryside, and pensioners are particularly severely affected. Widespread corruption, a lack of substantive economic reforms, and the control of major economic activity by powerful elites limit equality of opportunity for most residents.

China Hong Kong

Population: 6,940,000 **Political Rights:** 5
Religious Groups: Mixture of local religions (90 percent), Christian (10 percent) **Civil Liberties:** 2
Status: Partly Free
Ethnic Groups: Chinese (95 percent), other (5 percent)



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
--	6,3PF	5,3PF	5,3PF	5,3PF	5,3PF	5,3PF	5,3PF	5,2PF	5,2PF

Overview:

In June 2005, Donald Tsang, a career civil servant popular with the Hong Kong public and with Beijing, was sworn in as the new chief executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) after the unpopular chief executive, Tung Chee-hwa, resigned in March. Along with the change in leadership, the Hong Kong government unveiled plans for reforms that will include more widespread participation in the election of the chief executive and the legislature.

Located at the mouth of the Pearl River on the southern Chinese coast, Hong Kong consists of Hong Kong Island and Kowloon Peninsula. Ceded in perpetuity to Britain in the 1842 Treaty of Nanking following the Opium Wars, Hong Kong was made a crown colony and later leased by Britain for a period of 99 years, beginning in 1898. Hong Kong's transition to Chinese rule began in 1984 under the Sino-British Joint Declaration, when London agreed to return the entire territory to China in 1997. In return, Beijing—under Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping's "one country, two systems" formula—pledged to maintain the capitalist enclave's legal, political, and economic autonomy for 50 years.

Under the 1984 agreement, London and Beijing drafted a mini-constitution for Hong Kong, the basic law, which was adopted by the Chinese National People's Congress (NPC) in 1990 to go into effect in 1997. Under the basic law, the blueprint was laid in 1991 for the introduction of direct elections for 18 seats in the territory's 60-member legislature, known as the Legislative Council (Legco), and the gradual

expansion of the number of elected seats to 30 over 12 years. "Functional constituencies"—interest groups with close ties to Beijing—were to choose the remaining 30 seats. Hong Kong's last colonial governor, Christopher Patten, infuriated Beijing with his attempts to deepen democracy by giving ordinary residents greater say in choosing Legco's indirectly elected seats. After China took control of Hong Kong in 1997, Beijing retaliated by disbanding the partially elected Legco and installing, for 10 months, a provisional legislature that repealed or tightened several of the territory's civil liberties laws.

Tung Chee-hwa was chosen by a Beijing-organized committee to lead Hong Kong after top Chinese leaders indicated that he was their preferred choice. Perceived as being unfamiliar with the political system and indecisive, Tung's popularity waned as Hong Kong's economy suffered in the wake of the 1997-1998 Asian financial crisis and as Beijing became increasingly involved in the affairs of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR). The Hong Kong government's credibility and independence from Beijing was further undermined in 2002, with the release of the proposal for basic law Article 23, an antiriot law aimed at replacing colonial-era national security laws. The considerable powers the bill gave to the government on national security grounds led to fears that freedom of speech and the press would be compromised, resulting in massive demonstrations in July 2003. Subsequently, the bill was tabled, and authorities have said that it will not be reintroduced. After being reelected in 2002, Tung promised public consultations in 2004 or 2005 on changes to the electoral system.

However, in April 2004, the standing committee of the NPC issued a ruling preserving the status quo, with the chief executive being elected by an 800-member committee of lawmakers, religious figures, and interest group representatives. The NPC maintained that political reform in Hong Kong could not occur without the committee's prior approval. As a result, in July 2004, hundreds of thousands of people took part in a peaceful march and a rally to protest the ruling and to demand the right to directly elect the chief executive. The NPC, however, did not back down. Universal suffrage was denied for the chief executive election in 2007 and for the Legco poll in 2008.

In the September 2004 Legco elections, pro-Beijing parties retained control of the legislature, with prodemocracy parties winning only 25 of the 60 seats in Legco (18 of the 30 directly elected seats and just 7 of the 30 seats chosen by functional constituencies). Though it was the first election in which the people directly elected 30 of the 60 seats, the elections were marred by incidents of criminal intimidation and threats against independent politicians, journalists, and voters; much of this activity was thought to be directed by Beijing. In a report issued in September 2004, Human Rights Watch called the multiple instances of election manipulation "some of the most worrying violations of human rights since the 1997 handover."

In March 2005, Tung, citing health concerns, resigned as chief executive. His early retirement—Tung still had two years left in his term of office—led to his replacement by Donald Tsang in June 2005. A career civil servant from the British colonial administration who does not speak Mandarin Chinese, Tsang has cultivated a positive relationship with Beijing, while remaining popular with the Hong Kong population. Tsang's succession was formalized with his election by an 800-member, pro-Beijing committee. However, Beijing expressed concerns about Tsang's

background as a British civil servant and ruled that Tsang will serve out the remainder of Tung's term, rather than serving a full five-year term as chief executive.

Though widely expected to cultivate pro-Beijing ties to receive support for his reelection in 2007, Tsang has pushed for limited democratic reforms. In October 2005, Tsang's government announced reforms to double the size of the committee that selects the chief executive and expand Legco by 10 seats, 5 of which would be directly elected by the public.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Hong Kong cannot change their government democratically. However, the population does enjoy significant basic rights. The basic law calls for a chief executive and a unicameral Legislative Council (Legco). The chief executive is elected by an 800-member committee, which in 2002 consisted of the 60 members of Hong Kong's Legco, Hong Kong's 36 delegates to China's NPC, 40 representatives of religious groups, 41 members of an official Chinese consultative body, and 623 interest group representatives. A new package of reforms was announced in October 2005 that will double the size of the committee's electorate to 1,600, a change that Chief Secretary Rafael Hui has called a significant step towards the goal of universal suffrage. The reform package will also increase the number of seats in Legco from 60 to 70; 35 of these seats will be directly elected, and the rest will be indirectly elected by functional constituencies.

Although the basic law calls for direct elections for both the chief executive in 2007 and Legco in 2008, a ruling by China's NPC in April 2004 contravened those rights, stating that Hong Kong was "not yet ready" for full democratic government. The decision by Beijing in June to limit the term of Donald Tsang as chief executive to two years instead of the expected five has been seen as contributing to the erosion of political rights.

The territory's basic law restricts Legco's lawmaking powers, prohibiting legislators from introducing bills affecting Hong Kong's public spending, governmental operations, or political structure. Legco members can introduce bills concerning governmental policy but only with the chief executive's prior approval. In certain cases, the government has used a very broad definition of "governmental policy" in order to exercise its right to block Legco bills. In addition, for an individual member's bill to pass, it must have separate majorities among Legco members who are directly elected and those who represent interest groups.

Although there are fair electoral laws, the Legco elections in 2004 were marred by pro-Beijing voter and candidate intimidation and threats, which reduced the credibility of the polls. An unprecedented visit in September 2005 to China by prodemocracy members of Legco may signify Beijing's decision to begin accepting the plurality of political perspectives among Hong Kong's leaders, as well as a decision by Hong Kong democrats to open new lines of communication with Beijing.

Even the government's staunchest critics generally acknowledge that Hong Kong residents enjoy the same basic rights that they enjoyed before the handover. Many of these rights, however, are now on less solid legal footing. While the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights continues to be formally incorporated into Hong Kong's 1991 bill of rights, the provisional legislature that served for 10 months after the handover watered down certain provisions of the bill of rights and rolled

back certain laws protecting workers' rights. It also amended laws to give officials the power to cite national security concerns in denying registration to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), de-registering existing groups, and barring public protests.

Hong Kong is generally regarded as having low rates of corruption, even though it is apparent that business interests have considerable influence on Legco. Hong Kong was ranked 15 out of 159 countries and territories surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index. The right to access governmental information is protected under law, and such information is provided to citizens in practice.

Despite cases of intimidation and beatings that led to the resignation of two radio show hosts in 2004, Hong Kong's media are widely regarded as among the freest in East Asia. Hong Kong has 16 privately owned newspapers, although four of them are funded by pro-Beijing interests and follow the Chinese Communist Party's lead on political and social issues. Newspapers, magazines, and radio and television channels remain outspoken, and political debate is vigorous. However, in some cases, self-censorship is practiced. International media organizations operate freely in Hong Kong, and foreign reporters do not need government-issued identification to operate. In 2005, Hong Kong was ranked 34 out of 167 countries for press freedom by Reporters Without Borders. There are no restrictions on internet access.

The basic law provides for freedom of religion, and the government generally respects these provisions in practice. Religious groups are specifically excluded from the Societies Ordinance, which requires NGOs to register with the government. University professors can write and lecture freely, and political debate on campuses is lively. Research is independent of the government.

The basic law also guarantees freedom of assembly and association, and the government has never invoked its power to bar protests on national security grounds. The police merely must be notified in advance of demonstrations and marches. Protests on sensitive Chinese government issues are prominent, including the commemoration of the sixteenth anniversary of the Tiananmen Square incident in June 2005.

Hong Kong's trade unions are independent, and union membership is not restricted to a single trade, industry, or occupation. However, laws restrict some basic labor rights and do not protect others. The provisional legislature in 1997 removed both the legal basis for collective bargaining and legal protections against summary dismissal for union activity. The Employment Ordinance provides punishments for antiunion discrimination. Though strikes are legal in the territory, in reality many workers sign employment contracts stating that job walkouts could be grounds for summary dismissal.

Hong Kong's common law judiciary is independent, and the judicial process is fair. Trials are public and held before a jury. However, the NPC in China reserves the right to make a final interpretation of basic law, effectively limiting the power of Hong Kong's Court of Final Appeals. Other than isolated incidents of threats, there are no reports of political terror, unjustified imprisonment, exile, or torture.

Hong Kong's police force, which remains firmly under the control of civilian authorities, is well supervised and not known to be corrupt. The police are forbidden by law to employ torture and other forms of abuse. Arbitrary arrest and detention are also illegal; suspects must be charged within 48 hours of their arrest. Prison conditions generally meet international standards.

Citizens are treated equally under the law, though Hong Kong's large population of foreign domestic workers remains vulnerable to discrimination.

The government does not control travel, choice of residence, or choice of employment in Hong Kong, although documents are needed to travel to the Chinese mainland. Use of the Telecommunications Ordinance and the Post Office Ordinance permitting the interception of communications requires high-level authorization but not a court-issued warrant.

Though women enjoy equal access to schooling and are protected under the basic law, according to the U.S. State Department's 2005 human rights report, there is nevertheless discrimination in employment, salary, welfare, inheritance, and promotion. Despite robust efforts by the SAR government to stop human trafficking, Hong Kong remains a point of transit and destination for persons trafficked for sexual exploitation or forced labor.

China

Tibet

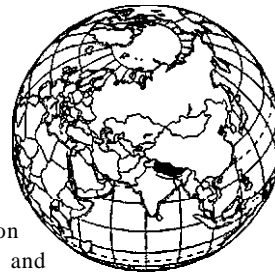
Population: 5,300,000* **Political Rights:** 7

Religious Groups: Tibetan **Civil Liberties:** 7

Buddhist [majority], other **Status:** Not Free
(including Muslim and Christian)

Ethnic Groups: Tibetan, Chinese

* This figure from China's 2000 census includes 2.4 million Tibetans living in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and 2.9 million Tibetans living in areas of Eastern Tibet that, beginning in 1950, were incorporated into four Chinese provinces



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF

Overview:

In September 2005, China celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the establishment of the Tibet Autonomous Region. However, in the months leading up to the anniversary celebration, officials in Lhasa were operating under heightened security, and former political prisoners were re-arrested in an effort to prevent "separatist" activity. Tensions between Tibetans and Han Chinese are expected to increase following completion of the Qinghai-Lhasa railroad in October 2005—the highest railroad ever constructed. The new rail line has raised concerns among Tibetans that the resulting increase in the number of Chinese traveling to Tibet will further jeopardize the region's distinct culture and future prospects for autonomy.

China's occupation of Tibet has marginalized a Tibetan national identity that dates back more than 1,600 years. Beijing's modern-day claim to the region is based on Mongolian and Manchurian imperial influence over Tibet in the thirteenth and

eighteenth centuries, respectively. Largely under this pretext, China invaded Central Tibet in 1950 and, in 1951, formally annexed Tibetan territory. In an effort to undermine Tibetan claims to statehood, Beijing split up the vast Tibetan traditional lands, incorporating roughly half of this eastern region into four different southwestern Chinese provinces. The central and western parts, the traditional homeland, which had been under the administration of the Dalai Lama's government at the time of the invasion, were named the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) in 1965.

The defining event of Beijing's rule took place in 1959, when Chinese troops suppressed a major uprising in Lhasa, a culmination of widespread fighting in eastern areas over the previous three years. A reported 87,000 Tibetans were killed in the Lhasa area alone. The massacre forced the Tibetan spiritual and political leader, the fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, to flee to India with some 80,000 supporters. During the next six years, China closed 97 percent of monasteries and defrocked more than 100,000 monks and nuns, and during Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), nearly all of Tibet's 6,200 monasteries were destroyed.

Resistance to Beijing's rule continued, but Chinese soldiers forcibly broke up protests throughout Tibet. Reforms were introduced in 1980, with religious practice allowed again, under some restrictions, and tourism permitted in certain areas. Protests against the Chinese resumed in 1987, and there were some 200 incidents over the next six years, almost all of them peaceful. Four large-scale protests against Chinese rule took place in Lhasa. The largest protest in March 1989 led to the imposition of martial law on Lhasa and the surrounding areas for 13 months, following three days of antigovernment protests and riots. Officials lifted martial law in May 1990.

In addition to jailing dissidents, Chinese officials stepped up their efforts in the mid-1990s to control religious affairs and undermine the exiled Dalai Lama's religious and political authority. China in 1995 detained six-year-old Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and rejected his selection by the Dalai Lama as the eleventh reincarnation of the Panchen Lama. The Panchen Lama is the highest religious figure to have remained in Tibet after the mass exodus in 1959. Officials then orchestrated the selection of another six-year-old boy as the Panchen Lama. Since the Panchen Lama identifies the reincarnated Dalai Lama, Beijing potentially could control the identification of the fifteenth Dalai Lama. The government has also tried to control the identification and education of other religious figures.

China in recent years has made a series of goodwill gestures that may be aimed at influencing international opinion on Tibet. Beijing freed several Tibetan political prisoners shortly before the end of their sentences, though all had been jailed for nonviolent activities. China also hosted visits by envoys of the Dalai Lama in 2002, 2003, and again in 2004, the first formal contacts between Beijing and the Dalai Lama since 1993. Since 1988, the Tibetan government-in-exile has sought to negotiate genuine autonomy for Tibet, having dropped earlier demands for independence. China's official statements suggest that Beijing is willing to have contacts with the Dalai Lama, while suggesting that he cannot be trusted because of a secret desire for independence.

At the September 1, 2005, celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the establishment of the TAR, the Chinese government praised the achievements of the past 40 years, citing economic development, social progress, cultural flourishing, ethnic

unity, stability, and consolidated frontier defense. The ceremony, held outside the Potala Palace, was broadcast on national television and included speeches by high government officials including Jia Qingling, member of the Politburo Standing Committee, who said that "people's living standards have been constantly improving," while "Tibetan traditional culture has been protected, carried forward, and developed" over the past 40 years. Evidence shows, however, that authorities tightened political control over the region, jailing dissidents, restricting freedoms, and managing daily affairs in major Buddhist monasteries and nunneries.

On October 15, China completed the construction of the first railway line to Tibet, running from Qinghai Province to Lhasa. According to official Chinese sources, after the commencement of trial operations in July 2006, the railway will link Lhasa with five major Chinese cities—Beijing, Shanghai, Xining, Chengdu, and Guangzhou—making it much more affordable to travel to the TAR. Within five years, Beijing hopes to extend the railway from Lhasa to the urban centers of Shigatse and Nyingtri. The Chinese leadership has asserted that the railway will boost trade, create jobs, and raise the standard of living in the TAR. While many Tibetans have benefited to some extent from government infrastructural development, the fruits of modernization policies disproportionately benefit Chinese. Scholars predict the new railroad will increase Chinese migration to the TAR, heightening ethnic tensions.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Tibet cannot change their government democratically. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rules the TAR and traditional Tibetan areas in nearby Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu, and Yunnan provinces through appointed officials whose leading ranks include few Tibetans. In a leadership shuffle in the spring of 2003, Jampa Phuntsog, formerly vice chairman of the TAR People's Congress, became chairman of the TAR regional government, a position he currently holds. Yang Chuantang, a Chinese, holds the position of TAR party secretary. He was hospitalized in September, and TAR government press confirmed that Jampa Phuntsog has assumed control of the "daily work." No Tibetan has ever held the peak post of TAR party secretary.

China controls the flow of information in Tibet, tightly restricting all media and regulating internet use. Tibetan-language programming by Voice of America, Radio Free Asia (RFA), and the Norway-based Voice of Tibet have suffered from the same frequency jamming as their Chinese-language counterparts. Increased availability of the internet in urban areas has provided Tibetans with more access to information. However, the Chinese government blocks websites providing news that is not "beneficial to the improvement of the quality of the nation, beneficial to economic development and conducive to social progress," according to Xinhua News Agency, and persons must show identity cards before using the internet in public facilities. An update to the 2000 restrictions on internet content was introduced in late September 2005 as a way of preventing the distribution of uncensored information through websites or e-mail, including all news related to "politics, economics, military affairs, foreign affairs and social and public affairs." This ban includes any information relating to Tibetan independence, the government-in-exile, and human rights abuses.

The CCP permits only certain Tibetans to take part in religious practice. All employees of government work units, however junior, and all students are forbidden

religious practice or the possession of religious objects. Enforcement is variable. However, since 1996, the party has strengthened control over monasteries under a propaganda campaign intended to undermine the Dalai Lama's influence as a spiritual and political leader. The government announced the end of this "patriotic education campaign" in 2000, but government-run "work teams" continue to visit monasteries to conduct mandatory sessions on Beijing's version of Tibetan history, the "peaceful liberation of Tibet," and other political topics. Officials allow monks over the age of 18; they are required to sign a declaration rejecting Tibetan independence, expressing loyalty to the Chinese government, and denouncing the Dalai Lama.

The government manages the daily operations of monasteries through Democratic Management Committees (DMCs) and local government bureaus. As with other government positions, the party approves all committee members so that only "patriotic and devoted" monks and nuns may lead DMCs. Since 1995, lay people have also been appointed to these committees. According to the U.S. State Department's 2004 Human Rights Report, released in February 2005, Beijing has claimed that Buddhist monasteries are associated with pro-independence activism in Tibetan areas. Spiritual leaders have encountered difficulty reestablishing historical monasteries because of a lack of funds, restrictions on monastic education, and denial of government permission to operate religious institutions.

In universities, professors cannot lecture on politically sensitive topics, and many must attend political indoctrination sessions. The government restricts course materials, prohibiting information that may reflect poorly on the CCP, to prevent campus-based political and religious activity; it also bans some ancient and/or religious texts from classrooms.

Independent trade unions, civic groups, and human rights groups are illegal. Some development and health nongovernmental organizations from Western countries operate in Tibet, under highly restrictive agreements signed with the Chinese government and government institutions, but registration has become increasingly difficult for these organizations.

Tibet is governed by China's corrupt, party-dominated legal system. Like the rest of China, Tibet does not enjoy rule of law. In January 2005, Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, a senior lama sentenced to death in December 2002, had his suspended sentence commuted to life in prison after much pressure from the United States and other international organizations. In a trial and procedure that Human Rights Watch said "lacked any pretense of due process," he was found guilty in 2002 of causing explosions and inciting separatism. The evidence against Tenzin Delek Rinpoche was not made public on the grounds that politically sensitive "state secrets" were involved. His alleged co-conspirator, Lobsang Dondrup, was executed in January 2003.

Tibetan political dissidents face particularly severe human rights abuses. Security forces routinely engage in arbitrary arrest, detention, torture, and execution without due process, punishing even nonviolent protest against Chinese rule. In July 2001, three Tibetans were arrested in Shigatse, the second largest city in the TAR, for attempting to carry photographs of the Dalai Lama and audiotapes of religious teachings across the border from Nepal to the TAR. Two of the men received four-year sentences, while the third, Jigme Gyatso, received two years' imprisonment

and two years' deprivation of political rights. Following his release, Jigme escaped to Nepal in July 2005, where he indicated that the three men were tortured prior to confessing to the crime of "instigation to split the country."

Owing to strictly controlled access to the TAR, it is difficult to determine the exact number of political prisoners. The Tibet Information Network estimated that approximately 145 Tibetans are currently imprisoned for political crimes, approximately two-thirds of whom are monks or nuns.

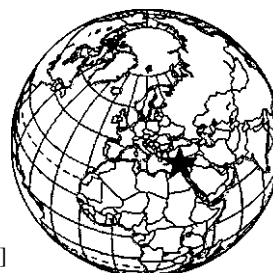
As members of one of China's 55 officially recognized "minority" groups, Tibetans receive preferential treatment in university admissions and exemptions to birth control restrictions. However, the dominant role of the Chinese language in education and in careers in government, business, and academia limits opportunities for many Tibetans. In the private sector, employers favor Chinese for many jobs—especially in urban areas. Also, Tibetans find it more difficult than Chinese to obtain permits and loans to open businesses.

Tibetan women are subject to China's restrictive family planning policies, which are somewhat more leniently enforced for Tibetans and other ethnic minorities than for Han Chinese. Officials limit urban Tibetans to having two children and encourage—but do not usually require—rural Tibetans to stop at three children.

Cyprus

Northern (Turkish) Cyprus

Population: 232,000 **Political Rights:** 2
Religious Groups: Muslim (majority), other [including Greek Orthodox] (1 percent) **Civil Liberties:** 2
Status: Free
Ethnic Groups: Turkish (majority), other [including Greek]



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
4,2PF	4,2PF	4,2PF	4,2PF	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F	2,2F

Note: See Cyprus under Country Reports.

Overview:

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus held parliamentary and presidential elections in 2005, both of which resulted in strong support for new president and pro-reunification candidate Mehmet Ali Talat and his Republican Turkish Party (RTP). Meanwhile, no progress was made on reunification talks during the year.

Annexed by Britain in 1914, Cyprus gained independence in 1960 after a 10-year guerrilla campaign by partisans demanding union with Greece. In July 1974, Greek Cypriot National Guard members, backed by the military junta in power in Greece, staged an unsuccessful coup aimed at unification with Greece. Five days later, Turkey invaded northern Cyprus, seized control of 37 percent of the island, and ex-

pelled 200,000 Greeks from the north. Today the Greek and Turkish communities are almost completely separated in the south and north, respectively.

A buffer zone, called the Green Line, has divided Cyprus since 1974. The capital, Nicosia, which is located at the Green Line, is similarly divided. Tensions between the Greek and Turkish populations have plagued the island since independence. UN resolutions stipulate that Cyprus is a single country in which the northern third is illegally occupied. In 1983, Turkish-controlled Cyprus declared its independence as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), an entity recognized only by Turkey.

The Turkish government elected in November 2002 was much less indulgent of Turkish Cypriot president Rauf Denktash's opposition to reunification because Turkey's own chances of European Union (EU) membership have been linked to a resolution of the island's division. Significant pressure from the EU and the United States, as well as UN intervention, helped move the two sides closer to settlement.

The latest and as yet most promising round of reunification negotiations began after a new reunification government was elected in northern Cyprus in December 2003. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan led a series of negotiations that included the leaders of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities, followed by the inclusion of Greece and Turkey. When no consensus was reached, Annan himself proposed a plan that was put to a vote in simultaneous, separate referendums in northern and southern Cyprus in April 2004. Greek Cypriots, who previously had been the more enthusiastic side with respect to reunification, had reservations about the plan, especially concerning security and international guarantees that the Turkish side would comply. Ultimately, 76 percent of Greek Cypriots voted against the plan, while 65 percent of Turkish Cypriots voted in favor. With the island still divided, only Greek Cyprus joined the EU as planned in May 2004. Membership had been a bargaining tool for the EU with Cyprus, and without it, a new reunification plan will be more difficult to bring about.

In legislative elections held on February 20, 2005, the Republican Turkish Party (RTP) won 44 percent of votes, increasing the number of seats it held to 24 of the 50 total. The National Unity Party (UBP), which had campaigned against reunification in the 2004 referendum, came in second with 32 percent, or 19 seats. Serdar Denktash, the son of the president, led the RTP's partner Democratic Party to win 6 seats, an increase of 1. The only other party in parliament is the proreunification Peace and Democracy Party, which dropped from 3 seats to 1.

The reunification government elected in 2003 and the yes vote in the 2004 referendum weakened the power of President Denktash—who had served since the TRNC declared independence—who decided not to run in the April 2005 presidential election. Seven candidates competed for Denktash's position, including Prime Minister Mehmet Ali Talat and UBP leader Dervish Eroglu. Talat won with 56 percent of the vote to Eroglu's 23 percent in a relatively low voter turnout.

Turkish Cypriot support for reunification has sparked international efforts to reward Turkish Cypriots by ending their isolation. However, attempts to end trade and travel bans have been thwarted by the southern Cypriots, who have worked against most direct contact between the north and the rest of the world. Exploratory talks took place in 2005, including discussion of a compromise to allow implementation of an EU aid and trade package for the north, but the positions of the two sides

were entrenched and no progress was made. Still, trade has increased between the two sides, and free movement across the Green Line has improved as more checkpoints have opened and restrictions have been loosened.

Living standards in the north, which has an economy that depends heavily on the government of Turkey, are only about a third of those in the south. The public sector provides most jobs, although many Turkish Cypriots now cross the border to work on the Greek side.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Turkish Cypriots can change the government of the TRNC democratically. The president and parliament are elected to terms of not longer than five years. The powers of the president are largely ceremonial. The 1,000-odd Greek and Maronite Christian residents of the north are disenfranchised, but many vote in elections in the Republic of Cyprus. Minorities are not represented in the Assembly.

Corruption and lack of transparency are considered problems in northern Cyprus. The government has made efforts to combat corruption since 2004.

The criminal code allows the government to jail journalists for what they write, and the government has been hostile to the independent press. The editor of the outspoken daily newspaper *Afrika*, Sener Levent, has faced hundreds of court summonses for his paper's criticism of Turkish and Turkish Cypriot officials. There were fears that Turkey's new penal code, which includes a provision forbidding expression in the media of views on Cyprus contrary to Turkish state policy, could be applied in Cyprus itself.

An agreement with Greek-Cypriot authorities dating from 1975 provides for freedom of worship, which is generally respected. About 500 Greek Cypriots crossed into the north on September 3 to attend a special service commemorating a saint for the second time since 1974. The event was marked by a nonfatal arson attack allegedly perpetrated by Turkish Cypriot extremists. The government does not restrict academic freedom. In 2004, Turkish Cypriot schools began teaching a less partisan account of Cypriot history in favor of multiple perspectives, in accordance with Council of Europe recommendations.

There is freedom of assembly and association. Civic groups and nongovernmental organizations generally operate without restrictions. Workers may form independent unions, bargain collectively, and strike, although union members are sometimes subject to harassment.

The judiciary is independent, and trials generally meet international standards of fairness. Turkish Cypriot police, under the control of the Turkish military, sometimes fail to respect due process rights, and there have been allegations of abuse of detainees.

The citizenship of children of mixed Turkish and Turkish Cypriot parentage has been the subject of debate. The granting of citizenship in these cases was frozen last year, but it resumed in 2005. Greek Cypriots and Maronites in the north face discrimination and have alleged that they are subject to official surveillance.

After the referendum on unification, the EU attempted to initiate direct trade and flights between northern Cyprus and the rest of the world, but it was unable to circumvent international regulations that control the ports and airports of the unrecognized state. Trade between the two parts of the island did increase after restric-

tions were loosened, and a new border crossing that opened in September 2005 further facilitates the export of Turkish Cypriot goods. In addition, all EU citizens, including Greek Cypriots, can now travel to the north by presenting identity cards instead of passports. Turkish Cypriots can move freely across the border to the south, but Turkish citizens in northern Cyprus cannot. Turkish Cypriots still have difficulty traveling abroad because most governments do not recognize their travel documents. They can now obtain Republic of Cyprus passports, which more are doing.

The status of property in the north formerly owned by Greek Cypriots is considered a major point of contention in possible future reunification talks. A March 2005 law in the south increased the penalties for people holding "illegal" property; the TRNC announced that it would ignore the law. The European Court of Human Rights ruled in April that the Turkish Cypriot regime must institute more effective remedies to address Greek Cypriot property claims in the north. A commission that had been established for this purpose was judged to be biased. The ruling will affect hundreds of other pending cases.

Women are underrepresented in government. There are legal provisions for equal pay for equal work, but these are often disregarded for textile and agricultural workers.

Georgia

Abkhazia

Population: 340,000 **Political Rights:** 5*
Religious Groups: Muslim [majority], Christian **Civil Liberties:** 5
Status: Partly Free
Ethnic Groups: Abkhaz (majority), Armenian, Georgian, Greek, Megrelian, Russian, Ukrainian



Ratings Change: Abkhazia's political rights rating improved from 6 to 5, and its status from Not Free to Partly Free, due to increased political ferment and public engagement in the political process associated with the January 2005 re-run of the presidential election.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
--	--	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	5,5PF

Overview:

The year 2005 saw the completion of the presidential election process that had dragged through the winter of 2004. A drawn-out leadership struggle followed on the heels of a presidential election in October 2004, the first openly contested presidential vote in the breakaway republic. Former Prime Minister Sergei Bagapsh won the presidency in a rerun of the election held in January 2005, in which Bagapsh and Raul Khajimba, campaigning on a joint ticket, garnered more than 90 percent of the

vote. Over the course of 2005, efforts were made through the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other intermediaries to advance a dialogue between Tbilisi and Sukhumi that could lead to a settlement on this frozen conflict.

Annexed by Russia in 1864, Abkhazia became an autonomous republic of Soviet Georgia in 1930. The year after the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, Abkhazia declared its independence from Georgia, igniting a war that lasted nearly 14 months. In September 1993, Abkhaz forces, with covert assistance from Russia, seized control of the city of Sukhumi, ultimately defeating the Georgian army and winning de facto independence for the territory. As a result of the conflict, more than 200,000 residents, mostly ethnic Georgians, fled Abkhazia, while casualty figures were estimated in the thousands. An internationally brokered ceasefire was signed in Moscow in 1994, although a final decision on the territory's status remains unresolved. In the October 1999 elections for president of Abkhazia, Vladislav Ardzinba, the incumbent and the only candidate running for office, was reelected. The OSCE, the United Nations, and other international organizations refused to recognize the vote as legitimate. In a concurrent referendum on independence, the results of which were not accepted by any state, a reported 98 percent of voters supported independence for Abkhazia. Georgia denounced the polls as illegal and as an attempt to sabotage peace talks.

Tensions in the Kodori Gorge, an area controlled partly by Georgia and partly by Abkhazia, underscored the precariousness of the region's fragile peace. In October 2001, a group reportedly consisting of Chechen rebels and Georgian partisans clashed with Abkhaz troops following a deadly raid on a village in the gorge. The downing of a UN helicopter and the bombing of several Abkhaz villages by aircraft that Georgian authorities alleged had come from Russia intensified the conflict. Tbilisi responded by sending troops to the upper part of the gorge in what it said was an operation to protect ethnic Georgians living there from separatist attacks. Abkhaz officials insisted that despite a UN-brokered protocol calling for the withdrawal of Georgian forces, which was signed by Russia and Georgia in 2002, Georgia had not pulled all of its troops out of the Kodori Gorge.

Deputies loyal to Ardzinba won a landslide victory in the March 2002 parliamentary elections when the opposition Revival and People's Party withdrew most of its candidates in protest over the conduct of the campaign. Officially backed candidates, who won all 35 seats in the legislature, ran unopposed for 13 of them. Among the problems cited during the elections were that ethnic Georgians displaced by the war were not able to vote, official radio and television promoted progovernment candidates, and the head of the Central Election Commission had disqualified a number of candidates supported by the opposition. As it had for previous elections in Abkhazia, the international community declared the elections to be illegitimate.

On April 8, 2003, after just four months in office, the government of Prime Minister Gennady Gagulia, who had developed a reputation for political weakness and inefficiency, resigned. Gagulia stepped down following pressure from Amtskhara, an increasingly powerful opposition political movement representing primarily veterans of the 1992-1993 war, which had threatened to organize a mass rally if he remained in office. On April 22, Defense Minister Raul Khajimba was named to sue-

ceed Gagulia as prime minister. Subsequently, Amtsakhara also called on Ardzinba to resign as president because of his poor health; Ardzinba, who was undergoing medical treatment in Moscow for an undisclosed illness and who was no longer actively involved in the daily running of the government, insisted that he had no intention of stepping down before the next presidential election, on October 3, 2004.

In advance of the presidential poll, a new political movement, called United Abkhazia (Yedinaya Abkhazia), took shape, with the hope of putting forward a single opposition candidate. However, all three of the new movement's leaders became presidential candidates: Sergei Shamba, the Abkhaz foreign minister; Nodar Khashba, a senior official in Russia's emergencies ministries; and Sergei Bagapsh, a former prime minister. The Central Election Commission barred one of the leading contenders, Alexander Ankvab, for allegedly failing to meet the residency requirement for presidential candidates. The commission also cited his refusal to take a full language test to evaluate his command of Abkhaz, which is the official state language of the Abkhaz Republic. Ankvab, who was the breakaway republic's interior minister during the Georgian-Abkhaz war of 1992-1993, has been among the most prominent opponents of President Ardzinba.

The postelection period at the end of 2004 and beginning of 2005 descended into a volley of charges and countercharges between Bagapsh, whom elections officials declared to be the winner of the October 3 poll with 50.08 percent of the vote—more than the 50 percent threshold needed to avert a second-round runoff—and Khajimba, who had the backing of the Ardzinba administration, as well as that of Moscow. Meanwhile, outgoing president Ardzinba, who had handpicked Khajimba as his successor, refused to leave office, contesting Bagapsh's apparent victory. When results in October 2004 showed that Bagapsh had defeated Khajimba, Russia imposed economic sanctions on Abkhazia. Under pressure from Moscow, Bagapsh and Khajimba agreed to a deal in which Khajimba and his opposition forces would support Bagapsh in return for a slot for Khajimba on the ticket. Bagapsh won the presidency in a re-run of the election held in January 2005 in which Bagapsh and Khajimba, campaigning on a joint ticket, garnered 91 percent of the vote. Turnout was 58 percent of the electorate, a higher than expected figure.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Residents of Abkhazia can elect government officials, but the more than 200,000 displaced Georgians who fled the region during the war in the early to mid-1990s could not vote in the October 1999 presidential, March 2001 local, or March 2002 parliamentary elections. International organizations, including the OSCE, as well as the Georgian government, criticized the polls as illegitimate. Although the November 1994 constitution established a presidential parliamentary system of government, the president exercises extensive control of the region. The agreement struck in December 2004 between Sergei Bagapsh and Raul Khajimba in advance of the January 2005 presidential elections rerun was to provide Khajimba's supporters the right to 40 percent of the positions in the future government, in the event that the Bagapsh-Khajimba ticket were successful. The ethnic Georgian Abkhazian Supreme Council has been a government in exile in Tbilisi since being expelled from Abkhazia in 1993.

Opposition political parties include Aitara (Revival). Amtsakhara, a political group

representing primarily veterans of the 1992-1993 war, has become a growing force in the territory's political life.

Several independent newspapers are published in the territory. Electronic media are controlled by the state and generally reflect government positions. Private television and radio stations are restricted in broadcasting news with political content. A good deal of Abkhazia's broadcasting infrastructure is poor, as much of it was destroyed during the civil war more than a decade ago.

Most nongovernmental organizations operating in Abkhazia rely on funding from outside the territory.

Defendants' limited access to qualified legal counsel, the violations of due process, and the lengthiness of pretrial detentions are among the systemic problems in the territory's criminal justice system.

The human rights and humanitarian situation in Abkhazia continued to be a serious problem in 2005. In its resolution issued on July 29, 2005, extending the Georgian observer mission (UNOMIG) through January 31, 2006, the UN Security Council stressed "the urgent need for progress on the question of refugees and internally displaced persons."

The security environment in the Gali district, whose population is largely ethnic Georgian, deteriorated over the course of 2005. Robbery and extortion of money and property have become widespread occurrences. Local residents in the Gali district were denied access to education in their mother tongue, Georgian.

Travel and choice of residence are limited by the ongoing conflict. Approximately 200,000 ethnic Georgians who fled Abkhazia during the early 1990s are living in western Georgia, most in the Zugdidi district bordering Abkhazia. Most of these internally displaced persons are unable or unwilling to return because they fear for their safety.

Equality of opportunity and normal business activities are limited by widespread corruption, the control by criminal organizations of large segments of the economy, and the continuing effects of the war. Abkhazia's economy is heavily reliant on Russia.

India

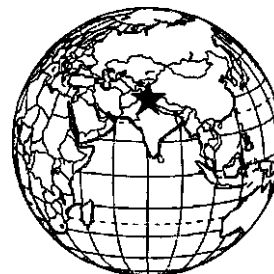
Kashmir

Population: 11,203,000
Religious Groups: Muslim (70 percent), other [including Hindu, Sikh, and Buddhist] (30 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Kashmiri [majority], Dogra, Ladakhi, Gujjar, Bakerwal, Dard, Balti, other

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,7NF	7,7NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF	5,5PF



Overview:

Overall progress on finding a political solution to the conflict over the territory of Kashmir, where a continuing insurgency has killed at least 40,000 civilians, soldiers, and militants since 1989, remained elusive throughout 2005. However, the reciprocal ceasefire between Indian and Pakistani troops declared in November 2003 has largely been upheld, and the two national governments held several rounds of talks during the year. In April 2005, both governments agreed to establish a bus service between the two sides of Kashmir, restoring a road connection that had been closed for more than 50 years. After an earthquake devastated Kashmir in early October, the two governments eventually agreed to open five crossing points across the Line of Control (LOC), which separates the two halves of Kashmir, in order to facilitate family contacts and improve relief efforts.

After centuries of rule in Kashmir by Afghan, Sikh, and local strongmen, the British seized control of the Himalayan land in 1846 and sold it to the Hindu maharajah of the neighboring principality of Jammu. The maharajah later incorporated Ladakh and other surrounding areas into what became the new princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. At the partition of British India into the new nations of India and Pakistan in 1947, Maharajah Hari Singh attempted to preserve Jammu and Kashmir's independence. However, after Pakistani tribesmen invaded, the maharajah agreed to Jammu and Kashmir's accession to India in return for promises of autonomy and eventual self-determination.

Within months of gaining their independence, India and Pakistan went to war in Kashmir. A UN-brokered ceasefire in January 1949 established the present-day boundaries, which gave Pakistan control of roughly one-third of Jammu and Kashmir, including the far northern and western areas. India retained most of the Kashmir Valley along with predominantly Hindu Jammu and Buddhist-majority Ladakh.

Under Article 370 of India's constitution and a 1952 accord, the territory received substantial autonomy. However, New Delhi began annulling the autonomy guarantees in 1953, and in 1957, India formally annexed the part of Jammu and Kashmir under its control. Seeking strategic roads and passes, China seized a portion of

Kashmir in 1959. India and Pakistan fought a second, inconclusive war over the territory in 1965. Under the 1972 Simla accord, New Delhi and Islamabad agreed to respect the LOC and to resolve Kashmir's status through negotiation.

The armed insurgency against Indian rule gathered momentum after 1987, when the pro-India National Conference Party won state elections that were marred by widespread fraud and violence, and authorities began arresting members of a new, Muslim-based, opposition coalition. Militant groups with links to political parties assassinated several National Conference politicians and attacked government targets in the Kashmir Valley. The militants included the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) and other pro-independence groups consisting largely of indigenous Kashmiris, as well as Pakistani-backed Islamist groups that want to bring Kashmir under Islamabad's control.

As the violence escalated, New Delhi placed Jammu and Kashmir under federal rule in 1990 and attempted to quell the mass uprising by force. By the mid-1990s, the Indian army had greatly weakened the JKLF, which abandoned its armed struggle in 1994. The armed insurgency has since been dominated by Pakistani-backed extremist groups, which include in their ranks many non-Kashmiri fighters from elsewhere in the Islamic world. Although opposition parties joined together to form the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) in 1993, they boycotted the 1996 state elections, and the National Conference was able to form a government under party leader Farooq Abdullah.

In August 2000, Hizbul Mujahideen, the largest armed group in Kashmir, initiated a dialogue with the Indian government, but talks broke down when India refused to include Pakistan in the discussions. A summit held in 2001 failed to resolve the two countries' long-standing differences over Kashmir. Militants stepped up their attacks in the aftermath of the summit, with an increasing focus on targeting Hindu civilians in the southern districts of the state. In addition, a leading moderate separatist politician, Abdul Ghani Lone, was assassinated in May 2002, probably by a hard-line militant group.

Seeking legitimacy for the electoral process, New Delhi encouraged all political parties to participate in the fall 2002 state elections but was unsuccessful in persuading the APHC to contest the polls. However, in a surprise result, the ruling National Conference lost 29 of its 57 assembly seats, while the Congress Party and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) made significant gains, winning 16 and 20 seats, respectively. In November, the two parties formed a coalition government headed by the PDP's Mufti Mohammad Sayeed. The new government promised to address issues of human rights violations, corruption, and economic development, and urged the central government to hold peace talks with separatist political groups. Sayeed also created a committee within the state assembly to study all autonomy-related issues. In October 2005, Sayeed stepped down as the chief minister under the terms of the 2002 power-sharing agreement with Congress, under which the two parties agreed to swap the post every three years. Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad, previously an urban development minister, was named as Sayeed's replacement.

After initial signs of improvement during the new government's honeymoon period, the incidence of both violence and human rights violations rose to previous levels. Nevertheless, the Indian government has shown a greater willingness to initiate a dialogue with various Kashmiri groups, including the APHC. In January 2004,

talks were held for the first time between Kashmiri separatists and the highest levels of the Indian government. The newly elected federal government announced in November 2004 that in response to an improved security situation, it planned to reduce troop numbers in the region; in addition, it presented a four-year, \$5 billion development package designed to improve infrastructure, education, and tourism.

The number of fatalities decreased slightly during the year, in a continuation of a declining trend since 2002; approximately 1,700 people were killed during 2005, according to the South Asia Terrorism Portal. In a high-profile assassination, education minister Ghulam Nabi Lone was killed in October. India issued passports to a number of separatist political leaders to travel to Pakistan in order to meet with Pakistan-based Kashmiri separatists in June 2005; at the meeting, APHC spokesperson and leading moderate Mirwaiz Umar Farooq said that the time had come for Kashmiri politicians to take the lead in finding a peaceful solution. The APHC's commitment to renouncing violence was reiterated in September, when an APHC delegation met with Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh. However, the desire of Kashmiris to become more deeply involved in the negotiating process has been made more difficult by an emerging split within the APHC between hard-liners, who favor a continuation of the militancy, and moderates, who favor a political solution.

Authorities in New Delhi have also attempted to improve relations with Pakistan. In November 2003, Pakistan declared a ceasefire across the LOC, to which India reciprocated; the ceasefire has largely held since then. Since announcing the resumption of a "composite dialogue," including concerning the Kashmir dispute, in January 2004, the two governments have held several rounds of talks. Although little substantive progress has been made on finding a lasting solution to the conflict, the two sides have discussed a range of issues, as well as affirming their commitment to solving the Kashmir dispute through peaceful negotiations. A number of confidence-building measures, such as improved nuclear safeguards, reopened transport links, and an increased diplomatic presence, have gradually been implemented. India and Pakistan agreed in February 2005 to start a bus service across the LOC that would link the capitals of Indian and Pakistani Kashmir. After delays due to differences over how paperwork should be handled and despite threats from insurgent groups—militants attacked targets along the intended route twice before the bus's launch—the service started in April. This historic opening allowed Kashmiri civilians to reunite with family members, many of whom had been divided and unable to see each other for decades.

On October 8, Pakistani-administered Kashmir, along with parts of Indian-administered Kashmir, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, was hit by an earthquake whose epicenter was near the Pakistani-Kashmir capital of Muzaffarabad. Although Indian-administered Kashmir escaped the brunt of the destruction, approximately 1,300 people were killed and 150,000 were rendered homeless. After several weeks of wrangling, India and Pakistan agreed to open their border at several crossing points to facilitate family contacts and improve relief efforts (the first points were opened in early November), and India also allowed Pakistan to fly helicopters over previously restricted airspace. However, both governments were accused of allowing territorial sensitivities regarding the decades-long dispute to overshadow the need to cooperate on a massive relief effort being conducted in very difficult mountainous terrain.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

India has never held a referendum on Kashmiri self-determination as called for in a 1948 UN resolution. The state's residents can nominally change the local administration through elections, but historically, elections have been marred by violence, coercion by security forces, and balloting irregularities. Militants commonly enforce boycotts called for by separatist political parties, threaten election officials and candidates, and kill political activists as well as civilians during the balloting. During the campaign period leading up to the 2002 elections for the 87-seat state assembly, more than 800 people, including more than 75 political activists and candidates, were killed. However, the balloting process itself was carefully monitored by India's Election Commission, and turnout averaged just over 40 percent. Most independent observers judged the elections to be fair but not entirely free, largely because of the threat of violence.

Although Jammu and Kashmir was returned to local rule in 1996, many viewed the National Conference government as corrupt, incompetent, and unaccountable to the wishes and needs of Kashmiris. An International Crisis Group report noted that official corruption is "widespread," and corruption cases are seldom prosecuted. Much corrupt behavior and illegal economic activity can be traced directly to political leaders and parties and to militant groups. The new state government made a commitment to address issues of corruption and governance; however, progress in improving both has been slow, and government opacity remains a major concern.

Primarily because of pressure from militants, conditions for the media remain difficult, and many journalists practice some level of self-censorship. Militant groups regularly threaten and sometimes kidnap, torture, or kill journalists, while reporters are occasionally also harassed or detained by the authorities. In July, eight journalists were injured in Srinagar during a grenade attack by Islamic militants and subsequent crossfire by security forces. Though it is generally not used, under India's 1971 Newspapers Incitements to Offenses Act (in effect only in Jammu and Kashmir), district magistrates can censor publications in certain circumstances. Pressure to self-censor has also been reported at smaller media outlets that rely on state government advertising for the majority of their revenue. Despite these restrictions, however, newspapers do report on controversial issues such as alleged human rights abuses by security forces. Authorities generally do not restrict access to the state by foreign journalists, according to the U.S. State Department's 2005 human rights report, and internet access is unrestricted.

Freedom to worship and academic freedom are generally respected by Indian and local authorities. In 2003, for the first time in over a decade, the state government granted permission to separatist groups who wished to organize a procession to mark the anniversary of the prophet Muhammad's birthday; this right was once again granted in 2005. However, Islamist militant groups do target Hindu and Sikh temples or villages for attack; a number of such instances, in which dozens of civilians were killed, occurred during the year.

Freedoms of assembly and association are occasionally restricted. Although local and national civil rights groups are permitted to operate, the Indian government has banned some international groups from visiting the state. Several human rights activists have been killed since 1989, and the few individuals and groups that continue to do human rights work are sometimes unable to travel freely within the state or are subject to harassment both from security forces and countermilitants.

The APHC, an umbrella group of 23 secessionist political parties, is allowed to operate, although its leaders are frequently subjected to preventive arrest, and its requests for permits for public gatherings are routinely denied. Until 2005, the Indian government had also denied permission for APHC leaders to travel to Pakistan. Politically motivated strikes, protest marches, and antigovernment demonstrations take place on a regular basis, although some are forcibly broken up by the authorities.

The judiciary was able to function more effectively in 2005, according to the U.S. State Department's human rights report, but judges, witnesses, and the families of defendants remain subject to threats and intimidation from militants. In addition, the government frequently disregards judicial orders quashing detentions, and security forces refuse to obey court orders. Many judicial abuses are facilitated by the 1978 Public Safety Act and other broadly drawn laws that allow authorities to detain persons for up to two years without charge or trial. Although detentions under the security laws are nonrenewable, authorities frequently re-arrest suspects on new charges and impose new detentions; Amnesty International's 2005 report noted that approximately 600 people remain held in preventive detention under such legislation. The new state government promised in November 2002 to review cases of detainees being held without trial and to release those against whom there were no charges. Although a screening committee met several times in 2003, and several political prisoners were released, progress in implementing this commitment remains slow.

In a positive step, the draconian 2002 Prevention of Terrorism Act, which gave authorities wide powers of interrogation and detention while expanding the definitions of punishable crimes and prescribing severe punishments for a broad range of criminal acts, was repealed by the new central government in September 2004. However, two other broadly written laws—the Armed Forces Special Powers Act and the Disturbed Areas Act—allow Indian forces to search homes and arrest suspects without a warrant, shoot suspects on sight, and destroy homes or buildings believed to house militants or arms. Moreover, the Special Powers Act requires New Delhi to approve any prosecution of Indian forces. While the state human rights commission examines some human rights complaints (it has received hundreds of complaints since its inception, mostly regarding prisoner release, custodial deaths, and alleged security force harassment), it is hampered by woefully inadequate resources and infrastructure. In addition, it cannot directly investigate abuses by the army or other federal security forces or take action against those found guilty of violations. Efforts to bring soldiers to justice have been rare. However, after coming to power, the new state government did undertake several initiatives to improve accountability. In June 2003, it announced that 118 security force personnel had been punished for having committed rights violations.

In a continuing cycle of violence, several thousand militants, security force personnel, and civilians are killed each year. Approximately 500,000 Indian security forces based in Kashmir, including soldiers, federal paramilitary troops, and the police, carry out arbitrary arrests and detentions, torture, "disappearances," and custodial killings of suspected militants and alleged civilian sympathizers. From 3,000 to 8,000 people are estimated to have disappeared during the course of the insurgency. As part of the counterinsurgency effort, the government has organized and armed pro-government militias composed of former militants. Members of these groups act with impunity and have reportedly carried out a wide range of human rights abuses against

pro-Pakistani militants, as well as civilians. Local activists report that human rights violations continue to occur at levels similar to those of previous years.

Armed with increasingly sophisticated and powerful weapons, and relying to a greater degree on the deployment of suicide squads, militant groups backed by Pakistan continue to kill pro-India politicians, public employees, suspected informers, members of rival factions, soldiers, and civilians. Militants also engage in kidnapping, rape, extortion, and other forms of terror. Violence targeted against Kashmiri Hindus is part of a pattern since 1990 that has forced several hundred thousand Hindus to flee the region; many continue to reside in refugee camps near Jammu. Until a ceasefire was declared in November 2003, shelling by Indian and Pakistani troops along the LOC killed numerous civilians during the year, displaced thousands more, and disrupted schools and the local economy.

Female civilians continue to be subjected to harassment, intimidation, and violent attack, including rape and murder, at the hands of both the security forces and militant groups. In recent years, women have also been targeted by Islamist groups. In 2001, the Lashkar-e-Jabbar group issued an ultimatum that all Muslim women wear the burqa (a head-to-toe covering); members of the group threw acid at and sprayed paint on several women who refused to comply with the directive. In late 2002, another militant group active in Rajouri district declared that no girls over the age of 12 should attend school.

Israel

Israeli-Occupied Territories

Populations, 889,000 (1,429,000: Gaza; 2,460,000: West Bank). In addition, there are some 220,000 Israeli settlers in the West Bank and 20,000 in the Golan Heights. Approximately 177,000 Jews and 174,000 Arabs live in East Jerusalem.

Religious Groups: Muslim, Jewish, Christian

Ethnic Groups: Palestinian, Jewish, Bedouin

Ratings Change: The Israeli-Occupied Territories' civil liberties rating improved from 6 to 5 due to Israel's withdrawal of settlers and troops from the entire Gaza Strip and from four settlements in the West Bank.



Note: The areas and total number of persons under Israeli jurisdiction changed periodically during the year as a result of the fluid nature of Israel's military presence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,5NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,5NF

Overview:

Palestinians gained a measure of freedom in 2005 with the complete withdrawal of Israeli settlers and army person-

nel from the Gaza Strip and with the dismantling of four settlements in the West Bank. Armed Israeli incursions into Palestinian areas decreased markedly after Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) announced mutual ceasefires early in the year. Israel's unilateral disengagement moves led to widespread speculation over its long-term intentions regarding the West Bank; shortly after the Gaza withdrawal, Israel announced it will increase the size of some West Bank settlements. Israel continued construction of a security barrier in the West Bank.

After Palestinians rejected a UN partition plan in November 1947, Israel declared its independence on the portion of land allotted for Jewish settlement. In 1948, the fledgling state was jointly attacked by neighboring Arab countries in Israel's War of Independence. While Israel maintained its sovereignty, Jordan seized East Jerusalem and the West Bank, and Egypt took control of the Gaza Strip. In the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel seized the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem; the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt; and the Golan Heights from Syria. The Golan Heights had been used by Syria to shell northern Israeli communities.

After 1967, Israel began establishing Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, an action regarded as illegal by most of the international community. Israel has maintained that the settlements are legal since under international law the West Bank and Gaza are in dispute, with their final legal status to be determined through direct bilateral negotiations based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. The settlements have become a major sticking point in negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians and in relations between Israel and the international community. The PA- and U.S.-backed road map put forward in 2003 demands a freeze on settlements, a condition that Israel did not fully honor in 2005.

In what became known as the *intifada* (uprising), Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza began attacking mainly settlers and Israel Defense Forces (IDF) troops in 1987 to protest Israeli rule. A series of secret negotiations between Israel and Yasser Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) conducted mainly in Oslo, Norway, produced an agreement in September 1993. The Declaration of Principles provided for a PLO renunciation of terrorism, PLO recognition of Israel, Israeli troop withdrawals, and gradual Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza.

Most of Gaza and the West Bank town of Jericho were turned over to the PA in May 1994. Following the assassination of Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995 by a right-wing Jewish extremist opposed to the peace process, Israel, under the stewardship of Prime Minister Shimon Peres, began redeploying its forces from six major Palestinian cities in the West Bank and Gaza.

Under the Oslo provisions implemented so far, the Palestinians have had full or partial control of up to 40 percent of the territory of the West Bank and 98 percent of the Palestinian population. However, Palestinian jurisdiction eroded considerably after the eruption of the second *intifada* in September 2000. The IDF subsequently reentered areas under PA control.

At the U.S. presidential retreat, Camp David, in July 2000 and at Taba, Egypt, in the fall and in early 2001, Israeli and Palestinian leaders engaged in negotiations under U.S. sponsorship. For the first time, Israel discussed compromise solutions on Jerusalem, agreeing to some form of Palestinian sovereignty over East Jerusalem and Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem's Old City. Israel also offered all of the Gaza Strip

and more than 95 percent of the West Bank to the Palestinians. The Palestinian leadership rejected the Israeli proposals. Some analysts suggested that Arafat was not confident that the Israeli offers guaranteed contiguity of Palestinian territory in the West Bank or that Israel would recognize a "right of return," allowing Palestinian refugees to live in Israel.

After the collapse of the talks, the Palestinians launched an armed uprising, and violence flared throughout the occupied territories. Insisting that the PA was not preventing terrorism, Israel responded to successive waves of Palestinian suicide bombings by staging incursions into Palestinian-ruled territory, destroying weapons factories and killing top leaders and others members of radical Islamist groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad, as well as members of the secular Tanzim and al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, both offshoots of the mainstream Fatah movement. Many Palestinian civilians were also killed in the Israeli raids.

In April 2003, Israel and the Palestinians agreed to abide by a roadmap to peace put forward by the United States, Russia, the United Nations, and the European Union. The multistage, performance-based plan demands concrete Palestinian moves against terrorist groups, to be followed by Israeli troop pullbacks and relaxation of curfews and travel restrictions. The plan also calls for a freeze on Israeli settlement activity and the creation of an independent Palestinian state.

After the death of Yasser Arafat in November 2004 and the election of Mahmoud Abbas as the new PA president in January, violence between the two sides declined markedly. In February 2005, Sharon and Abbas met in Sharm al-Sheikh, Egypt, and agreed on a formal truce. While some violence flared sporadically during the year, the four-year pattern of terrorist attacks and strong Israeli incursions into Palestinian territory largely came to an end.

Israel continued construction of a controversial security fence roughly along the West Bank side of the 1967 armistice line (Green Line). Composed of high-wire fencing, ditches, security sensors, watchtowers, and in some parts concrete slabs, the fence is designed to prevent terrorists from infiltrating Israel. In some areas, the fence juts farther east into the West Bank and restricts Palestinian access to farming fields, schools, and jobs. The barrier is largely viewed by Palestinians as a means to expropriate West Bank land and collectively punish ordinary Palestinians for acts committed by terrorists. In January 2005, Israel's Supreme Court—in response to a petition filed by nine Palestinian village councils—issued an interim injunction preventing the government from constructing a portion of the fence near two Palestinian villages. In March, the Israeli government announced its intention to expand three large settlement blocs close to the Green Line and to route the security barrier around them. The blocs house approximately 74 percent of West Bank settlers. Analysts suggested that the barrier would ultimately incorporate 8 percent of West Bank land, putting 99.5 percent of Palestinians outside the barrier in 92 percent of the West Bank. Once complete, however, the barrier will cut off approximately 55,000 Palestinians living in East Jerusalem from the rest of the city. Israel continued to insist that the fence is a temporary solution to an ongoing terrorist threat, not a permanent border.

While the road map calls for a freeze on settlement activity, U.S. president George W. Bush publicly acknowledged in 2004 that some large West Bank settlements would remain intact as part of a final status resolution to the conflict, particularly

heavily populated settlements close to the Green Line. A report issued in the spring—before Israel dismantled four West Bank settlements in August—stated that more than half of the illegal settler outposts in the West Bank were built on land whose ownership was unclear or on land owned by Palestinians. Outposts normally consist of a handful of trailer homes placed mainly by religious Jews on uninhabited land. The report, prepared by an Israeli lawyer at the request of the prime minister's office, said that the Israeli Housing Ministry had provided some financing for the outposts even though the cabinet had not approved their construction.

In August, Israel withdrew all settlers from the Gaza Strip, ending its 38-year presence in the Palestinian coastal enclave. Approximately 9,000 settlers left their homes in 21 settlements in Gaza. Despite the presence of Israeli protestors and calls by some Orthodox religious leaders to resist withdrawal efforts, the pullout took place with little violence and ahead of schedule. By September, all IDF troops had pulled out, and Palestinians were free to move about Gaza, no longer encumbered by numerous IDF checkpoints and roadblocks. However, while Israel handed over control of Gaza's southern border to the PA, Israel retained control over Gaza's airspace and coastline.

The Gaza withdrawal was not coordinated with the PA and was carried out unilaterally by Israel. Palestinians voiced concern that the plan was part of a larger permanent settlement envisioned by Israel that would be imposed unilaterally and would stop short of a larger Israeli pullout from the West Bank.

In September, Israel pulled out of the "Philadelphi" route, the border area between Gaza and Egypt it had long controlled. A lack of effective PA policing and apparent indifference on the part of Egyptian authorities led to chaos in the days immediately following Israel's evacuation. Palestinians poured over the border and freely smuggled arms and other contraband back into Gaza.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Since they are not citizens of Israel, Palestinians in the West Bank cannot vote in Israeli elections. They are permitted to vote in elections organized by the PA. Palestinian presidential elections were held in January, resulting in the election of Mahmoud Abbas as head of the PA. Israel helped facilitate voting by easing roadblocks and checkpoints in the West Bank and Gaza.

After Israel annexed East Jerusalem in 1967, Arab residents there were issued Israeli identity cards and given the option of obtaining Israeli citizenship. However, by law, Israel strips Arabs of their Jerusalem residency if they remain outside the city for more than three months. In February 2005, Israel's attorney general overturned a government decision allowing the confiscation of East Jerusalem property owned by West Bank Palestinians without compensation. Arab residents of East Jerusalem who do not choose Israeli citizenship have the same rights as Israeli citizens except the right to vote in national elections (they can vote in municipal elections). Many choose not to seek citizenship out of solidarity with Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, believing East Jerusalem should be the capital of an independent Palestinian state. East Jerusalem's Arab population does not receive a share of municipal services proportionate to its numbers. Arabs in East Jerusalem have the right to vote in PA elections.

Druze and Arabs in the Golan Heights, who were formerly under Syrian rule,

possess similar status to Arab residents of East Jerusalem. They cannot vote in Israeli national elections, but they are represented at the municipal level.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the most closely covered stories in the world, a circumstance that suggests there is a relatively high degree of press freedom in the occupied territories. However, international press freedom groups regularly criticize Israel for preventing journalists' access to live conflict zones, for harming and sometimes killing reporters during armed battles, and for harassing Palestinian journalists. Israel has long denied that it deliberately targets journalists and insists that reporters covering armed conflict in the West Bank and Gaza are in danger of getting caught in crossfire. At least one Palestinian journalist was shot and injured in 2005 while covering clashes.

Israel generally recognizes the right to freedom of worship and religion. On several occasions during the intifada, Israel has restricted Muslim men under 40 from praying on the Temple Mount compound in Jerusalem's Old City, for fear of violent confrontations. Palestinians have deliberately damaged Jewish shrines and other holy places in the West Bank. In the wake of Israel's withdrawal from Gaza, Palestinians desecrated or destroyed several synagogues in former settlements.

While academic freedom is generally respected, IDF closures and curfews and the West Bank security barrier restrict access to Palestinian academic institutions. Israeli authorities have at times shut universities, and schools have been damaged during military operations. Throughout the intifada, schoolchildren have periodically been injured or killed during fighting.

Freedom of assembly and association is generally respected. However, Israel has imposed strict curfews in the West Bank at various times since September 2000. There are many Palestinian nongovernmental organizations and civic groups, whose activities are generally not restricted by Israel. Labor affairs in the West Bank and Gaza are governed by a combination of Jordanian law and PA decisions. Workers may establish and join unions without government authorization. Palestinian workers in Jerusalem are subject to Israeli labor law.

Palestinians accused by Israel of security offenses in Israeli-controlled areas are tried in Israeli military courts. Security offenses are broadly defined. Some due process protections exist in these courts, though there are limits on the rights to counsel, bail, and appeal. Administrative detention is widely used. Most convictions in Israeli military courts are based on confessions, sometimes obtained through physical pressure. In 2000, Israel outlawed the use of torture as a means of extracting security information, but milder forms of physical coercion are permissible in cases where the prisoner is believed to have immediate information about impending terrorist attacks. Human rights groups still criticize Israel for engaging in what they consider torture. Confessions are usually spoken in Arabic and translated into Hebrew for official records.

Israel holds approximately 7,000 Palestinians in jail. Many suspected of involvement in terrorism are held in administrative detention without charge or trial. In February, in accordance with the truce agreement reached in Sharm al-Sheikh, Israel released 500 Palestinian prisoners, although not those charged with taking part in attacks that killed Israelis. In June, Israel released another 400 prisoners. While Palestinians have recourse to Israel's highest civilian courts to protest home demolitions and Israel's tactics in carrying out targeted assassinations, decisions made in

their favor are rare. However, Israel's high court has ruled in favor of Palestinians who have petitioned to have sections of the West Bank security barrier rerouted.

Violence between Palestinians and Israeli settlers is not uncommon. Israeli settlers in the Gaza Strip were ambushed and killed by Palestinian gunmen or attacked with mortar fire in 2005. Attacks by Israelis against Palestinians also occasionally take place. In August, an Israeli terrorist shot and killed four Palestinians in the West Bank.

Freedom of movement improved measurably in 2005, especially with Israel's withdrawal from Gaza. Reduced security checkpoints in the West Bank, especially around the time of Palestinian elections early in the year, also contributed to an easing of Palestinian mobility, as did Israel's handing over security control to the PA in the West Bank town of Tulkarm and its dismantlement of four settlements in the northern West Bank. The security measures had denied Palestinians easy passage from one town to another, making access to jobs, hospitals, and schools extremely difficult.

Israel exercises overall military control at border crossings between the West Bank and Jordan. Construction of Israel's security barrier has also disconnected many Palestinians from their farming fields and has denied them and others easier access to other parts of the West Bank. All West Bank and Gaza residents must have identification cards in order to obtain entry permits into Israel, including East Jerusalem. Israel often denies permits without explanation.

The Palestinian economy has been seriously affected by the intifada and the Israeli closures of the West Bank and Gaza; thousands of Palestinians rely on access to jobs in Israel. At various times during the year, Israel permitted several thousand Palestinian workers to enter the country, but not the nearly 200,000 who regularly crossed daily into Israel before the intifada.

While Palestinian women are underrepresented in most professions and encounter discrimination in employment, they do have full entry access to universities and to many professions. Palestinian personal status law, derived in part from Sharia (Islamic law), puts women at a disadvantage in matters of marriage, divorce, and inheritance. Rape, domestic abuse, and "honor killings," in which unmarried women who are raped or who engage in premarital sex are murdered by a relative, are not uncommon. Since societal pressures prevent reporting of such incidents, the exact frequency of attacks is unknown. According to media reports, an average of one honor killing a week takes place in the West Bank and Gaza. These murders often go unpunished, or perpetrators serve extremely short prison sentences.

Israel

Palestinian Authority-Administered Territories

Population: 3,889,000
(1,429,000: Gaza;
2,460,000: West Bank).
Political Rights: 5
Civil Liberties: 5*
Status: Partly Free
Religious Groups: Muslim, Christian
Ethnic Groups: Palestinian, Bedouin



Ratings Change: The Palestinian Authority-administered territories' civil liberties rating improved from 6 to 5, and its status from Not Free to Partly Free, due to an improved civil liberties environment that followed the death of Yasser Arafat and facilitated the success of relatively competitive and honest elections, along with the enhanced freedom of movement that followed Israel's abandonment of settlements in the Gaza Strip.

Note: The areas and total number of persons under Palestinian jurisdiction changed periodically during the year as a result of the fluid nature of Israel's military presence and activities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
5,6NF	5,6NF	5,6NF	5,6NF	5,6NF	5,6NF	5,6NF	5,6NF	5,6NF	5,5PF

Overview:

Palestinians faced a year of contrasting developments in 2005. The first elections in nine years ushered in a new president of the Palestinian Authority (PA), and Israel's pullout from Gaza and parts of the West Bank led to greater freedom and more areas under PA jurisdiction. However, internecine violence flared throughout the year, and armed militant groups seriously challenged the new PA leadership. After Mahmoud Abbas was elected president, succeeding the late Yasser Arafat, Abbas declared a ceasefire with Israel and faced intense pressure to deliver on jobs, public order, and security.

In the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel came to occupy Sinai, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. Israel annexed Jerusalem's Old City and East Jerusalem in 1967 and the Golan Heights in 1981. In what became known as the *intifada* (uprising), Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza began attacking mainly targets of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in 1987 to protest Israeli rule. A series of secret negotiations between Israel and Yasser Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) conducted in Oslo, Norway, produced an agreement in September 1993. Premised on the land-for-peace formula articulated in UN Security Council Resolution 242 of November 1967, the Declaration of Principles provided for Israeli troop withdrawals and gradual Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza in exchange for an end to Palestinian terrorism and for recognition of Israel.

- At the U.S. presidential retreat, Camp David, in July 2000 and at Taba, Egypt, in the fall and in early 2001, Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak and U.S. president Bill

Clinton engaged the Palestinian leadership in the most far-reaching negotiations ever. For the first time, Israel discussed compromise solutions on Jerusalem, agreeing to some form of Palestinian sovereignty over East Jerusalem and Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem's Old City. Israel also offered all of the Gaza Strip and more than 95 percent of the West Bank to the Palestinians. Arafat, however, rejected the offers. Some analysts have suggested that Arafat balked over Jewish claims to Jerusalem and Israel's refusal to recognize a "right of return," which would in principle allow Palestinian refugees to live in Israel. After a controversial visit by Likud party leader Ariel Sharon to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem in September 2000, the Palestinians launched an armed uprising. Sharon became prime minister in elections in February 2001. The PA has had full or partial control of up to 40 percent of the territory of the West Bank and 98 percent of the Palestinian population.

Presidential elections were held in January 2005 to replace Arafat, who died in November 2004. The elections, repeatedly postponed during Arafat's reign, were the first since Palestinian residents of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem chose their first popularly elected government in 1996, which formed the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). Mahmoud Abbas won the 2005 contest with approximately 62 percent of the vote. International observers judged the election generally free and fair. Despite calls by radical groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad to boycott the vote, violence was largely absent during the campaign and voting.

In municipal voting in Gaza following the presidential vote, Hamas won 77 out of 118 seats in 10 districts, to Fatah's 26 seats. Hamas's popularity is due in large part to its network of clinics and schools, but its electoral gains were nonetheless regarded as a significant challenge to the PA, which, despite the passing of Arafat, was still widely viewed as corrupt. In a second round of West Bank and Gaza municipal voting in May, Fatah won most municipalities, but Hamas posted impressive gains. Each group accused the other of fraud, and Fatah gunmen shut down Gaza voter-registration offices preparing for legislative elections scheduled for July. In June, Abbas postponed those elections until at least early 2006. Abbas said that he wanted to allow more time for changes to a new election law; the Palestinian elections committee announced in May that it needed more time to bridge differences over changes to a law regulating how to allocate legislative seats.

In August and September 2005, Israel withdrew all settlers from the Gaza Strip, ending its 38-year presence in the Palestinian coastal enclave. Approximately 9,000 settlers left their homes in 21 settlements in Gaza, and the PA assumed control over all of the Gaza Strip. The removal of Israeli military checkpoints, restrictions on Palestinian road travel, and the fortifications surrounding the settlements contributed to significantly enhanced freedom of movement for Palestinians inside Gaza. However, while Israel handed over control of Gaza's southern border to the PA, Israel retained control over Gaza's airspace and coastline.

The IDF has temporarily reentered some PA-controlled territory since the onset of the second intifada in September 2000. However, armed Israeli incursions into Palestinian areas decreased markedly after Israel and the PA announced mutual ceasefires in February 2005.

The truce also resulted in a significant decrease in violence between Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. However, violence among Palestinians continued. The PA banned the public display of weapons in Palestinian areas, but

militant groups brandished their weapons with relative impunity, at times striking against Israeli targets and clashing with one another and with PA security forces. In February, Abbas fired nine senior police and security chiefs in an attempt to consolidate his control over the various Palestinian security services. The dismissals occurred after militants fired mortars at Jewish settlements. In June and July, PA troops clashed with Palestinian militants in Gaza who were preparing rocket attacks against Israel. The fighting left two dead. Militants torched a police station. Clashes resulted in the deaths of at least two civilians after Abbas declared a state of emergency in Gaza. In October, Hamas and Fatah carried out violent tit-for-tat kidnappings in Gaza in a display of deepening animosity between the two groups. The Strategic Assessments Initiative, a conflict-management group based in Washington, D.C., issued a report on the state of the Palestinian security services, calling them divided, weak, and unmotivated, especially in the absence of meaningful reform.

While Israel's pullout from the Gaza Strip led to greater freedom for Palestinians, these freedoms were limited by the anarchic-like conditions that took hold in September 2005. Militants fired rockets at Israeli towns over the border, and hundreds of Palestinians ransacked former settlement areas. Chaos also reigned for several days at the border with Egypt after Israel handed over border security to the PA. Palestinians poured over the border unchecked, and many returned with smuggled contraband, including weapons. In September, in a direct challenge to Abbas and the PA, around 100 masked gunmen stormed the Gaza home of former security chief Moussa Arafat, dragging him outside and killing him execution style. The Popular Resistance Committees, made up of former Fatah members, claimed responsibility for the assassination, declaring that Arafat was corrupt. The brazen attack was widely perceived to be a direct challenge to Abbas, and it underscored the relative impunity enjoyed by gunmen in Palestinian areas.

The truce reached in February 2005 between Israel and the Palestinians increased optimism that the two sides would return to abiding by a road map to peace put forward by the United States, Russia, the United Nations, and the European Union (EU) in 2003. The multistage, performance-based plan is premised on demonstrative Palestinian action aimed at ending violence, which was to be followed by Israeli troop pullbacks and easing of curfews and travel restrictions on Palestinians. It also calls for a freeze of Israeli settlement activity once Palestinian terrorism ends. Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza represent a major sticking point in negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. Israel's withdrawals from Gaza and from four West Bank settlements were carried out unilaterally.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

The PA president is elected to five-year terms. International observers judged the January 2005 presidential election to be generally free and fair. As of the end of 2005, the PLC was composed of 88 representatives. The unicameral legislative body of the PA operates as a parliament and the prime minister is nominated by the president. Competitive multi-party parliamentary elections were scheduled for early 2006. Several parties in addition to Hamas and Fatah were expected to compete. In October, Palestinian legislators passed a vote of no confidence against Palestinian prime minister Ahmed Qurei. The motion took place after policemen invaded a legislative session in Gaza, demanding more support in confronting Hamas. As per agreements with

Israel, the PLC has no real authority over borders or defense policy. Laws governing Palestinians in the occupied territories derive from Ottoman, British Mandate, Jordanian, Egyptian, and Palestinian Authority law, and Israeli military orders.

Palestinian residents of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem do not have the right to vote in national elections in Israel. Arabs in East Jerusalem who hold Israeli identity cards can vote in the city's municipal elections and can also vote in PA elections.

Transparency and the consolidation of PA finances became priority issues in the wake of Arafat's death. Estimates of the amount of money Arafat deposited into private funds and offshore holdings ran into the billions of dollars. Some international aid to the PA was cut in the last days of Arafat's life over the rampant corruption under his watch. Abbas has presided over a cleanup of Palestinian finances, including instituting budget controls and ending the old system of cash handouts to political loyalists and members of security services. In July, the Group of 8 pledged \$3 billion a year to the PA in development assistance. Still, according to the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, an Israeli think tank, "all international investment activities in Gaza are subject to the ultimate control of local warlords and terror groups." Transparency International ranked Palestine 107 out of 159 countries surveyed in its 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The media are not free in the West Bank and Gaza, and press freedom continued to suffer in 2005. Under a 1995 PA press law, journalists may be fined and jailed, and newspapers closed, for publishing "secret information" on Palestinian security forces or news that might harm national unity or incite violence. However, another press law, also signed in 1995, stipulates that Palestinian intelligence services do not reserve the right to interrogate, detain, or arrest journalists on the basis of their work. Nevertheless, several small media outlets are pressured by authorities to provide favorable coverage of the PA. Arbitrary arrests, threats, and the physical abuse of journalists critical of the PA are routine. Official Palestinian radio and television are government mouthpieces. Arafat never ratified a 1996 law passed by the PLC that guarantees freedom of expression. According to the International Telecommunications Union, as of 2004, 160,000 Palestinians had access to the internet.

The relative lawlessness in Palestinian areas also endangered journalists during the year. In August, gunmen in Gaza believed to be attached to Fatah, and upset with the PA, kidnapped a cameraman for France 3 TV, who was released about one week later. Other foreign news crews left Gaza in the wake of the abduction. In February, the PA banned Palestinian journalists from covering a summit meeting between Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon in Sharm al-Sheikh, Egypt. In addition, in an apparent attempt to reduce coverage that could incite violence, Abbas ordered Palestinian television to stop airing bloody images of conflict and programs glorifying "martyrs." In a marked contrast from Arafat, Abbas also insisted that he did not want praiseworthy coverage of himself in place of violent imagery.

In March, the PA imposed restrictions on mosque preachers, a move seen as part of an effort to stem incitement against Israel and the United States. Nonetheless, anti-Israel and anti-Semitic preaching and incitement to violence were regular features of mosque prayer services and official radio and television broadcasts in 2005.

The PA generally respects freedom of religion, though no law exists protecting religious expression. The basic law declares Islam the official religion of Palestine and also states that "respect and sanctity of all other heavenly religions [that is, Judaism and Christianity] shall be maintained." The PA requires all Palestinians to be affiliated with a religion, which must be displayed on identification cards. Personal status law, which governs marriage and divorce, is based on religious law; for Muslims, it is derived from Sharia (Islamic law), and for Christians, from ecclesiastical courts. Some Palestinian Christians have experienced intimidation and harassment by radical Islamic groups and PA officials, which has led many to emigrate from traditionally Christian towns like Bethlehem. In September, hundreds of Muslim men torched houses and vehicles in a Christian village in the West Bank. Also in September, Palestinians desecrated synagogues left in former Jewish settlements in Gaza.

The PA has authority over all levels of education. Some Palestinian schools teach hatred of Israel, and some textbooks and curriculums promote Israel's destruction. IDF closures, curfews, and the West Bank security barrier restrict access to Palestinian academic institutions. Israeli authorities have at times shut universities, and schools have been damaged during military operations. Throughout the intifada, schoolchildren have periodically been injured or killed during fighting. The PA has also operated military training summer camps for children, often named for suicide bombers.

The PA requires permits for rallies and demonstrations and prohibits violence and racist sloganeering. Nevertheless, large rallies organized by radical groups are regular occurrences in Palestinian areas, often marked by violent rhetoric. There are a broad range of Palestinian nongovernmental organizations and civic groups, though many do not actively criticize the PA. The Islamist group Hamas operates a large network providing social services to certain Palestinians.

Labor affairs in the West Bank and Gaza are governed by a combination of Jordanian law and PA decisions. Workers may establish and join unions without government authorization. Palestinian workers seeking to strike must submit to arbitration by the PA Ministry of Labor. There are no laws in the PA-ruled areas to protect the rights of striking workers. Palestinian workers in Jerusalem are subject to Israeli labor law.

The Palestinian judicial system is not independent. While the PA revealed a draft constitution in April 2003, Arafat never endorsed it. Despite Abbas's consolidation of 13 security services into 3, law and order still remained elusive in 2005: property laws were not always enforced, few taxes were paid, and even traffic police were in some cases too frightened to enforce rules. Palestinian judges lack proper training and experience. Israeli demands for a Palestinian crackdown on terrorism have given rise to state security courts, which lack almost all due process rights. There are reportedly hundreds of administrative detainees currently in Palestinian jails and detention centers. The same courts are also used to try those suspected of collaborating with Israel or accused of drug trafficking. Defendants are not granted the right to appeal sentences and are often summarily tried and sentenced to death. According to the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group, alleged collaborators are routinely tortured in Palestinian jails and are denied the right to defend themselves in court. These practices are not prohibited under Palestinian law.

In September, Abbas outlawed armed men from appearing in Gaza's streets. Before the ban took effect, Hamas Kasseem rockets on display during a rally in Gaza City exploded, killing 16 people. While Hamas blamed Israel for the explosion, the PA criticized Hamas for not taking responsibility for its own actions and for needlessly endangering Palestinian civilians. After the ban was in place, however, Palestinian gunmen could still be seen brazenly carrying weapons on Gaza's streets. According to *Time* magazine, citing Palestinian security sources, 20,000 gunmen operate in Gaza.

Violence between Palestinians and settlers is common. Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip were ambushed and killed by Palestinian gunmen. These attacks generally go unpunished by the PA. Groups of settlers have attacked Palestinians and destroyed Palestinian property (such as olive groves), often without serious legal penalties.

The intifada and Israeli closures of the Palestinian territories have exacted a serious toll on the Palestinian economy. According to the World Bank, nearly half of the Palestinian population lives below the poverty line of two dollars' income per day. In August, former World Bank president James Wolfensohn arranged the purchase and handover to Palestinians of approximately 4,000 greenhouses used by Israeli settlers in Gaza. After Israeli forces withdrew from Gaza, however, Palestinians there looted or destroyed many greenhouses.

While Palestinian women are underrepresented in most professions and encounter discrimination in employment, they do have full access to universities and to many professions. Of the 2,500 candidates who participated in Palestinian municipal elections in May 2005, 400 were women. Personal status law, derived in part from Sharia, puts women at a disadvantage in matters of marriage, divorce, and inheritance. Rape, domestic abuse, and "honor killings," in which unmarried women who are raped or who engage in premarital sex are murdered by a relative, are not uncommon. According to media reports, an average of one honor killing a week takes place in the West Bank and Gaza. These murders often go unpunished. In April, reports emerged that Hamas was operating a "vice and virtue" unit in Gaza believed responsible for the murder of a 22-year-old woman killed while walking along a Gaza beach with her fiancé. The PA said it arrested two Hamas members involved with the intimidation campaign.

Moldova Transnistria

Population: 555,000
Religious Groups: Christian Orthodox (majority), other [including Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim]
Ethnic Groups: Moldovan (32 percent), Russian (30 percent), Ukrainian (29 percent), other (9 percent)

Political Rights: 6
Civil Liberties: 6
Status: Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	6,6NF

Overview:

Although peace talks to find a final settlement regarding the status of Transnistria resumed in 2005, no breakthroughs were reached. During the year, the United States and the European Union (EU) were invited to be observers in the negotiations.

The Dnestr Moldovan Republic (DMR), bounded by the Dniester River to the west and the Ukrainian border on the east, is a breakaway region in the eastern part of Moldova with a large population of ethnic Russians and ethnic Ukrainians. In Moldova, the region is called Transnistria. Historically distinct, Transnistria was attached to the territory that became Moldova when Stalin redrew borders in 1940. As the Soviet Union began to falter in the early 1990s, pro-Russian separatists in Transnistria, fearing that Romanian-speaking Moldova would join neighboring Romania, declared independence, established the DMR, and set up an authoritarian presidential system.

With weapons and other assistance from the Russian army, the DMR leadership fought a military conflict with Moldova that ended in a 1992 ceasefire. A new Moldovan constitution in 1994 gave the territory substantial autonomy, but the conflict remains unresolved. The separatist regime has been strong enough to resist absorption by Moldova, yet too weak to gain outright international recognition; it is not recognized by any independent state.

Over the past several years, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Russia, and Ukraine have attempted to mediate a final settlement between Moldova and the DMR. They also participate in the Joint Control Commission that monitors compliance with the 1992 ceasefire. In September 2005, the United States and the European Union (EU) were invited to join the negotiations as observers.

The lingering presence in Transnistria of more than 1,000 Russian soldiers and a supply of Russian weapons has further complicated matters. In 1999, Russia agreed to an OSCE initiative calling for the removal of all Russian weapons and troops by December 2002. However, as the withdrawal deadline approached, Russia announced that it would not meet its obligation and attempted to refashion the force as "guarantors" of any eventual diplomatic settlement. In response to this development, the OSCE extended the deadline by 12 months. This deadline was likewise unmet, as Russia ultimately declared that it would not remove all of its troops until a final settle-

ment was reached. Large quantities of armaments continued to be evacuated, but in January 2005 the Russian Ministry of Defense announced that evacuations had not taken place for the previous six months. The ministry also said that 50 percent of the equipment had been removed thus far. Moldovan president Vladimir Voronin and the Moldovan parliament have both called for the troops to be withdrawn.

Settlement negotiations have made little progress over the past several years. After Voronin rejected, in November 2003, a plan that would have created a "joint state," talks became deadlocked. The competing interests of Russia, Ukraine, and Western institutions such as the EU and the OSCE further impede progress in finding a solution. Early in 2004, the five negotiators (from the OSCE, Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, and Transnistria) agreed to meet regularly, but talks were suspended in 2004 after Transnistrian authorities closed two schools on their territory teaching in Moldovan using the Latin script. The authorities subsequently closed the other six such schools, taking some by force. While the schools were open in 2005, and all faced official obstacles.

The dynamic shifted somewhat with the December 2004 election of President Viktor Yushchenko in Ukraine, who subsequently launched a peace plan that was the basis for talks in 2005. Results have been modest so far, but all sides remain engaged.

In general, the Transnistrian authorities have been very effective in pursuing their short-term goals, and they currently have little reason to compromise on demands for wide-ranging autonomy or on contentious points such as developing a Transnistrian military. The authorities opened their own mint in November and began issuing a Transnistrian currency, which had previously been produced in Poland. Most of Moldova's industrial infrastructure is within Transnistria's borders, but international isolation limits its economic potential. A power plant in Transnistria that provides about 46 percent of Moldova's energy cut supplies in November because Moldova refused to accept a rate increase.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Residents of Transnistria cannot elect their leaders democratically, and they are unable to participate freely in Moldovan elections. While the DMR maintains its own legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government, no country recognizes the government's sovereignty. Igor Smirnov is now serving his third term as president, and he has said that he will not step down until Transnistria is independent. The various presidential and parliamentary elections that have been held since 1992 have generally been considered neither free nor fair by the international community, although they have not been monitored.

Candidates with genuine prospects of challenging Smirnov in 1996 and 2001 were banned from participation. The main opposition movement was also banned; authorities staged a recall vote for the only opposition member of the Supreme Soviet, but the necessary quorum of voters did not turn out. Native Moldovan speakers are not represented in government and are under constant political pressure. The Ministry of State Security has conducted Soviet-style interviews of citizens suspected of subversive activities and engages in brutality and heavy-handed threats.

The Transnistrian authorities refused to permit polling on their territory for the

March 2005 Moldovan elections, and therefore residents had to cross the border to vote. Transnistria planned to hold its own legislative elections in December 2005, which the OSCE will not monitor.

Corruption is a serious problem in Transnistria. The Moldovan government claims that weapons trafficking is common practice, though foreign diplomats maintain that such charges are exaggerated. Nevertheless, criminal elements with links to the regime are suspected of functioning with impunity.

The media environment is restrictive, but the few independent outlets do not experience open harassment. The authorities use tactics such as bureaucracy and withholding of information to inhibit the activities of independent media. The independent newspaper *The Individual and His Rights* has experienced pressure and violent attacks. All journalists exercise a certain amount of self-censorship. Nearly all media are state owned or controlled; state influence in the media is official policy, and these outlets do not criticize the authorities. A single company dominates private broadcasting (with one channel), cable television, and internet access.

Religious freedom is restricted. A locally administered census in 2005 found that more than 80 percent of Transnistrians say that they are Orthodox. Authorities have denied registration to other religious groups, and Jehovah's Witnesses are regularly arrested. Nonregistered groups have difficulty renting space for prayer meetings and face harassment.

Although about 5,000 students study Moldovan using the Latin script, this practice is banned in Transnistria. In 2004, authorities sent militias to close down eight schools that did not obtain a licensing permit and adopt the official curriculum. Parents and teachers who resisted the action were forcibly removed, and some were threatened by authorities. It is generally believed that the issue is not about language but about the politics of teaching in the official language of Moldova (Moldovan, or Romanian), rather than in Russian. The schools were allowed to reopen but faced logistical and legal hurdles.

The authorities severely restrict freedom of assembly and rarely issue required permits for public protest. Freedom of association is similarly circumscribed. All non-governmental activities must be coordinated with local authorities, and those that are not face harassment, including visits from security officials. Trade unions are holdovers from the Soviet era, and the United Council of Labor Collectives works closely with the government.

The judiciary is subservient to the executive and implements the will of the authorities. Defendants do not receive fair trials, and legislation falls short of international standards. Politically motivated arrests and long-term detentions are common. Human rights groups receive accounts of torture in custody. Politically motivated killings and police harassment have been reported, and political prisoners are frequently denied access to lawyers. Prison conditions are considered harsh, and prisons are severely overcrowded.

Members of the so-called Ilascu group were imprisoned by Transnistria following what is widely considered to have been an unfair trial that found them guilty of crimes against the Transnistrian authorities during the 1992 armed conflict. They were imprisoned in inhumane conditions and tortured. Two have been released. In July 2004, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that Moldova and Russia were responsible for paying damages for infringement of the rights of the four and said

that the remaining two must be released immediately. Moldova and Russia have paid compensation, but the two men remain in jail.

Authorities discriminate against ethnic Moldovans. According to Moldova's Ministry of Information, more than 270,000 people in Transnistria hold Moldovan citizenship, at least 80,000 hold Russian citizenship, and 80,000 hold Ukrainian citizenship.

The Transnistria authorities are entrenched in the territory's economic activities, both legal and illegal. Transnistria is accused of being a major exporter of drugs and illicit arms. It is likely that revenues of the Customs Department, headed by the president's son, line official pockets. Russia also has interests in Transnistria's illegal activities, although Russia's economic influence over the territory is likely less than in previous years. In August, Moldova lifted economic sanctions on the territory that had been imposed in the previous year.

Domestic violence against women is a problem, and women are underrepresented in most positions of authority. Transnistria is a transit point for trafficking in women.

Morocco

Western Sahara

Population: 273,000 **Political Rights:** 7
Religious Groups: Muslim **Civil Liberties:** 6
Ethnic Groups: Arab, Berber **Status:** Not Free



Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF	7,6NF

Overview:

By late 2005, it appeared unlikely that the Western Sahara would succeed in its bid to gain independence from Morocco. The Moroccan government, while striking a more conciliatory tone in its public statements, remained adamant about its sovereignty over the region. For its part, the Polisario Front, the main group leading the Western Sahara's drive for independence, also took small steps toward reconciliation with Morocco with the release of the 400 or so remaining Moroccan prisoners of war. Visits between family members on both sides of the divide, which had been started in 2004 but were then discontinued for much of the year, were restarted.

Spain colonized Western Sahara for over 90 years. In 1975, Spanish troops withdrew from the territory after a violent two-year conflict with the Polisario Front. Morocco and Mauritania both claimed the phosphate-rich region, and in 1976, the two countries, in an agreement with Spain, partitioned the territory, with Mauritania receiving the southern third. At the same time, the Polisario declared an independent state, the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, and began to fight foreign troops.

When Mauritania renounced its claim to the southern portion of the region in 1979, Moroccan troops moved in and essentially annexed the entire territory.

For 12 years, Moroccan and Polisario troops exchanged fire intermittently. In 1991, the United Nations brokered a ceasefire between the two groups that called for a referendum on independence, which was to be supervised by the newly created Mission for a Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). However, the referendum has been continuously postponed for almost 14 years, with disagreement about who is eligible to participate in the poll.

Since annexation of the Western Sahara, Morocco has moved to assert its control by encouraging Moroccans to move to the region, providing financial incentives and rewards for doing so. The Moroccan authorities have also encouraged Sahrawis to move to Morocco. While some Sahrawi prisoners have been released in recent years, Moroccan authorities still detain and try Sahrawi activists.

In 2004, the Polisario accepted the UN Security Council's so-called Baker plan, which called for a four- or five-year period of autonomy after which there would be a referendum on integration into Morocco, continued autonomy, or outright independence. However, Morocco rejected the plan, prompting James Baker to resign as UN envoy. While the conflict seemed intractable, the Security Council voted to maintain MINURSO in late October 2005, and a new UN envoy, Peter van Walsum, was appointed. The mandate of MINURSO was extended by the Security Council to April 2006.

Late in 2004, the confidence-building measures promoted by MINURSO and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) earlier that year were suspended after disagreements between the Polisario and Moroccan authorities. However, in November 2005, the measures were reintroduced, and programs such as family visits were restarted. Sahrawis who had family members in the Moroccan-controlled part of the Western Sahara visited family members in Tindouf and vice versa. The beneficiaries of the program are flown on UN planes and accompanied by MINURSO civilian police officers. Also in November, on the thirtieth anniversary of Morocco's annexation of the territory, King Muhammad VI said that Morocco supports a negotiated solution to the issue of the status of Western Sahara, which could result in autonomy for Morocco's "southern provinces," but only within the framework of the sovereignty of the kingdom.

In August, the Polisario announced their agreement to release the remaining 400 Moroccan prisoners of war in their custody. The prisoners were repatriated under the auspices of the International Red Cross. The Polisario claims that Morocco refuses to release over 100 prisoners and supporters, but the Moroccan authorities are steadfast in their denial that they are holding many Sahrawi fighters and claim that the numbers are inflated by the Sahrawi and their supporters.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of the Western Sahara cannot change their government democratically. Moroccan authorities organize local elections, and Sahrawis who believe in self-determination are excluded from Morocco's parliament.

Moroccan authorities tightly control press access to Western Sahara. Journalists are welcome if they travel accompanied by government officials. However, Moroccan and foreign journalists who want to cover the region independently can face

numerous hurdles. Moroccan authorities summarily expel reporters from the region. During protests in Laayoune in May, authorities expelled several reporters and prevented others from entering the city. Even Moroccan journalists who defy Morocco's position on the Western Sahara face legal harassment. Virtually no internet access or private media outlets exist in the poverty-stricken region.

Almost all Sahrawis are Sunni Muslims, and Moroccan authorities, who are also by and large Sunni Muslims, generally respect freedom of worship.

Freedom to assemble or to form political organizations is restricted. In May, Moroccan authorities arrested dozens of Sahrawis after anti-Moroccan riots and demonstrations in Laayoune. Thirty-two of the detainees went on a hunger strike in October to protest their detention. Throughout the year, several other demonstrations were held against Moroccan control of the area, which resulted in detentions, beating, and other forms of harassment by Moroccan authorities. The trials of eight Sahrawi activists were scheduled for December 2005.

Sahrawis living in areas under Moroccan control are subject to Moroccan labor laws, but little organized labor activity exists in the area.

Sahrawis who reside in areas under Moroccan government control are subject to Moroccan laws and regulations. For decades, Sahrawis who have defied the Moroccan government have been arrested, killed, "disappeared," and tortured.

Human rights groups, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have for years criticized the Moroccan authorities regarding their conduct in the Western Sahara. At year's end, the Moroccan Equity and Reconciliation Commission (IER), the first truth commission in the Middle East, submitted its final report to King Muhammad VI; the report detailed the contents of the commission's public hearings and investigations into the disappeared. The IER's work covered the period 1956-1999, most of the reign of King Hassan II. Yet the only public hearing scheduled to take place in the Western Sahara was canceled, and only a tiny fraction of the cases described by witnesses and victims related to the Western Sahara.

Moroccan authorities and the Polisario restrict freedom of movement in areas where potential conflict can occur.

As in Morocco, Sahrawi women are subject to legal and cultural discrimination, particularly in poorer, more rural areas where illiteracy is high.

Pakistan

Kashmir



Population: 5,093,000 **Political Rights:** 7

Religious Groups: Muslim **Civil Liberties:** 5

[Shia majority, Sunni minority] **Status:** Not Free
(99 percent), other (1 percent)

Ethnic Groups: Kashmiri, Punjabi, Balti, Gujjar, Ladakhi, Shina, other

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
--	--	--	--	--	--	7,5NF	7,5NF	7,5NF	7,5NF

Overview:

Relations between India and Pakistan continued to grow more cordial in 2005, as the two governments held several rounds of talks over the status of Kashmir and other issues. Both sides agreed to open a bus service connecting the two capitals of Kashmir in April in what was hailed as an important symbol of improved relations. Meanwhile, the Pakistani government faced demands from nationalist and pro-independence Kashmiri groups for increased political rights within Pakistani-administered Kashmir. Sectarian tensions in the Northern Areas remained high during the year, following the murder of a Shiite cleric in January, with extended curfews, rioting, and other targeted violence between Sunni and Shiite groups being reported throughout 2005. In October, the region was devastated by an earthquake that killed more than 85,000 and rendered several million homeless, creating a massive humanitarian disaster.

For centuries, Kashmir was ruled by Afghan, Sikh, and local strongmen. In 1846, the British seized control of the territory and sold it to the Hindu maharajah of the neighboring principality of Jammu. The maharajah later incorporated Ladakh and other surrounding areas into the new princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. When British India was partitioned into India and Pakistan in 1947, Maharajah Hari Singh tried to maintain Jammu and Kashmir's independence. However, after Pakistani tribesmen invaded, he agreed to cede Jammu and Kashmir to India. In return, India promised autonomy and eventual self-determination for the territory.

India and Pakistan went to war over Kashmir within months of gaining their independence. As part of a UN-brokered ceasefire in January 1949 that established the present-day boundaries, Pakistan gained control of roughly one-third of Jammu and Kashmir, including the far northern and western areas, as well as a narrow sliver of land adjoining Indian-held Kashmir. India retained most of the Kashmir Valley along with Jammu and Ladakh.

Unlike India, Pakistan never formally annexed the portion of Kashmir under its control. The Karachi Agreement of April 1949 divided Pakistani-administered Kashmir into two distinct entities—Azad (free) Kashmir and the Northern Areas. The Northern Areas consist of the five districts of Gilgit, Ghizer, Ghanche, Diamer, and

Baltistan. Pakistan retained direct administrative control over the Northern Areas, while Azad Kashmir was given a larger degree of nominal self-government.

For several decades, an informal council administered Azad Kashmir. A legislative assembly was set up in 1970, and the 1974 interim constitution established a parliamentary system headed by a president and a prime minister. However, the political process in Azad Kashmir has been suspended on several occasions by the military rulers of Pakistan. In 1977, General Zia ul-Haq dissolved the legislative assembly and banned all political activity for eight years, while in 1991, the prime minister of Azad Kashmir was dismissed, arrested, and imprisoned in Pakistan.

Chronic infighting among Azad Kashmir's various political factions has also allowed Islamabad to interfere with ease in the electoral process. In the 1996 state elections, Sultan Mahmud Chaudhary's Azad Kashmir People's Party (AKPP) emerged with a majority of seats. The outgoing Muslim Conference (MC) had boycotted the elections, accusing the AKPP of vote rigging and fraud. In elections held in July 2001, with a 48 percent turnout, the MC swept back into power, winning 30 out of 48 seats. However, Pakistani leader General Pervez Musharraf installed a serving general as the president of Azad Kashmir later that month, amid speculation that Islamabad intended to reassert its control over the territory.

The lack of political representation in the Northern Areas has fueled demands for both formal inclusion within Pakistan and self-determination. In 1988, Gilgit was wracked by unrest after the majority Shias demanded an independent state. The Pakistani army suppressed the revolt with the help of armed Sunni tribesmen from a neighboring province. In 1999, the Pakistani Supreme Court directed the government to act within six months to give the Northern Areas an elected government with an independent judiciary. After the verdict, the Pakistani government announced a package that provided for an appellate court and an expanded and renamed Northern Areas Legislative Council (NALC). In August 2003, the NALC submitted a proposal to the Pakistani government that called for a more autonomous form of provincial government along the lines of what currently exists in Azad Kashmir. Elections to the NALC were held in October 2004, but the NALC continues to have few real financial and legislative powers, despite continued calls for federal authorities to devolve more power to local elected politicians.

Since early 2002, Musharraf has been under sustained international pressure to curb the activities of Pakistani-based militant groups. However, when Musharraf banned the movement of militants from the Pakistani portion of Kashmir into the Indian-held section of Kashmir in June 2003, hard-line Islamist groups in Azad Kashmir organized protest rallies denouncing his decision and vowed to continue their armed insurgency. Militants continue to operate in both Azad Kashmir and the Northern Areas.

While the Pakistani authorities have readily provided support to armed militants fighting in India, they have been less tolerant of groups that espouse Kashmiri self-determination. In 2001, 12 small Kashmiri separatist groups in Azad Kashmir and the Northern Areas announced the formation of the All Parties National Alliance, which committed itself to fighting for an independent Kashmir. Nationalist and pro-independence groups in Pakistani-administered Kashmir have continued to agitate for increased political representation.

Talks between India and Pakistan over the ultimate status of Kashmir, as well as

other confidence-building measures, have continued regularly since a ceasefire was instituted in November 2003, and periodic meetings between national leaders have made clear that they want to continue the dialogue. India and Pakistan agreed in February 2005 to start a bus service across the Line of Control (LOC) separating the two halves of Kashmir, which would link the capitals of Indian and Pakistani Kashmir. After delays due to differences over how paperwork should be handled and despite threats from insurgent groups—militants attacked targets along the intended route twice before the bus's launch—the service started in April. This historic opening allowed Kashmiri civilians to reunite with family members, many of whom had been separated and unable to see each other for decades.

On October 8, Pakistani-administered Kashmir, along with parts of Indian-administered Kashmir, Afghanistan, and Pakistan proper, was hit by an earthquake whose epicenter was near the Azad Kashmir capital of Muzaffarabad. In all, at least 85,000 people were killed, 75,000 were injured, and several million were rendered homeless. After several weeks of wrangling, India and Pakistan agreed to open their border at several crossing points in order to facilitate family contacts and improve relief efforts (the first points were opened in early November), and India also allowed Pakistan to fly helicopters over previously restricted airspace. However, both governments were accused of allowing territorial sensitivities regarding the decades-long dispute to overshadow the need to cooperate on a massive relief effort being conducted in very difficult mountainous terrain.

Sectarian tension between the majority Shias and the Sunnis in the Northern Areas continued to be a concern. Violent protests erupted in 2003 among Shias in Gilgit over the government's decision to introduce a new educational curriculum. Attempts by Shias to campaign for changes to the curriculum led to the imposition of a curfew in Gilgit and several other parts of the Northern Areas in June 2004 after thousands of Shia protestors clashed with security forces and attacked government buildings, offices, and a state-run hotel. In 2005, sectarian tension once again erupted following the murder of a Shia cleric in January and remained a problem through the year, leading to a number of other violent incidents and prolonged curfews.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

The political rights of the residents of Pakistani-administered Kashmir remain severely limited. Neither the Northern Areas nor Azad Kashmir has representation in Pakistan's national parliament. The Northern Areas are directly administered by the Pakistani government and have no constitution guaranteeing fundamental rights, democratic representation, or the separation of powers, according to Amnesty International. Executive authority is vested in the minister for Kashmir affairs, a civil servant appointed by Islamabad. An elected 29-seat Northern Areas Legislative Council (NALC) serves in an advisory capacity and has no authorization to change laws or spend revenue. Elections to the NALC were held in October 2004; candidates who won seats included independents as well as representatives of several national political parties.

Azad Kashmir has an interim constitution, an elected unicameral assembly headed by a prime minister who sits for a five-year term, and a president. However, Pakistan exercises considerable control over both the structures of governance and electoral politics. Islamabad's approval is required to pass legislation, and the minister for

Kashmir affairs handles the daily administration of the state. Twelve of the 48 seats in the Azad Kashmir assembly are reserved for Kashmiri "refugees" in Pakistan, and the elections to these seats are the subject of some manipulation.

Until 2005, candidates in elections to the Azad Kashmir assembly were required to support the accession of Kashmir to Pakistan. According to Human Rights Watch, authorities barred at least 25 candidates from the pro-independence Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) from contesting the July 2001 elections after they refused to sign a declaration supporting the accession of all of Kashmir to Pakistan. Several hundred JKLF supporters, including its chief, Amanullah Khan, were arrested while protesting against the decision. Fifteen other nationalists who agreed to the "accession" clause competed in the elections, but none won a seat. In April 2005, an amendment was made to the electoral laws that withdrew this condition. However, as there have not yet been new elections, this positive development has yet to be tested in practice.

Azad Kashmir receives a large amount of financial aid from the Pakistani government, but successive administrations have been tainted by corruption and incompetence. A lack of official accountability has been identified as a key factor in the poor socioeconomic development of both Azad Kashmir and the Northern Areas. In November 2004, the National Accountability Bureau issued orders for the sitting minister of Kashmir and Northern Areas Affairs, Faisal Saleh Hayat, to appear in court on corruption charges that were originally filed in 2000. However, he has yet to stand trial.

The Pakistani government uses the constitution and other laws to curb freedom of speech on a variety of subjects, including the status of Kashmir. In recent years, authorities have banned several local newspapers from publishing and have detained or otherwise harassed Kashmiri journalists. In 2004, the magazine *Kargil International* was banned after it published a pro-independence article, and its editor and publisher were arrested and charged with sedition in 2005. Also during the year, the federal government, worried about the increase in sectarian violence in the Northern Areas, "advised" newspapers to restrict coverage of events, allegedly out of a concern that sensationalized reporting would further inflame sectarian tensions. When a number of newspapers refused to refrain from covering such news, the government suspended official advertisements in eight newspapers. In addition to pressure from the authorities, journalists face some harassment from other, non-state actors. Khursheed Ahmed, the Gilgit bureau chief of the national Urdu daily *Khabrain* and the president of the Gilgit Press Club, was targeted several times during the year by bomb attacks at his home in March and July. Ahmed speculated that the attacks may have been a retaliatory measure taken against local journalists who refused to publish the statements of extremist organizations. Internet access is not usually restricted but remains confined to urban centers.

Pakistan is an Islamic republic, and there are numerous restrictions on religious freedom. In addition, religious minorities face unofficial economic and societal discrimination and are occasionally subject to violent attack. Shiite Muslims, who form the majority of the population in the Northern Areas, include a large number of Ismailis, a group that follows the Aga Khan. Sectarian strife between the majority Shiite population and the increasing number of Sunni Muslims (many of whom are migrants from elsewhere in Pakistan) first erupted in 1988 and continues to be a prob-

lem. In June 2004, violence erupted in Gilgit between security forces and Shiite protestors who were campaigning for changes to be made in religious textbooks, which they allege present only a Sunni version of Islamic history.

Sectarian tensions were raised again in early 2005 after the murder of a prominent Shiite cleric (who had led the campaign for the separate curriculum) and remained simmering throughout the year; on January 8, suspected Sunni extremists shot Agha Ziauddin Rizvi, which sparked a wave of violence in which 15 people were killed. Although Gilgit and Skardu were placed under curfew for over a month and the Rangers, a paramilitary group, were deployed to maintain peace, further waves of violence occurred in which dozens of civilians were killed and an estimated 35,000 were evacuated. Extremists from both sides targeted the Ismaili community, accusing them of supporting the other side, and carried out tit-for-tat reprisal killings, such as the March murder of former inspector general of police Sakhniullah Tareen by Shiite assailants.

Freedom of association and assembly is restricted. The constitution of Azad Kashmir forbids individuals and political parties from taking part in activities prejudicial to the ideology of the state's accession to Pakistan. Political parties that advocate Kashmiri independence are allowed to operate but have not yet been able to participate in elections. According to Amnesty International, some people who do not support the accession of Azad Kashmir to Pakistan have been dismissed from their jobs and denied access to educational institutions. A number of nationalist political parties have been formed in the Northern Areas that advocate either self-rule or greater political representation within Pakistan. However, their leaders are subject to harassment, arbitrary arrest, and long jail terms. The Balawaristan National Front, which advocates for independence for the Northern Areas from Pakistan, estimates that more than 70 individuals are facing sedition or treason cases as a result of their political activities.

In recent years, police have suppressed antigovernment demonstrations, sometimes violently, in both Azad Kashmir and the Northern Areas, and have imposed lengthy curfews in order to forestall protestors from assembling. These have included rallies by nationalist political organizations, as well as student protests and demonstrations by the Shiite or Sunni communities. A report by the independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) noted that during the curfew imposed in June 2004, police used excessive force against civilians and arrested the leadership of the Shiite community that had organized the protests and hunger strikes. In October 2005, 10 people were killed in clashes between Shiite students and security forces; press reports alleged that security forces had fired indiscriminately into a group of unarmed students who were protesting the death of another student in police custody.

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are generally able to operate freely. In 2003, the HRCP established an office in Gilgit to monitor the human rights situation in the region. However, the Aga Khan Rural Support Program, run by the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), an international development organization that focuses on Ismaili communities worldwide, has in recent years been subjected to increasing harassment and violence. According to the U.S. State Department's 2005 International Religious Freedom report, Sunni extremist groups have vandalized AKF-founded schools and health clinics and, in December 2004, unknown assailants believed to

be linked to extremist groups killed two medical personnel at an AKF office in Chitral and burned vehicles belonging to the organization. Following the October 2005 earthquake, there were reports of some intimidation and violence towards NGOs involved in the relief effort. The BBC reported that the Sindh-based Muttahida Qaumi Movement was forced to temporarily close its camps and abandon its relief efforts in November after repeated attacks and intimidation from suspected militants. The situation for labor rights is similar to that of Pakistan.

The judiciary of the Northern Areas consists of district courts and a chief court, whose decisions are final. The NALC Legal Framework Order of 1994 provides for a separate court of appeals, and this was finally established in 2005. The territory continues to be governed by the colonial-era Frontier Crimes Regulations, under which residents are required to report to local police stations once a month. Azad Kashmir has its own system of local magistrates and high courts, whose heads are appointed by the president of Azad Kashmir. Appeals are adjudicated by the Supreme Court of Pakistan. According to the HRCP, Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) operates throughout Azad Kashmir and the Northern Areas and engages in extensive surveillance and monitoring (particularly of pro-independence groups and the press), as well as carrying out arbitrary arrest and detention. In some cases, those detained by the ISI, the police, or the security forces are tortured while in custody, and several cases of custodial death have been reported.

A number of Islamist militant groups, including members of al-Qaeda, have bases in, and operate from, Pakistani-administered Kashmir with the tacit permission of Pakistani intelligence. Several militant groups that advocate the accession of Kashmir to Pakistan receive weapons and financial aid from the Pakistani government in support of their infiltrations into Indian-administered Kashmir. Under pressure from the United States, General Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan's president, undertook several steps to curb infiltrations across LOC, such as banning the main militant groups and persuading them to close some of their training camps in Azad Kashmir. However, by 2003, militant activity had increased to previous levels. Tension between the Islamist, pro-Pakistan groups, and the pro-independence Kashmiri groups has reportedly intensified. The militant presence increased in the Northern Areas during the 1999 Kargil conflict with India, and several militant groups continue to operate there and engage in anti-Shiite activism.

Until a bilateral ceasefire was declared in November 2003, shelling between Indian and Pakistani forces around the LOC in Kashmir killed or displaced numerous civilians; some of these people remain unable to return to their homes. In addition, the Azad Kashmir government manages relief camps for refugees from Indian-administered Kashmir, which are funded by the Pakistani government. The appropriation of land in the Northern Areas by non-Kashmiri migrants from elsewhere in Pakistan, which has been tacitly encouraged by the federal government and army, has led to dwindling economic opportunities for the local population, as well as an increase in religious and ethnic tensions.

The status of women in Pakistani-administered Kashmir is similar to that of women in Pakistan. While the HRCP reports that honor killings and rape occur less frequently than in other areas of Pakistan, domestic violence, forced marriage, and other forms of abuse continue to be issues of concern. In the first reported case of its kind, three military personnel were accused of a rape of a woman in Azad Kashmir in July 2005;

despite being pressured to withdraw the case, the family was able to have a case registered. Women are not granted equal rights under the law, and their educational opportunities and choice of marriage partner remain circumscribed. In February 2004, a spate of attacks by suspected Islamist hard-liners opposed to women's education targeted girls' schools in the Northern Areas.

Russia Chechnya



Population: 800,000
(Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in the Russian Federation, 2006)

Political Rights: 7
Civil Liberties: 7
Status: Not Free

Inter-Agency Transitional Workplan for the North Caucasus. The population of Chechnya according to the 2002 Russian census is approximately 1,100,000.)

Religious Groups: Muslim [majority], Russian Orthodox

Ethnic Groups: Chechen (majority), other [including Russian and Ingush]

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
--	--	6,6NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF	7,7NF

Overview:

The civil war continued to devastate Chechnya in 2005 with acts of terrorism, "disappearances," and war crimes perpetrated by various parties to the conflict. Violence spread outside the confines of Chechnya, as rebels and terrorists conducted strikes in neighboring regions, engaging in bombings on trains and raids into the Russian republics of Dagestan and Kabardino-Balkariya. Assassination of the Chechen rebel leader Asian Maskhadov, regarded by many observers as a moderate in the separatist camp, further reduced the already faint hopes that a peaceful resolution to the crisis could be achieved.

A small, partly mountainous Northern Caucasus republic, Chechnya has been at war with Russia for much of its history since the late 1700s. In February 1944, the Chechens were deported en masse to Kazakhstan under the pretext of their having collaborated with Germany during World War II. Officially rehabilitated in 1957 and allowed to return to their homeland, they remained politically suspect and were excluded from the region's administration.

After being elected Chechnya's president in October 1991, former Soviet air force commander Dzhokhar Dudayev proclaimed Chechnya's independence. Moscow responded with an economic blockade. In 1994, Russia began assisting Chechens opposed to Dudayev, whose rule was marked by growing corruption and the rise of powerful clans and criminal gangs. Russian president Boris Yeltsin sent 40,000 troops into Chechnya by mid-December and attacked the capital, Grozny, widening the

conflict. As casualties mounted, Russian public opposition to the war increased, fueled by criticism from much of the country's then-independent media. In April 1996, Dudayev was killed by a Russian missile.

A peace deal that was signed in August 1996 resulted in the withdrawal of most Russian forces from Chechnya. However, a final settlement on the republic's status was put off until 2001. In May 1997, Russia and Chechnya reached an accord recognizing the elected president, Aslan Maskhadov, as Chechnya's legitimate leader.

Following incursions into neighboring Dagestan by renegade Chechen rebels and deadly apartment bombings in Russia that the Kremlin blamed on Chechen militants, then Russian prime minister Vladimir Putin launched a second military offensive in Chechnya in September 1999. Russian troops conquered the flat terrain in the north of the republic, but progress slowed considerably as they neared heavily defended Grozny. During the hostilities, Moscow withdrew its recognition of Maskhadov as president.

Russia's indiscriminate bombing of civilian targets caused some 200,000 people to flee Chechnya, most to the tiny neighboring Russian republic of Ingushetia. After federal troops finally captured Grozny in February 2000, the Russian military focused on rebel strongholds in the southern mountainous region. Russian security sweeps led to atrocities in which civilians were regularly beaten, raped, or killed, while Russian forces were subject to almost daily bombings and sniper attacks by rebels. The renewed campaign enjoyed broad popular support in Russia fueled by the media's now one-sided reporting favoring the official government position.

Following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, Moscow defended its actions in Chechnya as part of the broader war on global terrorism. Russia asserted a connection between Chechen separatists and terrorists linked to Osama bin Laden, leader of al-Qaeda, the terrorist network, allegations that were never credibly proven. As the war persisted and atrocities mounted, some Chechen fighters engaged in terrorist acts. In an ordeal covered live by Russian television, a group of Chechen rebels stormed a Moscow theater on October 23, 2002, taking 750 people hostage. More than 120 hostages died, most from the effects of a sedative gas that Russian troops used to incapacitate the rebels. Russian authorities reported that all 41 of the rebels had been killed.

On September 1, 2004, anti-Russian guerrillas carried out a military assault in the neighboring republic of North Ossetia, taking over a school in the town of Beslan. Some 400 people—half of them children—died in the shootout that began after local citizens moved to rescue their relatives. Putin, now president of Russia, used the attack to justify the further consolidation of authoritarian control in Russia proper. Meanwhile, some families of the victims criticized the government in Moscow for its inability to prevent terrorist attacks and for covering up the negligence and corruption that led to the attack.

As part of a largely unsuccessful Russian campaign to build up the authority of pro-Moscow Chechen factions, a March 23, 2003, referendum on a new Chechen constitution took place in the absence of free media and public debate. Chechnya's Moscow-appointed administration claimed a voter turnout of 85 percent, with 96 percent of voters in favor of the Kremlin-backed constitution. However, an independent survey of voter sentiments by the Russian rights group Memorial found that 80 percent of the indigenous population opposed the referendum. After the

referendum, presidential and legislative elections, which were held on October 5, 2003, saw the victory of Kremlin-backed candidate Akhmad Kadyrov as president. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe criticized the elections for not offering voters significant choice, and the U.S. government judged them as "seriously flawed."

Chechen fighters assassinated Kadyrov and a dozen others in May 2004 in an explosion that ripped through a stadium. After Kadyrov's death, authorities carried out a new election on August 29. Alu Alkanov, a graduate of the USSR's Academy of the Interior Ministry and Chechnya's interior minister since 2003, won with a reported 74 percent of the vote amid a claimed 85 percent voter turnout. Journalists observing the process pronounced the voter-turnout figure wildly inflated.

Pro-Russian Chechen officials admitted that more than 200,000 have died since war broke out in Chechnya in 1994, and hundreds of thousands have been wounded and displaced. Rights groups estimate that more than 1,000 people are believed to have been kidnapped in Chechnya in 2004. Increasingly women, children, and adolescents from pro-rebel families are targeted. Russian security forces stated in 2005 that family members of the separatist leader Maskhadov had been taken hostage by the Kadyrov's militia.

On March 8, 2005, Maskhadov was killed in an operation conducted by the Russian Federal Security Service. His death came weeks after rebels unsuccessfully tried to convince the Russian government to enter into peace negotiations by declaring a unilateral ceasefire in February; in response to the ceasefire, President Putin ordered an expansion of the conflict. The assassination of Maskhadov, who had been elected in a relatively fair ballot, struck a blow to the more moderate faction in the separatist leadership, as most of its remaining representatives have fled abroad. Maskhadov's replacement as rebel leader was the little-known Abdul-Karim Sadulaev, a former head of a religious court. Observers suggest his elevation marks a shift among Chechen leaders toward younger, battle-hardened men infused with strong religious beliefs. Sadulaev promised restraint from engaging in kidnappings and attacks on civilians but vowed to continue fighting against the Russian armed forces.

Separatist forces launched a two-day attack on the south Russian city of Nalchik, capital of the republic of Kabardino-Balkariya, on October 13-14, 2005. According to official estimates, 33 police officers and 12 civilians were killed in fighting, along with 92 terrorists. Critics of the government alleged that corruption among the military and security forces might have contributed to the outcome of the attacks. However, officials tried to defend their actions by claiming that they averted a September 11-style attack planned by the rebels.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Residents of Chechnya cannot change their government democratically. While the 1997 presidential elections—conducted by the region's separatist authorities—were characterized by international observers as reasonably free and fair, the resumption of war in the republic in 1999 led to the total evisceration of the political rights of Chechens. President Asian Maskhadov fled the capital city in December 1999, and the parliament elected in 1997 ceased to function. In June 2000, Russian president Vladimir Putin enacted a decree establishing direct presidential rule over Chechnya.

Claims by the Russian government that they were returning the region to democratic rule by means of a March 2003 referendum lacked credibility. The referendum was orchestrated by the Kremlin, with no opportunity for debate, widespread vote rigging, and official results that indicated a voter turnout of 85 percent and nearly unanimous support for a new constitution.

In the subsequent presidential and parliamentary elections of October 5, 2003, candidates representing a genuine alternative were not on the ballot and real debate was stifled in an atmosphere of repression and censorship. After the assassination of the newly elected president, Akhmad Kadyrov, in May 2004, a new election was conducted under similarly undemocratic circumstances. Under the authoritarian rule of President Alu Alkhanov, as under Kadyrov, there is no party pluralism and politicians who advocate Chechen state independence are unable to work openly and freely. The current regime, which includes Ramzan Kadyrov, son of the assassinated president, is linked to a network of criminal Chechen groups and is denounced by separatist Chechens as traitorous. Putin proclaimed Kadyrov a Hero of Russia in January 2005, an act that shocked the human rights community.

The disruptive effects of the war continue to severely hinder news production and the free flow of information. Russian state-run television and radio continue to broadcast in Chechnya, although much of the population remains without electricity. Alkhanov's administration effectively controls all other broadcast and most print media, which predominantly reflect official viewpoints. There are three licensed television broadcasters, whose content is pro-regime. The Chechen rebel government operates a website with reports about the conflict and other news from its perspective. The editors of an independent weekly, *Groznensky Rabochy*, left Chechnya in 1999. The paper is now edited in Moscow and has limited distribution in Chechnya owing to increased government restrictions on media coverage of the conflict.

The Russian military imposes severe restrictions on journalists' access to the widening Chechen war zone, issuing accreditation primarily to those of proven loyalty to the Russian government. Few foreign reporters are allowed into the breakaway republic, and when they are allowed entry, journalists covering the war must be accompanied at all times by military officials. Russian authorities renounced accreditation of the ABC television bureau in Moscow in July 2005 after the network aired an interview with the notorious warlord Shamil Basayev. Due to the devastating effects of the war, including damaged infrastructure, internet usage is negligible.

Most Chechens are Muslims who practice Sufism, a mystical form of Islam. The Wahhabi sect, with roots in Saudi Arabia and characterized by a strict observance of Islam, has been banned by the Russian government, although adherents to its radical fundamentalist Islamic teachings form an important core of those engaged in terrorism against civilians. Since the start of the last war in 1994, many of the republic's schools have been damaged or destroyed, and education in Chechnya has been sporadic. Most schools have not been renovated and continue to lack such basic amenities as textbooks, electricity, and running water.

Some charitable nongovernmental organizations working on humanitarian, cultural, and social issues are allowed to operate, but they are under increasing Russian government criticism and pressure. Human rights groups, particularly those that deal with sensitive issues such as torture and other forms of abuse by police and the security services, have been subjected to increasing scrutiny by the au-

thorities. In April, the authorities initiated proceedings to close down the Nizhniy Novgorod-based Russian-Chechen Friendship Society, a humanitarian organization involved in increasing mutual understanding between Russians and Chechens and monitoring human rights abuses in the republic. In the past, the society had been subjected to harassment by the authorities, including break-ins, confiscation of equipment, and the beating of activists. Union activity is almost non-existent due to the devastation of the republic's economy and widespread unemployment.

As a result of the widespread conflict, the rule of law is virtually nonexistent. Civilians are subjected to harassment and violence, including torture, rape, and extrajudicial executions, at the hands of Russian soldiers, while senior Russian military authorities have shown disregard for such abuses. Human rights groups report the ongoing operation of illegal filtration camps by Russian authorities and Alkhanov's security forces. The camps detain and "filter" out Chechens suspected of ties to rebel groups, with "filtration" often used as a euphemism for "murder." Pro-Moscow Chechen authorities admitted in 2005 that up to 60,000 people had lost a relative or friend in so-called disappearances since the start of the second Chechen war in 1999. Although Alkhanov's regime reported that disappearances became much less frequent in 2005, human rights groups questioned his assertion. Chechen rebels frequently capture Russian soldiers during combat, enslaving them, trading them among themselves, and ultimately selling them back to their families.

Russian troops engage in so-called mopping-up operations in which they seal off entire towns and conduct house-to-house searches for suspected rebels. During these security sweeps, soldiers have been accused of beating and torturing civilians, looting, and extorting money. Thousands of Chechens have gone missing or been found dead after such operations. Russian authorities strongly condemned a sweep operation conducted by pro-Russian Chechen militias in the village of Borozdinovskaya in northeastern Chechnya on June 4 that triggered an exodus to neighboring Dagestan of several hundred local families. The condemnation, however, lacked credibility, as it appeared to be a move to neutralize Chechen fighting forces that in the past had crossed swords with Kadyrov's militias.

The new police and security structures—some of them created by recruitment from private armies and militarized gangs loyal to Alkhanov's regime—are engaged in criminal activities and rights violations. Particularly notorious is the former Presidential Security Service—renamed the Akhmad Kadyrov Special Purpose Regiment in 2004—which is reportedly involved in extortion, abductions, trading in contraband, and the maintenance of unsanctioned prisons and torture chambers. Occasional protests are held by family members pressing for action on the abduction and murder of their relatives.

Extrajudicial killings, disappearances, and other war crimes are rarely investigated and even more rarely prosecuted. In an unprecedented development, on July 25, 2003, a military court in Rostov-on-Don, Russia, found Russian colonel Yuri Budanov guilty of kidnapping and murdering a Chechen woman and sentenced him to 10 years in a maximum-security prison. In December 2003, a Russian military court initiated the trial of four soldiers for murders alleged to have been committed in the Shattoi region of Chechnya in January 2002. A jury in a Russian military court found the soldiers not guilty in May 2005. The defendants admitted carrying out the killings but denied responsibility, claiming that they were acting under orders. Human

rights activists feared that the decision would encourage further abuses in Chechnya. While many external refugee camps have been closed and Chechens who fled the violence have been pressured to return to their homes, tens of thousands of refugees still remain outside of Chechnya. Many refugees who return live in appalling conditions in tent camps, abandoned buildings, or cramped quarters with friends or relatives. There are tens of thousands of additional internally displaced persons inside the region and well over 100,000 long-term homeless, many of them orphaned children and teens.

Travel to and from the republic and inside its borders is severely restricted. After the resumption of the war, the Russian military failed to provide safe exit routes from the conflict zones for noncombatants.

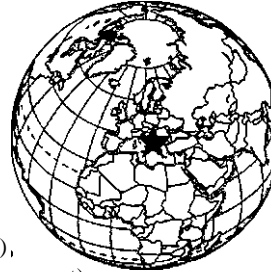
Widespread corruption and the economic devastation caused by the war severely limit equality of opportunity. Ransoms obtained from kidnapping and the lucrative illegal oil trade provide money for Chechens and members of the Russian military. Much of the republic's infrastructure and housing remain damaged or destroyed after years of war, with reconstruction funds widely believed to have been substantially misappropriated by corrupt local authorities. In the capital city of Grozny, the long-term conflict has devastated civilian life, with more than 60 percent of all buildings completely destroyed. Much of the population ekes out a living selling produce or other goods at local markets. Residents who have found work are employed mostly by the local police, the Chechen administration, the oil and construction sectors, or at small enterprises.

While women continue to face discrimination in this traditional, male-dominated culture, the war has resulted in many women becoming the primary breadwinners for their families. Russian soldiers reportedly rape Chechen women in areas controlled by federal forces. Increasing numbers of women were reported to have been abducted and have disappeared. The war has taken a heavy toll on children, many of whom suffer from various psychological traumas. Children, who accounted for up to 40 percent of casualties during the war, continue to suffer from inadequate living conditions, including lack of access to education and health care.

Serbia and Montenegro

Kosovo

Population: 1,900,000
Political Rights: 6
Religious Groups: Muslim (majority), other [including Serbian Orthodox]
Civil Liberties: 5
Status: Not Free



Ethnic Groups: Albanian (88 percent), Serb (7 percent), other [including Montenegrin, Turk, Croat, and Roma] (5 percent)

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
7,7 NF	7,7 NF	7,7 NF	7,7 NF	6,6NF	6,6NF	5,5PF	5,5PF	6,5NF	6,5NF

Overview:

In 2005, driven in part by a perceived need to settle Kosovo's unresolved legal status, and partly by the threat of violence directed against the international presence in Kosovo and non-Albanian ethnic minorities, the UN Security Council endorsed the beginning of negotiations to determine Kosovo's future status. The decision overturned previous international policy, which had held that Kosovo could not achieve "status" (generally, but not exclusively, considered to be independence) until it had made progress on a number of "standards" relating to democracy and human rights. Within Kosovo itself, political uncertainty increased after Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj was indicted for war crimes in March.

Kosovo was contested by Albanians (who, in Kosovo itself, are primarily Muslim) and Serbs (primarily Orthodox Christian) throughout the twentieth century. After the death of Yugoslav dictator Josip Broz Tito in 1980, ethnic Albanians in the province began protesting in favor of republic status within the former Yugoslavia, and in some cases outright independence from Yugoslavia. Tensions increased after Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic came to power and revoked much of Kosovo's autonomy in the late 1980s and early 1990s. For most of the 1990s, an uneasy status quo held between the Yugoslav government and the Kosovo Albanians, who developed an entirely parallel society in Kosovo, replete with quasi-governmental institutions, hospitals, and school systems.

In late 1997, an ethnic Albanian guerrilla movement called the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) began a series of attacks against Serbs in the province, as well as against fellow Albanians deemed to be collaborating with the Serbian government. In March 1999, NATO launched a 78-day air campaign against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) to force it to relinquish control over the province. During the war, Yugoslav military forces and paramilitary gangs forcibly expelled hundreds of thousands of ethnic Albanians from the province. Under the terms of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1244 of June 1999, a NATO-led peacekeeping force (KFOR) assumed responsibility for security in Kosovo. UNSCR 1244 turned Kosovo into a protectorate of the international community, while officially maintaining Yugoslav sovereignty over the province.

Since international forces moved into Kosovo in mid-1999, tens of thousands of non-Albanians have been forced to flee the province. A large Serb population is concentrated in a triangle-shaped piece of territory north of the Ibar River, and smaller, scattered Serb enclaves in southern parts of the province constitute virtual ethnic ghettos. In March 2004, two days of violent riots by Albanian mobs aimed at non-Albanian ethnic groups across Kosovo left 20 dead, 800 homes and 30 churches destroyed, and more than 4,000 Serbs and other non-Albanians homeless. UN secretary-general Kofi Annan called the March events "an organized, widespread, and targeted campaign" against non-Albanian communities in Kosovo, and Human Rights Watch reported that international organizations in Kosovo "failed catastrophically in their mandate to protect minority communities during the March 2004 violence." On a visit to a Serb enclave in the aftermath of the riots, Soren Jessen-Petersen, who took over as head of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in June 2004, publicly decried the fact that in twenty-first-century Europe, human beings were forced to live in ghettos enclosed by barbed wire.

Extremist violence, motivated by both politics and criminal activities, has also targeted Albanians in the province since 1999. Within the span of just a few weeks in March-April 2005, for instance, an explosive device damaged the car of Kosovo president Ibrahim Rugova as he was driving through the streets of Pristina; an explosive device damaged the political party offices of Veton Surroi, a leading Kosovo Albanian publisher and politician; and Enver Haradinaj, the brother of the former prime minister, was killed in a murder apparently related to a blood feud.

The latest elections for the Kosovo parliament, held in October 2004, were marred by a Serb boycott (99 percent of Serbs registered to vote in Kosovo refused to cast a ballot). The elections reconfirmed the basic postwar balance of Kosovo Albanian politics, as Rugova's Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) maintained its position as the Kosovo Albanians' leading political party, followed by Hashim Thaci's Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) and Ramush Haradinaj's Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK). A week after the elections, Kosovo's Central Election Commission called for a recount of all the ballots cast in response to numerous complaints. Overall turnout for the elections was 53 percent.

The March 2004 violence and the failure of the Serb community to participate in the October 2004 parliamentary elections created new uncertainties about Kosovo's future, leading the international community to officially endorse a "status with standards" strategy for Kosovo, in which decisions on Kosovo's future status will be made in tandem with Kosovo's progress on issues such as democratization, rule of law, respect for minority rights, and respecting the security of neighboring states. In October, Kofi Annan formally recommended to the Security Council that talks on Kosovo's future status should begin at the start of 2006.

In March 2005, Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj was indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) for the murder, rape, and torture of numerous individuals, both Albanian and non-Albanian. However, after a few weeks in confinement, he was allowed to return to Kosovo to await his trial at home, despite protests by the prosecution that Haradinaj would intimidate witnesses if he went back to Kosovo.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

According to UNSCR 1244, ultimate authority within Kosovo resides with the UN special representative in the province, who is appointed by the UN secretary-general. The special representative, who also serves as chief of UNMIK, is responsible for implementing civilian aspects of the agreement ending the war. Kosovo's government currently consists of what are called the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, including a 120-seat Assembly whose members are popularly elected and serve three-year terms. Twenty seats in the Assembly are reserved for representatives of ethnic minorities. The Assembly elects a president, who also serves a three-year term.

Elections in Kosovo in the post-1999 period, organized by the international community, have been considered "generally free and fair." However, given the large role played by international officials in the administration of the province, the lack of freedom of movement for ethnic minorities in Kosovo, and problems relating to the ability of women to participate in the political process, the actual level of democratization in Kosovo remains relatively low. In the October 2002 municipal elections, contested by more than 60 political entities, voter turnout was approximately 54 percent. Non-Albanian voter turnout in post-1999 Kosovo has been consistently low because of the lack of freedom of movement for Serb and other non-Albanian ethnic communities.

Throughout the post-1999 period, the main political parties in Kosovo have been Ibrahim Rugova's LDK, which enjoys 45 to 60 percent of the popular vote in general and municipal elections; the PDK, led by former KLA leader Hashim Thaci, which garners 25 to 30 percent; and the AAK, led by another former KLA leader, Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj, which usually gains 7 to 8 percent. Serbs (when they have chosen to participate in elections) have generally voted for an umbrella organization named the "Return Coalition," which usually gets 5 to 10 percent of the vote.

A major focus of the current effort to make progress on Kosovo's status is to transfer authority in various governmental fields from UNMIK agencies to Albanian-dominated institutions. Kosovo's civil service, however, is hurt by the fact that the various government ministries are divided up by the main political parties; thus, appointment within the civil service often depends more on party connections than personal qualifications or competence.

Freedom of expression is limited because of the overall lack of security in the province. Although a wide variety of print and electronic media operate in Kosovo, journalists report frequent harassment and intimidation. In a report on the performance of Kosovo media during the March 2004 violence, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) noted that Kosovo's media had engaged in "reckless and sensationalist reporting," had displayed "an unacceptable level of emotion, bias, and carelessness," and were deserving of "the strongest criticism." In March 2005, representatives of leading print media adopted a press code, and in October, the temporary media commissioner's office began to phase out its supervision of print media. In June, a journalist from the newspaper *Bota Sot* was shot in a drive-by shooting; he subsequently died of his injuries. There were no reports of government attempts to restrict access to the internet.

The Albanian population in Kosovo, which is predominantly Muslim, on the whole enjoys freedom of belief and religious association, but there have been con-

sistent, systematic attacks on Orthodox churches and other holy sites associated with the Serb population. During the March 2004 violence, 30 Christian churches and monasteries were destroyed or damaged. Since NATO took control of Kosovo in 1999, approximately 130 churches and other properties belonging to the Serbian Orthodox Church have been destroyed or damaged. Over the past several years, Kosovo's small Protestant community has claimed that "Islamic extremists" were attending services so as to be able to identify worshippers and later harass them. There were also several reported incidents of attacks on Protestant places of worship. Academic freedom, however, has not been restricted.

Freedom of assembly, especially in flashpoints for ethnic conflict such as the divided city of Mitrovica, is occasionally restricted by UNMIK and/or KFOR because of security concerns. Both domestic and foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) generally function freely, although lack of donor funding in the past two years has forced a large number of NGOs to cease operations. Current UNMIK regulations governing workers' rights allow workers to join unions, although there is no explicit right to association. Similarly, the law does not recognize the right to strike, although no attempt is made to prevent workers from striking. The largest union in Kosovo, BSPK, claims to represent some 100,000 workers.

Kosovo lacks a functioning criminal justice system. A report by Karl Eide, special envoy of the UN secretary-general, submitted to the UN Security Council in June 2005, noted that the justice system is the weakest of Kosovo's institutions. Both Kosovo's Supreme Court and local courts have been subject to political influence and intimidation. Ethnic Albanian judges are generally unwilling to prosecute cases involving Albanian attacks on non-Albanians, and the physical safety of non-Albanian judges brought into Kosovo to try cases is difficult to guarantee. Criminal suspects who have been arrested under the UN special representative's power to order executive detentions are frequently released on the orders of local judges. The Eide report noted that in Kosovo "property rights are neither respected nor ensured." The backlog in the civil court system now stands at several tens of thousands of cases. Some 17,000 cases involving property claims were backlogged in municipal courts as of 2005—almost all are claims by Serbs. Given the breakdown of normal legal and judicial institutions, there has been an increase in the number of murders attributable to blood feuds and vendettas, carried out in accordance with a medieval Albanian legal code known as the Kanun of Lek Dukagjini. Since 1999, approximately 40 murders have been attributed to blood feuds in Kosovo.

Prison conditions in Kosovo are generally in line with international standards, although prison overcrowding remains a problem. While many Kosovo Police Service officers tried to protect ethnic minorities during the March 2004 riots, others were accused of actively participating in the violence. Also, KFOR arrest and detention procedures remain the object of criticism for their lack of transparency.

Several leading members of the former KLA are under investigation for war crimes by the ICTY for actions committed before, during, and after the NATO intervention. The chief prosecutor of the ICTY, Carla Del Ponte, has repeatedly criticized both international officials in Kosovo and local ethnic Albanian political leaders for their unwillingness to cooperate with the ICTY's efforts.

A 2003 Amnesty International report noted that non-Albanians in Kosovo "find themselves subjected to both direct and indirect discrimination when seeking ac-

cess to basic civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights." Freedom of movement continues to be a significant problem in Kosovo for ethnic minorities, and the international community is doing little to promote the return of some 220,000 people the UN High Commissioner for Refugees lists as displaced from Kosovo. As the Eide report noted, "[T]he overall return process has come to a virtual halt."

As throughout the Balkans, gender inequality is a serious problem in Kosovo, but the problem is more severe in Kosovo than elsewhere. Patriarchal societal attitudes often limit a woman's ability to gain an education or to choose her own marriage partner. As of 2005, women held 36 of the 120 seats in the Kosovo Assembly, and women occupy 28 percent of all municipal assembly seats. Current election rules stipulate that women must occupy every third spot on each political party's electoral list. According to statistics compiled in 2004, women constitute 25 percent of judges, 17 percent of prosecutors, and 15 percent of the Kosovo Police Service. According to the results of a study published in 2004, only half of Kosovo women between the ages of 25 and 64 have received even basic elementary education. In some rural areas of Kosovo, this figure reaches 90 percent. Similarly, in many rural areas of Kosovo, women are effectively disenfranchised by "family voting," in which the male head of a household casts ballots for the entire family.

Trafficking is a major problem in Kosovo, which serves as a place of transit, a point of destination, and a source for women and children trafficked from Eastern to Western Europe for purpose of prostitution. The presence of a large international military force and of numerous civilian agencies provides a relatively affluent clientele for the trafficking trade in the province.

United States

Puerto Rico



Population: 3,927,000 **Political Rights:** 1
Religious Groups: Roman Catholic (85 percent),
 other [including Protestant] (15 percent) **Civil Liberties:** 1*
Status: Free
Ethnic Groups: White (80.5 percent), black (8 percent),
 other [including Amerindian and Asian] (11.5 percent)

Ratings Change: Puerto Rico's civil liberties rating improved from 2 to 1 due to a consolidation of freedom of assembly.

Ten-Year Ratings Timeline (Political Rights, Civil Liberties, Status)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,2F	1,1F

Overview:

After nearly two months of vote recounting and legal struggles, Anibal Acevedo-Vila was officially recognized on December 23, 2004 as having won the November 2 election for governor of Puerto Rico. The killing of Filiberto Ojeda Rios, a one-time leader of the illegal wing of the island's independence movement, led to a number of

public protests and demonstrations. The year was also marked by an upsurge in criminal violence, much of which was tied to strife between rival gangs for control of drug trafficking on the island.

Puerto Rico acquired the status of a commonwealth of the United States following approval by plebiscite in 1952. Under its terms, Puerto Rico exercises approximately the same control over its internal affairs as do the 50 U.S. states. Although they are U.S. citizens, residents of Puerto Rico cannot vote in presidential elections and are represented in the U.S. Congress by a delegate to the House of Representatives who can vote in committee, but not on the floor.

After one of the closest elections for governor in Puerto Rico's history, Anibal Acevedo-Vila was declared the winner of the November 2 election on December 23, 2004. The candidate of the pro-commonwealth Popular Democratic Party (PPD), Acevedo Vila won 48.4 percent of the vote while his main opponent, former governor Pedro Rossello, the candidate of the pro-statehood New Progressive Party (PNP), received 48.2 percent. Acevedo-Vila won by a margin of 3,500 votes out of a total of 1.9 million votes cast. At the same time, the NPP retained control of the commonwealth's legislature and prevented the adoption of key aspects of the new governor's program.

The close nature of the election reflected divisions among Puerto Ricans over the island's future political status. For years, Puerto Ricans have been nearly equally divided between those who favor the continuation of the commonwealth status and those who favor Puerto Rico's formally becoming part of the United States as a state. A third option, independence, has little popular support; indeed, the Independence Party (PIP) candidate for governor, Ruben Berrios, failed to poll 5 percent of the vote, the party's worst showing in recent years. Several referendums during the past 15 years have resulted in narrow endorsements for continuation of commonwealth status. At present, the U.S. Congress shows no interest in changing Puerto Rico's status.

Although nationalist passions have cooled somewhat since the 2003 decision by the United States to abandon the use of the small island of Vieques as a bombing range—a decision reached in response to several years of protest—the past year was notable for a controversy triggered by the death of a one-time leader of the illegal wing of the independence movement. Filiberto Ojeda Rios, who was the leader of a militant group that claimed responsibility for bombings and who had been convicted of a \$7.2 million bank robbery in the United States, was killed by U.S. federal agents during a gun battle. Some observers, however, accused the agents of having allowed Ojeda Rios to die by failing to quickly summon medical assistance for the wounded man. A number of protests and demonstrations took place in response to his killing.

During 2005, Puerto Rico was plagued by a wave of violent crime, much of which was related to the illegal drug trade. The island has become a major point of entry for drugs from South America en route to the United States. The island's murder rate is high by U.S. standards, as are the rates of drug addiction and HIV/AIDS.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

The commonwealth constitution, modeled after that of the United States, provides for a governor and a bicameral legislature, consisting of a 28-member Senate and a 54-member

ber House of Representatives, elected for four years. As U.S. citizens, Puerto Ricans are guaranteed all civil liberties granted in the United States. The major political parties are the pro-commonwealth PPD, the pro-statehood PNP, and the PIP.

Puerto Rico has a varied and outspoken media environment. During 2004, a coalition of human rights and gay organizations formally complained about frequent antihomosexual comments and jokes on radio and television. Freedom of religion is guaranteed in this predominantly Roman Catholic territory, and a substantial number of Evangelical churches have been established on the island in recent years. Academic freedom is guaranteed.

Freedom of assembly is guaranteed by law, and Puerto Ricans frequently mount protest rallies against government policies or policies of the United States. There is a robust civil society, with numerous nongovernmental organizations representing the interests of different constituencies. The government respects trade union rights, and unions are generally free to organize and strike.

The legal system is based on U.S. law, and a supreme court heads an independent judiciary. Crime is the most serious problem facing the island. The law enforcement and legal systems have been seriously tested by the upsurge of drug-related crime. A controversy has emerged over the issue of capital punishment. Although Puerto Rico prohibits the death penalty, Puerto Ricans are subject to the death penalty for crimes that violate U.S. federal law.

In recent years, there has been an upsurge in attempts by illegal migrants from various Caribbean countries, many traveling in flimsy boats, to reach Puerto Rico. Many were brought to the island by smugglers, who encouraged their migration efforts by warning that new U.S. policies would make illegal immigration more difficult in the future.

Although relatively prosperous by Caribbean standards, Puerto Rico suffers from high rates of poverty. In 2005, the government began implementing a program to demolish many of the government-provided housing units, a breeding place for crime, and relocate the occupants to better units.

Laws granting equal rights for women in education, at the work place, and in other aspects of society have been adopted. Women's rights organizations, however, claim that women are still subject to widespread discrimination.

Freedom in the World 2006

Methodology

INTRODUCTION

The *Freedom in the World* survey provides an annual evaluation of the state of global freedom as experienced by individuals. The survey measures freedom—the opportunity to act spontaneously in a variety of fields outside the control of the government and other centers of potential domination—according to two broad categories: political rights and civil liberties. Political rights enable people to participate freely in the political process, including the right to vote freely for distinct alternatives in legitimate elections, compete for public office, join political parties and organizations, and elect representatives who have a decisive impact on public policies and are accountable to the electorate. Civil liberties allow for the freedoms of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, rule of law, and personal autonomy without interference from the state.

Freedom House does not maintain a culture-bound view of freedom. The methodology of the survey is grounded in basic standards of political rights and civil liberties, derived in large measure from relevant portions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These standards apply to all countries and territories, irrespective of geographical location, ethnic or religious composition, or level of economic development. The survey operates from the assumption that freedom for all peoples is best achieved in liberal democratic societies.

The survey does not rate governments or government performance per se, but rather the real-world rights and social freedoms enjoyed by individuals. Freedoms can be affected by state actions, as well as by nonstate actors, including insurgents and other armed groups. Thus, the survey ratings generally reflect the interplay of a variety of actors, both governmental and nongovernmental.

The survey includes both analytical reports and numerical ratings for 192 countries and 14 select territories.¹ Each country and territory report includes an overview section, which provides historical background and a brief description of the year's major developments, as well as a section summarizing the current state of political rights and civil liberties. In addition, each country and territory is assigned

1. These territories are selected based on their political significance and size. Freedom House divides territories into two categories: related territories and disputed territories. Related territories consist mostly of colonies, protectorates, and island dependencies of sovereign states that are in some relation of dependency to that state and whose relationship is not currently in serious legal or political dispute. Disputed territories are areas within internationally recognized sovereign states whose status is in serious political or violent dispute and whose conditions differ substantially from those of the relevant sovereign states. They are often outside of central government control and characterized by intense, longtime, and widespread insurgency or independence movements that enjoy popular support.

a numerical rating—on a scale of 1 to 7—for political rights and an analogous rating for civil liberties; a rating of 1 indicates the highest degree of freedom and 7 the least amount of freedom. These ratings, calculated based on the methodological process described below, determine whether a country is classified as Free, Partly Free, or Not Free by the survey.

The survey findings are reached after a multilayered process of analysis and evaluation by a team of regional experts and scholars (see below). Although there is an element of subjectivity inherent in the survey findings, the ratings process emphasizes intellectual rigor and balanced and unbiased judgments.

HISTORY OF THE SURVEY

Freedom House's first year-end reviews of freedom began in the 1950s as the *Balance Sheet of Freedom*. This modest report provided assessments of political trends and their implications for individual freedom. In 1972, Freedom House launched a new, more comprehensive annual study of freedom called *The Comparative Study of Freedom*. Raymond Gastil, a Harvard-trained specialist in regional studies from the University of Washington at Seattle, developed the survey's methodology, which assigned political rights and civil liberties ratings to 151 countries and 45 territories and—based on these ratings—categorized them as Free, Partly Free, or Not Free. The findings appeared each year in Freedom House's *Freedom at Issue* bimonthly journal (later titled *Freedom Review*). The survey first appeared in book form in 1978 under the title *Freedom in the World* and included short, explanatory narratives for each country and territory rated in the study, as well as a series of essays by leading scholars on related issues. *Freedom in the World* continued to be produced by Gastil until 1989, when a larger team of in-house survey analysts was established. In the mid-1990s, the expansion of *Freedom in the World's* country and territory narratives demanded the hiring of outside analysts—a group of regional experts from the academic, media, and human rights communities. The survey has continued to grow in size and scope; the 2006 edition is the most exhaustive in the *Freedom in the World's* 34-year tenure.

RESEARCH AND RATINGS REVIEW PROCESS

This year's survey covers developments from December 1, 2004, through November 30, 2005, in 192 countries and 14 territories. The research and ratings process involved two dozen analysts and more than a dozen senior-level academic advisors. The eight members of the core research team headquartered in New York, along with 16 outside consultant analysts, prepared the country and territory reports. The analysts used a broad range of sources of information—including foreign and domestic news reports, academic analyses, nongovernmental organizations, think tanks, individual professional contacts, and visits to the region—in preparing the reports.

The country and territory ratings were proposed by the analyst responsible for each related report. The ratings were reviewed individually and on a comparative basis in a series of six regional meetings—Asia-Pacific, Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union, Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Western Europe—involving the analysts,

academic advisors with expertise in each region, and Freedom House staff. The ratings were compared to the previous year's findings, and any major proposed numerical shifts or category changes were subjected to more intensive scrutiny. These reviews were followed by cross-regional assessments in which efforts were made to ensure comparability and consistency in the findings. Many of the key country reports were also reviewed by the academic advisers.

CHANGES TO THE 2006 EDITION OF *FREEDOM IN THE WORLD*

The survey's methodology is reviewed periodically by an advisory committee of political scientists with expertise in methodological issues. Over the years, the committee has made a number of modest methodological changes to adapt to evolving ideas about political rights and civil liberties. At the same time, the time series data are not revised retroactively, and any changes to the methodology are introduced incrementally in order to ensure the comparability of the ratings from year to year.

In September 2005, the methodology committee met and accepted some minor changes to the checklist questions that the analysts use to rate the countries and territories. These changes consisted primarily of rewording several questions to provide greater clarity. The committee also approved a series of guidelines to assist the analysts in the ratings process. These "checklist question guidelines" are intended to provide guidance to the analysts regarding the issues to be considered in scoring each numbered checklist question; the authors are not required to consider every sub-question in scoring their countries, as some of the issues may not apply to every country. (*The checklist question guidelines immediately follow the methodology essay.*)

RATINGS PROCESS

(*NOTE: See the full checklists and keys to political rights and civil liberties ratings and status at the end of the methodology essay.*)

Raw Points - The ratings process is based on a checklist of 10 political rights questions and 15 civil liberties questions. The political rights questions are grouped into the three subcategories: Electoral Process (3 questions), Political Pluralism and Participation (4), and Functioning of Government (3). The civil liberties questions are grouped into four subcategories: Freedom of Expression and Belief (4 questions), Associational and Organizational Rights (3), Rule of Law (4), and Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights (4). Raw points are awarded to each of these questions on a scale of 0 to 4, where 0 points represents the smallest degree and 4 points the greatest degree of rights or liberties present. The only exception to the addition of 0 to 4 points per checklist item is Additional Discretionary Question B in the Political Rights Checklist, for which 1 to 4 points are subtracted depending on the severity of the situation. The highest number of points that can be awarded to the political rights checklist is 40 (or a total of up to 4 points for each of the 10 questions). The highest number of points that can be awarded to the civil liberties checklist is 60 (or a total of up to 4 points for each of the 15 questions).

In answering both the political rights and civil liberties questions, Freedom House does not equate constitutional or other legal guarantees of rights with the on-the-ground fulfillment of these rights. While both laws and actual practices are factored into the ratings decisions, greater emphasis is placed on the latter.

In addition, for states and territories with small populations, the absence of pluralism in the political system or civil society is not necessarily viewed as a negative situation unless the government or other centers of domination are deliberately blocking its establishment or operation. For example, a small country without diverse political parties or media outlets or significant trade unions are not penalized if these limitations are determined to be a function of size and not overt restrictions.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties Ratings - The total number of points awarded to the political rights and civil liberties checklists determines the political rights and civil liberties ratings. Each point total corresponds to a rating of 1 through 7, with 1 representing the highest and 7 the lowest level of freedom (see Tables 1 and 2).

Status of Free, Partly Free, Not Free - Each pair of political rights and civil liberties ratings is averaged to determine an overall status of "Free," "Partly Free," or "Not Free." Those whose ratings average 1.0 to 2.5 are considered Free, 3.0 to 5.0 Partly Free, and 5.5 to 7.0 Not Free (see Table 3).

The designations of Free, Partly Free, and Not Free each cover a broad third of the available raw points. Therefore, countries and territories within any one category, especially those at either end of the category, can have quite different human rights situations. In order to see the distinctions within each category, a country or territory's political rights and civil liberties ratings should be examined. For example, countries at the lowest end of the Free category (2 in political rights and 3 in civil liberties, or 3 in political rights and 2 in civil liberties) differ from those at the upper end of the Free group (1 for both political rights and civil liberties). Also, a designation of Free does not mean that a country enjoys perfect freedom or lacks serious problems, only that it enjoys comparably more freedom than Partly Free or Not Free (or some other Free) countries.

Indications of Ratings and/or Status Changes - Each country or territory's political rights rating, civil liberties rating, and status is included in the statistics section that precedes each country or territory report. A change in a political rights or civil liberties rating since the previous survey edition is indicated with an asterisk next to the rating that has changed. A brief ratings change explanation is included in the statistics section.

Trend Arrows - Upward or downward trend arrows may be assigned to countries and territories. Trend arrows indicate general positive or negative trends since the previous survey that are not necessarily reflected in the raw points and do *not* warrant a ratings change. A country cannot receive both a numerical ratings change and a trend arrow in the same year. A trend arrow is indicated with an arrow next to the name of the country or territory that appears before the statistics section at the top of each country or territory report.

**GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF EACH
POLITICAL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES RATING**

POLITICAL RIGHTS

Rating of 1 - Countries and territories that receive a rating of 1 for political rights come closest to ensuring the freedoms embodied in the checklist questions, beginning with free and fair elections. Those who are elected rule, there are competitive parties or other political groupings, and the opposition plays an important role and has actual power. Minority groups have reasonable self-government or can participate in the government through informal consensus.

Rating of 2 - Countries and territories rated 2 in political rights are less free than those rated 1. Such factors as political corruption, violence, political discrimination against minorities, and foreign or military influence on politics may be present and weaken the quality of freedom.

Ratings of 3, 4, 5 - The same conditions that undermine freedom in countries and territories with a rating of 2 may also weaken political rights in those with a rating of 3, 4, or 5. Other damaging elements can include civil war, heavy military involvement in politics, lingering royal power, unfair elections, and one-party dominance. However, states and territories in these categories may still enjoy some elements of political rights, including the freedom to organize quasi-political groups, reasonably free referendums, or other significant means of popular influence on government.

Rating of 6 - Countries and territories with political rights rated 6 have systems ruled by military juntas, one-party dictatorships, religious hierarchies, or autocrats. These regimes may allow only a minimal manifestation of political rights, such as some degree of representation or autonomy for minorities. A few states are traditional monarchies that mitigate their relative lack of political rights through the use of consultation with their subjects, tolerance of political discussion, and acceptance of public petitions.

Rating of 7 - For countries and territories with a rating of 7, political rights are absent or virtually nonexistent as a result of the extremely oppressive nature of the regime or severe oppression in combination with civil war. States and territories in this group may also be marked by extreme violence or warlord rule that dominates political power in the absence of an authoritative, functioning central government.

CIVIL LIBERTIES

Rating of 1 - Countries and territories that receive a rating of 1 come closest to ensuring the freedoms expressed in the civil liberties checklist, including freedom of expression, assembly, association, education, and religion. They are distinguished by an established and generally equitable system of rule of law. Countries and territories with this rating enjoy free economic activity and tend to strive for equality of opportunity.

Rating of 2 - States and territories with a rating of 2 have deficiencies in a few aspects of civil liberties, but are still relatively free.

Ratings of 3, 4, 5 - Countries and territories that have received a rating of 3, 4, or 5 range from those that are in at least partial compliance with virtually all checklist standards to those with a combination of high or medium scores for some questions and low or very low scores on other questions. The level of oppression increases at each successive rating level, including in the areas of censorship, political terror, and the prevention of free association. There are also many cases in which groups opposed to the state engage in political terror that undermines other freedoms. Therefore, a poor rating for a country is not necessarily a comment on the intentions of the government, but may reflect real restrictions on liberty caused by nongovernmental actors.

Rating of 6 - People in countries and territories with a rating of 6 experience severely restricted rights of expression and association, and there are almost always political prisoners and other manifestations of political terror. These countries may be characterized by a few partial rights, such as some religious and social freedoms, some highly restricted private business activity, and relatively free private discussion.

Rating of 7 - States and territories with a rating of 7 have virtually no freedom. An overwhelming and justified fear of repression characterizes these societies.

Countries and territories generally have ratings in political rights and civil liberties that are within two ratings numbers of each other. Without a well-developed civil society, it is difficult, if not impossible, to have an atmosphere supportive of political rights. Consequently, there is no country in the survey with a rating of 6 or 7 for civil liberties and, at the same time, a rating of 1 or 2 for political rights.

ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY DESIGNATION

In addition to providing numerical ratings, the survey assigns the designation "electoral democracy" to countries that have met certain minimum standards. In determining whether a country is an electoral democracy, Freedom House examines several key factors concerning how its national leadership is chosen.

To qualify as an electoral democracy, a state must have satisfied the following criteria:

- 1) A competitive, multiparty political system;
- 2) Universal adult suffrage for all citizens (with exceptions for restrictions that states may legitimately place on citizens as sanctions for criminal offenses);
- 3) Regularly contested elections conducted in conditions of ballot secrecy, reasonable ballot security, and in the absence of massive voter fraud, and that yield results that are representative of the public will;

- 4) Significant public access of major political parties to the electorate through the media and through generally open political campaigning.

The electoral democracy designation reflects a judgment about the last major national election or elections. In the case of presidential/parliamentary systems, both elections must have been free and fair on the basis of the above criteria; in parliamentary systems, the last nationwide elections for the national legislature must have been free and fair. The presence of certain irregularities during the electoral process does not automatically disqualify a country from being designated an electoral democracy. A country cannot be an electoral democracy if significant authority for national decisions resides in the hands of an unelected power, whether a monarch or a foreign international authority. A country is removed from the ranks of electoral democracies if its last national election failed to meet the criteria listed above, or if changes in law significantly eroded the public's possibility for electoral choice.

Freedom House's term "electoral democracy" differs from "liberal democracy" in that the latter also implies the presence of a substantial array of civil liberties. In the survey, all Free countries qualify as both electoral and liberal democracies. By contrast, some Partly Free countries qualify as electoral, but not liberal, democracies.

FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2006

CHECKLIST QUESTIONS AND GUIDELINES

The bulleted sub-questions are intended to provide guidance to the writers regarding what issues are meant to be considered in scoring each numbered checklist question; the authors do not necessarily have to consider every sub-question in scoring their countries.

POLITICAL RIGHTS CHECKLIST

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS

1. Is the head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections?

- Did established and reputable national and/or international election monitoring organizations judge the most recent elections for head of government to be free and fair? (*Note:* Heads of government chosen through various electoral frameworks, including direct elections for president, indirect elections for prime minister by parliament, and the electoral college system for electing presidents, are covered under this and the following sub-questions. In cases of indirect elections for the head of government, the elections for the legislature that chose the head of government, as well as the selection process of the head of government himself, should be taken into consideration.)
- Have there been undue, politically motivated delays in holding the most recent election for head of government?
- Is the registration of voters and candidates conducted in an accurate, timely, transparent, and nondiscriminatory manner?

- Can candidates make speeches, hold public meetings, and enjoy media access throughout the campaign free of intimidation?
- Does voting take place by secret ballot or by equivalent free voting procedure?
- Are voters able to vote for the candidate or party of their choice without undue pressure or intimidation?
- Is the vote count transparent, and is it reported honestly with the official results made public? Can election monitors from independent groups and representing parties/candidates watch the counting of votes to ensure their honesty?

in order to ensure equal representation?

- Has a democratically elected head of government who was chosen in the most recent election subsequently been overthrown in a violent coup? (*Note:* Although a peaceful, "velvet coup" may ultimately lead to a positive outcome—particularly if it replaces a head of government who was not freely and fairly elected—the new leader has not been freely and fairly elected and cannot be treated as such.)

2. Are the national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?

- Did established and reputable domestic and/or international election monitoring organizations judge the most recent national legislative elections to be free and fair?
- Have there been undue, politically motivated delays in holding the most recent national legislative election?

timely, transparent, and nondiscriminatory manner?

- Can candidates make speeches, hold public meetings, and enjoy media access throughout the campaign free of intimidation?
- Does voting take place by secret ballot or by equivalent free voting procedure?

out undue pressure or intimidation?

- Is the vote count transparent, and is it reported honestly with the official results made public? Can election monitors from independent groups and representing parties/candidates watch the counting of votes to ensure their honesty?
- Is each person's vote given equivalent weight to those of other voters in order to ensure equal representation?

ture who were chosen in the most recent election subsequently been overthrown in a violent coup? (*Note:* Although a peaceful, "velvet coup" may ultimately lead to a positive outcome—particularly if it replaces a

national legislature whose representatives were not freely and fairly elected—members of the new legislature have not been freely and fairly elected and cannot be treated as such.)

3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair?

- Is there a clear, detailed, and fair legislative framework for conducting elections? (*Note:* Changes to electoral laws should not be made immediately preceding an election if the ability of voters, candidates, or parties to fulfill their roles in the election is infringed.)
- Are election commissions or other election authorities independent and free from government or other pressure and interference?
- Is the composition of election commissions fair and balanced?
- Do election commissions or other election authorities conduct their work in an effective and competent manner?
- Do adult citizens enjoy universal and equal suffrage? (*Note:* Suffrage can be suspended or withdrawn for reasons of legal incapacity, such as mental incapacity, or conviction of a serious criminal offense.)
- Is the drawing of election districts conducted in a fair and nonpartisan manner, as opposed to gerrymandering for personal or partisan advantage?

(such as proportional versus majoritarian) been manipulated to advance certain political interests or to influence the electoral results?

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION

1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system open to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings?

- Do political parties encounter undue legal or practical obstacles in their efforts to be formed and to operate, including onerous registration requirements, excessively large membership requirements, etc.?
- Do parties face discriminatory or onerous restrictions in holding meetings, rallies, or other peaceful activities?
- Are party members or leaders intimidated, harassed, arrested, imprisoned, or subjected to violent attacks as a result of their peaceful political activities?

2. Is there a significant opposition vote and a realistic possibility for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections?

- Are various legal/administrative restrictions selectively applied to opposition parties to prevent them from increasing their support base or successfully competing in elections?
- Are there legitimate opposition forces in positions of authority, such as in the national legislature or in subnational governments?

rested, imprisoned, or subjected to violent attacks as a result of their peaceful political activities?

3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, totalitarian parties, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group?

- Do such groups offer bribes to voters and/or political figures in order to influence their political choices?
- Do such groups intimidate, harass, or attack voters and/or political figures in order to influence their political choices?
- Does the military control or enjoy a preponderant influence over government policy and activities, including in countries that nominally are under civilian control?
- Do foreign governments control or enjoy a preponderant influence over government policy and activities by means including the presence of foreign military troops, the use of significant economic threats or sanctions, etc.?

4. Do cultural, ethnic, religious, or other minority groups have full political rights and electoral opportunities?

- Do political parties of various ideological persuasions address issues of specific concern to minority groups?
- Does the government inhibit the participation of minority groups in national or subnational political life through laws and/or practical obstacles?

operate peacefully, democratic values legally permitted and de facto allowed to operate?

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT

1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government?

office?

- Do other appointed or non-freely elected state actors interfere with or prevent freely elected representatives from adopting and implementing legislation and making meaningful policy decisions?

governments, interfere with or prevent elected representatives from adopting and implementing legislation and making meaningful policy decisions?

2. Is the government free from pervasive corruption?

grams to prevent, detect, and punish corruption among public officials, including conflict of interest?

- Is the government free from excessive bureaucratic regulations, registration requirements, or other controls that increase opportunities for corruption?
- Are there independent and effective auditing and investigative bodies that function without impediment or political pressure or influence?
- Are allegations of corruption by government officials thoroughly investigated and prosecuted without prejudice, particularly against political opponents?
- Are allegations of corruption given wide and extensive airing in the media?
- Do whistle-blowers, anticorruption activists, investigators, and journalists enjoy legal protections that make them feel secure about reporting cases of bribery and corruption?
- What was the latest Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index score for this country?

3. Is the government accountable to the electorate between elections, and does it operate with openness and transparency?

- Are civil society groups, interest groups, journalists, and other citizens able to comment on and influence pending policies of legislation?
- Do citizens have the legal right and practical ability to obtain information about government operations and the means to petition government agencies for it?
- Is the budget-making process subject to meaningful legislative review and public scrutiny?
- Does the government publish detailed accounting expenditures in a timely fashion?

awarding of government contracts?

- Are the asset declarations of government officials open to public and media scrutiny and verification?

ADDITIONAL DISCRETIONARY POLITICAL RIGHTS QUESTIONS:

1. For traditional monarchies that have no parties or electoral process, does the system provide for genuine, meaningful consultation with the people, encourage public discussion of policy choices, and allow the right to petition the ruler?

- Is there a non-elected legislature that advises the monarch on policy issues?

with or petition the monarch?

- Does the monarch take petitions from the public under serious consideration?

2. Is the government or occupying power deliberately changing the ethnic composition of a country or territory so as to destroy a culture or tip the political balance in favor of another group?

- Is the government providing economic or other incentives to certain people in order to change the ethnic composition of a region or regions?
- Is the government forcibly moving people in or out of a certain or areas in order to change the ethnic composition of those regions?
- Is the government arresting, imprisoning, or killing members of certain ethnic groups in order change the ethnic composition of a region or regions?

CIVIL LIBERTIES CHECKLIST

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF

1. Are there free and independent media and other forms of cultural expression? (Note: In cases where the media are state-controlled but offer pluralistic points of view, the survey gives the system credit.)

- Does the government directly or indirectly censor print, broadcast, and/or internet-based media?
- Is self-censorship among journalists common, especially when reporting on politically sensitive issues, including corruption or the activities of senior officials?
- Does the government use libel and security laws to punish those who scrutinize government officials and policies through either onerous fines or imprisonment?
- Is it a crime to insult the honor and dignity of the president and/or other government officials? How broad is the range of such prohibitions, and how vigorously are they enforced?
- If media outlets are dependent on the government for their financial survival, does the government withhold funding in order to propagandize, primarily provide official points of view, and/or limit access by opposition parties and civic critics?
- Does the government attempt to influence media content and access through means including politically motivated awarding of broadcast frequencies and newspaper registrations, unfair control and influence over printing facilities and distribution networks, selective distribution of advertising, onerous registration requirements, prohibitive tariffs, and bribery?
- Are journalists threatened, arrested, imprisoned, beaten, or killed by government or nongovernmental actors for their legitimate journalistic activities, and if such cases occur, are they investigated and prosecuted fairly and expeditiously?

pression censored or banned for political purposes?

2. Are religious institutions and communities free to practice their faith and express themselves in public and private?

- Are registration requirements employed to impede the free functioning of religious institutions?
- Are members of religious groups, including minority faiths and movements, harassed, fined, arrested, or beaten by the authorities for engaging in their religious practices?
- Does the government appoint or otherwise influence the appointment of religious leaders?
- Does the government control the production and distribution of religious books and other materials and the content of sermons?
- Is the construction of religious buildings banned or restricted?
- Does the government place undue restrictions on religious education?
Does the government require religious education?

3. Is there academic freedom and is the educational system free of extensive political indoctrination?

- Are teachers and professors free to pursue academic activities of a political and quasi-political nature without fear of physical violence or intimidation by state or nonstate actors?
- Does the government pressure, strongly influence, or control the content of school curriculums for political purposes?
- Are student associations that address issues of a political nature allowed to function freely?

officials, pressure students and/or teachers to support certain political figures or agendas, including pressuring them to attend political rallies or vote for certain candidates? Conversely, does the government, including through school administration or other officials, discourage or forbid students and/or teachers from supporting certain candidates and parties?

4. Is there open and free private discussion?

- Are people able to engage in private discussions, particularly of a political nature (in places including restaurants, public transportation, and their homes) without fear of harassment or arrest by the authorities?
- Does the government employ people or groups to engage in public surveillance and to report alleged antigovernment conversations to the authorities?

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS

1. Is there freedom of assembly, demonstration, and open public discussion?

- Are peaceful protests, particularly those of a political nature, banned or severely restricted?
- Are the legal requirements to obtain permission to hold peaceful demonstrations particularly cumbersome and time consuming?
- Are participants of peaceful demonstrations intimidated, arrested, or assaulted?
- Are peaceful protestors detained by police in order to prevent them from engaging in such actions?

2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations? (*Note:* This includes civic organizations, interest groups, foundations, etc.)

- Are registration and other legal requirements for nongovernmental organizations particularly onerous and intended to prevent them from functioning freely?
- Are laws related to the financing of nongovernmental organizations unduly complicated and cumbersome?

ernment pressure?

- Are members of nongovernmental organizations intimidated, arrested, imprisoned, or assaulted because of their work?

3. Are there free trade unions and peasant organizations or equivalents, and is there effective collective bargaining? Are there free professional and other private organizations?

government interference?

- Are workers pressured by the government or employers to join or not to join certain trade unions, and do they face harassment, violence, or dismissal from their jobs if they do?
- Are workers permitted to engage in strikes, and do members of unions face reprisals for engaging in peaceful strikes? (*Note:* This question may not apply to workers in essential government services or public safety jobs.)
- Are unions able to bargain collectively with employers and able to negotiate collective bargaining agreements that are honored in practice?
- For states with very small populations or primarily agriculturally based economies that do not necessarily support the formation of trade unions, does the government allow for the establishment of peasant organizations or their equivalents? Is there legislation expressly forbidding the formation of trade unions?

- Are professional organizations, including business associations, allowed to operate freely and without government interference?

F. RULE OF LAW

1. Is there an independent judiciary?

- Is the judiciary subject to interference from the executive branch of government or from other political, economic, or religious influences?
- Are judges appointed and dismissed in a fair and unbiased manner?
- Do judges rule fairly and impartially, or do they commonly render verdicts that favor the government or particular interests, whether in return for bribes or other reasons?
- Do executive, legislative, and other governmental authorities comply with judicial decisions, and are these decisions effectively enforced?
- Do powerful private concerns comply with judicial decisions, and are decisions that run counter to the interests of powerful actors effectively enforced?

2. Does the rule of law prevail in civil and criminal matters? Are police under direct civilian control?

- Are defendants' rights, including the presumption of innocence until proven guilty, protected?
- Are detainees provided access to independent, competent legal counsel?

independent, and impartial tribunal?

- Are prosecutors independent of political control and influence?
- Are prosecutors independent of powerful private interests, whether legal or illegal?
- Is there effective and democratic civilian state control of law enforcement officials through the judicial, legislative, and executive branches?
- Are law enforcement officials free from the influence of nonstate actors, including organized crime, powerful commercial interests, or other groups?

3. Is there protection from political terror, unjustified imprisonment, exile, or torture, whether by groups that support or oppose the system? Is there freedom from war and insurgencies?

- Do law enforcement officials make arbitrary arrests and detentions without warrants or fabricate or plant evidence on suspects?
- Do law enforcement officials beat detainees during arrest and interrogation or use excessive force or torture to extract confessions?
- Are conditions in pretrial facilities and prisons humane and respectful of the human dignity of inmates?

- Do citizens have the means of effective petition and redress when their rights are violated by state authorities?
- Are there private/nonstate actors operating in the country that engage in kidnapping for ransom, murder, or other violent crimes against the general population or specific groups?
- Is the population subjected to physical harm, forced removal, or other acts of violence or terror due to civil conflict or war?

4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?

- Are members of various distinct groups—including ethnic and religious minorities, homosexuals, and the disabled—able to exercise effectively their human rights with full equality before the law?
- Is violence against such groups widespread, and if so, are perpetrators brought to justice?
- Do members of such groups face legal and/or de facto discrimination in areas including employment, education, and housing because of their identification with a particular group?

- Do women enjoy full equality in law and in practice as compared to men?

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

1. Does the state control travel or choice of residence, employment, or institution of higher education?

- Are there restrictions on foreign travel, including the use of an exit visa system, which may be issued selectively?
- Is permission required from the authorities to move within the country?
- Does the government determine or otherwise influence a person's type and place of employment?
- Are bribes or other inducements for government officials needed to obtain the necessary documents to travel, change one's place of residence or employment, enter institutions of higher education, or advance in school?

2. Do citizens have the right to own property and establish private businesses? Is private business activity unduly influenced by government officials, the security forces, political parties/organizations, or organized crime?

- Are people legally allowed to purchase and sell land and other property, and can they do so in practice without undue interference from the government or nonstate actors?
- Does the government provide adequate and timely compensation to people whose property is expropriated under eminent domain laws?
- Are people legally allowed to establish and operate private businesses with a reasonable minimum of registration, licensing, and other requirements?

- Are bribes or other inducements needed to obtain the necessary legal documents to operate private businesses?
- Do private/nonstate actors, including criminal groups, seriously impede private business activities through such measures as extortion?

3. Are there personal social freedoms, including gender equality, choice of marriage partners, and size of family?

- Is violence against women, including wife-beating and rape, widespread, and are perpetrators brought to justice?
- Is the trafficking of women and/or children abroad for prostitution widespread, and is the government taking adequate efforts to address the problem?

social matters, including property and inheritance rights, divorce proceedings, and child custody matters?

partners through means such as requiring large payments to marry certain individuals (e.g., foreign citizens) or by not enforcing laws against child marriage or dowry payments?

- Does the government determine the number of children that a couple may have?
- Does the government engage in state-sponsored religious/cultural/ethnic indoctrination and related restrictions on personal freedoms?
- Do private institutions, including religious groups, unduly infringe on the rights of individuals, including choice of marriage partner, dress, etc.?

4. Is there equality of opportunity and the absence of economic exploitation?

- Does the government exert tight control over the economy, including through state ownership and the setting of prices and production quotas?
- Do the economic benefits from large state industries, including the energy sector, benefit the general population or only a privileged few?
- Do private interests exert undue influence on the economy through monopolistic practices, cartels, or illegal blacklists, boycotts, or discrimination?
- Is entrance to institutions of higher education or the ability to obtain employment limited by widespread nepotism and the payment of bribes?
- Are certain groups, including ethnic or religious minorities, less able to enjoy certain economic benefits than others? For example, are certain groups restricted from holding particular jobs, whether in the public or the private sector, because of de jure or de facto discrimination?

including unfairly withholding wages and permitting or forcing employ-

ees to work under unacceptably dangerous conditions, as well as through adult slave labor and child labor?

NOTE: For each political rights and civil liberties checklist question, 0 to 4 points are added, depending on the comparative rights and liberties present (0 represents the least, 4 represents the most). However, for additional discretionary question B only, 1 to 4 points are subtracted, when necessary.

KEY TO RAW POINTS, POLITICAL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES RATINGS, AND STATUS

Table 1		Table 2	
Political Rights (PR)		Civil Liberties (CL)	
Total Raw Points	PR Rating	Total Raw Points	CL Rating
36-40	1	53-60	1
30-35	2	44-52	2
24-29	3	35-43	3
18-23	4	26-34	4
12-17	5	17-25	5
6-11	6	8-16	6
0-5	7	0-7	7
Table 3			
Combined Average of the PR and CL Ratings		Country Status	
1.0-2.5		Free	
3.0-5.0		Partly Free	
5.5-7.0		Not Free	

Tables and Ratings

Table of Independent Countries

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Rating	Country	PR	CL	Freedom Rating
Afghanistan	5▲	5▲	Partly Free	Dominica	1	1	Free
Albania	3	3	Partly Free	Dominican Republic	2	2	Free
Algeria	6	5	Not Free	East Timor	3	3	Partly Free
Andorra	1	1	Free	Ecuador	3	3	Partly Free
Angola	6	5	Not Free	Egypt	6	5	Not Free
Antigua and Barbuda	2	2	Free	El Salvador	2	3	Free
Argentina	2	2	Free	Equatorial Guinea	7	6	Not Free
Armenia	5	4	Partly Free	Eritrea	7	6	Not Free
Australia	1	1	Free	Estonia	1	1	Free
Austria	1	1	Free	Ethiopia	5	5	Partly Free
Azerbaijan	6	5	Not Free	Fiji	4	3	Partly Free
Bahamas	1	1	Free	Finland	1	1	Free
Bahrain	5	5	Partly Free	France	1	1	Free
Bangladesh	4	4	Partly Free	Gabon	6▼	4	Partly Free
Barbados	1	1	Free	The Gambia	5▼	4	Partly Free
Belarus	7	6	Not Free	Georgia	3	3▲	Partly Free
Belgium	1	1	Free	Germany	1	1	Free
Belize	1	2	Free	Ghana	1▲	2	Free
Benin	2	2	Free	Greece	1	2	Free
Bhutan	6	5	Not Free	Grenada	1	2	Free
Bolivia	3	3	Partly Free	Guatemala	4	4	Partly Free
Bosnia-Herzegovina	4	3	Partly Free	Guinea	6	5	Not Free
Botswana	2	2	Free	Guinea-Bissau	3▲	4	Partly Free
Brazil	2	2▲	Free	Guyana	3▼	3▼	Partly Free
Brunei	6	5	Not Free	Haiti	7	6	Not Free
Bulgaria	1	2	Free	Honduras	3	3	Partly Free
Burkina Faso	5	3▲	Partly Free	Hungary	1	1	Free
Burma	7	7	Not Free	Iceland	1	1	Free
Burundi	3▲	5	Partly Free	India	2	3	Free
Cambodia	6	5	Not Free	Indonesia	2▲	3▲	Free
Cameroon	6	6	Not Free	Iran	6	6	Not Free
Canada	1	1	Free	Iraq	6▲	5	Not Free
Cape Verde	1	1	Free	Ireland	1	1	Free
Central African Republic	5▲	4▲	Partly Free	Israel	1	2▲	Free
Chad	6	5	Not Free	Italy	1	1	Free
Chile	1	1	Free	Jamaica	2	3	Free
China	7	6	Not Free	Japan	1	2	Free
Colombia	3▲	3▲	Partly Free	Jordan	5	4	Partly Free
Comoros	4	4	Partly Free	Kazakhstan	6	5	Not Free
Congo (Brazzaville)	5	5▼	Partly Free	Kenya	3	3	Partly Free
Congo (Kinshasa)	6	6	Not Free	Kiribati	1	1	Free
Costa Rica	1	1	Free	Kuwait	4	5	Partly Free
Cote d'Ivoire	6	6	Not Free	Kyrgyzstan	5▲	4▲	Partly Free
Croatia	2	2	Free	Laos	7	6	Not Free
Cuba	7	7	Not Free	Latvia	1	1▲	Free
Cyprus	1	1	Free	Lebanon	5▲	4▲	Partly Free
Czech Republic	1	1	Free	Lesotho	2	3	Free
Denmark	1	1	Free	Liberia	4▲	4	Partly Free
Djibouti	5	5	Partly Free	Libya	7	7	Not Free
				Liechtenstein	1	1	Free

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Rating	Country	PR	CL	Freedom Rating
Lithuania	1▲	1▲	Free	Seychelles	3	3	Partly Free
Luxembourg	1	1	Free	Sierra Leone	4	3	Partly Free
■ Macedonia	3	3	Partly Free	Singapore	5	4	Partly Free
Madagascar	3	3	Partly Free	Slovakia	1	1	Free
Malawi	4	4	Partly Free	Slovenia	1	1	Free
Malaysia	4	4	Partly Free	Solomon Islands	3	3	Partly Free
Maldives	6	5	Not Free	Somalia	6	7	Not Free
Mali	2	2	Free	South Africa	1	2	Free
Malta	1	1	Free	South Korea	1	2	Free
Marshall Islands	1	1	Free	Spain	1	1	Free
Mauritania	6	4▲	Partly Free	■ Sri Lanka	3	3	Partly Free
Mauritius	1	1	Free	Sudan	7	7	Not Free
Mexico	2	2	Free	Suriname	2▼	2	Free
Micronesia	1	1	Free	Swaziland	7	5	Not Free
Moldova	3	4	Partly Free	Sweden	1	1	Free
Monaco	2	1	Free	Switzerland	1	1	Free
Mongolia	2	2	Free	Syria	7	7	Not Free
Morocco	5	4	Partly Free	Taiwan	1▲	1	Free
Mozambique	3	4	Partly Free	Tajikistan	6	5	Not Free
Namibia	2	2▲	Free	Tanzania	4	3	Partly Free
Nauru	1	1	Free	Thailand	3▼	3	Partly Free
Nepal	6▼	5	Not Free	■ Togo	6	5	Not Free
Netherlands	1	1	Free	Tonga	5	3	Partly Free
New Zealand	1	1	Free	Trinidad and Tobago	3	2▲	Free
Nicaragua	3	3	Partly Free	Tunisia	6	5	Not Free
Niger	3	3	Partly Free	Turkey	3	3	Partly Free
Nigeria	4	4	Partly Free	Turkmenistan	7	7	Not Free
North Korea	7	7	Not Free	Tuvalu	1	1	Free
Norway	1	1	Free	Uganda	5	4	Partly Free
Oman	6	5	Not Free	Ukraine	3▲	2▲	Free
Pakistan	6	5	Not Free	United Arab Emirates	6	6	Not Free
Palau	1	1	Free	United Kingdom	1	1	Free
Panama	1	2	Free	United States	1	1	Free
Papua New Guinea	3	3	Partly Free	Uruguay	1	1	Free
Paraguay	3	3	Partly Free	Uzbekistan	7	7▼	Not Free
Peru	2	3	Free	Vanuatu	2	2	Free
Philippines	3▼	3	Partly Free	Venezuela	4▼	4	Partly Free
Poland	1	1	Free	Vietnam	7	5▼	Not Free
Portugal	1	1	Free	■ Yemen	5	5	Partly Free
Qatar	6	5	Not Free	Zambia	4	4	Partly Free
Romania	2▲	2	Free	■ Zimbabwe	7	6	Not Free
Russia	6	5	Not Free				
Rwanda	6	5	Not Free				
St. Kitts and Nevis	1	1▲	Free				
St. Lucia	1	1▲	Free				
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	2	1	Free				
Samoa	2	2	Free				
San Marino	1	1	Free				
Sao Tome and Principe	2	2	Free				
Saudi Arabia	7	6▲	Not Free				
Senegal	2	3	Free				
Serbia and Montenegro	3	2	Free				

PR and CL stand for Political Rights and Civil Liberties, respectively. 1 represents the most free and 7 the least free rating. The ratings reflect an overall judgment based on survey results.

▲▼ up or down indicates a change in Political Rights or Civil Liberties since the last survey.

■ up or down indicates a trend arrow.

Note: The ratings reflect global events from December 1, 2004, through November 30, 2005.

Table of Related Territories

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Rating
China			
Hong Kong	5	2	Partly Free
United States			
Puerto Rico	1	1▲	Free

Table of Disputed Territories

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Rating
Armenia/Azerbaijan			
Nagorno-Karabakh	5	5	Partly Free
China			
Tibet	7	7	Not Free
Cyprus			
Northern (Turkish) Cyprus	2	2	Free
Georgia			
Abkhazia	5▲	5	Partly Free
India			
Kashmir	5	5	Partly Free
Israel			
Israeli-Occupied territories	6	5▲	Not Free
Palestinian Authority-Administered territories	5	5▲	Partly Free
Moldova			
Transnistria	6	6	Not Free
Morocco			
Western Sahara	7	6	Not Free
Pakistan			
Kashmir	7	5	Not Free
Russia			
Chechnya	7	7	Not Free
Serbia & Montenegro			
Kosovo	6	5	Not Free

Combined Average Ratings: Independent Countries

FREE			
1.0			
Andorra	Bulgaria	Madagascar	NOT FREE
Australia	Ghana	Nicaragua	5.5
Austria	Greece	Niger	Algeria
Bahamas	Grenada	Papua New Guinea	Angola
Barbados	Israel	Paraguay	Azerbaijan
Belgium	Japan	Philippines	Bhutan
Canada	Monaco	Seychelles	Brunei
Cape Verde	Panama	Solomon Islands	Cambodia
Chile	St. Vincent and the Grenadines	Sri Lanka	Chad
Costa Rica	South Africa	Thailand	Egypt
Cyprus	South Korea	Turkey	Guinea
Czech Republic			Iraq
Denmark	2.0	3.5	Kazakhstan
Dominica	Antigua and Barbuda	Bosnia-Herzegovina	Maldives
Estonia	Argentina	Fiji	Nepal
Finland	Benin	Guinea-Bissau	Oman
France	Botswana	Moldova	Pakistan
Germany	Brazil	Mozambique	Qatar
Hungary	Croatia	Sierra Leone	Russia
Iceland	Dominican Republic	Tanzania	Rwanda
Ireland	Mali		Tajikistan
Italy	Mexico	4.0	Togo
Kiribati	Mongolia	Bangladesh	Tunisia
Latvia	Namibia	Burkina Faso	
Liechtenstein	Romania	Burundi	6.0
Lithuania	Samoa	Comoros	Cameroon
Luxembourg	Sao Tome and Principe	Guatemala	Congo (Kinshasa)
Malta	Suriname	Liberia	Cote d'Ivoire
Marshall Islands	Vanuatu	Malawi	Iran
Mauritius		Malaysia	Swaziland
Micronesia	2.5	Nigeria	United Arab Emirates
Nauru	El Salvador	Tonga	Vietnam
Netherlands	India	Venezuela	
New Zealand	Indonesia	Zambia	6.5
Norway	Jamaica		Belarus
Palau	Lesotho	4.5	China
Poland	Peru	Armenia	Equatorial Guinea
Portugal	Senegal	Central African Republic	Eritrea
Saint Kitts and Nevis	Serbia and Montenegro	Gambia	Haiti
Saint Lucia	Trinidad and Tobago	Jordan	Laos
San Marino	Ukraine	Kuwait	Saudi Arabia
Slovakia		Kyrgyzstan	Somalia
Slovenia	PARTLY FREE	Lebanon	Zimbabwe
Spain	3.0	Morocco	
Sweden	Albania	Singapore	7.0
Switzerland	Bolivia	Uganda	Burma
Taiwan	Colombia		Cuba
Tuvalu	East Timor	5.0	Libya
United Kingdom	Ecuador	Afghanistan	North Korea
United States	Georgia	Bahrain	Sudan
Uruguay	Guyana	Congo (Brazzaville)	Syria
	Honduras	Djibouti	Turkmenistan
1.S	Kenya	Ethiopia	Uzbekistan
Belize	Macedonia	Gabon	
		Mauritania	
		Yemen	

Combined
Average
Ratings:
Related
Territories

FREE
1.0
Puerto Rico (US)

PARTLY FREE
3.5
Hong Kong (China)

Combined Average Ratings: Disputed Territories

FREE	PARTLY FREE	NOT FREE
2.0	5.0	5.5
Cyprus (Northern [Turkish] Cyprus)	Abkhazia (Georgia) Kashmir (India) Nagorno-Karabakh (Armenia/Azerbaijan) Palestinian Authority- Administered Territories (Israel)	Israeli-Occupied Territories (Israel) Kosovo (Serbia and Montenegro)
		6.0
		Kashmir (Pakistan) Transnistria (Moldova)
		6.5
		Western Sahara (Morocco)
		7.0
		Chechnya (Russia) Tibet (China)

Electoral Democracies (123)

Albania	Iceland
Andorra	India
Antigua and Barbuda	Indonesia
Argentina	Ireland
Australia	Israel
Austria	Italy
Bahamas	Jamaica
Bangladesh	Japan
Barbados	Kenya
Belgium	Kiribati
Belize	Latvia
Benin	Lesotho
Bolivia	Liberia
Botswana	Liechtenstein
Brazil	Lithuania
Bulgaria	Luxembourg
Burundi	Macedonia
Canada	Madagascar
Cape Verde	Malawi
Central African Republic	Mali
Chile	Malta
Colombia	Marshall Islands
Comoros	Mauritius
Costa Rica	Mexico
Croatia	Micronesia
Cyprus	Moldova
Czech Republic	Monaco
Denmark	Mongolia
Dominica	Mozambique
Dominican Republic	Namibia
East Timor	Nauru
Ecuador	Netherlands
El Salvador	New Zealand
Estonia	Nicaragua
Finland	Niger
France	Nigeria
Georgia	Norway
Germany	Palau
Ghana	Panama
Greece	Papua New Guinea
Grenada	Paraguay
Guatemala	Peru
Guinea-Bissau	Philippines
Guyana	Poland
Honduras	Portugal
Hungary	Romania

St. Kitts and Nevis	Sri Lanka
St. Lucia	Suriname
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	Sweden
Samoa	Switzerland
San Marino	Taiwan
Sao Tome and Principe	Thailand
Senegal	Trinidad and Tobago
Serbia and Montenegro	Turkey
Seychelles	Tuvalu
Sierra Leone	Ukraine
Slovakia	United Kingdom
Slovenia	United States
Solomon Islands	Uruguay
South Africa	Vanuatu
South Korea	Venezuela
Spain	

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