

THE WORLD'S MOST  
REPRESSIVE  
REGIMES  
2002

A Special Report to the 58th Session of the United Nations  
Commission on Human Rights, Geneva, 2002

Excerpted from:

Freedom in the World  
The Annual Survey of Political Rights & Civil Liberties  
2001--2002

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First published in 1999.

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## INTRODUCTION

This year, as is the case each year, Freedom House appears before the United Nations Commission on Human Rights at its session in Geneva to present its findings on the state of political rights and civil liberties and to highlight areas of great urgency and concern. In this year's report, Freedom House again places its focus on the most repressive regimes in the world.

The "Most Repressive" reports that follow are excerpted from the 2001--2002 Freedom House survey *Freedom in the World*. The ratings and accompanying essays are based on information received through the end of December 2001. The countries judged to be the worst violators of basic political rights and civil liberties are: Afghanistan, Burma, Cuba, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, and Turkmenistan. They are joined by the territories of Chechnya and Tibet. These states and regions received the Freedom House survey's lowest rating: 7 for political rights and 7 for civil liberties. Within them, state control over daily life is pervasive and intrusive, independent organizations and political opposition are banned or suppressed, and fear of retribution is rooted in reality. In the case of Chechnya, the rating reflects the condition of a vicious conflict that has disrupted normal life and resulted in tens of thousands of victims within the civilian population. Because the report is based on events through December 2001, Afghanistan remains on the list. However, events in the first months of the new year suggest a modest improvement as a consequence of the fall of the Taliban, an end to hostilities, and the beginning of a process of national reconciliation based on the participation of broad segments of the country's civic, political, and military groupings.

The states on the list span a wide array of cultures, civilizations, regions, and levels of economic development. They include countries from the Americas, the Middle East, Central Asia, Africa, and East Asia. Many of the states in this report also share common characteristics. They violate basic human rights, suppress independent trade unions, censor or control the press, and restrict property rights. Some of these states deny the basic rights of women.

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This year in Geneva, we direct our attention to the plight of the people of Chechnya, who are being subjected to an ever-mounting humanitarian catastrophe and a death toll that are the consequence of the brutal prosecution by Russia of a war against the territory's pro-independence insurgence. Amid ongoing reports of war atrocities committed against civilians, Russian authorities have shown little sign of interest in a peaceful solution to the conflict, a dialogue to which the leaders of the Chechen people are open. Regrettably, the Chechen people and their mainstream leaders are caught between elements of Russia's leadership that seek to crush the will of the Chechen people, and isolated groups of terrorist extremists who seek to hijack the cause of the Chechen people in the name of a violent jihad. While focusing attention on the ongoing rights abuses in Chechnya, Freedom House works to promote a dialogue between Russia and the Chechen people that can end the carnage.

Brutal human rights violations continue to take place in nearly every part of the world. Indeed, of the 192 countries in the world, only a minority, 86, are Free and can be said to respect a broad array of basic human rights and political freedoms; a further 57 are Partly Free, with some abridgments of basic rights and weak enforcement of the rule of law; and 49 countries (a quarter of the world total) are Not Free and suffer from systematic and pervasive human rights violations.

This report from Freedom House to the United Nations paints a picture of severe repression and unspeakable crimes against human dignity. But the grim reality depicted in this report stands in sharp contrast to the gradual expansion of human liberty that has been progressing for the last twenty-five years. Today, there are more Free countries than at any time in history. As significantly, there are 121 electoral democracies, representing 63 percent of the world's countries, up from 40 percent fifteen years ago. This progress is in no small measure the consequence of a growing global pro-democratic and pro-human rights movement. Increasingly, it is clear that countries that make the most measured and sustainable progress toward long-term economic development are those that are characterized by good governance and the absence of massive corruption and cronyism, conditions that are only possible in a climate of trans-

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parency, civic control, and a vigorously independent media--all requisites of multiparty democracy.

It is the hope of Freedom House that by distributing information about the “Most Repressive” states and bringing these country reports to the attention of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, we will be aiding those inside these countries who are engaged in a struggle to win their human dignity and freedom. Through their courageous work, such activists are hastening the day when dictatorships will give way to genuine pluralism, democracy, and the rule of law—the bedrock not only of political rights and civil liberties, but also of true economic prosperity.

Additional information about Freedom House and its reports on the state of political rights and civil liberties around the world can be obtained on the Internet at [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org).

**Adrian Karatnycky**  
**President, Freedom House**  
April 2002

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## ↑Afghanistan

**Political Rights: 7**

**Civil Liberties: 7**

**Status: Not Free**

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**Trend Arrow:** Afghanistan received an upward trend arrow because of the installation of a broad-based interim government, an easing of repression, and reduced civil conflict.

### **Overview:**

Afghanistan's war-ravaged population had its first real prospects for peace in years in late 2001 after American-led military strikes and Afghan opposition forces routed the ultraconservative Taliban movement that ruled the impoverished country for five years. It was not clear, however, whether the Taliban's overthrow would bring the stability needed to rebuild a country wracked by severe food shortages, three years of drought, and 22 years of civil conflict.

A broad-based, interim government that took office in December, led by Pashtun tribal leader Hamid Karzai, enjoyed the backing of the West and the United Nations and the nominal support of Afghanistan's post-Taliban provincial governors. However, it had little real authority outside Kabul. Throughout the rugged countryside, military commanders, tribal leaders, rogue warlords, and petty bandits held sway. This patchwork of local control plus the onset of the harsh Afghan winter complicated efforts by international aid agencies to help the roughly one-third of Afghanistan's population that depends on food aid for its survival. Thousands of Afghans returned to their homes once the American bombing campaign ended, but at year's end upwards of 1.1 million civilians remained displaced within the country. Many had left their homes long before the latest crisis began in search of food or to flee fighting.

Karzai, meanwhile, faced the daunting tasks of setting up functioning government institutions almost from scratch and maintaining an uneasy power-sharing arrangement between representatives of ethnic Pashtuns, who are Afghanistan's largest ethnic group, and minority Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras. Those groups dominated the Northern Alliance coalition that for years fought a losing cam-

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paigned against the Pashtun-based Taliban until the United States and its allies intervened.

The United States launched the campaign, which featured daily aerial bombings and the use of American, British, and Australian troops, to capture or kill Saudi militant Osama bin Laden, destroy the Afghanistan operations of his Al Qaeda terrorist network, and punish the Taliban for harboring him. Washington accused bin Laden of masterminding the September 11 terrorist attacks on New York and the Pentagon.

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 nineteenth-century contest for influence in Afghanistan, Britain recognized the country as an independent monarchy in 1921. King Zahir Shah ruled from 1933 until being deposed in a 1973 coup. Afghanistan has been in continuous civil conflict since 1978, when a Communist coup set out to transform this highly traditional society. The Soviet Union invaded on Christmas in 1979 and installed a pro-Moscow Communist faction. Until they finally withdrew in 1989, more than 100,000 Soviet troops faced fierce resistance from U.S.-backed *mujahideen* (guerrilla fighters).

The ethnic-based 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. Until the mid-1990s, the main forces were the Pashtun-based Hizbi-Islami (Islamic Party) and the Tajik-dominated Jamiat-i-Islami (Islamic Association). The rural-based Pashtuns form a near majority in Afghanistan and have ruled for most of the past 250 years.

Drawn largely from students in Islamic schools, the Taliban militia entered the fray in 1995 and, in 1996, seized control of Kabul from a nominal government headed by the Jamiat's Burhanuddin Rabbani. Defeating or buying off mujahideen commanders, the Taliban soon controlled most of the mountainous country except for parts of northern and central Afghanistan, which remained in the hands of the Northern Alliance. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were the Taliban's main supporters while Iran, Russia, India, and Central Asian states backed the Northern Alliance.

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By the time the American-led strikes began on October 7, 2001, the Taliban controlled roughly 95 percent of Afghanistan. After holding out for several weeks, the movement crumbled quickly throughout the country. The Taliban lost Kabul to Northern Alliance forces in November and then on December 7 surrendered the southern city of Kandahar, the movement's spiritual headquarters.

The UN-brokered deal that put Karzai in office sought to balance demands for power by victorious Tajik, Uzbek, and Hazara military commanders with the reality that many Pashtuns would not trust a government headed by ethnic minorities. Karzai, 44, named 18 Northern Alliance officials to his 30-member cabinet. They included Northern Alliance military leader Mohammad Fahim as defense minister. Fahim had taken command of Northern Alliance troops in September after two men posing as Arab journalists had assassinated his predecessor, Ahmad Shah Masood, the storied anti-Soviet resistance leader. Karzai, moreover, is expected to be in office only until June 2002, when exiled monarch Zahir Shar, 87, will convene a *loya jirga*, a traditional council of tribal elders and other notables. That body will name a government that will rule for two years pending elections.

As Karzai's government got down to work in Kabul, relief workers in the countryside struggled to meet the needs of thousands of displaced and refugee Afghans who were returning to their homes and the millions more who needed food aid. Relief workers blamed the severe food shortages on a three-year drought, the worst in decades, and the civil conflict.

At year's end, some 80,000 Afghan refugees had returned from Pakistan and Iran since late November, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. The Geneva-based agency warned, however, that Afghanistan needs large amounts of humanitarian relief and reconstruction aid before any large-scale refugee returns would be possible. Even before the latest crisis began, Pakistan had hosted around 2 million Afghan refugees, and Iran another 1.5 million. Most had fled fighting, while many newer arrivals desperately sought food.

Adding to the difficulty of providing relief, fighting continued in parts of Afghanistan at year's end while warlords were setting up numerous checkpoints to extort money from travelers. The first lightly armed British troops of a foreign security force for

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the capital began patrolling Kabul in December. U.S. and anti-Taliban forces, however, were still confronting pockets of resistance from some Taliban soldiers and the mainly Arab Al Qaeda fighters and were mounting cave-to-cave searches for bin Laden and Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar. Meanwhile, Pashtun chieftains with few ties to Karzai's government were carving out their own fiefs in much of south and eastern Afghanistan.

### **Political Rights and Civil Liberties:**

As 2001 ended, Afghanistan had only a nominal government in Kabul and most Afghans enjoyed few basic rights. With the Taliban routed, residents of the capital and other cities were able to go about their daily lives with far less harassment. Basing its rule on a strict interpretation of the *Sharia* (Islamic law) and the harsh Pashtun social code of rural Afghanistan, the Taliban had placed tight restrictions on nearly all aspects of social and religious life. At year's end, however, it was not clear whether rural Afghans had gained much in the way of enhanced security or freedom to live and work without being molested. The local military commanders, tribal leaders, and rogue warlords who replaced the Taliban in the countryside enjoyed virtually unlimited power.

Throughout Afghanistan, new rulers from Karzai on down to local strongmen faced the question of whether to bring to justice, take revenge on, or simply ignore perpetrators of past abuses. During the civil war, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and other international human rights groups recorded numerous cases where either the Taliban or an opposition group killed civilians or soldiers, often from particular ethnic groups, after wresting control of a city or town. The London-based Amnesty International in December called for an inquiry into what it said was a "large-scale killing" of captured Taliban fighters and others at the Qala-i-Jhanghi fort outside Mazar-i-Sharif. In another recent incident, Taliban fighters reportedly massacred more than 100 Hazara Shiite civilians in January 2001 after recapturing Yakaolang district in central Bamiyan Province from the Shiite-based Hezb-e-Wahdat militia in December, according to Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the UN.

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During their rule, the Taliban also detained and tortured thousands of Tajiks, Hazaras, and members of other ethnic minorities, some of whom were killed or disappeared. The warring factions at times also deliberately or indiscriminately bombed or shelled homes, schools, and other civilian buildings.

Dealing with past abuses as well as protecting basic rights will be particularly tough in a country where courts are rudimentary and judges are easily pressured by those with guns. Justice under the Taliban consisted of clerics with little legal training handing down rulings based on Pashtun customs and the Taliban's interpretation of the Sharia. Trials were brief and defendants had no legal counsel or right of appeal. The situation was not much different in areas outside of Taliban control, although punishments were generally less severe. In a society where families of murder victims have the option of carrying out court-imposed death sentences or granting clemency, the Taliban allowed victims' relatives to kill convicted murderers on several occasions. Taliban authorities at times bulldozed alleged sodomizers under walls, stoned adulterers to death, and amputated the hands of thieves.

The end of Taliban rule freed women in Kabul and other cities from harsh restrictions that had kept them largely shrouded, isolated, and, in many cases, impoverished. In their five years in power, the Taliban made all women wear a *burqa*, a head-to-toe covering, outside the home, and banned most from working. The Taliban also enforced the rural Islamic custom of *pardah*, which requires families to isolate women from men who are not blood relatives, even in the home, as well as the custom of *mehrem*, which requires women to be accompanied by a male relative when they leave their homes.

Rural Afghan women, particularly Pashtuns, have faced many of these restrictions for centuries. Late in the year, it was not clear to what extent these strictures were still being enforced outside Kabul. Under the Taliban, religious police from the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Suppression of Vice routinely detained, flogged, beat, and otherwise punished women for violating Taliban decrees.

Moreover, the Taliban's ban on female employment, though enforced unevenly, reduced many women to begging in order to eat. The ban also caused a health care crisis. The Taliban allowed fe-

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male doctors and nurses to return to work in 2000, though only to treat other women, following reports that many women had died after being unable to obtain medical assistance in the country's gender-segregated hospitals.

In a further sign of change, Afghanistan's new education minister, Rasoul Amin, told Reuters in late December that Karzai's government would reverse the Taliban's ban on schooling for most girls. Boys too had found it tough to attend school, in part because the majority of Afghan teachers are women and the Taliban banned them from working. Under the Taliban, only about four out of ten boys and perhaps three out of ten girls attended school, according to the World Bank. In a move long on symbolism, Karzai named two women to his 30-member cabinet.

The Taliban's downfall also meant that Afghans generally were able to speak more freely and openly. They also were able to enjoy routine leisure activities banned by the Taliban, including listening to music, watching movies and television, and flying kites.

In a country with few independent newspapers and radio stations, many Afghans get their news from foreign radio broadcasts. Afghanistan has fewer than ten regular publications, while several others appear sporadically, according to the U.S. State Department's February 2001 report on human rights in Afghanistan in 2000. During the U.S.-led military campaign, gunmen believed to be either bandits or Taliban fighters killed at least four journalists.

For Muslim Afghans, the end of Taliban rule meant that they no longer were forced to adopt the movement's ultraconservative Islamic practices. Taliban militants had made men maintain beards of sufficient length, cover their heads, and pray five times daily. Many Muslim men whose beards were too short were jailed for short periods and forced to attend mandatory Islamic instruction. Roughly 85 percent of Afghanistan's population is Sunni Muslim, with Shiites making up most of the remainder. The Taliban drew international condemnation in 2001 for ordering Hindu Afghans to wear a yellow piece of cloth to identify them as non-Muslims. Taliban leaders insisted this was to protect Hindus from being punished for failing to adhere to Islamic religious practices. The Taliban also were denounced abroad after they demolished two giant, 2,000-year-old statues of Buddha in central Bamiyan Province.

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Life for Afghans in rural areas formerly controlled by the Taliban may come to resemble that in traditional Northern Alliance strongholds. Villagers in these often remote parts of the country are able to go about their daily lives with little harassment, and girls can attend school. They enjoy few real rights, however, with local authorities and strongmen ruling according to whim. Soldiers of the Northern Alliance and local strongmen occasionally kill, kidnap, detain, and torture opponents and civilians and rape women, according to the U.S. State Department report.

The UN estimates that Afghanistan is the most heavily land mined country in the world despite more than a decade of internationally assisted mine clearance. Farming has been severely hampered by the threat posed by mines, and by drought, limited resources, and poor irrigation systems, roads, and other infrastructure. Aviation and financial sanctions imposed by the UN in 1999 worsened economic conditions in a country already ravaged by two decades of war.

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# Burma

**Political Rights: 7**

**Civil Liberties: 7**

**Status: Not Free**

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## Overview:

Burma's ruling junta continued its tight grip over this impoverished Southeast Asian nation in 2001, even as it released some 200 political prisoners, the highest number of releases in several years. Late in the year, talks between the generals who run Burma and Aung San Suu Kyi, the veteran pro-democracy leader who is under house arrest in Rangoon, were at a standstill. Analysts said the regime faces little real pressure for change because it has crushed the democratic opposition, largely defeated the few ethnic insurgencies still active in the border areas, and offset the effects of Western sanctions by stepping up trade with China and other Asian countries.

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, has been in power since the summer of 1988, when the army opened fire on peaceful, student-led pro-democracy protesters, killing an estimated 3,000 people. In the aftermath, a younger generation of army commanders who took over for Ne Win created the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) to rule the country. The SLORC refused to cede power after holding elections in 1990 that were won in a landslide by Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD). 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, who is in his late 60s, and several other relatively young generals who head the junta refashioned the SLORC as

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the State Peace and Development Council in 1997. In the process, they fired some of the more blatantly corrupt cabinet ministers. 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. Yet the junta took few concrete steps to gain international support. It continued to sentence peaceful pro-democracy activists to lengthy jail terms, force NLD members to quit the party, and periodically detain dozens of NLD activists. Some observers had expressed optimism when word leaked in late 2000 that the regime was holding talks with Suu Kyi, but there was no sign of a breakthrough in 2001 or even a sense of what was being discussed.

The junta continued to face low-grade insurgencies in border areas waged by the Karen National Union (KNU) and at least five smaller ethnic-based rebel armies. A Burmese army offensive against the KNU early in the year drove some 30,000 villagers from their homes in eastern Burma, the *Far Eastern Economic Review* reported in January. More offensives were reported late in the year after the onset of the dry season. Thai troops, meanwhile, reportedly raided several narcotics labs inside Burma, run by a former Burmese rebel group, that help traffick millions of methamphetamine tablets to Thailand each year, according to the *Review* and other sources. The United Wa State Army (UWSA) trafficks the drugs with the reported help of Burmese soldiers and intelligence officials. The UWSA is one of about 15 rebel groups that have since 1989 reached ceasefire deals permitting them to maintain their armies and carry out some government functions in their territory. Like the UWSA, many are involved in narcotics trafficking.

### **Political Rights and Civil Liberties:**

Burma continued to be ruled by one of the world's most repressive regimes. The junta rules by decree, controls the judiciary, 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. Diplomats say that junta leader General Than Shwe is ailing and is expected to be succeeded by General Maung Aye, the army commander and the regime's second-ranking official. However, they add, Maung Aye is locked in a behind-the-scenes struggle for the top spot with

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Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt, the military intelligence chief and the junta's number three official. This jockeying for power reflects a broader split in the regime between supporters of Maung Aye, who oppose any type of reform, and those of Khin Nyunt, who favor modest reforms to boost Burma's flagging economy. Former strongman Ne Win, now 90, still wields some influence within the junta.

The United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva condemns the regime each year for committing torture, disappearances, and other grave human rights abuses. In its 2001 session in the spring, the commission praised the government for beginning a dialogue with Suu Kyi, but also deplored "the deterioration of the human rights situation and the continuing pattern of gross and systematic violations of human rights" in the country.

Some of the worst human rights abuses take place in Burma's seven ethnic minority-dominated states. In these border states, the *tatmadaw*, or Burmese armed forces, often kill, beat, rape, and arbitrarily detain civilians with impunity, according to the United Nations, the United States State Department, and other sources. Soldiers also routinely seize livestock, cash, property, food, and other goods from villagers.

Tens of thousands of ethnic minorities in Shan, Karenni, Karen, and Mon states and Tenasserim Division remain in squalid and ill-equipped relocation centers set up by the army. The sites generally lack adequate food, water, health care, and sanitation facilities. The army forcibly moved the villagers to the sites in the 1990s as part of its counterinsurgency operations. Reports by Amnesty International in 1999 documented widespread army abuses while relocating the villagers. Press reports suggested that the army continued to forcibly uproot villagers in Karen, Shan, and other states in 2001, though on a smaller scale compared to the mid-1990s.

While army abuses are the most widespread, some rebel groups forcibly conscript civilians, commit some extrajudicial killings, and use women and children as porters, according to the U.S. State Department's February 2001 report on Burma's human rights record in 2000. Rebel fighters occasionally are accused of rape, the report added. Thailand continues to host some 120,000 Karen and Karenni refugees in camps near the Burmese border and some

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100,000 Shan refugees who are not permitted by Thai authorities to enter the camps, Amnesty International said in December.

The regime continued to use forced labor in 2001 despite formally banning the practice in October 2000, Human Rights Watch said in June. The government outlawed forced labor just days prior to an unprecedented November 2000 call by the International Labor Organization (ILO) for its members and UN agencies to "review" their relations with Burma. Many interpreted the resolution as a call to tighten sanctions against the regime. A 1998 ILO report found substantial evidence that the junta systematically uses forced labor. The Geneva-based organization passed a resolution in 1999 calling the regime's use of forced labor "a contemporary form of slavery." The ILO, the U.S. State Department, and other sources say that soldiers routinely force civilians to work without pay under harsh conditions. Soldiers make civilians construct roads, clear minefields, porter for the army, or work on military-backed commercial ventures. Forced labor appears to be most widespread in states dominated by ethnic minorities.

Amnesty International said in 2000 that "torture has become an institution" in Burma and that victims include political activists, criminals, and members of ethnic minorities. Dissidents say that since 1988 more than 40 political prisoners have died in Rangoon's infamous Insein prison.

The junta denies citizenship to and has committed serious abuses against the Muslim Rohingya minority in northern Arakan state. Lacking citizenship, the Rohingyas face restrictions on their movement and right to own land and are barred from secondary education and most civil service jobs. The government denies citizenship to most Rohingyas on the grounds that their ancestors allegedly did not reside in Burma in 1824, as required under the 1982 citizenship law. More than 100,000 Rohingya refugees remain in Bangladesh, where they fled in the 1990s to escape extrajudicial executions, rape, forced labor, and other abuses, according to reports by Human Rights Watch, the U.S. State Department, and other sources. The refugees include some of the 250,000 Rohingyas who fled to Bangladesh in the early 1990s but then largely returned to Burma, as well as newer arrivals.

Since rejecting the results of the 1990 elections, the junta has all but emasculated the victorious National League for Democ-

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racy (NLD). Authorities have jailed many NLD leaders, pressured thousands of party members and officials to resign, closed party offices, and periodically detained hundreds of NLD members at a time to block planned party meetings. The New York-based Human Rights Watch in May released a list of 85 Burmese lawmakers elected in 1990 who it said were in prison or in government “guest houses” because of their peaceful political activities. Some have been held since 1990, but most were arrested in later crackdowns. Besides the NLD, there are nine other political parties, although most of them are moribund. A state-controlled convention began drafting a new constitution in 1993 that would grant the military key government posts in a civilian government and 25 percent of seats in a future parliament. However, the convention has not met since 1996 and never produced a final document.

The junta in late 2001 was holding some 1,600 political prisoners, Amnesty International reported in December. Many of the 200 political prisoners who were released in 2001 had reached the end of their terms or had been held without trial for years, the organization added. Most political prisoners are held under broadly drawn laws that criminalize a range of peaceful activities. These include distributing pro-democracy pamphlets and distributing, viewing, or smuggling out of Burma videotapes of Suu Kyi’s public addresses. The frequently used Decree 5/96 of 1996 authorizes jail terms of 5 to 25 years for aiding activities “which adversely affect the national interest.”

Burmese courts respect some basic due process rights in ordinary criminal cases but not in political cases, according to the U.S. State Department report. The report also said that authorities in 2000 arrested and sentenced on fabricated charges nearly every lawyer with alleged links to the NLD. Prisons and labor camps are overcrowded, and inmates lack adequate food and health care. However, conditions in some facilities have reportedly improved somewhat since 1999, when the junta began allowing the International Committee of the Red Cross access to prisons.

The junta sharply restricts press freedom, jailing dissident journalists and owning and tightly controlling all daily newspapers and radio and television stations. It also subjects most private periodicals to prepublication censorship. The regime released at least

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two jailed journalists in 2001, but continued to hold at least 18 others, the Paris-based *Reporters sans Frontières* said in August.

Authorities continued to arbitrarily search homes, intercept mail, and monitor telephone conversations, the State Department report said. The regime's high-tech information warfare center in Rangoon reportedly can intercept private telephone, fax, e-mail, and radio communications. Laws and decrees criminalize possession and use of unregistered telephones, fax machines, computers and modems, and software.

Since the 1988 student pro-democracy demonstrations, the junta has kept universities closed on and off for a total of nearly seven years, limiting higher education opportunities for a generation of young Burmese. Moreover, since reopening universities in 2000 after a four-year hiatus, authorities have lowered standards and shortened the academic term at many schools, made students pledge loyalty to the regime, barred political activity on campuses, and relocated some schools to relatively remote areas. The few non-governmental groups in Burma generally work in health care and other nominally nonpolitical fields.

Criminal gangs have in recent years trafficked thousands of Burmese women and girls, many from ethnic minority groups, to Thailand for prostitution, according to reports by Human Rights Watch and other groups. Women are underrepresented in the government and civil service.

Ordinary Burmese generally can worship freely. The junta, however, has 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. Authorities also jailed more than 100 monks in the 1990s for their pro-democracy and human rights work; about half of these have been released, according to the U.S. State Department report. Buddhists make up around xx percent of Burma's population.

There was "a significant increase in the level of anti-Muslim violence" in Burma between July 2000 and June 2001, according to the U.S. State Department's annual report on religious freedom covering that period. The regime "may have acquiesced" in some of the violence, the report added. Officials often reject or delay approval of requests by Islamic and Christian groups to build new churches and mosques.

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Independent trade unions, collective bargaining, and strikes are illegal. Several labor activists continued to serve long prison terms in 2001 for their political and labor activities. Child labor is relatively common in small businesses, family farming, and other industries, according to the U.S. State Department report. The junta forces most state workers and many other Burmese to join a tightly controlled mass movement, the Union Solidarity Development Association. It monitors forced labor quotas, reports on citizens, and organizes meetings called to denounce the NLD and its members.

In recent years, the junta's economic mismanagement has contributed to periodic gas and power shortages, persistently high inflation rates, stagnant economic growth, and a hugely overvalued currency. Weak property rights and poor land ownership records further hamper economic development. The European Union and the United States, moreover, maintain economic sanctions against Burma and prevent it from receiving some multilateral aid because of its dismal human rights record. Meanwhile, official corruption is reportedly rampant. Given these problems, foreign investment has been limited.

# Cuba

**Political Rights: 7**

**Civil Liberties: 7**

**Status: Not Free**

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## Overview:

The collapse of 74-year-old Cuban leader Fidel Castro at a long outdoor rally near Havana on June 23 centered attention in 2001 on the future of the island once the world's longest-ruling dictator passes from the scene. Increasing contact with the free-market world appeared to give a boost to Cuba's long-stagnant economy, at least until the September 11, 2001, terrorist bombings in the United States put a damper on international tourism generally, including travel by Europeans to Cuba's tourist destinations. Lower prices for sugar and nickel, two of the island's most important exports, added to economic planners' concerns. The attacks on New York and the Pentagon afforded Castro a rare opportunity to voice "solidarity" with the "people" of the United States and to condemn terrorism, while complaining about past attacks directed against Cuban civilian targets by Miami-based Cuban exiles. The Castro regime received an unexpected boost in October when U.S. coalition partner Great Britain voiced disagreement with Washington's continuing inclusion of the island on its list of terrorist states. In November, Hurricane Michelle, the most powerful tropical storm to hit Cuba in a half-century, left a low death toll but a trail of physical destruction, devastating Cuban crops. In the wake of the storm, the first direct food trade was permitted between Cuba and the United States since the latter imposed an embargo on the Communist-run island in 1962. On a positive note, at the end of 2001 Castro was reported to have urged Colombia's National Liberation Army (ELN) guerrilla group to reach a peace agreement with that country's government.

Cuba achieved independence from Spain in 1898 as a result of the Spanish-American War. The Republic of Cuba was established in 1902, but was under U.S. tutelage under the Platt Amendment until 1934. In 1959 Castro's July 26th Movement—named

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after an earlier, failed insurrection—overthrew the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, who had ruled for 18 of the previous 25 years.

Since then, Fidel Castro has dominated the Cuban political system, transforming it 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 a national assembly, which designates a Council of State. It is that body which in turn appoints a 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.

Since the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, and the end of some \$5 billion in annual Soviet subsidies, Castro has sought Western foreign investment. Most investment has come from Europe and Latin America. The legalization of the U.S. dollar since 1993 has heightened social tensions, as the minority with access to dollars from abroad or through the tourist industry has emerged as a new moneyed class and the desperation of the majority without has increased. State salaries have shrunk to \$4 or less a month.

Under Castro the cycles of repression have ebbed and flowed depending on the regime's need to keep at bay the social forces set into motion by his severe post-Cold War economic reforms. For example, stepped-up actions against peaceful dissidents preceded the Fifth Congress of the PCC held in October 1997, as well as elections the same month to the National Assembly of Popular Power. Two small bomb explosions at hotels in Havana on July 13, 1997, also provided a pretext for action against peaceful opposition groups, which Cuban authorities tried to link to terrorist activities.

Neither the Fifth Congress, where one-party rule was reaffirmed, nor the one-party national elections provided any surprises. Castro proudly pointed to a reported 95 percent turnout at the polls; critics noted that nonparticipation could be construed by authorities as dissent and many people were afraid of the consequences of being so identified.

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In the aftermath of the visit of Pope John Paul II, January 21–25, 1998, the number of dissidents confirmed to be imprisoned dropped nearly 400 percent, to 381 in mid-June 1998. Part of the decline was due to the release of 140 of 300 prisoners held for political activities or common crimes whose freedom was sought by the pontiff.

In February 1999, the government introduced tough legislation against sedition, with a maximum prison sentence of 20 years. It included penalties for unauthorized contacts with the United States and the import or supply of “subversive” materials, including texts on democracy, by news agencies and journalists. A month later, a court used the new law in sentencing four well-known dissidents to prison terms of up to five years. Castro used the occasion of the Ibero-American summit, which was boycotted by several Latin American leaders, to lash out at Cuba’s small band of vocal dissidents and members of the independent press.

U.S.-Cuban relations took some unexpected turns in 2000, against a backdrop of unprecedented media coverage of the story of the child shipwreck survivor Elián Gonzalez, who was ordered to be returned to his father after a lengthy legal battle involving émigré relatives in Florida. In response to pressure from U.S. farmers and businessmen who pushed for a relaxation of economic sanctions against Fidel Castro’s island dictatorship, in October the United States eased the 38-year-old embargo on food and medicine to Cuba. However, the aging caudillo’s grip on the island was anything but relaxed. Repression of the independent media and other civil society dissidents continued unabated, and Cuba’s tightening of emigration policy increased the likelihood of high-risk escapes by boat from the island. In 2001, Cuba remains the western hemisphere’s per capita leader in the practice of capital punishment.

Following Castro’s fainting spell in June 2001, both the septuagenarian leader and other senior government officials dismissed rumors that he was in bad health and claimed neither chaos nor an end to the Communist regime would occur when he died. In July, residents of Havana were the subjects of a first-ever public opinion survey sponsored by the regime to determine grassroots satisfaction with the quality of government services provided. Declining educational opportunity, dissatisfaction with public health services and criticism of the national police were among the most fre-

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quent complaints. Cuba's tourism industry, which grew by 500 percent in the last decade and accounts for more than half the island's foreign exchange earnings, was hard hit in the global tourism free fall that was an outgrowth of the September 11 attacks. In October began the trial of three Guatemalans jailed since 1998 on charges of allegedly participating in a Central American terror network that organized a series of bomb attacks on tourist locations in 1997 and 1998. The three confessed to the charges and face sentences ranging from 20 to 30 years. In November, relations between Havana and Washington appeared to thaw slightly, as Continental Airlines celebrated its first charter flight to the Cuban capital. The renewal of food sales in the wake of Michelle sparked further debate among farmers and others in the United States who want the embargo lifted, and Cuban exile groups and some democracy activists who demand even tougher sanctions. In early December, Cuban state security agents detained dozens of activists around the country who were attempting to hold meetings to protest Castro's continued rule and Cuba's one-party system.

### **Political Rights and Civil Liberties:**

Cubans cannot change their government through democratic means. On January 11, 1998, members of the national assembly were elected in a process in which a reported 98.35 percent of 7.8 million registered voters turned out. There were only 601 candidates for an equal number of seats; opposition or dissident groups were forbidden to present their own candidates. Although the national assembly is vested with the right of legislative power, when it is not in session, this faculty is delegated to the 31-member Council of State elected by the assembly and chaired by Castro.

All political and civic organization 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. There has been a slight relaxation of strictures on cultural life; nevertheless, the educational system, the judicial system, labor unions, professional organizations, and all media remain state-controlled. A small group of human rights activists and dissident journalists, together with a still-shackled Ro-

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man Catholic Church, provide the only glimmer of an independent civil society.

In Cuba the executive branch controls the judiciary. The 1976 constitution is remarkable for its concentration of power in the hands of one individual—Castro, president of the Council of State. In practice, the council serves as a *de facto* judiciary and controls both the courts and the judicial process as a whole. In 1999, the Cuban government showed some willingness to enhance antinarcotics cooperation between the island republic and the United States. In 1999, Cuba executed at least 21 prisoners by firing squad, and in 2000 held another 24 on death row, awaiting a final decision on their execution sentence by the Council of State. Two of those on death row are Salvadoran nationals who were convicted of terrorism after confessing to a 1997 bombing campaign against hotels in Cuba that killed an Italian citizen.

Cuba under Castro has one of the highest per capita rates of imprisonment for political offenses of any country in the world. There are several hundred political prisoners, most held in cells with common criminals and many convicted on vague charges such as “disseminating enemy propaganda” or “dangerousness.” There are credible reports of torture of dissidents in prison and in psychiatric institutions, where a number of those arrested in recent years are held. 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. In 1993 vandalism was decreed to be a form of sabotage, punishable by eight years in prison. Groups that exist apart from the state are labeled “counterrevolutionary criminals” and are subject to systematic repression, including arrests, beatings while in custody, confiscations, and intimidation by uniformed or plainclothes state security.

The press in Cuba is the object of a targeted campaign of intimidation by the government. Independent journalists, particularly those associated with five small news agencies they established outside state control, have been subjected to continued repression, including jail terms at hard labor and assaults while in prison by state security agents. At a time when their potential audiences are increasing, as a result of the Internet, about 100 independent journalists have been branded “counterrevolutionaries” by the authorities. Foreign news agencies must hire local reporters only through

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government offices, which limits employment opportunities for independent journalists. In 1999, in the run-up to the November summit of Ibero-American leaders, Castro singled out 17 independent journalists by name and said they were “counterrevolutionary” conspirators paid by the United States. On a positive note, in January 2001, independent journalist Jesus Joel Diaz Fernandez, the winner of the 1999 International Press Freedom Award, was released after two years in jail. However, during the rest of 2001 reporters suffered from the levels of repression reminiscent of earlier years.

Freedom of movement and the right to choose one’s residence, education, or job are severely restricted. Attempting to leave the island without permission is a punishable offense. In August 2000, the U.S. State Department charged that Cuba was not abiding by a 1994 agreement seeking to establish ground rules for the orderly migration of 20,000 Cubans plus their family members to the United States. Noting that more than 100 Cubans to whom the United States had granted visas were denied exit permits by the Cuban government in a 75-day period, it said that the island’s policy was encouraging Cubans “denied the means to migrate in a safe, orderly and legal fashion to risk their lives in desperate sea voyages.”

Cuban authorities have failed to carry out an adequate investigation into the July 1994 sinking of a tugboat carrying at least 66 people, of whom only 31 survived, as it sought to flee Cuba. Several survivors alleged that the craft sank as it was being pursued and assaulted by three other Cuban vessels acting under official orders, and that the fleeing boat was not allowed to surrender. The government denied any responsibility, claiming the tragedy was an accident caused by irresponsible actions by those on board. Citing what it calls compelling evidence, including eyewitness testimony, in 1999 Amnesty International concluded that the force employed by the Cuba government was “disproportionate” to the nature of the crime. It noted that “if events occurred in the way described by several of the survivors, those who died as a result of the incident were victims of extrajudicial execution.” Those in Cuba commemorating the dead, or who have peacefully protested the sinking, have faced harassment and intimidation.

In 1991 Roman Catholics and other believers were granted permission to join the Communist Party, and the constitutional ref-

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erence to official atheism was dropped the following year. Religious freedom has made small gains. Afro-Cuban religious groups are now carefully courted by Cuban officials. In preparation for the papal visit in 1998, Catholic pastoral work and religious education activities were allowed to take place at previously unheard-of levels, and Christmas was celebrated for the first time in 28 years. On a positive note, in June 2001 the archbishop of Havana consecrated the first parish church built on the island in more than 40 years, the latest in a series of small concessions wrested by the papal representative from the regime.

In the post-Soviet era, the rights of Cubans to own private property and to participate in joint ventures with foreigners have been recognized. Non-Cuban businesses have also been allowed. In practice, there are few rights for those who do not belong to the PCC. Party membership is still required for good jobs, serviceable housing, and real access to social services, including medical care and educational opportunities. In a move that was widely criticized in Cuba's large exile community, in 2001 World Bank President James Wolfensohn congratulated Cuba for its social programs, singling out "a great job on education and health." However, critics pointed out that the statistics cited by the World Bank—that suggest that Cuba ranks with many developed countries on measures such as literacy and infant mortality—were based on official Cuban government reports unlikely to be reliable.

Many blacks have benefited from access to basic education and medical care since the Castro revolution, and much of the police force and army enlisted personnel is black. However, credible reports say the forced evictions of squatters and residents who lack official permission to reside in Havana are primarily targeted against individuals and families from the eastern provinces, which are traditionally areas of black or mixed-race populations.

About 40 percent of all women work, and they are well represented in the professions. However, violence against women is a problem, as is child prostitution.

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## Iraq

**Political Rights: 7**

**Civil Liberties: 7**

**Status: Not Free**

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### **Overview:**

Despite persistent rumors of illness, Saddam Hussein appears stronger than at any time since the 1991 Persian Gulf war. The U.S.-led coalition that drove Iraq out of Kuwait has disintegrated; support for the 11-year-old sanctions has eroded; internal and external opposition to the Iraqi government is weak and divided; the regime is flush with money from illicit oil trade; and Saddam has waged a successful propaganda campaign, using the Palestinian uprising and Iraqi suffering to rally anti-Western sentiment throughout the region. All the while, he continues to defy UN resolutions and to bar weapons inspectors.

Iraq gained formal independence in 1932, though the British maintained influence over the Hashemite monarchy. The monarchy was overthrown in a military coup in 1958. A 1968 coup established a government under the Arab Baath (Renaissance) Socialist Party, which has remained in power since. The frequently amended 1968 provisional constitution designated the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) as the country's highest power, and granted it virtually unlimited and unchecked authority. In 1979, Saddam Hussein, long considered the strongman of the regime, formally assumed the titles of state president and RCC chairman.

Iraq attacked Iran in 1980, touching off an eight-year war of attrition during which at least 150,000 Iraqis died and Iraq's economy was devastated. In August 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait. At least 100,000 Iraqi troops were killed in the Persian Gulf War before a 22-nation coalition liberated Kuwait in February 1991. In April, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 687, which called on Iraq to destroy its weapons of mass destruction, to accept long-term monitoring of its weapons facilities, and to recognize Kuwaiti sovereignty. The UN also imposed an oil embargo on Iraq, which may be lifted when the government complies with the terms of Resolution 687. In 1996, the UN initiated an oil-for-food program that

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allows Iraq to sell a limited amount of oil to pay for food and medicine.

UN weapons inspectors were withdrawn, and the United States and Britain began bombing military and potential weapons production sites in December 1998 after traces of a nerve agent were found in an Iraqi weapons dump. A UN weapons inspector had reported that Iraq was largely in compliance with Resolution 687 with regard to chemical and nuclear weapons, but was less forthcoming about biological weapons. In December 1999, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1284, which would suspend sanctions for renewable 120-day periods, provided Baghdad cooperates with a new arms control body, the UN Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC). The resolution also lifted the ceiling on oil-for-food exports. Saddam rejected the resolution, refusing access to weapons inspectors without an unconditional lifting of sanctions.

According to UNICEF, more than 500,000 Iraqi children under age five died between 1991 and 1998. About 41 percent of the population has regular access to clean water. Contaminated water, deteriorating sewage treatment facilities, and sharp declines in health care services have increased the spread and mortality rate of curable disease. The UN Human Development Index, which ranks countries based on quality of life as measured by indicators such as education, life expectancy, and adjusted real income, rated Iraq 55<sup>th</sup> in 1990. In 2000, Iraq was ranked 126<sup>th</sup> of 174 countries.

Saddam has skillfully exploited the humanitarian disaster in Iraq to create divisions among UN Security Council members and to rally support for a lifting of sanctions. While the United States and Britain take a hardline approach, China, France, and Russia have pushed for an end to sanctions for humanitarian reasons and to restore economic relations with Iraq. Iraq reopened its international airport in August 2000, and a year later some 20 countries had defied the air embargo and resumed flights to Iraq. Jordan, Egypt, and Syria resumed scheduled flights, while Russia, France, and a number of African states sent humanitarian assistance or delegations interested in reviving trade. Turkey appointed an ambassador to Iraq in January 2001, and opened a rail link between the two countries in May. An international trade fair in November drew

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participants from 47 countries, and Iraq signed free-trade agreements with six Arab countries in 2001.

Iraqi officials reportedly pocket \$1.5 billion to \$3 billion per year from oil smuggling through Syria, Turkey, and the Persian Gulf. In March, UN officials reported that Iraqi officials demand millions of dollars in kickbacks and illegal commissions on contracts under the oil-for-food agreement. The illegal profits have been used by Saddam to build vast palaces, amusement parks, mosques, and other monuments, and to pad his personal fortune, which is estimated at some \$6 billion in unfrozen foreign assets. U.S. intelligence and other sources say that Saddam is also using the revenues to rebuild weapons factories and may have begun producing chemical and biological agents. Meanwhile, Kurdish officials in the autonomous north of Iraq have spent their portion of the oil-for-food money on building schools, infrastructure, and hospitals. Recent public health statistics put infant mortality in Kurdistan at lower than its pre-sanctions rate. Several observers have reported that the Iraqi government exports food and medicine meant for Iraqis.

By blaming the United States and Britain for the poor state of his people, Saddam further inflames anti-Western sentiment among Arabs in neighboring countries, who already perceive the United States as supporting Israel against Arabs in the current Palestinian uprising. Saddam criticizes Arab leaders for not standing up to Western "meddling" in the region and recently announced the formation of a volunteer Jerusalem Liberation Army "to liberate Palestine from the Mediterranean to the Jordan." His skillful use of propaganda has won him support among Arabs and put increasing pressure on Arab governments allied with the West. Egypt and Jordan both reacted negatively to U.S. airstrikes on radar installations 20 miles south of Baghdad in February.

Saddam won another public relations victory against the West in 2001, when a U.S.-British proposal to overhaul sanctions was postponed under threat of a Russian veto. The proposal would remove restrictions on importing civilian goods while placing tighter controls on illegal oil trade and suspect items, including almost all computer and telecommunications equipment, and other civilian items which may have potential military uses. The United States failed to obtain support for the policy from Iraq's neighbors, who also benefit from illegal oil trade. Still, as the U.S. administration

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debated the direction of the war on terrorism following the September 11 attacks in the United States, with some officials favoring military action to oust Saddam, President George Bush warned that Iraq would face “consequences” if the Iraqi leader continues to refuse access to UN weapons inspectors.

Recent media reports alleging that Saddam has cancer or has suffered a stroke have highlighted the issue of succession. While authorities have vehemently disputed these reports, Saddam appears to be grooming his younger son, Qusay, for the presidency. In May, the Baath Party elected Qusay to its leadership structure. Three days later, Saddam named him one of two deputy commanders of the party’s military branch. Qusay, 34, is head of the country’s security apparatus and keeps a much lower profile than his older brother, Uday, who has a reputation for brutality and excess. Throughout the year a number of senior figures, including foreign ministry officials and the sons of several senior government aides, were arrested or fired for alleged corruption. The purges have been seen by some as a way of eliminating potential rivals to Qusay.

### **Political Rights and Civil Liberties:**

Iraqis cannot change their government democratically. Saddam holds supreme power, and relatives and friends from his hometown of Tikrit hold most key positions. Opposition parties are illegal, and the 250-seat National Council (parliament) has no power. Members of the Council serve four-year terms. Elections were held in 2000 for 220 of the seats; 30 seats reserved for Kurds are appointed by presidential decree. Saddam’s older son, Uday Hussein, won a seat for Baghdad. All candidates are vetted to ensure their support for the regime, and all are either Baathists or nominal independents loyal to the Baath Party. High turnout is typical of Iraqi elections, as failure to vote may be seen as opposition to the government and thus may result in harassment, arrest, torture, and/or execution.

State control is maintained through the extensive use of intimidation through arrest, torture, and summary execution. In August 2001, Amnesty International published a report entitled “Iraq: Systematic Torture of Political Prisoners,” which details abuses against suspected dissidents, including electric shock, extraction of fingernails or toenails, severe beatings, rape or threats of rape, and

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mock execution. An Amnesty International press release in April 2001 said that hundreds of political prisoners and detainees are executed in Iraq every year. Dozens of women accused of prostitution were beheaded in front of their homes in October 2000 by a militia created by Uday Hussein, according to the statement. London-based opposition groups report that Qusay Hussein regularly carries out mass executions of prisoners in a campaign to “cleanse” prisons. Military and government officials suspected of disloyalty to the regime are also reportedly killed from time to time.

Some safeguards exist in civil cases, but political and “economic” cases are tried in separate security courts with no due process considerations. Theft, corruption, desertion from the army, and currency speculation are punishable by amputation, branding, or execution. Doctors have been killed for refusing to carry out punishments or for attempting reconstructive surgery.

Criticism of local officials and investigation into official corruption are occasionally tolerated, as long as they do not extend to Saddam or to major policy issues. The government makes little effort to block the signal of Radio Free Iraq, which began broadcasting in 1998. An opposition-run, U.S.-backed satellite channel called Liberty TV was set to begin broadcasting into Iraq from London around early September 2001. The government carefully controls most information available to Iraqis. Restricted access to satellite broadcasting was allowed beginning in 1999. Uday Hussein is Iraq’s leading media magnate. He is head of the Iraqi Journalists’ Union, owner of 11 of about 35 newspapers published in Iraq, including the *Babel* daily, and director of television and radio stations. In July 2001, Uday reportedly threatened to kill a Kurdish journalist living in Britain for criticizing the Iraqi regime on the Internet.

Freedom of assembly and association is restricted to pro-Baath gatherings. All active opposition groups are in exile, and regime opponents outside Iraq are subject to retaliation by the Iraqi regime. There have been credible reports of Iraqi defectors receiving videotapes of their female relatives being raped in attempts to coerce them to abandon the opposition. In 2000, the Revolutionary Command Council passed Societies Law 13, which specifies that “the goals, programs, and activities of societies should not conflict with the principles and objectives of the great 17-13 July revolution, the independence of the country, its national unity, and its republi-

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can system.” Workers for the UN oil-for-food program were accused of spying and expelled in September 2001.

Islam is the state religion. Shiite Muslims, who constitute more than 60 percent of the population, face severe persecution. Shiites may not engage in communal Friday prayer, the loaning of books by mosque libraries, broadcasting, book publishing, or funeral processions and observances. The army has arrested thousands of Shiites and executed an undetermined number of these detainees. Security forces have desecrated Shiite mosques and holy sites. The army has indiscriminately targeted civilian Shiite villages, razed homes, and drained southern Amara and Hammar marshes in order to flush out Shiite guerrillas.

Forced displacement of ethnic Kurds, Turkomans, and other non-Arab minorities continued in 2001. According to Kurdish sources, a government “Arabization” policy involves authorities’ forcibly expelling thousands of Kurdish families from Kurdish areas under Baghdad’s control and replacing them with Arabs, who are offered land and money as incentives. A Kurdish newspaper reported in March that Kurds in the Kirkuk governorate have been ordered to report for military training or be imprisoned. In August, the government reportedly issued a ban on Iraqis traveling to Kurdistan. Many believe that the purpose of the ban is to prevent Iraqi awareness of the relative peace and prosperity in the north. Ethnic Turkomans have also been subjected to Arabization and assimilation policies, as well as displacement to reduce their concentration in the oil-rich north.

Although laws exist to protect women from discrimination in employment and education, to include women in security and police forces, to require education for girls, and to grant women rights in family matters such as divorce and property ownership, it is difficult to determine whether these rights are respected in practice. Men are granted immunity for killing female relatives suspected of “immoral deeds.” In May 2001, the Baath Party elected a woman to its leadership for the first time.

Independent trade unions are nonexistent; the state-backed General Federation of Trade Unions is the only legal labor federation. The law does not recognize the right to collective bargaining and places restrictions on the right to strike.

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# Libya

**Political Rights: 7**

**Civil Liberties: 7**

**Status: Not Free**

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## Overview:

Colonel Mu' ammar al-Qadhafi continued his campaign for international respectability in 2001. While his drive to improve relations with the United States and Europe yielded mixed results, his vision of a unified African state came closer to fruition in March with the formation of the African Union, intended to replace the Organization for African Unity (OAU). While the new union may be a victory for Qadhafi, it is undoubtedly less popular among Libyans, who suffer rampant corruption, mismanagement, and severe restrictions on their political and civic freedom, and who tend to blame African immigrants for Libya's socioeconomic problems.

After centuries of Ottoman rule, Libya was conquered by Italy in 1912 and occupied by British and French forces during World War II. In accordance with agreements made by Britain and the United Nations, Libya gained independence under the staunchly pro-Western King Idris I in 1951. Qadhafi seized power in 1969 amid growing anti-Western sentiment regarding foreign-controlled oil companies and military bases on Libyan soil.

Qadhafi's open hostility toward the West and his sponsorship of terrorism have earned Libya the status of pariah. Clashes with regional neighbors, including Chad over the Aozou strip and Egypt over their common border, have led to costly military failures. Suspected Libyan involvement in the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland prompted the UN to impose sanctions, including embargoes on air traffic and the import of arms and oil production equipment, in 1992. The United States has maintained unilateral sanctions against Libya since 1981 because of the latter's sponsorship of terrorism.

With the economy stagnating, unemployment at 30 percent, and internal infrastructure in disrepair, Qadhafi began taking steps in 1999 to end Libya's international isolation. That year, he surrendered two Libyan nationals suspected in the Lockerbie bomb-

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ing. He also agreed to pay compensation to the families of 170 people killed in the 1989 bombing of a French airliner over Niger. In addition, he accepted responsibility for the 1984 killing of British police officer Yvonne Fletcher by shots fired from the Libyan embassy in London, and expelled the Palestinian terrorist Abu Nidal organization from Libya. The UN suspended sanctions in 1999, but stopped short of lifting them permanently because Libya has not explicitly renounced terrorism. The United States eased some restrictions to allow American companies to sell food, medicine, and medical equipment to Libya, but maintained its travel ban. Britain restored diplomatic ties with Libya for the first time since 1986; the Libyan embassy in Britain reopened in March 2001. The European Union (EU) lifted sanctions but maintained an arms embargo.

The two Lockerbie suspects went on trial in May 2000 under Scottish law in the Netherlands. One, a Libyan intelligence agent named Abdel Basset Ali Mohammed al-Megrahi, was convicted of murder in January 2001 and sentenced to life imprisonment. The other was acquitted for lack of evidence and freed. Following the trial, the Arab League called for a total lifting of UN sanctions, and all 22 of its members agreed to disregard them. The United States and Britain reiterated their demand that Libyan authorities renounce terrorism, take responsibility for the attack, and pay compensation to the victims' families. Libya has consistently denied government involvement in the attack, and its immediate response to the verdict was bizarrely mixed. No sooner had its assistant foreign minister publicly stated that Libya looked forward to improved relations with the United States than Qadhafi declared that the judges had acted under U.S. influence and might consider suicide, that the United States owes compensation to the "victims" of its foreign policy, and that he had evidence to exonerate al-Megrahi. The evidence never materialized, and observers attributed the contradictory Libyan positions to Qadhafi's desire to maintain a defiant posture for domestic consumption.

Qadhafi's diplomatic offensive continued in 2001 despite the U.S. decision in August to extend unilateral sanctions for five years. In September, Libyan officials sent an appeal to U.S. officials via the Italian foreign minister seeking improved U.S.-Libyan relations. The anti-American posturing appeared again in September, when Qadhafi accused the United States of inventing AIDS for use

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as a bioweapon. But Qadhafi was also one of the first Arab leaders to condemn the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States. He called upon Muslim aid groups to assist Americans, and offered to help capture Saudi-born terrorist Osama bin Laden through law enforcement cooperation and intelligence sharing. In November, Libya placed several intelligence officials under house arrest in connection with the 1989 French airliner bombing. One of the officials, Abdallah Senoussi, is deputy head of Libyan intelligence and Qadhafi's brother-in-law. He was sentenced to life imprisonment two years ago by a French court.

Once a leading advocate of pan-Arab unity, Qadhafi received little Arab support in the wake of Lockerbie and turned instead to promoting a united Africa. Though notorious for his past support for rebel insurgents and apparent attempts to destabilize a number of African countries, Qadhafi has used the numerous conflicts on the continent as an opportunity to step into the role of regional power broker. In 2001 he worked with Egypt on a peace plan for Sudan and mediated disputes between Sudan and Uganda, and Eritrea and Djibouti. He sent troops to Central African Republic in November to support President Ange Felix Patasse in the wake of a failed coup in May. In March, he hosted an OAU summit in Sirte, at which leaders from 40 African countries backed the dissolution of the OAU and the formation of the African Union. Loosely based on the EU model, the African Union would include a pan-African parliament, a central bank, a supreme court, and a single currency. More than two-thirds of Africa's 53 countries have so far ratified the union. Still, the union is largely the product of Qadhafi's enthusiasm, and his promises of generous financial aid to many regional leaders have undoubtedly secured their support.

Despite his improved international stature, Qadhafi has become increasingly isolated at home. Ethnic rivalries among senior junta officials have been reported, while corruption, mismanagement, and unemployment have eroded support for the regime. Disaffected Libyans see little of some \$10 billion per year in oil revenue, and have yet to reap the benefits of suspended UN sanctions as potential investors from Europe, Asia, and the Middle East stream in seeking oil contracts. Economists stress the need for deregulation and privatization, and Qadhafi has gradually lifted some state controls on the economy. He has also tried to encourage foreign invest-

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ment in agriculture and tourism as well as oil. In November, 47 government and bank officials, including the finance minister, were sent to prison for corruption as part of an apparently ongoing investigation that may be aimed at cleaning up Libya's image. However, arbitrary investment laws, restrictions on foreign ownership of property, state domination of the economy, and continuing corruption are likely to hinder growth for years to come.

### **Political Rights and Civil Liberties:**

Libyans cannot change their government democratically. Colonel Mu'ammr al-Qadhafi rules by decree, with almost no accountability or transparency. Libya has no formal constitution; a mixture of Islamic belief, nationalism, and socialist theory in Qadhafi's *Green Book* provides principles and structures of governance, but the document lacks legal status. Libya is officially known as a *jamahiriyah*, or state of the masses, conceived as a system of direct government through popular organs at all levels of society. In reality, an elaborate structure of revolutionary committees and people's committees serves as a tool of repression. Real power rests with Qadhafi and a small group of close associates that appoints civil and military officials at every level. In 2000, Qadhafi dissolved 14 ministries, or General People's Committees, and transferred their power to municipal councils, leaving five intact. While some praised this apparent decentralization of power, others speculated that the move was a power grab in response to rifts between Qadhafi and several ministers.

The judiciary is not independent. It includes summary courts for petty offenses, courts of first instance for more serious offenses, courts of appeal, and a supreme court. Revolutionary courts were established in 1980 to try political offenses, but were replaced in 1988 by a people's court after reportedly assuming responsibility for up to 90 percent of prosecutions. Political trials are held in secret, with no due process considerations. Arbitrary arrest and torture are commonplace.

In what has been called the biggest political trial in recent memory, 300 Libyans and 31 other African nationals went on trial in January 2001 in connection with four days of clashes between Libyans and African expatriate workers in October 2000, in which

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at least seven people died. Five African expatriates and two Libyans were sentenced to death in May, while 160 defendants were freed and the rest received prison sentences ranging from one year to life. Some 150 professionals, including engineers, doctors, and academics, went on trial in March 2001 for belonging to or supporting the Libyan Islamic Group, a nonviolent group that is prohibited in Libya. According to Amnesty International, the defendants were arrested in 1998 and their whereabouts unacknowledged by authorities for three years. In August 2001, officials released 107 political prisoners, including one who had served 31 years in connection with an attempted coup in 1970. Hundreds of political prisoners reportedly remain in Libyan prisons. The trial of 16 health professionals accused of infecting nearly 400 Libyan children with HIV continued in 2001. The defendants, who include six Bulgarians and a Palestinian, face the death penalty if convicted. Amnesty International has reported allegations of torture and pretrial irregularities, including denial of access to counsel, in the case. The judge in the case has postponed the verdict until February 2002. The death penalty applies to a number of political offenses and "economic" crimes, including currency speculation and drug- or alcohol-related crimes. Libya actively abducts and kills political dissidents in exile.

Limited public debate occurs within government bodies, but free expression and free media do not exist in Libya. The state owns and controls all media and thus controls reporting of domestic and international issues. Foreign programming is censored, but satellite television is widely available in Tripoli. Members of the international press reported fewer restrictions on their movement and less interference from officials in recent years.

Independent political parties and civic associations are illegal; only associations affiliated with the regime are tolerated. Political activity considered treasonous is punishable by death. Public assembly must support and be approved by the government. Instances of public unrest are rare. In February 2001, riot police beat and fired tear gas at thousands of demonstrators trying to break into the British embassy in Tripoli. Authorities had originally permitted the demonstration, which was held to protest the verdict in the Lockerbie trial. At least 30 people were arrested.

About 98 percent of Libyans are Sunni Muslim. Islamic groups whose beliefs and practices differ from the state-approved

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teaching of Islam are banned. According to the U.S. State Department, small communities of Christians worship openly. The largely Berber and Tuareg minorities face discrimination, and Qadhafi reportedly manipulates, bribes, and incites fighting among tribes in order to maintain power.

Qadhafi's pan-African policy has led to an influx of African immigrants in recent years. Poor domestic economic conditions have contributed to resentment of these immigrants, who are often blamed for increases in crime, drug use, and the incidence of AIDS. In late September 2000, four days of deadly clashes between Libyans and African nationals erupted as a result of a trivial dispute. Thousands of African immigrants were subsequently moved to military camps, and thousands more were repatriated to Sudan, Ghana, and Nigeria. Security measures were taken, including restrictions on the hiring of foreigners in the private sector. The incident proved an embarrassment to Qadhafi, who blamed "hidden forces" for trying to derail his united-Africa policy.

Women's access to education and employment have improved under the current regime. However, tradition dictates discrimination in family and civil matters. A woman must have her husband's permission to travel abroad.

Independent trade unions and professional associations do not exist. The only federation is the government-controlled National Trade Unions Federation. There is no collective bargaining, and workers have no legal right to strike.

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## **North Korea**

**Political Rights: 7**

**Civil Liberties: 7**

**Status: Not Free**

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### **Overview:**

Despite the severe food shortages plaguing his impoverished nation, North Korean strongman Kim Jong-il made few efforts in 2001 to free up the country's command economy or gain increased aid by improving relations with South Korea and the United States. Thanks to international food-aid programs, the country no longer seems to be in danger of a repeat of the 1990s famine that killed hundreds of thousands of people. The outlook seemed bleak, however, for any real improvements in the lives of ordinary North Koreans.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea was established in the northern part of the Korea Peninsula in September 1948, three years after the United States occupied the south of the peninsula -- and Soviet forces, the north — following Japan's defeat in World War II. At independence, North Korea's uncontested ruler was Kim Il-sung, a former Soviet army officer who claimed to be a guerrilla hero in the struggle against Japanese colonial rule that began in 1910. North Korea invaded South Korea in 1950 in an attempt to reunify the peninsula under Communist rule. Drawing in the United States and China, the ensuing three-year conflict killed up to two million people on both sides and ended with a ceasefire rather than a peace treaty. Since then, the two Koreas have been on a continuous war footing.

Kim solidified his power base during the Cold War, purging rivals, throwing thousands of political prisoners into gulags, and promoting a Stalinist-style personality cult emphasizing absolute fealty to himself as North Korea's "Dear Leader." The end of the Cold War brought North Korea's command economy to the brink of collapse, as Pyongyang lost crucial Soviet and East Bloc subsidies and preferential trade deals. North Korea's economy shrank an estimated 30 percent between 1991 and 1996, according to the United Nations.

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With the regime's survival already in doubt, Kim's death in 1994 ushered in even more uncertainty. Many observers questioned whether his son and appointed successor, Kim Jong-il, would have the stature to command the loyalty of other senior officials and the 1.1 million-strong armed forces. The reclusive Kim Jong-il, 59, has done little to dispel these doubts. Meanwhile, his tolerance of small farmers' markets and sporadic efforts to improve relations with the United States, Japan, and South Korea are widely viewed as desperate acts meant to save the country from economic implosion.

Still reeling from the loss of Soviet support and crippled by its own economic mismanagement, North Korea has also suffered since the mid-1990s from droughts and floods that have contributed to chronic food shortages. Famine has killed "approximately a million" people since 1995, according to the U.S. State Department's February 2001 report on North Korea's human rights record in 2000.

North Koreans have more to eat now than during the worst shortages, in 1997, largely because of international aid. The UN and private groups help feed 8 million of North Korea's 20 million people. Critics, however, say the regime misappropriates humanitarian aid. The Paris-based *Medicins Sans Frontieres* relief group quit working in North Korea in 1998, accusing Pyongyang of diverting food aid to government officials. Similarly, the UN Human Rights Committee accused Pyongyang in July 2001 of failing to take adequate measures to tackle the country's food problems.

On top of the food shortages, North Korea is facing an acute health care crisis. Foreign press reports suggest that the 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. Some 63 percent of North Korean children are stunted because of chronic undernourishment, according to a 1998 UNICEF survey.

The government has tried to stave off economic collapse by bringing to the cities small farmers' markets, which have existed in the countryside for several years. It has also allowed foreign investors to set up factories in a free trade and special economic zone in the Rajin-Sonbong area.

Moreover, South Korean intelligence reported that technocrats in their 40s and 50s took up key posts in September in govern-

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ment agencies dealing with the economy, the Hong Kong-based *Far Eastern Economic Review* reported in December. It is not yet clear, however, whether the reshuffle will lead to tangible economic reforms. In any case, the regime appears to be wary of carrying out broad reforms that could undermine its tight control of the country.

North Korea has also used its long-range missile and suspected nuclear weapons programs as bargaining chips to win aid and other concessions from the United States and Japan. Pyongyang pledged in 1999 to suspend ballistic missile tests and open to American inspection a suspected nuclear weapons facility north of the capital. In return, Washington agreed to ease sanctions and provide 100,000 tons of food aid. The negotiating progress came a year after North Korea launched a long-range missile that flew over northern Japan. Earlier concerns over North Korea's suspected nuclear weapons program led to 1994 agreement under which a U.S.-led, multi-nation consortium is currently supplying North Korea with light-water nuclear reactors, which cannot be used to make atomic weapons. Pyongyang in return is scrapping existing nuclear reactors capable of producing weapons-grade plutonium.

North Korea largely rebuffed efforts by Seoul in 2001 to improve bilateral relations in the wake of a landmark June 2000 summit in Pyongyang between Kim Jong-il and his South Korean counterpart, Kim Dae-jung. The lack of progress largely ended the few social exchanges and business deals that followed the summit.

### **Political Rights and Civil Liberties:**

North Korea is one of the most tightly controlled countries in the world. The regime denies North Koreans even the most basic rights, holds tens of thousands of political prisoners, and controls nearly all political, social, and economic groups and activities.

Kim Jong-il, the North Korean leader, and a small group of elites from the Korean Worker's Party (KWP) rule by decree, although little is known about the regime's inner workings. Kim formally is general secretary of the KWP, supreme military commander, and chairman of the National Defense Commission. The latter post is the "highest office of state," following the 1998 abolition of the presidency. Vice Marshall Jo Myong Rok, first vice chairman of the National Defense Commission, is believed to be Kim's second-in-command.

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The Supreme People's Assembly (SPA), or parliament, has little independent power. It meets only a few days each year to rubber-stamp the ruling elite's decisions. In an effort to provide a veneer of democracy, the government occasionally holds show elections for the SPA and provincial, city, and county bodies. All of the candidates belong to the KWP or to one of several small, pro-government "minority parties." The last SPA elections were in 1998.

Defectors and refugees have in recent years reported that the regime regularly executes political prisoners, repatriated defectors, military officers accused of espionage or other antigovernment acts, and other suspected dissidents, according to the U.S. State Department report. The regime has also executed prisoners for "ideological divergence," "opposing socialism," and other "counterrevolutionary crimes," the report added. The UN Human Rights Committee commended North Korea in July for cutting the number of offenses carrying the death penalty to 5 from 33. The committee noted, however, that four of the remaining offenses are largely political.

The UN human rights body also severely criticized the regime's harsh treatment of prisoners. It called on Pyongyang to allow international human rights groups into the country to verify the "many allegations of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and conditions and of inadequate medical care in reform institutions, prisons, and prison camps." Defectors say the regime holds some 150,000 political prisoners, while the South Korean government puts the figure at 200,000, the U.S. State Department report said. The number of ordinary prisoners is not known.

Foreign humanitarian groups estimate that up to 300,000 North Koreans have fled to China since 1995 to escape food shortages. Chinese authorities have returned many refugees to North Korea, where some have been executed, according to the U.S. State Department report. The government has also forcibly relocated "many tens of thousands" of North Koreans to the countryside from Pyongyang, particularly people considered politically unreliable, the U.S. State Department report said. In addition, authorities continue to restrict travel into Pyongyang, normally granting permission only for government business. At the same time, the government has in recent years eased internal controls that had required North Koreans to obtain passes to travel outside of their home villages.

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Authorities rely on an extensive network of informers to expose dissidents and routinely carry out surprise security checks on homes and even entire communities, according to the U.S. State Department report. Pyongyang assigns to each North Korean a security rating that partly determines access to education, employment, and health services as well as place of residence. By some foreign estimates nearly half the population is considered either “wavering” or “hostile,” the U.S. State Department report said, with the rest rated “core.”

The government severely punishes North Koreans for worshipping in underground churches and requires all prayer and religious study to be supervised by state-controlled bodies, according to the U.S. State Department report. Foreign religious and human rights groups say that authorities have killed, beaten, arrested, and detained in prison camps members of underground churches.

North Korean authorities control all trade unions, which they use to monitor workers, mobilize them to meet production targets, and provide them with health care, schooling, and welfare services. The regime does not permit strikes, collective bargaining, or other basic organized labor activities. Many work sites are dangerous, and the rate of industrial accidents reportedly is high, the U.S. State Department report said.

Authorities subject North Koreans to intensive political and ideological indoctrination through the mass media, schools, and work and neighborhood associations. They face a steady onslaught of propaganda from radios and televisions that are pretuned to receive only government stations. Foreign visitors and academics say that children receive mandatory military training and indoctrination at their schools. The regime also routinely orchestrates mass marches, rallies, and performances involving thousands of people that glorify the two Kims and the state.

The government uses a vague guiding philosophy of *juche*, or “I myself,” to justify its dictatorship and rabid efforts to root out dissent. Credited to former President Kim Il-sung, *juche* emphasizes national self-reliance and stresses that the collective will of the people is embodied in a supreme leader. Opposing the leader means opposing the national interest. Taking this to the extreme, authorities have punished people for offenses as trivial as acciden-

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tally defacing photographs of Kim Il-sung or Kim Jong-il, according to the U.S. State Department report.

Few women have reached the higher ranks of the ruling KWP or government. Little is known about how problems such as domestic violence or workplace discrimination may affect North Korean women.

The government prohibits private property and directs and controls nearly all economic activity. Authorities have in recent years, however, allowed families to keep small private gardens and farmers to sell produce at small daily markets. Prior to the economic collapse that began in the early 1990s, the government provided all North Koreans with free food, housing, clothing, and medical care. Today, it barely provides these essentials.

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## **Saudi Arabia**

**Political Rights: 7**

**Civil Liberties: 7**

**Status: Not Free**

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### **Overview:**

The Saudi royal family was beset by internal and external tensions during 2001. The increasing unpopularity of its alliance with the United States exacerbated public frustration with declining living standards, increasing unemployment, official corruption, fiscal mismanagement, and the denial of basic civil and political rights. Saudi-U.S. relations were strained in light of the Palestinian uprising and Saudi reluctance to cooperate with U.S. investigations in high-profile terrorism cases, but tensions escalated in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States.

King Abd al-Aziz al-Saud consolidated the Nejd and Hejaz regions of the Arabian peninsula into the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932. His son, Fahd bin Abd al-Aziz al-Saud, ascended the throne in 1982 after a series of successions within the family. The king rules by decree and serves as prime minister as well as supreme religious leader. The overwhelming majority of Saudis belong to the Wahhabi sect of Sunni Islam. In 1992, King Fahd appointed a 60-member consultative council, or majlis al-shura. The majlis plays only an advisory role and is not regarded as a significant political force. Majlis committees, set up to address financial, Islamic, social, and other affairs, debate and issue recommendations on topics selected by the king. The king expanded the majlis to 90 members in 1997, and to 120 members in May 2001.

King Fahd's poor health has raised serious concerns about succession. The system of fraternal succession adopted by King Abd al-Aziz to prevent fratricide among his 44 sons presents the possibility that a series of aging, sickly rulers will leave Saudi Arabia with no direction at a time when strong leadership is required. Although Crown Prince Abdullah, 77, has effectively ruled since Fahd suffered a stroke in 1995, the succession after Abdullah is unclear. A 1994 decree gives the king the unilateral right to name his successor, but philosophical and ideological rifts within the ruling family

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and varying degrees of power and spheres of influence among potential heirs will make any choice problematic. Of Abd al-Aziz's 25 living sons, many regard themselves as contenders, while others advocate passing power to the next generation.

Saudis have sacrificed civic freedom and political participation for material wealth, modernity, education, and a heavily subsidized welfare state in a social contract that has been the main source of legitimacy for the government. But economic mismanagement, combined with lavish spending by members of the royal family, has endangered the social contract. Unemployment is estimated at up to 35 percent and is expected to rise as the slow-growing job market provides one job for every two people entering the workforce each year. Per capita income, more than \$28,000 in the early 1980s, has dropped below \$7,000, while the population has doubled. Billions of dollars have disappeared in unbudgeted expenditures by royals, who keep some 300 palaces in Jeddah alone. Meanwhile, ordinary Saudis must struggle with rolling blackouts and water rationing. While dissent has not seriously threatened the regime, there is concern over the decreased ability of the government to placate citizens. Some within the royal family have advocated political reform, including some form of popular participation in the political process.

Observers note that Saudi Arabia appears to have abandoned efforts at privatization, structural reform, and diversification aimed at alleviating the kingdom's economic problems. Many measures taken to address economic concerns and attract foreign investment are incomplete, vague, or insufficient to meet investors' concerns. A plan for U.S.-based SBC Communications to invest in the Saudi Telecommunications Company fell through in December 2000 because the Saudi company refused to meet SBC's demands for transparency in its accounting procedures. Meanwhile, the government has issued an extensive "negative list" of industries closed to foreign investment, including military, publishing, education, insurance, transport, fishing, real estate, employment services, and poison control. In addition, Islamic law forbids interest, insurance, and income tax; is randomly applied; and allows for no means of redress for economic grievances.

The relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia has become another source of domestic discontent. As the

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Palestinian uprising in the West Bank continued, Saudi media carried unprecedented criticism of the United States' perceived pro-Israel bias. Saudis also blame the United States for maintaining a sanctions policy against Iraq that is viewed as catastrophic for the Iraqi people. Following the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Saudi-born terrorist-in-exile Osama bin Laden blasted the Saudi government as "godless" for allowing American troops in Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of the prophet Mohammed and home of Mecca, Islam's holiest site. He also warned that the United States would not enjoy security "before we can see it as a reality in Palestine and before all the infidel armies leave the land of Mohammed." Bin Laden's message resonates with Saudis, who privately donate to Islamic charities used as fronts to support bin Laden's network. It also chips away at the government's claim to religious legitimacy as the defender of Islamic faith and law.

The Saudi regime has attempted to downplay its ties to Washington, and relations between the two were increasingly strained. Crown Prince Abdullah has so far refused to meet with President George W. Bush. Following the September 11 attacks, the Saudi government cut ties with Afghanistan's Taliban regime, which harbors and sympathizes with bin Laden, and froze the assets of some groups and individuals suspected of having terrorist links after Bush warned that countries refusing to act against terrorists would be barred from doing business with American companies. Otherwise, Saudi Arabia was reluctant to cooperate with Washington. It criticized the U.S. policy of support for Israel and spirited a number of Saudis out of the United States before it could be determined whether they had information about the terrorists, at least ten of whom were Saudis. Saudi Arabia has been uncooperative in other high-level terror cases as well; it announced in June 2001 that 13 Saudis indicted by a U.S. federal grand jury in connection with the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing, which killed 19 American servicemen, would go to trial in Saudi courts. The FBI complained that Saudi authorities restricted its access to the suspects and evidence in the case. Tensions increased in October when U.S.-led airstrikes on Afghanistan drew harsh criticism from the Muslim clerics whose support gives the Saudi ruling family its legitimacy.

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## **Political Rights and Civil Liberties:**

Saudis cannot change their government democratically. Political parties are illegal, and the king rules by decree according to a constitution based on a strict interpretation of Sharia (Islamic law). There are no elections at any level. Majlis membership is not representative of the population. A council of senior ruling family members was established in 2000 with Crown Prince Abdullah as chair. Membership includes a broad cross-section of royals, including Prince Talal bin Abd al-Aziz, who has been a vocal proponent of liberalization. Noticeably absent is Interior Minister Nayef bin Abd al-Aziz, who is known for his ultraconservative views. The apparent aim of the council is to facilitate decision making and to provide a wider power base for Abdullah in the interest of political stability.

The judiciary is subject to the influence of the royal family and its associates. The king has broad powers to appoint or dismiss judges, who are selected based on their strict adherence to religious principles. The legal system, based on Sharia, allows for corporal punishment such as flogging and amputation, which are widely practiced. Trials are routinely held in secret. Death by beheading is the prescribed punishment for rape, murder, armed robbery, adultery, apostasy, and drug trafficking. People sentenced to death are often unaware of the sentence and receive no advance notice of their execution. Some are never made aware of the charges against them. The law enables heirs of a murder victim to demand “blood money” in exchange for sparing the life of a murderer. Saudi Arabia executes about 100 people per year, many of them foreigners.

Arbitrary arrest and detention are widespread. Under a 1983 law, authorities may hold detainees for 51 days without trial, but this limit is often exceeded in practice. Detainees are frequently not informed of their legal rights, and may or may not be granted access to counsel at the judge’s discretion. Police routinely torture detainees, and signed or videotaped confessions extracted under torture are used, uncorroborated, as evidence. In February 2001, three foreign residents in the kingdom—from the United Kingdom, Canada, and Belgium—confessed on Saudi television to two car bombings in November 2000 that killed a British man. The confessions were made after the accused were held incommunicado for more than a month, and aired before the criminal investigation was complete.

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The accused face the death penalty if convicted. In October, the government adopted a new code of criminal procedure. The new regulations allow defendants and suspects in criminal cases to seek legal counsel, limit administrative detention to five days, prohibit the abuse of detainees, subject authorities who have powers of arrest to prosecution, ban detention or imprisonment in places other than jails, and require search warrants for private homes, offices, and vehicles.

Freedom of expression is severely restricted by prohibitions on criticism of the government, Islam, and the ruling family. The government owns all domestic broadcast media and closely monitors privately owned but publicly subsidized print media. The information minister must approve and may remove all editors in chief. The entry of foreign journalists into the kingdom is tightly restricted, and foreign media are heavily censored where possible. The government outlawed private ownership of satellite dishes in 1994. Internet access was made available in 1999 with filters to block information deemed pornographic, offensive to Islam, or a threat to state security. All Internet traffic is routed through the official Internet Services Unit which, along with inadequate infrastructure, slows connection speeds. In April 2001, the government announced that it would double the number of banned websites to 400,000. Saudi Arabia is estimated to have some 300,000 Internet users.

Public demonstrations are prohibited, and public gatherings are segregated by sex. There are no publicly active human rights groups, and the government prohibits visits by international human rights groups and independent monitors.

Islam, particularly the Wahhabi branch of Sunni Islam, is the state religion, and all citizens must be Muslim. Shiite Muslims, who constitute about a third of the population, face systematic political and economic discrimination, such as arbitrary arrest on suspicion of subversion or pro-Iranian activities. Riots reportedly occurred in April 2000 following the closure of a Shiite mosque by religious police.

Women are segregated in the workplace, in schools, in restaurants, and on public transportation, and they may not drive. They are required to wear the *abaya*, a black garment covering the head, most of the face, and the body. Officers of the Mutawwai'in, or Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, ha-

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rass women for violating conservative dress codes and for appearing in public with unrelated males. Women may not travel within or outside the kingdom without a male relative. Although they make up half the student population, women account for less than six percent of the workforce. They may not study engineering, law, or journalism. A female member of the royal family was appointed assistant secretary in the ministry of education—the highest position ever held by a Saudi woman. Some private businesses have secretly hired women to work alongside men, and more women are making use of the Internet to do business without having to meet male customers in person. In January, the Saudi interior minister issued a statement ruling out any public debate on the status of women in the kingdom, saying it would be “useless and a hollow exchange of ideas.” The statement followed criticism by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, which expressed concern over Saudi treatment of women and the possibility of Sharia punishments being applied to children. In November, authorities began granting women their own identification cards. Previously, women were named, but not depicted, as dependents on their fathers’ or husbands’ cards. Officials explained that the move would help reduce fraud, but it appeared unlikely that womens’ rights would be affected in any way.

Government permission is required to form professional groups and associations, which must be nonpolitical. Trade unions, collective bargaining, and strikes are prohibited. Foreign workers, who comprise about 60 percent of the kingdom’s workforce, are especially vulnerable to abuse, including beating and rape, and are often denied legitimate claims to wages, benefits, or compensation. They are not protected under labor law, and courts generally do not enforce the few legal protections provided to them. A Saudi official reported in April that more than 19,000 foreign maids, mostly from Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines, ran away from their employers during 2000 for various reasons, including nonpayment of wages and maltreatment. The maids were reportedly being housed in shelters run by the labor ministry until the disputes were settled.

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# Sudan

**Political Rights: 7**

**Civil Liberties: 7**

**Status: Not Free**

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## Overview:

Having effectively marginalized Islamic ideologue and former regime strongman Hassan al-Turabi, President Omar al-Bashir further consolidated his power during 2001 and continued to emerge from diplomatic isolation. On the latter front, al-Bashir took the opportunity following the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States to pledge cooperation in combating terrorism, and therefore to lay the foundation for improved relations with Washington. U.S.-Sudanese relations did improve somewhat during the year despite a lack of concrete evidence that Sudan has stopped harboring terrorists or their supporters.

The Sudanese civil war moved into its nineteenth year with no end in sight despite African- and Arab-sponsored peace initiatives. Such initiatives have taken on greater urgency since the 1999 inauguration of a Sudanese oil pipeline, which now finances Khartoum's war efforts. The government has intensified fighting around oil fields in an apparently new policy aimed at driving out or exterminating inhabitants who might pose a threat to its control of the fields.

Africa's largest country has been embroiled in civil wars for 35 of its 45 years as an independent state. It achieved independence in 1956 after nearly 80 years of British rule. The Anyanya movement, representing mainly Christian and animist black Africans in southern Sudan, battled Arab Muslim government forces from 1956 to 1972. The south gained extensive autonomy under a 1972 accord, and for the next decade, an uneasy peace prevailed. In 1983, General Jafar Numeiri, who had toppled an elected government in 1969, restricted southern autonomy and imposed Sharia (Islamic law). Opposition led again to civil war, and Numeiri was overthrown in 1985. Civilian rule was restored in 1986 with an election that resulted in a government led by Sadiq al-Mahdi of the moderate Islamic Ummah Party, but war continued. Lieutenant Gen-

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eral Omar al-Bashir ousted al-Mahdi in a 1989 coup, and the latter 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 al-Turabi, who wielded considerable power as the ruling National Congress (NC) party leader and speaker of the 400-member national assembly.

Tensions between al-Bashir and al-Turabi came to a head in December 1999. On the eve of a parliamentary vote on a plan by al-Turabi to curb the president's power, al-Bashir dissolved parliament and declared a state of emergency. He introduced a law allowing the formation of political parties, fired al-Turabi as NC head, replaced the cabinet with his own supporters, and held deeply flawed presidential and parliamentary elections, which the NC won overwhelmingly, in December 2000. Al-Turabi formed his own party, the Popular National Congress (PNC), in June 2000, but 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-Bashir renewed the state of emergency for another 12 months in January.

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). Al-Turabi and four aides were charged with conspiracy to overthrow the government, and al-Turabi was placed under house arrest in May. He was released in October and the charges were dropped. No explanation was given, but al-Bashir promised to open up politics and promote democracy.

The current civil war broadly pits northern Arab Muslims against southern-based black African animists and Christians. Some pro-democracy northerners, however, have allied themselves with the SPLA-led southern rebels to form the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), while northern rebels of the Sudan Allied Forces have staged attacks in northeastern Sudan. Some southern groups have signed peace pacts with the government, and there is fighting among rival southern militias. A convoluted mix of historical, religious, ethnic, and cultural tensions makes peace elusive, while competition for economic resources fuels the conflict.

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The government continued to bomb civilian as well as military targets, and to arm tribal militias as proxy fighting forces. International humanitarian relief efforts are hampered by ceasefire violations and are sometimes deliberately targeted by parties to the conflict. A Danish pilot was killed in May when the Red Cross plane he was flying came under fire over southern Sudan. It was unclear who was responsible. In March, pro-government militia abducted four aid workers but released them a week later. Several nongovernmental organizations reported intensified fighting and increasing numbers of displaced persons in oil-rich areas, and assert that oil interests are fueling an ethnic cleansing campaign that has uprooted more than 36,000 people.

A joint Libyan-Egyptian peace initiative calls for democracy within a unified state based on recognition of Sudan's ethnic and religious diversity. All major parties to the conflict have nominally approved the initiative, though many have expressed reservations, particularly about the lack of a provision for southern self-determination. Peace talks under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) have focused on southern self-determination, borders, and the application of Sharia in the south. However, prospects for a settlement, or even for serious multilateral negotiations, appear dim; it seems unlikely that the government will halt the war until it has complete control of southern oil fields.

Al-Bashir has begun to lift Sudan out of its international isolation by sidelining al-Turabi, who was seen as the force behind Sudan's efforts to export Islamic extremism. Although new vice president Ali Osman Mohammed Taha, who replaced al-Turabi as Islamic ideologue, maintains a firm commitment to Sudan as an Islamic state and its jihad against non-Muslims, al-Bashir has managed to repair relations with several states, including Iran, Eritrea, Saudi Arabia, and even the United States. Following the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States, al-Bashir condemned terrorism, issued a statement rejecting violence, and offered to cooperate on combating terrorism. The U.S. State Department reported that Sudanese officials had arrested about 30 associates of Saudi-born terrorist-in-exile Osama bin Laden, who resided in Sudan for five years in the 1990s. Though the report was unconfirmed by Khartoum, the United States abstained from a late-September UN

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Security Council vote, clearing the way for the UN to lift sanctions on Sudan, imposed in 1996 after suspects in an assassination attempt against Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak fled to Sudan. However, the United States renewed its own sanctions for a year in November, citing human rights abuses and Sudan's reputation for terrorism.

### **Political Rights and Civil Liberties:**

Sudanese 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 called an attempt 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 a third of parliamentary seats, and more than 100 seats are reserved for presidential appointees. 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.

Serious human rights abuses by nearly every faction involved in the civil war have been reported. Secret police operate "ghost houses," or detention and torture centers, in several cities. Government armed forces routinely raid villages, burn homes, kill men, and abduct women and children to be used as slaves in the north. Relief agencies have liberated thousands of slaves by purchasing them from captors in the north and returning them to the south. The government continued to bomb civilian installations and relief sites. International aid workers have been abducted and killed.

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. Distribution of food and medical relief is hampered by fighting and by the government's deliberate blockage of aid shipments. The World Health Organization reported

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a case of polio in southern Sudan in July and expressed concern that many more people might be infected. In November, the government called a four-week ceasefire to allow for vaccinations and aid drops. More than four million people are internally displaced, and that number is growing as the government fights to clear black Africans from oil fields or potential oil drilling sites. The UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Sudan reported in July 2001 that the human rights situation in the country is worse than one year ago and was concerned that oil is fueling the government's war against civilians.

Soldiers continue to carry out a policy of "depopulating" the Nuba Mountains, a 30,000-square-mile area in the heart of Sudan. The black Africans native to the Nuba region numbered more than one million in 1985, and have been reduced to some 300,000 today. The government frequently bombs the region and enforces a blockade that prevents food, fuel, clothing, and medicine from entering.

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, used to punish political opponents of the government, do not. Criminal law is based on Sharia and provides for flogging, amputation, crucifixion, and execution. Ten southern, predominantly non-Muslim states are officially exempt 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 widespread, and security forces act with impunity. Prison conditions do not meet international standards.

Six NDA leaders arrested in December 2000 went on trial in March 2001 for plotting an uprising with a U.S. diplomat. The diplomat was expelled shortly after meeting with the defendants. President al-Bashir announced in October that the case would be dropped, but gave no explanation. In November, Ahmed al-Mirghani, a leading opposition figure, returned to Sudan from 12 years of exile in Egypt. Al-Bashir welcomed the former head of the State Council, which represented political parties before al-Bashir's coup, in a move aimed at demonstrating the government's commitment to reconciliation.

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Press freedom has improved since the government eased restrictions in 1997, but journalists practice self-censorship to avoid harassment, arrest, and the closure of their publications. There are reportedly nine daily newspapers and a wide variety of Arabic- and English-language publications. All of these are subject to censorship. Penalties apply to journalists who allegedly harm the nation or economy or violate national security. A 1999 law imposes penalties for "professional errors." The editor of a leftist paper was jailed in January 2001 after an article alleging financial mismanagement by courts. Two journalists were jailed in February for failing to pay fines incurred for libeling the local government in Khartoum. In February, al-Turabi's PNC began printing the first opposition paper to appear in Sudan for more than a decade, but the paper was banned later that month. A BBC correspondent was arrested in April when he went to cover an Easter event in Khartoum. He was released without charge after a week. The English-language *Khartoum Monitor* was suspended temporarily in September because of "inflammatory" articles. Twenty-two journalists from *al Watan* were arrested in November when they protested an official ban on a corruption story. The president controls the National Press and Publications Council, which may impose suspensions, bans, or fines at will.

Emergency law severely restricts freedom of assembly and association. Riot police used tear gas and batons to break up a demonstration in Khartoum by thousands of students protesting an increase in bus fares. PNC members have been arrested and detained at random during the year, including Hassan al-Turabi, who spent eight months of 2001 detained for conspiracy to overthrow the government.

Islam is the state religion, and the constitution claims Sharia as the source of its legislation. At least 75 percent 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 starve because of a policy under which food is withheld pending conversion to Islam. Officials have described their campaign against non-Muslims as a holy war. Under the 1994 Societies Registration Act, religious groups must register in order to gather legally. Registration is reportedly difficult to obtain. The government denies permission to build churches and destroys Christian

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schools, centers, and churches. Catholic priests face random detention and interrogation by police. Fifty-three Christians protesting a government order to change the venue of an Easter ceremony were flogged in April, and 47 of them were sentenced to 20-day jail terms. Amnesty International reported that many people were injured when police fired bullets at the protesters.

Women face discrimination in family matters such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance, which are governed by Sharia. Public order police frequently harass women and monitor their dress for adherence to government standards of modesty. Human Rights Watch reported in July 2001 that three young women were beaten and verbally abused by police in such a case. Female genital mutilation occurs despite legal prohibition, and rape is reportedly routine in war zones. President al-Bashir announced in January 2001 that Sudan would not ratify the international Convention on Eradication of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women because it "contradicted Sudanese values and traditions." Children are used as soldiers by government and opposition forces in the civil war. The SPLA, which reportedly employs some 13,000 children, promised to demobilize at least 10,000 by the end of 2002.

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.

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# Syria

**Political Rights: 7**

**Civil Liberties: 7**

**Status: Not Free**

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## Overview:

Glimmers of Syrian civil society activity emerged during 2001, as a result in large part to President Bashar al-Assad's earlier pledges to advance political reforms. However, by year's end, whatever progress had been made was effectively snuffed out as the government curtailed informal gatherings and jailed opposition leaders, critical journalists, and intellectuals. President Assad's room for maneuverability seemed curtailed by an influential old guard in the ruling Baath Party, a group accustomed to the repressive and corrupt status quo that had defined the rule of the president's late father, Hafez al-Assad. Many analysts predict Bashar will be forced to walk a tightrope in the foreseeable future as he balances modernizing his country with placating Baathist hardliners. Peace talks with Israel remained stalled during the year. Facing greater public discontent in Lebanon, Syria redeployed its forces there during the year, withdrawing completely from the capital, Beirut. Syria, included on the U.S. State Department list of countries supporting terrorism, appeared to cooperate with the United States in its war against global terrorism after Al Qaeda's attacks on New York and the Pentagon on September 11.

Following four centuries of rule under the Ottoman Empire, Syria came under French control after World War I and gained independence in 1941. A 1963 military coup brought the pan-Arab, Socialist Baath Party to power. As head of the Baath military wing, Hafez al-Assad took power in a 1970 coup and formally became president of the secular regime in 1971. Members of the Alawite Muslim minority, which constitutes 12 percent of the population, were installed in most key military and intelligence positions and continue to hold those positions today.

The 1973 constitution vests executive power in the president, who must be a Muslim and who is nominated by the Baath Party to be elected through popular referendum. The 250-member

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People's Assembly holds little independent legislative power. The minimum age for president was lowered in June 2000 from 40 to 34, when Bashar al-Assad, at age 34, assumed the presidency after his father's death.

In the late 1970s, the fundamentalist Muslim Brotherhood, drawn from the Sunni majority, carried out antigovernment attacks in several northern and central towns. In 1982, the government sent the army into the northern town of Hama to crush a Muslim Brotherhood rebellion. As many as 20,000 militants and civilians died in the resulting bloodshed, which decisively ended active opposition to the regime to this day.

In June 2000, after Bashar became president, the 90-member central committee of the governing Baath Party was overhauled with the election of 62 new members, among them top army officials. This action seemed to indicate a concerted effort on the new president's part to ensure loyalty at the highest levels of government and to consolidate his rule, which led to new hope that the young, Western-educated, new president would push through political and economic reform. The president relaxed some restrictions, such as permitting informal gatherings of government critics.

In the beginning of 2001, President Assad raised hopes that he would expand his liberalization campaign. In February, he announced that private universities could be established, thus ending 50 years of socialist government control over higher education. He also publicly hinted at the prospect of allowing the formation of independent political parties. The trend toward greater freedom, would, however, be reversed by the middle of the year.

In August, a member of parliament, Mohammed Mamoun al-Humsi, staged a hunger strike to protest the government's refusal to implement meaningful political reforms. He called for an end to martial law, the creation of a parliamentary commission on human rights, and the implementation of anticorruption measures.

Syria made no progress with Israel regarding negotiations over the Golan Heights. Indeed, no talks took place in 2001. Israel has in the past agreed in principle to return all of the Golan to Syria in return for security guarantees. Prior to losing the Golan in 1967, Syria had used the territory to shell northern Israeli towns.

Tensions between Syria and Israel remained high during the year. In April, after the Lebanese-based and Syrian-backed

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Hezbollah guerrilla group killed an Israeli soldier in an attack along the Israel-Lebanon border, Israeli fighter jets bombed a Syrian radar installation in Lebanon. Three Syrian soldiers were killed in the strike. Syria, which continues to maintain its 35,000-strong troop presence in Lebanon, often sanctions Hezbollah attacks against Israeli forces, ostensibly as a pressure tactic to force Israel to return the Golan Heights on Syrian terms.

During Pope John Paul II's visit to Syria in May, President Assad used the occasion to launch a stinging public attack against Israel, calling it a racist state. The rebuke was seen by many analysts as an attempt by the relatively untested president to shore up his stature in the Arab world, while leading to concerns in the West over his judgment and political acumen.

While Syria pledged its cooperation with the United States in the war against terrorism, some U.S. officials remain skeptical of Bashar's commitment. In addition to backing Hezbollah, Syria harbors radical Palestinian terror groups opposed to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Syria faced growing calls within Lebanon for the withdrawal of Syrian troops from that country. Many felt more emboldened in criticizing the Syrian presence with the seemingly reform-minded Bashar in power; his father had dealt harshly with any dissent related to Syria's Lebanese occupation. In June, Syrian troops redeployed throughout the country and withdrew completely from Beirut. Viewing the move as largely symbolic, the Lebanese stepped up their vocal opposition to Syria's overbearing presence in their country.

Antiquated infrastructure and an overbearing and corrupt bureaucracy characterize Syria's economy. There are no industrial zones, nor is there a modern banking system. However, in 2001, the government authorized the creation of private banks for the first time.

Syrian unemployment registered 20 percent in 2001. With the population growing two times faster than the economy, Bashar al-Assad, upon assuming office, pledged to combat corruption and attract foreign investment. As first steps, he liberalized the rules against holding foreign currency and narrowed the powers of the economic security courts. However, by the end of 2000 and throughout 2001, the president's drive to modernize the economy seemed to taper off, leading to speculation that he faces significant challenges

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from those grown accustomed to benefiting from a closed, statist economy.

Agriculture accounts for roughly 50 percent of exchange earnings and exports, and farmers make up 30 percent of the Syrian workforce, a segment of the economy hit hard by a 1999 drought. Oil accounts for approximately half of the country's exports, but many predict Syria will have to import oil within ten years as fields run dry.

Syria is known to be a major transit point of processed opiates, including heroin, from Central Asia. The country earns an estimated \$1 billion a year on drug smuggling to the Middle East, Europe, and North Africa.

Greater calls from parliament for economic accountability and transparency emerged during the year. In what was seen as an attempt to stimulate the economy, President Assad oversaw a cabinet reshuffle in December. Some long-time cabinet officials were let go.

### **Political Rights and Civil Liberties:**

Syrians cannot change their government democratically, though they ostensibly vote for the president and the People's Assembly. President Bashar al-Assad maintains absolute authority in the military-backed regime.

The Emergency Law, in effect almost continuously since 1963, allows authorities to carry out preventative arrests and to supersede due process safeguards in searches, detentions, and trials in the military-controlled state security courts, which handle political and security cases. Several non-governmental security services operate independently of each other and without judicial oversight. Authorities monitor personal communications and conduct surveillance of suspected security threats.

The judiciary is subservient to the government. Defendants in ordinary civil criminal cases have some due process rights, though there are no jury trials. In state security courts, confessions obtained through torture are generally admitted as evidence. Nevertheless, acquittals have been granted in political cases.

Hundreds of political prisoners remain behind bars. However, the government in November released more than 100 members of the banned Muslim Brotherhood and the Iraqi Baath Party.

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Freedom of assembly is largely nonexistent. Technically, the interior ministry must grant citizens permission to hold meetings, and the government or Baath Party organizes most public demonstrations. However, once Bashar succeeded his father, citizens felt more emboldened to meet and criticize the government. Syrian intellectuals began meeting regularly to debate issues surrounding social, economic, and political reform. They issued calls for the creation of civil institutions such as an independent press, trade unions and associations, and political parties.

Sensing an emboldened civil society, the government in 2001 clamped down on the informal dialogue forums, attended by critics, intellectuals, and democracy proponents. In January, democratic activists announced they had gathered 1,000 signatures on a petition demanding greater political freedom and calling for the cancellation of emergency laws and an end to the one-party system. The following month, the government informed forum organizers that they needed permission to hold their meetings. The directive followed statements by President Assad to the London-based Arabic daily *Al-sharq Al-Awsat* that dialogue groups could only discuss the past and not debate possible future changes. He also ruled out criticism of the Baath Party, saying “the government will stand firmly against any work that might cause harm to the public interest.” Soon after the president’s comments, Baath Party member began speaking out against political pluralism on the grounds it would lead to the disintegration of the state.

In September, the government jailed Riad Turk, the secretary-general of the political office of the banned Communist Party and a government opponent. Two hundred intellectuals called for his immediate release and for those behind his arrest to be tried. Later in the month, Riad Seif, a member of parliament and an outspoken critic, was arrested for hosting an unlicensed political discussion forum.

Freedom of association is restricted. Private associations must register with the government, which usually grants registration to groups that are nonpolitical.

While the government authorized the creation of new independent newspapers during the year, freedom of expression in Syria suffered an overall setback in 2001. In January, *Sawt al-Sha’b*, the first newspaper not affiliated with the Baath Party, was launched.

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In February, Ali Farzat, a well-known Syrian cartoonist, began publishing *Al-Domari*, an independent, satirical newspaper devoting ample space to mocking government corruption. In May, prominent human rights activist Nizar Nayyof, was released from prison after nine years behind bars. The renaissance, however, was be short-lived.

In September, partly in response to increasing calls for political reform, the government passed a new, restrictive press law. The law allows for longer sentences for press offenses, legalized censorship, and the arrest of those calling for reform or constitutional changes. The law also grants the prime minister a veto if, in his judgment, a publication “undermines the general interest.”

The atmosphere worsened with renewed official harassment of Nizar Nayyof. In May, military intelligence agents reportedly detained him for 24 hours after abducting him outside his doctor’s office. They allegedly tried to bribe him into remaining silent on Syrian human rights abuses and beat him when he refused to cooperate. In July, Nayyof left for Paris for medical care, but not before announcing the formation of the Committee for Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation. The committee is to seek legal action against government officials and Islamist opposition members who have committed rights violations. By September, the government issued a warrant for Nayyof’s arrest on charges of trying to illegally modify the constitution and publishing “false” news reports abroad. With Nayyof out of reach in France, the government began intimidating his family. In October, his brothers were dismissed from their teaching posts at government-run schools. In December, three other family members began a hunger strike in response to harassment, attacks on their property, and death threats, all suspected to have been carried out by government agents.

Internet access in Syria remains inchoate and highly restricted. Government ministries, some businesses, universities, and hospitals are connected to the Internet, although on government-controlled servers. While private access is not sanctioned, some private homes are believed to be connected to the Internet via Lebanese service providers. Bashar al-Assad is leading the drive to connect Syria to the Internet, but the country’s ruling structure and intelligence services remain steadfastly against widespread access. Satellite dishes are illegal, although they are increasingly tolerated.

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The state prohibits Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh-Day Adventists from worshipping as a community and from owning property. The security apparatus closely monitors the tiny Jewish community, and Jews are generally barred from government employment. They are also the only minority group required to have their religion noted in their passports and identity cards. Religious instruction is mandatory in schools, with government-approved teachers and curricula. Separate classes are provided for Christian and Muslim students.

Although the regime has supported Kurdish struggles abroad, the Kurdish minority in Syria faces cultural and linguistic restrictions, and suspected Kurdish activists are routinely dismissed from schools and jobs. Some 200,000 Kurdish Syrians are stateless and unable to obtain passports, identity cards, or birth certificates as a result of a policy some years ago under which Kurds were stripped of their Syrian nationality. The government never restored their nationality, though the policy ended after the 1960s. As a result, these Kurds are unable to own land, to gain government employment, or to vote.

Traditional norms place Syrian women at a disadvantage in marriage, divorce, and inheritance matters. Syrian law stipulates that an accused rapist can be acquitted if he marries his victim. Violence against women, including rape, is high in Syria. Women also face legal restrictions on passing citizenship on to children.

All unions must belong to the government-controlled General Federation of Trade Unions. By law, the government can nullify any private sector collective-bargaining agreement. Strikes are prohibited in the agricultural sector and rarely occur in other sectors owing to previous government crackdowns.

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## **Turkmenistan**

**Political Rights: 7**

**Civil Liberties: 7**

**Status: Not Free**

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### **Overview:**

Despite its geographical proximity to Afghanistan, Turkmenistan's official political neutrality precluded overt cooperation with the U.S.-declared war on terrorism following the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. While granting permission for his country to be used as a base for humanitarian aid purposes, President Saparmurat Niyazov steadfastly refused to allow the coalition to use Turkmenistan to conduct military strikes against the Taliban. Niyazov's isolationist and frequently bizarre policies continued throughout 2001, including introducing further restrictions on the activities of foreigners and banning various art forms deemed to be alien or offensive to the country's Turkmen culture.

The southernmost republic of the former Soviet Union, Turkmenistan was conquered by the Mongols in the thirteenth century and seized by Russia in the late 1800s. Having been incorporated into the U.S.S.R. in 1924, Turkmenistan gained formal independence in 1991 with the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Saparmurat Niyazov, the former head of the Turkmenistan Communist Party, ran unopposed in elections to the newly created post of president in October 1990. After the adoption of a new constitution in 1992, Niyazov was reelected as the sole candidate 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. Niyazov's tenure as president was extended for an additional five years until 2002 by a 1994 referendum, which exempted him from having to run again in 1997 as originally scheduled. In December 1994 parliamentary elections, only Niyazov's Democratic Party of Turkmenistan (DPT), the renamed Communist Party, was permitted to field candidates.

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In December 12, 1999, elections to the National Assembly (Mejlis), every candidate was selected by the government and virtually all were members of the DPT. According to government claims, voter turnout was 98.9 percent. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which cited the lack of provisions for non-governmental 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 him president for life. With this decision, Turkmenistan became the first Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) country to formally abandon presidential elections. However, in February 2001, Niyazov announced that a presidential poll would be held in 2010, although he claimed that he would not run.

After the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Niyazov announced that the United States could not use his country for military strikes against the Taliban, although Turkmenistan would serve as a base for humanitarian aid. Ashgabat cited the country's official political neutrality as a reason for not participating in the U.S.-led campaign. However, Turkmenistan had maintained good relations with the Taliban in recent years in an attempt to secure safe energy export routes through Afghanistan to destinations including India and China.

Already one of the most closed societies in the world, Turkmenistan took steps throughout 2001 to isolate itself further from the international community through restrictive and often bizarre decrees. President Niyazov announced in April that ballet and opera would be banned as art forms alien to Turkmen culture, while books "misrepresenting" Turkmen history have been removed from libraries and destroyed. A presidential decree in June would require foreigners to pay \$50,000 to marry Turkmen citizens, ostensibly to provide financial support to children in the event of divorce and to protect women from abusive relationships. In September, Niyazov reportedly had completed writing the *Rukhname*, a book meant to serve as a spiritual guide for the nation. These moves followed two decrees in 2000 creating a council to monitor all foreign nationals traveling or living in the country and forbidding Turkmen citizens from holding accounts in foreign banks.

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Despite the country's wealth of natural resources, there have been few reforms of the Soviet command system, and the majority of citizens live in poverty. The economy suffers from low levels of gross domestic product (GDP) and major industries remain state-owned. Turkmenistan has struggled to bring its energy resources to foreign markets in the face of limited export routes and nonpaying customers. Plans to build a Trans-Caspian gas pipeline, which would extend from Turkmenistan through Azerbaijan and Georgia to Turkey, continued to be delayed for various political and economic reasons.

### **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 the government. He has established an extensive cult of personality, including the erection of monuments to his leadership throughout the country. In 1994, he renamed himself Turkmenbashi, or leader of the Turkmen. The country has two national legislative bodies: the unicameral National Assembly (Mejlis), composed of 50 members elected in single-mandate constituencies for five-year terms, which is the main legislature; and the People's Council (*Khalk Maslakhaty*), consisting of members of the assembly, 50 directly elected representatives, and various regional and other executive and judicial officials, which meets infrequently to address certain major issues. Neither parliamentary body enjoys genuine independence from the executive. The 1994 and 1999 parliamentary elections were neither free nor fair.

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, other than Russian ones, are severely restricted. Foreign journalists have few opportunities to visit Turkmenistan and are often limited to certain locations. Only the state-owned Turkmentelekom is permitted to provide Internet access.

The government restricts freedom of religion through means including strict registration requirements. Only Sunni Muslims

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and Russian Orthodox Christians have been able to meet the criterion of having at least 500 members. Members of religious groups that are not legally registered by the government, including Baptists, Pentecostals, and Bahais, are frequently harassed or attacked by security forces. In May, a Baptist, Dmitri Melnichenko, was reportedly called up for military service. He was subsequently detained and tortured for refusing to carry arms or to swear an oath of military allegiance on the grounds of being a conscientious objector. Since independence, Turkmenistan, which is overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim, has enjoyed a modest revival of Islam.

While the constitution guarantees peaceful assembly and association, these rights are restricted in practice. Only one political party, the Niyazov-led Democratic Party of Turkmenistan, has been officially registered. Opposition parties have been banned, and virtually all of their leading members face harassment and detention or have fled abroad. Social and cultural organizations are allowed to function, but often have difficulty registering. The government-controlled Colleagues Union is the only central trade union permitted, and there are no legal guarantees for workers to form or join unions or to bargain collectively.

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. There are no independent lawyers, with the exception of a few retired legal officials, to represent defendants in trials. Police abuse of suspects and prisoners, often to obtain confessions, is reportedly widespread, and prisons are overcrowded and unsanitary. The security services regularly monitor the activities of those critical of the government.

Citizens are required to carry internal passports for identification. Although residence permits are not required, place of residence is registered in passports. Obtaining passports and exit visas for foreign travel is difficult for most nonofficial travelers and allegedly often requires payment of bribes to government officials. Since the October 7 launch of the U.S.-led air strikes against the Taliban, Turkmenistan has increased security along its previously poorly guarded border with Afghanistan, effectively limiting freedom of movement for those who live in the border region.

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A continuing Soviet-style command economy and widespread corruption diminish equality of opportunity. As part of Niyazov's alleged anticorruption campaign, officials accused of corruption are publicly berated by the president, dismissed from their positions, or forced to leave the country. As a consequence, the government has undergone a rapid turnover of personnel, including the July dismissal of Foreign Minister Batyr Berdiev for alleged persistent drunkenness, which many observers attribute to Niyazov's fear of the development of political rivals within his government. Traditional social-religious norms mostly limit professional opportunities for women to the roles of homemaker and mother, and anecdotal reports suggest that domestic violence is common.



## **Russia**

### **Chechnya**

**Political Rights: 7**

**Civil Liberties: 7**

**Status: Not Free**

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#### **Overview:**

In the wake of the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and the subsequent U.S.-led attacks against the Taliban in Afghanistan, Russia intensified its efforts to portray the war in Chechnya as part of the struggle against international terrorists. Russian President Vladimir Putin's support of the U.S. antiterrorism campaign led to concern that Moscow would use its newfound cooperation with Washington to justify hardline policies in Chechnya. Some countries in the West, including the United States, that previously had criticized Russian actions in the breakaway republic softened their stance over Chechnya in the months following the attacks of September 11. While Russian and Chechen representatives held face-to-face negotiations in November for the first time in more than two years, clashes between federal troops and Chechen separatists continued throughout the year, underscoring the Russian military's tenuous hold over much of Chechen territory.

A small Northern Caucasus republic covered by flat plains in the north-central portion and by high mountains in the south, Chechnya has been at war with Russia almost continuously 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. Although rehabilitated by Nikita Khrushchev in 1957 and allowed to return to their homeland, they continued to be politically suspect and were excluded from the region's administration.

In his first decree as head of state after his election as Chechnya's president in October 1991, former Soviet Air Force Commander Dzhokhar Dudayev proclaimed Chechnya's independence on November 1. Moscow responded by instituting an economic blockade of the republic and engaging in political intimidation of the territory's leadership.

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In 1994, Russia began overtly to assist Chechen figures opposed to Dudayev, whose rule was marked by corruption and the rise of powerful clans and criminal gangs. Low-intensity conflicts developed in July, and fighting escalated in September. Citing the need to protect Moscow's national security and important economic interests, such as railways and energy pipelines, President Boris Yeltsin sent 40,000 Russian troops into Chechnya by mid-December 1994 and attacked the capital city on New Year's Eve. Russian forces intensified the shelling of Grozny and other population centers throughout 1995, with civilians becoming frequent targets. Chechen forces regrouped, making significant gains against ill-trained, undisciplined, and demoralized Russian troops. Russian public opposition to the war increased, fueled by criticism from much of the country's media. In April 1996, President Dudayev was killed reportedly by a Russian missile.

With mounting Russian casualties and no imminent victory for Moscow, a peace deal was signed in August 1996. While calling for the withdrawal of most Russian forces from the breakaway territory, the document postponed a final settlement on the republic's status until 2001. Russia had suffered a humiliating defeat against the much smaller Chechen forces, while Chechnya's formal economy and infrastructure were virtually destroyed. The war had been marked by serious human rights violations committed by Russian government forces, as well as reported abuses by armed Chechen opposition groups.

On January 27, 1997, moderate Chief of Staff Aslan Maskhadov was elected president over 12 other candidates, including his principal rival, field commander Shamil Basayev. Concurrent national legislative elections ushered in the fifth parliament since 1990, as none of the previous ones had lasted their full term. Maskhadov, who subsequently named Basayev acting prime minister, sought to maintain Chechen sovereignty while pressing Moscow to help rebuild the republic. On May 12, Yeltsin and Maskhadov signed an accord that included a reference to Moscow's recognition of Maskhadov as Chechnya's legitimate president. Throughout 1998, Basayev and other former field commanders formed an unruly opposition of often-competing warlords, removing large areas of Chechnya from Maskhadov's control. A series of kidnappings, including the taking of foreign nationals as hostages by criminal

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gangs and militia groups, illustrated Maskhadov's growing weakness.

In early August 1999, a group of more than 1,000 Chechen guerrillas crossed into the neighboring Russian republic of Dagestan, seizing several towns and declaring their intention to unite Chechnya and Dagestan as an independent Islamic state. Russian troops soon recaptured the villages and claimed to have driven the guerrillas back into bases in Chechnya by late September. A few weeks later, a string of bombings in Moscow and two other Russian cities killed nearly 300 people. Although the Kremlin blamed the attacks on Chechen militants, both the Chechen government and rebel groups denied any involvement.

In what was described by Moscow as an operation to destroy the Chechen guerrillas, the Kremlin ordered air strikes on key Chechen military installations and economic targets in late September 1999, and the subsequent deployment of ground troops in Chechnya. Although Russian troops advanced rapidly over the largely flat terrain in the northern third of the republic, their progress slowed considerably as they neared the heavily defended city of Grozny, which they entered in mid-December but failed to capture by year's end. In a notable policy shift, then Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in early October effectively withdrew Moscow's recognition of President Maskhadov as the republic's main legitimate authority.

Russia's increasingly deliberate and indiscriminate bomb attacks on civilian targets caused some 200,000 people to flee Chechnya, most to the tiny neighboring Russian republic of Ingushetia. Tens of thousands of residents remained trapped in basements in Grozny during the deadly air and artillery strikes. While Western governments and international organizations expressed growing condemnation of the attacks, in Russia the campaign enjoyed broad popular support, which was fueled by the media's one-sided reporting favoring the official government position.

After Russian troops finally captured the largely destroyed city of Grozny in early February 2000, causing thousands of Chechen separatists to flee the capital, the Russian military turned its offensive against the remaining rebel strongholds in the southern mountain region. While Russian troops conducted air and artillery raids against towns suspected of harboring large numbers of Chechen fighters, frequently followed by often indiscriminate mopping-up opera-

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tions to check for remaining rebels, they became subject to almost daily guerilla bomb and sniper attacks by rebel forces. The international community issued periodic condemnations of Moscow's operation in Chechnya, as did the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly, which voted in April to suspend Russia's voting rights in the organization.

Throughout 2001, Chechen rebels continued to engage in guerilla warfare against Russian troops with regular mine, sniper, and bomb attacks, highlighting Moscow's inability to assert full control over the breakaway republic. In January, President Putin signed a decree transferring command of military operations in Chechnya from the defense ministry to one of the country's main intelligence agencies, the FSB. The same month, the Kremlin announced that it would scale down its operations in Chechnya by reducing the number of Russian troops in Chechnya from 80,000 to 20,000. However, the withdrawal halted in early May after only 5,000 soldiers were sent home.

Following the September 11 attacks on New York and the Pentagon, Russian officials announced their support for the U.S. antiterrorism campaign. Moscow described the Chechen conflict as part of the broader war on global terrorism, drawing a connection between Chechen separatists and international terrorist groups associated with Osama bin Laden. Meanwhile, the West softened its criticisms of Moscow's actions in Chechnya in apparent exchange for Russia's support of the U.S.-led operation against the Taliban. While German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder suggested that the world should reevaluate the situation in Chechnya in light of the September 11 events, the United States urged Chechen rebels to cut their alleged ties with terrorist groups. In contrast, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights had approved a resolution less than half a year earlier condemning what it called the disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force by Russia's armed forces in Chechnya.

In the worst outbreak of hostilities in many months, Chechen fighters staged a series of surprise offensives in mid-September in the second largest city of Gudermes and shot down a military helicopter over Grozny. The Russian military responded by detaining more than 400 people suspected of assisting the rebels.

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In an unexpected reversal of the Russian policy of refusing to negotiate with Chechen separatists, President Putin on September 24 offered the rebels a 72-hour deadline to sever all of their alleged contacts with international terrorists and approach federal representatives in the region to discuss disarmament procedures. As the deadline passed, Putin's envoy to Chechnya, Viktor Kazantsev, reported having made brief telephone contact with Aslan Maskhadov's representative, Akhmed Zakayev. Some analysts maintained that the Kremlin's goal in extending the offer to negotiate was to deflect Western criticism of Russian human rights abuses in Chechnya, while at the same time justifying continued military operations in the republic if the deadline were not met.

In another surprising development, Russian and Chechen representatives sat down on November 18 for the first official face-to-face negotiations since the war broke out more than two years ago. Kazantsev and Zakayev, who met in Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport for a few hours, discussed a possible resolution to the conflict and agreed to hold future meetings. Despite these initiatives, fighting continued in several cities throughout the republic and Russia's defense minister announced plans in December to launch a new winter offensive targeting rebel groups. Also, serious doubts remained as to whether President Maskhadov maintains sufficient control over the territory's various rival factions to impose a peace process.

The trial of prominent Chechen rebel leader Salman Raduyev, who had led a hostage-taking raid on a hospital in neighboring Dagestan in 1996 that left 78 people dead, opened in Dagestan on November 15. Russia's prosecutor-general personally handled the case, underscoring the importance with which federal authorities regarded the trial. On December 25, Raduyev was found guilty of hostage taking, terrorism, and murder, and sentenced to life in prison.

### **Political Rights and Civil Liberties:**

With the resumption of war in Chechnya in 1999, residents of the republic currently do not have the means to change their government democratically. The 1997 presidential elections were characterized by international observers to have been reasonably free and fair. President Aslan Maskhadov fled the capital city

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in December 1999, and the parliament elected in 1997 ceased to function. Russia placed Moscow loyalists or Chechens opposed to Maskhadov's central government in various administrative posts throughout the republic. In June 2000, Putin enacted a decree establishing direct presidential rule over Chechnya, appointing Akhmed Kadyrov, a Muslim cleric and Chechnya's spiritual leader, to head the republic's administration. Kadyrov was denounced by Maskhadov and separatist Chechens as a traitor, while pro-Moscow Chechens objected to his support during the first Chechen war for the republic's independence.

The Russian military continued to impose severe restrictions on journalists' access to the Chechen war zone, issuing accreditation primarily to those of proven loyalty to the Russian government. Few foreign reporters are allowed into the breakaway republic. Anna Politkovskaya, a journalist with the daily Russian paper *Novaya Gazeta* who has published articles critical of Moscow's war effort in Chechnya, was briefly detained by Russian forces in February. In July, the Russian military announced that journalists covering the war must be accompanied at all times by an official from the interior ministry's press service. The disruptive effects of the war severely hinder news production and the flow of information to the general public. Russian state-run television and radio resumed broadcasts in Chechnya in March via a transmitter north of Grozny, although much of the population remains without electricity. The Chechen rebel government operates a website, Kavkaz Center, with reports about the conflict and other news from its perspective.

Muslims enjoy freedom of worship, although the Wahhabi sect, a group with roots in Saudi Arabia and characterized by a strict observance of Islam, has been banned. Most religious Chechens practice Sufiism, a mystical form of Islam characterized by the veneration of local saints and by groups practicing their own rituals.

Since the resumption of war, the rule of law has become virtually nonexistent. Civilians have been subject to harassment and violence, including torture, rape, and extrajudicial executions, at the hands of Russian soldiers, while senior military authorities have shown general disregard for these abuses. In the spring of 2001, Russian Colonel Yuri Budanov went on trial at a military court on charges of abducting and murdering a young Chechen

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woman in March 2000. The trial was adjourned in July to allow for a psychiatric evaluation of the defendant, who was found to be “emotionally distressed” at the time he committed the crime, allowing the charge to be reduced to manslaughter. Human rights groups emphasized that this case represents only one of many crimes committed by Russian soldiers against local civilians. Chechen fighters have targeted Chechens who have cooperated with Russian government officials. According to Human Rights Watch, at least 18 local administration heads and 5 religious leaders, as well as many Chechen teachers, police officers, and other civil servants were murdered in 2001. Kadyrov survived several assassination attempts, and one of his deputies was killed.

A mass grave containing 51 bodies, many in civilian clothing and showing signs of torture, was discovered in February in a town near Grozny. According to a report by Human Rights Watch, the Russian government’s investigators failed to preserve crucial evidence and prematurely buried unidentified bodies. In early July, a roundup of some 1,500 men for supposed document checks unleashed new allegations of brutality against the Russian military. According to eyewitness accounts, some of those detained were not released until their families paid bribes, while others were tortured or had disappeared and were presumed dead. Soldiers reportedly looted homes, schools, and hospitals during the raids, which were in apparent retaliation for rebel attacks that had left five Russian policemen dead. The massive mopping-up operation took place in three towns that had been declared safe zones for refugees, causing almost all of the 26,000 Chechens harboring there to seek safety in neighboring Ingushetia. Kadyrov expressed unprecedented criticism of the roundups, and several local officials appointed by Moscow threatened to quit in protest. The Russian military initiated an investigation into the incident and subsequently arrested six lower-ranking soldiers, although no top army officials were charged.

Travel both within and to and from the republic is severely restricted. After the resumption of war, the Russian military failed to provide safe exit routes for many civilians out of the conflict zones. Many Chechens, particularly those in Grozny, face often random harassment or physical assault by Russian troops and local armed groups while traveling even short distances. Bribes are usually required to pass the numerous military checkpoints. By the end of

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2001, about 150,000 officially registered internally displaced persons remained in Ingushetia, citing fears for their personal safety if they returned to Chechnya. According to a Council of Europe representative, conditions in the refugee camps had worsened over the year, with a shortage of clothing, food, and medicine.

Widespread corruption and the economic devastation caused by the war severely limit equality of opportunity. Ransoms obtained from kidnapping, counterfeiting, and the production of low-quality fuel out of oil stolen from pipelines provide money for guerillas and criminal elements. Residents of Russian-occupied areas report that many basic social and other services have not been restored.

While women continue to face discrimination in a 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 the Russian military.



# China

## Tibet

**Political Rights: 7**

**Civil Liberties: 7**

**Status: Not Free**

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### Overview:

China continued its tight control over Tibet in 2001, jailing dissidents, managing daily life in Buddhist monasteries, and pressuring monks and nuns to renounce their allegiance to the Dalai Lama.

Tibetan national history dates back more than 2,000 years. Beijing's modern-day claim to the region is based solely on Mongol and Manchu imperial influence over Tibet in the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries, respectively. China invaded Tibet in late 1949 and in 1951 formally annexed the country. In an apparent effort to marginalize Tibetan national identity, Beijing incorporated roughly half of Tibet into four southwestern Chinese provinces beginning in 1950. As a result, the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), which Beijing created in 1965, covers only half the territory of pre-invasion Tibet.

In what is perhaps the defining event of Beijing's occupation, Chinese troops suppressed a local uprising in 1959 by killing an estimated 87,000 Tibetans in the Lhasa region alone. The massacre forced the Tibetan spiritual and temporal leader, the fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, to flee to Dharamsala, India, with 80,000 supporters. The International Commission of Jurists in 1960 called the Chinese occupation genocidal and ruled that between 1911 and 1949, the year China invaded, Tibet had possessed all the attributes of statehood as defined under international law. During the Cultural Revolution, China jailed thousands of monks and nuns, destroyed nearly all of Tibet's 6,200 monasteries, and burned numerous sacred texts. By the late 1970s, an estimated 1.2 million Tibetans had died as a result of the occupation.

As resistance to Beijing's rule continued, Chinese soldiers forcibly broke up peaceful demonstrations throughout Tibet between

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1987 and 1990. Beijing imposed martial law on Lhasa and surrounding areas in March 1989 following three days of anti-Chinese riots during which police killed at least 50 Tibetans. Authorities lifted martial law in May 1990.

China has in recent years attempted to control religious affairs and undermine the exiled Dalai Lama's authority. Foreign observers have reported a slight easing of repression since late 2000, when Beijing named as the region's Communist Party secretary the relatively moderate Guo Jinlong. He replaced Chen Kuiyan, the architect of recent crackdowns. The 53-year old Guo, who served on several party committees in Sichuan Province and the TAR, pledged to continue Chen's policies.

One reason for the change in Tibet's top political post may have been Beijing's anger over the escape to India in late 1999 of the teenager recognized by the Dalai Lama, and accepted by Beijing, as the seventeenth Karmapa. The Karmapa is the highest-ranking figure in Tibetan Buddhism's Karma Kargyu school. Beijing had interfered in the Karmapa's selection and education as part of its efforts to influence the next generation of Tibetan religious leaders. The most flagrant case of interference in the Buddhist religious hierarchy occurred in 1995, when Chinese authorities rejected and detained the Dalai Lama's selection of six-year-old Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as the eleventh reincarnation of the Panchen Lama. The Panchen Lama is Tibetan Buddhism's second highest religious figure. Authorities stage-managed the selection of another six-year-old boy as the Panchen Lama. Since the Panchen Lama identifies the reincarnated Dalai Lama, Beijing potentially can control the identification of the fifteenth Dalai Lama.

### **Political Rights and Civil Liberties:**

Tibetans lack the right of self-determination, cannot change their government through elections, and enjoy few basic rights. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rules the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and neighboring areas that historically were part of Tibet through compliant government officials whose ranks include some Tibetans in largely ceremonial posts. While ethnic Tibetans have served as TAR governor, none has ever held the peak post of TAR party secretary. Most of China's policies affecting Tibetans

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apply both to those living in the TAR and to Tibetans living in parts of pre-invasion Tibet that Beijing has incorporated into China's Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan, and Yunnan Provinces.

China's blanket repression denies Tibetans nearly all basic rights. Some of the worst abuses are against political dissidents. Security forces routinely and arbitrarily arrest, imprison, and torture dissidents to punish nonviolent protest, according to the U.S. State Department, the London-based Tibet Information Network (TIN), and other sources. The offenses include displaying Tibetan flags or other symbols of cultural identity, holding peaceful demonstrations, possessing photographs of the Dalai Lama, forming prisoner lists, putting up posters, and distributing leaflets.

The CCP controls the judiciary, which routinely hands down lengthy prison terms to Tibetans convicted of political offenses. The number of Tibetan political prisoners fell to 266 in January 2001 from 538 in January 2000, TIN said in February. The reason for the decrease is not clear. At least 37 Tibetan political prisoners, or about 1 in 50, have died since 1987 as a result of prison abuse, the rights group said. The average sentence being served by political prisoners is just over eight and a half years, with monks and nuns making up 74 percent of these inmates, TIN added. In addition to using the judiciary to stifle dissent, authorities also frequently use administrative regulations to detain political prisoners for up to four years without charge or trial.

Throughout Tibet, security forces routinely beat, torture, and otherwise abuse detainees and inmates in prisons, detention centers, and other places of incarceration, according to the U.S. State Department, TIN, and other sources. In one of the most serious cases of abuse in recent years, authorities responded to protests at Lhasa's Drapchi prison in May 1998 with torture and beatings that led to the deaths of at least nine prisoners, including five nuns and three monks. There have also been reports of officials sexually abusing female prisoners. In addition, authorities frequently force detainees and prisoners to work on demanding agriculture and lumbering projects, often for no pay, according to the U.S. State Department's February 2001 report on human rights in Tibet in 2000.

While authorities permit some religious practices, they have since 1996 strengthened their control over Tibetan monasteries under a "patriotic education campaign" that is aimed largely at under-

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mining the Dalai Lama's influence as a religious and political leader. Under the campaign, government-run "work teams" have conducted political indoctrination sessions in hundreds of monasteries, the U.S. State Department report said. The teams seek to coerce monks and nuns into opposing Tibetan independence, recognizing the Beijing-appointed Panchen Lama as the true Panchen Lama, and denouncing the Dalai Lama. The intensity of the campaign varies from year to year and by region, but throughout Tibet authorities have in recent years arrested dozens of monks and nuns for refusing to renounce their beliefs and expelled hundreds more from their religious institutions, according to the U.S. State Department report and the New York-based Human Rights Watch. As part of the campaign, Beijing in 1996 banned from monasteries all photographs of the Dalai Lama. Evidence from TIN in 2000 suggested that authorities are increasingly extending the patriotic education campaign to Tibetan areas outside the TAR.

In addition to trying to coerce changes in political and religious beliefs through the patriotic education campaign, the government continues to oversee day-to-day affairs in major monasteries and nunneries. Authorities control daily affairs through state-organized "democratic management committees" that run each establishment. The government also strictly limits the numbers of monks and nuns permitted in major monasteries, although these restrictions are not always enforced, and has interfered with the choice of monastic leaders. The boy the Dalai Lama identified as the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama is believed to be under house arrest in Beijing, along with his family. Moreover, authorities have limited the building of new monasteries and nunneries, closed numerous religious institutions, and demolished several others.

While hundreds of religious figures hold nominal positions in local "people's congresses," authorities have banned religious practice among Tibetan members of the CCP and Tibetan government workers. Reporting on what appeared to be fresh efforts to enforce these restrictions, TIN said in August 2000 that authorities had recently ordered party cadres and government workers to withdraw their children from monasteries and nunneries in Lhasa. Officials also warned them that if they took part in religious practices, they could be fined and their children expelled from their schools. TIN also reported that authorities had begun searching the homes

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of party members in Lhasa and some outlying areas for religious shrines and pictures of the Dalai Lama. Since 1994, authorities have banned the sale of the Dalai Lama's photograph and displays of his photograph in state offices.

Authorities also imposed several other restrictions on lay religious activity in 2000 that targeted not only party cadres and government workers but also students and pensioners. The TAR government threatened civil servants with dismissals, schoolchildren with expulsions, and retired workers with loss of pensions if they publicly marked the Buddhist Sagadawa festival in Lhasa, according to TIN. Authorities also warned Lhasa students in July that they could be thrown out of their schools if they visited monasteries and temples during the summer holidays.

As one of China's 55 recognized ethnic minority groups, Tibetans receive some preferential treatment in university admissions and government employment. Tibetans, however, need to learn Mandarin Chinese in order to take advantage of these preferences. Many Tibetans want to learn Chinese in order to compete for educational slots and jobs but at the same time fear that an increased use of Chinese threatens the survival of the Tibetan language. Already the language of instruction in middle schools, Chinese is reportedly being used to teach several subjects in a number of Lhasa primary schools, TIN said in November. In the private sector, employers routinely give Han Chinese preferences in hiring and greater pay for the same work, according to the U.S. State Department's February 2001 report. Tibetans also find it more difficult than do Han Chinese to get permits and loans to open businesses, the report added. As in the rest of China, authorities reportedly subject farmers and herders to arbitrary taxes.

Beijing's draconian family planning policy is nominally more lenient towards Tibetans and other minorities. Authorities permit urban Tibetans to have two children, while farmers and herders often have three or more children. Officials, however, frequently enforce the nationwide one-child rule in Tibet for government workers and CCP members and in some cases reportedly use threats of fines to coerce women into undergoing abortions and sterilizations, the U.S. State Department report said. Authorities, moreover, are reportedly applying a two-child limit to farmers and nomads in several counties, TIN said in 2000.

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Seeking to escape religious and political persecution, some 3,000 Tibetans flee to Nepal as refugees each year, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In yet another sign of Beijing's tight grip on the region, Chinese authorities control all print and broadcast media in Tibet, except for about 20 or so clandestine publications that appear sporadically, the Paris-based Reporters Sans Frontières said in 2000.

Beijing's development policies in Tibet have encouraged and facilitated the resettlement of Han Chinese into traditional Tibetan areas. This has altered the region's demographic composition, displaced Tibetan businesses, reduced employment opportunities for Tibetans, and further marginalized Tibetan cultural identity. Possibly because of these rapid social and economic changes and dislocations, prostitution is a "growing problem" in Tibet, particularly in Lhasa, the U.S. State Department report said.

Thanks in part to heavy subsidies from Beijing and favorable economic and tax policies, Tibet's economy has grown by more than ten percent, on average, each year over the past decade, according to the U.S. State Department's 2001 report. The report added, however, that while Beijing's development policies have raised the living standards of many ethnic Tibetans, Han Chinese have been the main beneficiaries of many of the benefits of development and the growing private sector. This is seen most starkly in parts of Lhasa, where Han Chinese run almost all small businesses.

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TABLE OF INDEPENDENT COUNTRIES 2001-2002

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Rating	Country	PR	CL	Freedom Rating
Afghanistan	7	7	Not Free	El Salvador	2	3	Free
Albania	▲3	▲4	Partly Free	Equatorial Guinea	▲6	▲6	Not Free
Algeria	6	5	Not Free	Eritrea	7	▼6	Not Free
Andorra	1	1	Free	Estonia	1	2	Free
Angola	6	6	Not Free	Ethiopia	5	5	Partly Free
Antigua and Barbuda	4	2	Partly Free	Fiji	▲4	3	Partly Free
Argentina	▼3	▼3	Partly Free	Finland	1	1	Free
Armenia	4	4	Partly Free	France	1	2	Free
Australia	1	1	Free	Gabon	5	4	Partly Free
Austria	1	1	Free	The Gambia	▲5	5	Partly Free
Azerbaijan	6	5	Partly Free	Georgia	4	4	Partly Free
Bahamas	1	1	Free	Germany	1	2	Free
Bahrain	▲6	▲5	Not Free	Ghana	2	3	Free
Bangladesh	3	4	Partly Free	Greece	1	3	Free
Barbados	1	1	Free	Grenada	1	2	Free
Belarus	6	6	Not Free	Guatemala	3	4	Partly Free
Belgium	1	2	Free	Guinea	6	5	Not Free
Belize	1	▼2	Free	Guinea-Bissau	4	5	Partly Free
Benin	▼3	2	Free	Guyana	2	2	Free
Bhutan	7	6	Not Free	Haiti	6	▼6	Not Free
Bolivia	1	3	Free	Honduras	3	3	Partly Free
Bosnia-Herzegovina	5	4	Partly Free	Hungary	1	2	Free
Botswana	2	2	Free	Iceland	1	1	Free
Brazil	3	3	Partly Free	India	2	3	Free
Brunei	7	5	Not Free	Indonesia	3	4	Partly Free
Bulgaria	▲1	3	Free	Iran	6	6	Not Free
Burkina Faso	4	4	Partly Free	Iraq	7	7	Not Free
Burma	7	7	Not Free	Ireland	1	1	Free
Burundi	6	6	Not Free	Israel	1	3	Free
Cambodia	6	▲5	Not Free	Italy	1	2	Free
Cameroon	▲6	6	Not Free	Jamaica	2	▼3	Free
Canada	1	1	Free	Japan	1	2	Free
Cape Verde	1	2	Free	Jordan	▼5	▼5	Partly Free
Central African Republic	▼5	▼5	Partly Free	Kazakhstan	6	5	Not Free
Chad	6	5	Not Free	Kenya	6	5	Not Free
Chile	2	2	Free	Kiribati	1	1	Free
China (PRC)	7	6	Not Free	Korea, North	7	7	Not Free
Colombia	4	4	Partly Free	Korea, South	2	2	Free
Comoros	6	4	Partly Free	Kuwait	4	5	Partly Free
Congo (Brazzaville)	▲5	4	Partly Free	Kyrgyz Republic	6	5	Not Free
Congo (Kinshasa)	▲6	6	Not Free	Laos	7	6	Not Free
Costa Rica	1	2	Free	Latvia	1	2	Free
Cote d'Ivoire	▲5	▲4	Partly Free	Lebanon	6	5	Not Free
Croatia	2	▲2	Free	Lesotho	4	4	Partly Free
Cuba	7	7	Not Free	Liberia	▼6	6	Not Free
Cyprus (G)	1	1	Free	Libya	7	7	Not Free
Czech Republic	1	2	Free	Liechtenstein	1	1	Free
Denmark	1	1	Free	Lithuania	1	2	Free
Djibouti	4	5	Partly Free	Luxembourg	1	1	Free
Dominica	1	1	Free	Macedonia	4	▼4	Partly Free
Dominican Republic	2	2	Free	Madagascar	2	4	Partly Free
East Timor	▲5	3	Partly Free	Malawi	▼4	3	Partly Free
Ecuador	3	3	Partly Free	Malaysia	5	5	Partly Free
Egypt	6	▼6	Not Free	Maldives	6	5	Not Free
				Mali	2	3	Free

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Rating
Malta	1	1	Free
Marshall Islands	1	1	Free
Mauritania	▲5	5	Partly Free
Mauritius	1	2	Free
Mexico	2	3	Free
Micronesia	1	2	Free
Moldova	2	4	Partly Free
Monaco	2	1	Free
Mongolia	2	3	Free
Morocco	5	▼5	Partly Free
Mozambique	3	4	Partly Free
Namibia	2	3	Free
Nauru	1	3	Free
Nepal	3	4	Partly Free
Netherlands	1	1	Free
New Zealand	1	1	Free
Nicaragua	3	3	Partly Free
Niger	4	4	Partly Free
Nigeria	4	▼5	Partly Free
Norway	1	1	Free
Oman	6	5	Not Free
Pakistan	6	5	Not Free
Palau	1	2	Free
Panama	1	2	Free
Papua New Guinea	2	3	Free
Paraguay	4	3	Partly Free
Peru	▲1	3	Free
Philippines	2	3	Free
Poland	1	2	Free
Portugal	1	1	Free
Qatar	6	6	Not Free
Romania	2	2	Free
Russia	5	5	Partly Free
Rwanda	7	6	Not Free
St. Kitts and Nevis	1	2	Free
St. Lucia	1	2	Free
St. Vincent and Grenadines	2	1	Free
Samoa	2	2	Free
San Marino	1	1	Free
Sao Tome and Principe	1	2	Free
Saudi Arabia	7	7	Not Free
Senegal	3	4	Partly Free
Seychelles	3	3	Partly Free
Sierra Leone	4	5	Partly Free
Singapore	5	5	Partly Free
Slovakia	1	2	Free
Slovenia	1	2	Free
Solomon Islands	4	4	Partly Free
Somalia	6	7	Not Free
South Africa	1	2	Free
Spain	1	2	Free
Sri Lanka	3	4	Partly Free
Sudan	7	7	Not Free

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Rating
Swaziland	6	5	Not Free
Sweden	1	1	Free
Switzerland	1	1	Free
Syria	7	7	Not Free
Taiwan (Rep. Of China)	1	2	Free
Tajikistan	6	6	Not Free
Tanzania	4	4	Partly Free
Thailand	2	3	Free
Togo	5	5	Partly Free
Tonga	5	3	Partly Free
Trinidad and Tobago	▼3	▼3	Partly Free
Tunisia	6	5	Not Free
Turkey	4	5	Partly Free
Turkmenistan	7	7	Not Free
Tuvalu	1	1	Free
Uganda	6	5	Partly Free
Ukraine	4	4	Partly Free
United Arab Emirates	6	5	Not Free
United Kingdom*	1	2	Free
United States	1	1	Free
Uruguay	1	1	Free
Uzbekistan	7	6	Not Free
Vanuatu	1	3	Free
Venezuela	3	5	Partly Free
Vietnam	7	6	Not Free
Yemen	▼6	6	Not Free
Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro)	▲3	▲3	Partly Free
Zambia	5	4	Partly Free
Zimbabwe	6	▼6	Not Free

**PR** and **CL** stand for Political Rights and Civil Liberties

1 represents the most free and 7 the least free category

▲▼ up or down indicates a change in Political Rights or Civil Liberties since the last Survey

The Freedom Rating is an overall judgment based on the results of *Freedom in the World 2001-2002*.

\* Excluding Northern Ireland



### **Methodology**

The Survey team, made up of regional specialists, posed a series of questions concerning the level of political rights and civil liberties in each country or territory. Using these criteria, Freedom House assigned each country and territory a numerical rating between 1 and 7 for both political rights and civil liberties. In each category, 1 represents the most free and 7 represents the least free. Based on these ratings, each country was then placed in one of three broad categories: Free, Partly Free, or Not Free. Freedom House labels the most repressive regimes which received the lowest score of 7,7 as the “Most Repressive.” (Freedom House recognizes that within the “Most Repressive” are gradations of repression which make some more repressive than others.)

## About Freedom House

Freedom House is a clear voice for democracy and freedom around the world. Founded nearly sixty years ago by Eleanor Roosevelt, Wendell Willkie, and other Americans concerned with the mounting threats to peace and democracy, Freedom House has been a vigorous proponent of democratic values and a steadfast opponent of dictatorships of the far left and the far right.

Non-partisan and broad-based, Freedom House is led by a Board of Trustees composed of leading Democrats, Republicans, and independents; business and labor leaders; former senior government officials; scholars; writers; and journalists. All are united in the view that American leadership in international affairs is essential to the cause of human rights and freedom.

Over the years, Freedom House has been at the center of the struggle for freedom. It was an outspoken advocate of the Marshall Plan and NATO in the 1940s, of the U.S. civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s, of the Vietnam boat people in the 1970s, of Poland's Solidarity movement and the Filipino democratic opposition in the 1980s, and of the many democracies that have emerged around the world in the 1990s.

Freedom House has vigorously opposed dictatorships in Central America and Chile, apartheid in South Africa, the suppression of the Prague Spring, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, genocide in Bosnia and Rwanda, and the brutal violation of human rights in Cuba, Burma, China, and Iraq.

It has championed the rights of democratic activists, religious believers, trade unionists, journalists, and proponents of free markets. In 1997, a consolidation took place whereby the international democratization training programs of the National Forum Foundation were incorporated into Freedom House.

Today, Freedom House is a leading advocate of the world's young democracies, which are coping with the debilitating legacy of statism, dictatorship, and political repression. It conducts an array of U.S. and overseas research, advocacy, education, and training initiatives that promote human rights, democracy, free market economics, the rule of law, independent media, and U.S. engagement in international affairs.

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